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Marcelli Claudinni Teixeira Osorio

Reflections on coloniality, diasporas and cosmopolitanisms in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

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Dissertação apresentada, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre, ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras, da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de concentração: Estudos de Literatura.

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Still a world, my friend, where one side travels to be a servant, and the other side travels to be treated like a king.

Kiran Desai

RESUMO

OSORIO, Marcelli Claudinni Teixeira. *Reflections on coloniality, diasporas and cosmopolitanisms in Kiran Desai's The inheritance of loss.* 2020. 95 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Letras) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2020.

A presente dissertação propõe um estudo do romance *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), da escritora indiana contemporânea Kiran Desai, através de três perspectivas. Primeiro, esta dissertação visa explorar algumas das práticas do colonialismo e da colonialidade descritas no romance, juntamente com consequências substanciais da globalização como retratada por Desai. Segundo, concentrando-se principalmente nos personagens imigrantes, este estudo também propõe investigar a heterogeneidade das diásporas, a questão do lar e do (não) pertencimento na vida dos personagens diaspóricos retratados. Terceiro, o presente trabalho aborda a preocupação com o trabalho dos imigrantes e a marginalidade a que são submetidos, juntamente com a questão dos cosmopolitismos emergentes no romance de Desai. Embora Kiran Desai crie um mundo fictício habitado por personagens de diferentes origens e nacionalidades, esta dissertação se concentra na análise dos menos privilegiados que fazem parte de um ciclo contínuo de desigualdade, pobreza e perda. *The Inheritance of Loss* é uma narrativa não linear, organizada em fragmentos, que apresenta dois enredos principais. A obra retrata a vida de personagens indianos que pertencem a gerações e origens diversas. A narrativa inclui passagens das primeiras décadas do século XX que retratam o domínio britânico sobre a Índia e algumas das práticas do colonialismo introduzidas pelos colonizadores. O romance se passa principalmente nos anos 80. O cenário alterna entre o nordeste da Índia e Nova York, Estados Unidos. Parte da narrativa representa a luta das populações que exigiram seu próprio estado após a independência da Índia. O romance de Desai representa imigrantes, ilegais em sua maioria, tentando ganhar a vida nos Estados Unidos. A narrativa expõe a colonialidade que persiste na vida e no imaginário de pessoas de ex-colônias. A autora destaca as esperanças, conflitos e dificuldades enfrentadas por aqueles que embarcam em jornadas diaspóricas para trabalhar como imigrantes sem documentos na cidade global. Desai também oferece rápidos vislumbres da vida de indianos abastados estudando e trabalhando nos EUA. Essas representações revelam como as diferenças sociais, culturais e étnicas marcam experiências e acesso à mobilidade global, infraestrutura urbana, assistência médica e segurança no emprego. Esta dissertação baseia sua discussão em críticos acadêmicos das áreas de Estudos Pós-coloniais / Decoloniais e Estudos Culturais, como James Clifford (1994), Avtar Brah (1996), Saskia Sassen (1998), Aihwa Ong (1999), Walter D. Mignolo (2000, 2012), Arjun Appadurai (2003, 2006), Silviano Santiago (2004), Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009), Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida (2010, 2015) e Ruvani Ranasinha (2016).

Palavras-chave: (Pós)colonialismo. Colonialidade. Diásporas. Cosmopolitanismos. Kiran Desai.

ABSTRACT

OSORIO, Marcelli Claudinni Teixeira. *Reflections on coloniality, diasporas and cosmopolitanisms in Kiran Desai's The inheritance of loss.* 2020. 95 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Letras) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2020.

This thesis proposes a study of the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), by contemporary Indian-born writer Kiran Desai, through three perspectives. First, this thesis aims at exploring some of the practices of colonialism and coloniality depicted in the novel, along with substantial consequences of globalization portrayed by Desai. Second, by focusing primarily on the migrant characters, this study also proposes to investigate the heterogeneity of diasporas, the question of home and (non)belonging in the lives of diasporic characters Third, this thesis addresses the concern with migrant labor and marginality along with the matter of emerging cosmopolitanisms in Desai's novel. Although Kiran Desai crafts a fictional world that is inhabited by characters from different backgrounds and nationalities, this thesis focuses on the analysis of the less privileged ones that are part of an ongoing cycle of inequality, poverty and loss. *The Inheritance of Loss* is a non-linear narrative, organized in fragments, that presents two main plots. It portrays the lives of Indian characters that belong to different generations and backgrounds. The narrative includes passages from the first decades of the 20th century that picture the British rule over India and some of the practices of colonialism introduced by the colonizers. The novel is primarily set during the 1980s. The setting alternates mostly between north-eastern India and New York, United States. Part of the narrative represents the struggle faced by those populations who demanded their own state after India's independence. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* also depicts immigrants, mostly illegal, trying to make a living in the United States. The narrative exposes the coloniality that persists in the lives and the imaginary of people from ex-colonies. The author gives prominence to the hopes, conflicts and difficulties faced by those who embark on diasporic journeys to work as undocumented immigrants in the global city. Desai also offers brief glimpses of the lives of affluent Indians studying and working in the U.S. These depictions reveal how social, cultural and ethnic differences mark experiences and access to global mobility, urban infrastructure, health care and job security. This thesis grounds its discussion on well-known critics and academic scholars from the fields of Postcolonial/Decolonial Studies and Cultural Studies, such as James Clifford (1994), Avtar Brah (1996), Saskia Sassen (1998), Aihwa Ong (1999), Walter D. Mignolo (2000, 2012), Arjun Appadurai (2003, 2006), Silviano Santiago (2004), Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009), Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida (2010, 2015) and Ruvani Ranasinha (2016).

Keywords: (Post)colonialism. Coloniality. Diasporas. Cosmopolitanisms. Kiran Desai.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In his Preface to the 2012 edition of *Local Histories/ Global Designs*: *Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Global Thinking* [2000], Walter D. Mignolo emphasizes that for five hundred years universal history had been told from the perspective of one local history, that of Western civilization. In contrast, the histories of other civilizations had been relegated to the past of world history and their localities. Thus, Western civilization had the epistemic privilege of narrating its local history as universal (MIGNOLO, 2012, p. ix).

Mignolo develops the thesis that there is no modernity without coloniality. That is, modernity hides the constant logic of coloniality, the imperial belief that the rest of the world shall submit to its view (MIGNOLO, 2012, p. x). According to the critic, the logic of coloniality, which is disguised with the rhetoric of modernity, is what moves the world. Global designs, responding to the logic of coloniality, clash with the local histories of migrants and nation-states, that are regulated, while free trade is liberated (MIGNOLO, 2012, p. xv-xvi). Hence, the scholar argues against the notion of absolute knowledge and favors a pluriversality of knowing, sensing and believing (MIGNOLO, 2012, p. xiv). Moreover, Mignolo proposes the restitution of colonized subaltern knowledges and diverse visions of life (MIGNOLO, 2012, p. xviii).

Like Walter Mignolo, but through fiction, Indian-born author Kiran Desai also helps to unveil the logic of coloniality that permeates modernity. Her novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, published in 2006, uncovers the clashes between global designs and local histories.

The impact of globalization upon contemporary nation states and their populations has deserved much attention from scholars. In *Globalization and its Discontents* (1998), Saskia Sassen addresses processes of economic globalization as concrete and situated in specific places. These strategic places are the cities (SASSEN, 1998, p. xix). According to Sassen, there is a new geography of centrality. It is a "geography of strategic places at the global scale, places bound to each other by the dynamics of economic globalization" (SASSEN, 1998, p. xx). She also considers a new politics of disadvantaged actors operating in this new geography. That is, Sassen underlines the economic participation of many disadvantaged workers in the global cities and a political system that valorizes only corporate actors as participants, thereby helping to perpetuate a politics of exclusion (SASSEN, 1998, p. xx).

Furthermore, many of these disadvantaged workers in global cities are women, immigrants, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans and oppressed minorities. As the Dutch-American sociologist points out, immigration is one of the constitutive processes of globalization today. Nonetheless, Sassen sees the global city as a strategic site for these actors to gain presence and emerge as subjects, even when they do not gain direct power (SASSEN, 1998, p. xxi). Conversely, Kiran Desai's perspective in *The Inheritance of Loss* is singularly disillusioned concerning immigrants' possibilities of gaining presence or agency: "It was horrible what happened to Indians abroad and nobody knew but other Indians abroad. It was a dirty little rodent secret" (DESAI, 2006, p. 138).

Sassen highlights a new dynamics of inequality as there is a sharp disparity between the overvalorized sectors of economy and the devalorized sectors (SASSEN, 1998, p. xxiv). She relates the devalorization of growing sectors of the economy with the growing presence of women, African Americans, and Third World immigrants in the urban workforce (SASSEN, 1998, p. xxiv). This concern is also present in Desai's work.

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is a remarkable novel that reflects geopolitical and social issues that are embedded in modern and contemporary movements. Desai's novel examines some of the effects of colonization in India, including the question of mass migrations and decolonization, some of the consequences of globalization in contemporary times and some of the practices of coloniality that still remain in the lives of those who are related to former colonies. Her novel may be read as an example of a transnational piece of literature that discusses pertinent topics that are inseparable from contemporary concerns.

Some scholars suggest the examination of India's modern history from the 18th century onwards. The Mughal Empire used to be the most powerful empire the Asian subcontinent had ever known. It unified the north and parts of India under its rule. In the first half of the 18th century, it started to weaken. New regional powers prospered; one of them was a joint stock company of English traders, among other powerful rival trading companies (METCALF, 2006).

The English East India Company created a profitable trade by selling Indian products in Europe. It was awarded free trade in Bengal by the emperor. The Company existed among several Indian country powers, but it started interfering with the political affairs of the Indian rulers. In the second half of the 18th century, it was subordinated to the British Government that appointed the first governor general of the company's Indian territories. During the first decades of the 19th century, there was extensive military activity that made the Company

master of India. In 1858 the East India Company was abolished and Crown Rule was instituted. The period of British rule as the Raj lasted from 1858 to 1947 (METCALF, 2006).

The British rule introduced the English language in India as part of a strategy of colonialism. It prepared clerks that would work for lower wages than the British; it also aimed to create a class of Indians who would be taught to appreciate British culture and opinion. This strategy would also help to increase the market for British goods. This education policy was a means to strengthen political authority in the country. Therefore, English became the lingua franca of the elites in India. The British also introduced a new system of administration, law and justice. It is important to mention that Indians were mostly excluded from all higher positions. Although British colonization came to an end in 1947, the effects of colonialism still remain in contemporary times. The traumatic dismemberment of India – officially known as The Partition – into separate countries caused the forced displacement of Indian citizens and separation of family members. Thus, the independence process brought about even more problems than those usually associated with the transformation of former colonies into nation states. Desai's novel exposes the persistence of colonial practices in the imaginary and daily lives of these nations and peoples.

My motivation to study Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is based on two main arguments. First, during my studies as an exchange undergraduate student at the University of Jaén, Spain (2014-2015), I had the opportunity of enrolling in a discipline that examined Postcolonial/ Emerging Literatures in English. That semester, we studied not only authors from Nigeria, South Africa, India and Australia, but also these countries' recent history and independence processes. While attending this course, I learned about Kiran Desai's career as a novelist, which encouraged me to start researching this particular author and her literary production.

Second, despite Kiran Desai's notable works, she is not well known in academic Brazilian communities. Her literary output has been mostly studied outside Brazil. However, there have been a few substantial studies about her novels written by Brazilians. For instance, in 2008, Eliana Lourenço de Lima Reis, professor at Federal University of Minas Gerais, published Wise men in trees: dialogues between Kiran Desai and Italo Calvino, an article comparing Desai's first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998), to Italo Calvino's *The Baron in the Trees*. In 2010, Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida, professor at Federal University of Minas Gerais, produced a chapter in Portuguese about Desai's second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*. In Cosmopolitas e subalternos: Kiran Desai e a poética do deslocamento nos espaços transnacionais, Almeida discusses the question of cosmopolitan

and subaltern characters and their displacement in transnational spaces as depicted in the novel. In 2012, Gracia Regina Gonçalves, professor at Federal University of Viçosa, published O cozinheiro, o ladrão, o juiz e sua neta: Memória e Poder em *O Legado da Perda* de Kiran Desai. In her article, Gonçalves studies the question of memory and power in Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* through culinary. In 2015, Renato de Oliveira Dering and Ederson Luis Silveira published a study in Portuguese, Identidades no leito de Procusto: entre silêncios e naturalizações, that proposes an analysis of the character Jemubhai Patel from Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* by focusing on identity and gender studies. Sandra Almeida, in 2015, published the book *Cartografias Contemporâneas: Espaço, Corpo, Escrita*, in which she develops those ideas related to Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* that she had first addressed in her 2010 chapter. In 2018, Thallita Mayra Soares Fernandes, in her thesis *Nações em cima do muro: deslocamentos na poética de Kiran Desai*, discusses characters' subalternity and the questions of nation and immigration in *The Inheritance of Loss*. Thus, this study of Desai's work aims at promoting even more fruitful analyses from academic Brazilian communities.

It is noteworthy that during the 1980s and 90s, a set of male authors, such as Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipul, Amitav Gosh and Rohinton Mistry, dominated Indian postcolonial fiction and the literary market. In her turn, Kiran Desai belongs to a group of 21st century diasporic South Asian female writers that challenges national assumptions and tries to make sense of a recent past in their literary texts. Ruvani Ranasinha, reader in Postcolonial Literature at King's College London, mentions Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri (India), Monica Ali (Bangladesh), Kamila Shamsie (Pakistan), among other female writers, whose hybrid narratives "locate and fuse family drama within wider political upheavals" (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 9). Therefore, I understand that Kiran Desai's works are relevant to the study of postcolonial and decolonial South Asian women writers in academia. Moreover, the analysis of her novels would broaden Brazilian academic research regarding contemporary literature written in English.

Although this study does not focus on autobiographical readings, it is useful to learn about the author's life and context. Kiran Desai (1971-) is a contemporary Indian-born writer whose novels have been acclaimed by critics and scholars. Daughter of Indian novelist Anita Desai, Kiran Desai was born in and brought up in India until she was 14. Later, Desai and her mother moved to England for a year before relocating to the United States. Kiran Desai attended high school in Amherst, Massachusetts. She studied Creative Writing at Bennington College (1993) (BENNINGTON COLLEGE, [201-]), received a M.A from Hollins

University (1994) (HOLLINS UNIVERSITY, [201-]) and earned a M.F.A degree in fiction from Columbia University (1999).

Desai is the author of two novels. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998), her first novel, is set in an Indian village and follows the life of a young man, Sampath Chawla, who wants to avoid responsibilities. He climbs a guava tree and is mistaken as a holy man. Desai's work gained recognition for the first time in 1997 when a short piece of the still unpublished manuscript from her first novel was included in *The New Yorker* magazine's Indian Fiction issue. Desai's debut was entitled The Sermon in the Guava Tree (DESAI, 1997). In the same year, Salman Rushdie's praises to Kiran Desai's writing and this same excerpt, now entitled Strange Happenings in the Guava Orchard, were published in the anthology *Mirrorwork: Fifty Years of Indian Writing (1947-1997)*[1]. Her first novel won a Betty Trask Award (1998), a literary prize awarded to a writer under the age of 35 for a first novel.

In the following decade, after publishing *The Inheritance of Loss* in 2006, the novelist became the youngest woman to win the Man Booker Prize (2006), a prestigious literary prize awarded to the best original novel written in English and published in the United Kingdom. In addition, the novel also won the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award in that same year, a literary prize from a professional association of American book review editors and critics. Later, in 2009, Kiran Desai was presented with the Columbia University Medal for Excellence. Desai was 35 years old when her second novel was published. After 14 years of publication, in 2020, the discussions and criticism present in *The Inheritance of Loss* remain current and relevant to be studied.

Desai's first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, was translated into fifteen languages (NARAYANAN, 2012, p. 125). Her second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, was translated into over forty languages. In Brazil, Desai's first novel was translated in 2000 by Ana Luísa Borges as *Rebuliço no Pomar das Goiabeiras* (DESAI, 2000). Her second novel was translated in 2007 by José Rubens Siqueira as *O Legado da Perda* (DESAI, 2007). Also in 2007, Kiran Desai participated in the International Literary Festival of Paraty (FLIP), in the city of Paraty, Brazil. Desai had already visited the city when she spent a few months in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, between 2001 and 2002. She considers that her visit to Brazil while writing *The Inheritance of Loss* was fundamental to her novel, because she could

[1] Ana Cristina Mendes (2013), researcher at the University of Lisbon, draws attention to the importance of Kiran Desai's recognition in *The New Yorker* and further compliments by Salman Rushdie as events that did promote her debut as a novelist in the literary market. The scholar also criticizes the commodification of postcolonial authors. See MENDES, Ana Cristina. *Salman Rushdie in the Cultural Marketplace*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

experience the feeling of living in a place where she did not speak the language (STRECKER, 2007). According to Brazilian journalist Marcos Strecker, who interviewed Kiran Desai a few times, the author lived in Rio de Janeiro for six months. Desai believes that living in Brazil while writing *The Inheritance of Loss* helped broaden her horizons as she could observe the common experiences of globalization, immigration and unequal power between nations such as India and Brazil (STRECKER, 2006).

Regarding her most recent accomplishments, Desai has been a visiting writer in several institutions. The novelist was a Distinguished Visiting Creative Writer at the American University in Cairo, Egypt, in 2010 (JOHN SIMON GUGGENHEIM FOUNDATION, [2013?]). She was also the recipient of a 2013-2014 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship to work on her new novel, the uncompleted *The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny*, at the American Academy in Berlin (AMERICAN ACADEMY, [2013?]). Later, in 2018, Kiran Desai was a Writer-in-Residence at Vassar College (VASSAR COLLEGE, 2018).

Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is a non-linear narrative, organized in fragments, that presents two main plots. It portrays the lives of Indian characters that belong to different generations and backgrounds, including passages from the first decades of the 20th century in India and England. It also focuses on immigrants, mostly illegal, trying to make a living in the United States. The narrative's setting alternates mostly between Kalimpong, in the state of West Bengal, north-eastern India, near the Himalayas, and the busy restaurants of New York, United States, during the 80s. Kiran Desai recognizes that part of her family's history of diasporic movements and her personal background as an English-speaking Indian have influenced the composition of her second novel (SMITH, 2006).

Desai, a diasporic subject herself that belongs to a more privileged group, has lived in the United States since her teenage years. However, she retains her Indian citizenship and visits India regularly. In an interview, she explains that she does not want to surrender her Indian citizenship as she sees through the perspective of being Indian. Regarding her second novel, Desai justifies the choice of setting because her novel portrays the India she knew when she left the country during the 80s: "I find myself at a disadvantage because India has changed, moved on. I go every year, yet it belongs to Indian authors living in India. The subject belongs to them. So the only way I could put this book together was to go back to the India of the 1980s, when I left" (BARTON, 2006). It is notable that her fiction moves away from national paradigms towards a focus on interrelated nation-states (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 14).

The novel is constructed with carefully crafted details and its subplots are enriched with plenty of characters. Part of the novel is set in the hill station of Kalimpong, which is mostly known for its tourist appeal as well as its flower and tea production. It is where the retired and bitter Indian judge Jemubhai Patel lives together with his orphaned teenage granddaughter, Sai, in a crumbling mansion, named Cho Oyu. In this estate, the family has the assistance of their only servant, Panna Lal — usually referred plainly as "cook".

It is important to highlight that Panna Lal started working as Jemubhai's servant when he was a teenager. Enduring a life full of difficulties, humiliations and poverty, he faithfully accompanies his master and does his best to provide him with the dishes and do the tasks he demands. Observing the lack of opportunities in the region, the cook urges his son to travel to a First World country with the promise of achieving success and wealth. Panna Lal's son, Biju, is the young man who leaves India in order to work as a waiter or cook in New York.

In this thesis, the usage of terms such as "First World" and "Third World" is maintained for analytical purposes, in spite of their problematic semantic scope. Kiran Desai uses this terminology in The *Inheritance of Loss* that is set in the 1980s. The concept "First World" emerged during the 1960s and the Cold War, when the world's nations were divided along ideological lines. It was traditionally used to describe the group of nations whose economy was based on capitalism. These nations usually had some form of democracy. Countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, the Scandinavian nations, the Mediterranean countries and Australia were considered in the First World category. Later, "First World" indicated highly developed nations, characterized by high income and industrialization, and higher levels of equality of opportunities and democratic rights (NAYAR, 2015, p. 81). The socialist countries of the former Soviet Union and others were regarded as the "Second World". The term "Third World" was used to collectively describe nations in Asia, Africa and South America. Some scholars believe this classification positions Asian, African and South American nations as later nations. "Third World" can be also seen as a legacy of colonial discourse, because it positions those nations as a stereotype of poverty, disease, corruption, suffering, primitivism and exploitation (NAYAR, 2015, p. 156-157). The terms "Global North" and "Global South" are also used in this thesis as they are "an attempt to correct the use of other economically based terms, such as First World and Third World and developed world and developing world" (DEL CASINO, 2009, p. 26). "Global North" and "Global South" suggest a "more open definition of global difference, one based in social relations and cultural differences *and* political and economic disparity" (DEL CASINO, 2009, p. 26, emphasis by the author). However, they may generalize the complexity

found within the Global North and Global South. Both terminologies are not perfect, but they are ways of discussing global differences and both are present in this thesis.

While discussing migration, in an article entitled Migrations, Diasporas, and Borders, Susan Stanford Friedman draws attention to the fact that migrations and diasporas are not new as they have shaped human cultures since immemorial times (FRIEDMAN, 2007, p. 260). Her point is that in the contemporary phase of globalization, the degrees of interconnectedness have been intensified by the technologies of travel, information and media along with massive movements of people as refugees and migrants. Hence, as migration involves multiples moves from place to place, it blurs the boundaries between home and elsewhere (FRIEDMAN, 2007, p. 261). As an illegal employee in different restaurants during the 80s, Biju's stay in New York City is marked by long working hours, exploitation and prejudice. In the cosmopolis, Biju starts to learn about the cruel reality faced by immigrants. He also gets in contact with many fellows who, just like him, describe their diasporic journeys, their relation to their homeland, their expectations and experiences as illegal workers in the United States.

It is important to highlight that Kiran Desai also portrays women's difficult situation in India in *The Inheritance of Loss*. For instance, Jemubhai's wife, Nimi Patel, was mistreated and punished by her husband several times. The husband disliked his wife and her ways. Moreover, Nimi was seen in a Nehru's welcoming committee, which was an embarrassment to Jemubhai because he was a civil servant to the British. His wife did not know that she was participating in a political event, but Jemubhai did not consider this fact. Consequently, Jemubhai sent Nimi back to her family. She had to depend on her relatives' assistance to survive. Even when Nimi discovered she was pregnant with a baby, her husband did not want her back (DESAI, 2006, p. 302-305). Moreover, the couple's daughter was sent to a convent boarding school in order not to bother the father, who did not want to see his own child. Although these passages expose relevant questions regarding gender issues and the unequal treatment received by women in the Indian society as depicted by Desai, these concerns are beyond the scope of the present thesis.

As Jemubhai's wife, India is mistreated and abused by England during the colonial period and the Crown rule over the country. The effects of colonization and the constant logic of coloniality still inflict pain in India in contemporary times. Hence, this thesis proposes a study of the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* through three perspectives. First, it aims at exploring some of the practices of colonialism and coloniality depicted in the novel, along with substantial consequences of globalization portrayed by Desai. Second, by focusing

primarily on the migrant characters, this study also proposes to investigate the heterogeneity of diasporas, the question of home and (non)belonging in the lives of diasporic characters. Third, this thesis addresses the concern with migrant labor and marginality along with the matter of emerging cosmopolitanisms in Desai's novel. Although Desai crafts a fictional world that is inhabited by characters from different backgrounds and nationalities, this thesis intends to focus its analysis on the less privileged ones that are part of an ongoing cycle of inequality, poverty and loss.

The first chapter, Investigating (post)colonialism, coloniality and globalization, proposes to discuss some of the practices of colonialism and coloniality portrayed in the novel, along with some of the consequences of globalization present in *The Inheritance of Loss*. Homi Bhabha (1994), Gauri Viswanathan (1995), Stuart Hall (1996), Elleke Boehmer (2005), Aníbal Quijano (2007), Walter D. Mignolo (2012), Robert J. C. Young (2015) are part of the theoretical framework that supports the chapter.

The second chapter, Mapping diasporas, home and (non)belonging, aims at investigating diasporas, the question of home, and the concern with (non)belonging and displacement in Kiran Desai's novel, with a particular focus on underprivileged characters. In order to support this research, this chapter grounds its discussion on well-known critics and academic scholars from the fields of Postcolonial/Decolonial Studies and Cultural Studies, such as James Clifford (1994), Avtar Brah (1996), Saskia Sassen (1998), Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (2003), Arjun Appadurai (2003), Anh Hua (2005), Susan Stanford Friedman (2007, 2004), Steven Vertovec (2007) and Walter D. Mignolo (2012).

The third chapter, Revisiting cosmopolitanisms, diasporic marginality and migrant labor, intends to study the meanings of cosmopolitanisms and the representations of migrant labor and diasporic marginality in Desai's novel, with a special focus on global cities. This discussion is grounded on the theoretical contributions of Bruce Robbins (1998), Kwame Anthony Appiah (1998), Aihwa Ong (1999), Walter D. Mignolo (2000), Renato Cordeiro Gomes (2004, 1999), Silviano Santiago (2004) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009), who rethink cosmopolitanisms. In addition, Saskia Sassen (1998) and Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida (2015) contribute to the examination of the geographies of centrality and marginality in global cities. Moreover, Stuart Hall (1992), Arjun Appadurai (2006) and Zygmunt Bauman (2016) consider cultural identities and the fear, including the fear of minorities that is related to immigrants' marginality.

1 INVESTIGATING (POST)COLONIALISM, COLONIALITY AND GLOBALIZATION

In a broader perspective, the history of the world amounts to the formation and reformation of empires, which appear, expand and contract. As political stability is minimal, the organization of the world whether as empires, nations or unions has been changing constantly through the last five centuries. In *Empire, Colony, Postcolony* (2015), Robert J. C. Young, professor of English at New York University, explains some of the changes that have occurred in the world's political and geographical division in the last centuries. The scholar highlights that most of the territories that are considered countries today have been colonies of some kind in modern times (YOUNG, 2015, p. 4). Few countries, such as Britain, China, France, Russia, Turkey and Japan were not under colonial rule, because they were empires. Young stresses that the end of European empires produced a new global political formation: the world of nation-states as we know it. In this environment, the cultural theorist agrees that the postcolonial emerged as a way to address the injustices of imperial rule and its global consequences (YOUNG, 2015, p. 6).

The limits and what should be included in the frame of the "post-colonial" have been a matter of discussion among theorists. Stuart Hall, in his essay When Was "The Post-colonial"? Thinking at the limit, published in 1996, investigates some of the controversies regarding the post-colonial. Hall understands that the concept may help scholars to describe or characterize the shift in global relations which marks the transition from the age of Empires to the post-independence or post-decolonization moment (HALL, 1996, p. 246). The term post-colonial draws attention to the ways in which colonization was inscribed within both the imperial metropolis and the cultures of the colonized inhabitants. It enables re-readings of the binary form in which the colonial encounter has been represented for so long and places colonization as a transcultural global process (HALL, 1996, p. 246-247).

In his essay, Hall does not consider the post-colonial as a form of periodization. To him, "the disengagement from the colonizing process" has been a long affair (HALL, 1996, p. 247) and the post-colonial did not reverse the old colonial relations simultaneously. In her turn, Elleke Boehmer, South-African-born scholar and Professor of World Literature in English at the University of Oxford, discusses the difference between the terms "post-colonial" and "postcoloniality". She considers the hyphenated term "post-colonial" as a period term that designates the post-Second World War era (BOEHMER, 2005, p. 3), while

"postcoloniality" is conceived as a "condition in which colonized peoples seek to take their place, forcibly or otherwise, as historical agents in an increasingly globalized world" (BOEHMER, 2005, p. 3). In this thesis, the term postcolonial will be used to refer to the period after the Second World War, the shift in global relations which marks the transition from the age of Empires to the post-independence, and the conditions influencing citizens from ex-colonies to review societies' configurations and analyze them from different perspectives.

Regarding literature in this context, Elleke Boehmer does not consider postcolonial literature only as writing practices that came after the imperial period, but as forms of critically examining the colonial relationship and resisting colonialist perspectives. The scholar makes clear that postcolonial literature should not be diametrically opposed to colonial literature. That is, the dichotomy which considers postcolonial literature as subversive and colonial literature as single-voiced brings limitations to the analysis of writing practices. The researcher highlights that in many countries initiatives towards self-affirmation first began to emerge before formal independence. Therefore, many voices that demanded their place through writing are, strictly speaking, part of colonial literature (BOEHMER, 2005, p. 4-5).

Writing developed by women, Indigenous peoples and migrant or diasporic writers is considered as increasingly representative of postcolonial writing in the last decades. Regarding postcolonial women's writing, Elleke Boehmer argues that its crucial structural feature is its mosaic or composite quality: "the intermingling of forms derived from indigenous, nationalist, and European literary traditions. Coming from very different cultural contexts themselves, writers emphasize the need for a lively heterogeneity of styles and speaking positions in their work" (BOEHMER, 2005, p. 219).

Likewise, migrant literature has been considered displaced, multilingual, and, simultaneously, conversant with the cultural codes of the West. It is "within Europe/America though not fully *of* Europe/America" (BOEHMER, 2005, p. 230, emphasis by the author). Homi Bhabha, Indian-born professor of the Humanities at Harvard University, suggests in *The Location of Culture* (1994) that the transnational histories of migrants, the colonized or political refugees, as border conditions, may be the terrains of world literature in postmodern age (BHABHA, 1994, p. 12). The scholar acknowledges that in the contemporary world the concept of homogeneous national cultures is in a process of redefinition, because there is the awareness of dissonant histories and voices (BHABHA, 1994, p. 5). Some of these postcolonial migrant literatures are marked by disillusionment as post-independence nations

have been plagued by neo-colonial ills, such as economic disorders, government corruption, the maintenance of power hierarchies and the constant influence of the values of former colonizers (BOEHMER, 2005, p. 230-231).

During the period from 1500 to 2000, one local history built itself as the point of arrival of human history. According to Walter D. Mignolo, in his *Local Histories/ Global Designs*: *Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Global Thinking* (2012), Western civilization had relegated the histories of other civilizations to the past of world history and to their localities. Therefore, Western civilization managed to narrate its own local history as a universal history (MIGNOLO, 2012, p. ix-x). Modernity, with its rhetoric of salvation and progress, has hidden the logic of coloniality that moves the world. Hence, modernity promoted the colonization of time and space. During Renaissance, the invention of the Middle Ages and antiquity became an early plan for the European idea of a universal historical chronology, while the conquest and colonization of the New World became a design for the European organization of space (MIGNOLO, 2012, p. xiii). Through modernity, Western civilization started narrating its history as universal.

In contemporary times, modernity and its global designs continue to promote a Western image of progress and development as the trade of money and commodities are facilitated. These global designs clash with the histories of migrants and nation-states, that are regulated and pressured by Western modernity (MIGNOLO, 2012, p. xv). Mignolo considers that the colonial difference is the physical as well as the imaginary location where the coloniality of power is enacted. In this space, there is the confrontation between two kinds of local histories: histories that implement global designs and those that have to accommodate themselves to dominant Western local histories (MIGNOLO, 2012, p. xxv). Mignolo's ideas are based on the notion of "coloniality of power" developed by Aníbal Quijano. Walter Mignolo clarifies that his understanding of coloniality of power "presupposes the colonial difference as its condition of possibility and as the legitimacy for the subalternization of knowledges and the subjugation of people" (MIGNOLO, 2012, p. 16). Therefore, the space of colonial difference, where local histories clash, is also where coloniality of power is executed. This space promotes the classification of the planet population in relation to the dominant European culture. Coloniality of power is responsible for colonizing the imaginary of non-European populations and making them believe that their cultures are inferior to dominant Western culture. Their knowledges are seen as subaltern and unwanted in relation to "universal" Western knowledges and values. Quijano and Mignolo aim at decolonizing the imperial idea of universal history and legitimizing plural knowledges and histories. Like these

scholars, but through fiction, Kiran Desai also helps to disclose the logic of coloniality that permeates modernity. As a diasporic woman writer, she is a representative of postcolonial writing that portrays in her work the disillusionment, loss and distress brought by colonialism and neo-colonial practices.

Kiran Desai is an example of a contemporary postcolonial immigrant writer that discusses and critically examines concerns such as some of the practices of colonialism in India, some of the effects of colonization, some of the consequences of globalization/ modernity and the ways in which coloniality still remains in the lives of people from former colonies. This chapter aims at investigating how these pertinent issues are present in Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, first published in 2006.

The narrative unfolds during the 1980's, but Kiran Desai also makes use of flashbacks to portray India and England during the first half of the 20th century. The story of Jemubhai Popatlal Patel is told mostly through the use of this strategy. According to the narrator, the retired Indian judge was born in the outskirts of the town of Piphit in 1919. He first left his hometown at the age of twenty to study in Cambridge, England (DESAI, 2006, p. 35). During his youth, Jemubhai lived under British colonial rule in India.

The times and temporalities of colonization varied dramatically. Some colonies were under the control of one European state; others suffered through changes of rulers (YOUNG, 2015, p. 27). The majority of modern European colonies were formed according to the Roman political model, which involved "the founding of a settlement in a separate, usually overseas, locality which sought to expand the territory and reduplicate or renew the culture of the parent country […] while retaining allegiance to it and submitting to its overall political control" (YOUNG, 2015, p. 29). These settlements were originally the enterprise of groups, corporations, joint-stock companies, rather than initiated directly by states. For instance, the East India Company started with a trading outpost which expanded to control the whole of India. Robert Young understands that colonies as India in which trade, resource extraction or port facilities were primary concerns can be considered as exploitation colonies. Furthermore, Europeans rarely settled there and most returned to their places of origin (YOUNG, 2015, p. 30). In his turn, Stuart Hall places colonization as direct colonial occupation and rule, including the whole process of expansion, exploration, conquest, colonization and imperial hegemonisation by Western capitalist modernity after 1492 (HALL, 1996, p. 249).

Some of the effects of colonization in India are explored in Desai's novel. For instance, the narrator describes the town of Piphit as ageless before the changes brought by colonial rule:

> a temple stood at its heart, and by its side, a several-legged banyan tree; in its pillared shade, white-bearded men regurgitated their memories; cows mooed *oo aaw*, *oo aaw*; women walked through the cotton fields to collect water at the mud-muddled river, a slow river, practically asleep (DESAI, 2006, p. 57, emphasis by the author).

The construction of railways helped to modify the town's aspect. Broad homes and a courthouse with a clock tower were built. Hindus, Christians, Muslins, clerks and army officials were some of the characters that would move through the town, now organized according to the clock that changed the meaning of time to that society (DESAI, 2006, p. 57). The introduction of railways in India was first conceived by the colonizers, who saw this as a beneficial strategy to the commerce, the government and military control of the country. In Piphit, the train was mainly used to transport cotton from the interior to the docks in the coast of India. But later, it would also be helpful to some travelers, such as Jemubhai Patel.

It is noteworthy that when European colonization began, China and India were the primary manufacturing countries in the world. As Professor Robert Carson Allen points out, in 1750 most of the world's manufacturing took place in China, responsible for 33% of the world total manufacturing shares, and in the Indian subcontinent, which represented 25% of the total (ALLEN, 2011, p. 6). These countries produced handcrafted goods. The European industrial revolution, by using power-driven machines, transformed this configuration by discouraging competition between the colony and the industrial metropolis. By 1913, the Chinese and Indian shares of world manufacturing had dropped to 4% and 1% respectively (ALLEN, 2011, p. 8). In India, established manufacturing industries were destroyed. The importation of cheap European manufactured goods, such as English printed cloth to India, resulted in the de-industrialization of colonies which could not compete with the metropolis (YOUNG, 2015, p. 38). Consequently, Asian labor force was re-allocated into agriculture and these countries became exporters of primary products, such as wheat, cotton and rice (ALLEN, 2011, p. 55). In *The Inheritance of Loss*, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the town of Piphit used to sell primary goods, such as cotton, to the British. The economy of India changed because the colony could not compete with the metropolis' mechanized industries.

Eurocentered colonialism was a process that implied a violent concentration of the world's resources for the benefit of a small European minority. Although the research by Peruvian scholar Aníbal Quijano concentrates on Latin America, his considerations are helpful to understand European colonization as a whole. He explains that colonialism was a

product of a systematic repression of ideas, beliefs, symbols and of the expropriation from the colonized knowledges. These practices were followed by the imposition of the rulers' own patterns of production and expression of knowledge. The colonizers taught some of the dominated in order to assimilate them into their own power institutions. Quijano emphasizes that the "European culture was made seductive: it gave access to power" (QUIJANO, 2007, p. 169). In India, English language, culture and literature were also made seductive to inhabitants from the colony through a colonialist process of offering education to the elites.

In the early days of administration in India and other colonies, colonizers searched for non-European texts that would help them govern. The British consulted a range of specialists to learn about the colony's culture, religions and languages in order to legitimize colonial rule in an indigenous idiom. The classical and vernacular Indian languages were archived in grammars, dictionaries and guidebooks (BOEHMER, 2005, p. 19-20). Later, the study of English literature, aimed at the elites, was advocated throughout the British Empire as "a means of inculcating a sense of imperial loyalty in the colonized" (BOEHMER, 2005, p. 49).

In the 19th century, the study of English as a privileged academic subject was confirmed by its inclusion in the syllabuses of prestigious universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge. It was an attempt to replace the Classics at the heart of humanistic studies. This historical moment also contributed to the colonial form of imperialism, because the study and valorization of the English language and literature was intertwined to the growth of the British Empire. The English language was used both as propaganda and a means of educating elite citizens in the colonies by naturalizing British constructed values of civilization and humanity (ASHCROFT; GRIFFITHS; TIFFIN, 2002, p. 2-3).

During imperial rule, the question of providing education to inhabitants from British India was greatly discussed among the Parliament. In the Charter Act of 1813, the British Parliament ended the British East India Company commercial monopoly, except for the tea trade. In the same document, the Parliament required the Company to accept the responsibility for the education of Indian people, by promoting the study of Indian literature and the knowledge of western sciences (VISWANATHAN, 1995, p. 431-432). By the early 1820s, some administrators within the East India Company were questioning if the teaching of Oriental subjects was actually useful for Indian students. During this period, private institutions had begun to teach western knowledge in English language (VISWANATHAN, 1995, p. 433). There was a substantial debate whether Indians should be educated in English.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, a British politician, advocated that students should be taught Western subjects, with English as the language of instruction. Macaulay's *Minute on*

Indian Education, published on 2nd February, 1835, exalted the English language and its literature in comparison to other languages, which were seen as inferior by him. He insisted that: "We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate" (MACAULAY, 1995, p. 428) and "the English tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects" (MACAULAY, 1995, p. 429). The politician highlighted that English was the language spoken by the ruling class in India. Macaulay defended that the British Empire should "form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (MACAULAY, 1995, p. 430). Therefore, Macaulay advised the formation of a class of Anglicized Indians that would later serve as auxiliaries to the British who ruled the country.

Thomas Macaulay's memorandum was influential to the English Education Act of 1835 which supported establishments teaching a Western curriculum, using English as language of instruction. The Act also promoted English as the language of administration and of the higher law courts in India. Some scholars relate the study of English literature to the process of sociopolitical control in colonial India. According to Gauri Viswanathan, Indian-born professor and director of the South Asia Institute at Columbia University, the early British Indian curriculum in English was devoted to language studies. Initially, English was taught alongside Oriental studies. However, there was an attempt to establish separate colleges for its study. When English was taught within the same college, the course was kept separate from the course of Oriental studies (Persian, Arabic or Sanskrit). Simultaneously, the introduction of English literature increased British involvement in Indian education and enforced noninterference in religion (VISWANATHAN, 1995, p. 431-433).

English literary education in British India aimed at the shaping of character, the development of the aesthetic sense and ethical thinking according to British cultural standards. Gauri Viswanathan emphasizes that the strategy of locating authority in English literature aimed at erasing a history of colonialist expropriation, material exploitation, and class and race oppression:

> Making the Englishman known to the natives through the products of his mental labour served a valuable purpose in that it removed him from the plane of ongoing colonialist activity—of commercial operations, military expansion, administration of territories—and de-actualized and diffused his material presence in the process (VISWANATHAN, 1995, p. 436).

Therefore, the teaching of English language and literature to Indian inhabitants was a procedure that promoted the assimilation of British cultural ideas and the control over the population. It helped producing a class of Anglicized Indians who would work for the empire and teach other inhabitants about the considered prestigious knowledge held by those who spoke English. It was a core colonial strategy in enforcing the idea that British culture was more advanced and powerful than Indian culture and knowledge, while trying to hide the substantial disadvantages and exploitation brought by British rule in India.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Jemubhai was born to a family of peasant caste. His father procured false witnesses to appear in court, such as the desperate, the poor or scoundrels, who would be rehearsed by Jemubhai's father. His business succeeded and when his only son was born, the father decided to provide Jemubhai with a good education (DESAI, 2006, p. 56-57). By corrupting the path of justice through his business, the father was able to afford sending his son to a mission school, the Bishop Cotton School. His sisters were deprived in order to ensure that he got the best of everything: "Stomach full of cream, mind full of study, camphor hung in a tiny bag about his neck to divert illness; the entire package was prayed over and thumb-printed red and yellow with *tika* marks. He was taken to school on the back of his father's bicycle" (DESAI, 2006, p. 58, emphasis by the author). In the entrance of the school building, there was a portrait of Queen Victoria, which impressed Jemubhai when he thought how powerful she was. The boy was taught according to the British English curriculum in India. His colonial education and ready intelligence astounded his family (DESAI, 2006, p. 58). The British colonialist strategy to provide an education to inhabitants from the colonies based on English language and culture made Indians believe that this knowledge would make them as successful as the British.

In a conversation with Jemubhai's father, the principal of the school suggested that the fourteen-age boy take an examination that would enable him to find employment in the courts of subordinate magistrates. The father dreamed beyond:

> Well, if he could do that, he could do more. He could be the judge himself, couldn't he? His son might, *might, could!* occupy the seat faced by the father, proud disrupter of the system, lowest in the hierarchy of the court. He might be a district commissioner or a high court judge. He might wear a silly white wig atop a dark face in the burning heat of summer and bring down his hammer on those phony rigged cases. Father below, son above, they'd be in charge of justice, complete (DESAI, 2006, p. 59, emphasis by the author).

The father shared his dream with the son and their fantasies took flight. In that period, the recommended number of Indians working in the Indian Civil Service (ICS) was fifty

percent. However, the quota wasn't close to being filled (DESAI, 2006, p. 59). The British government wanted to train Indian citizens to work for the Crown in Colonial India according to Western standards. Jemubhai attended college in India on a scholarship and was then accepted at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge — founded in 1869 specifically to broaden access to the University of Cambridge. When the young man returned, member of the ICS, a few years later, he was put to work in a far district, in the state of Uttar Pradesh (DESAI, 2006, p. 60).

Jemubhai's family, the Patels, had been raising money to send their son to England, but there wasn't money enough as much as the father worked. The young man would be the first boy from their community to go to an English university. His journey to Cambridge was made possible because his family accepted a generous dowry bid from a successful businessman named Bomanbhai Patel[2]. Jemubhai got married to one of Bomanbhai's daughters, Bela. She was six years younger than Jemubhai and had her name changed to Nimi Patel after marriage (DESAI, 2006, p. 89-91). Thus, Jemubhai's colonial studies were supported by illegal business and an arranged marriage. Although gender issues are beyond the scope of the present research, it is worth signaling that coloniality of power, to use Aníbal Quijano's term, often intersects with coloniality of gender[3]. For instance, Jemubhai's sisters are deprived of education and even food so that their brother may have a better life. Even though it is thanks to the money of Bela's father that Jemubhai can go to England, Jemubhai shows no gratitude. He is unrelentingly cruel to his wife. What's more, he changes her name – as he had his name changed by his British landlady – , a strategy used for suppression of identity and control of the Other.

Robert Young points out that empires such as Britain, Holland and the Ottoman Empire would use an imperial language for administration and for the legal system, but would allow the diverse cultures of the empire to remain in place, instead of promoting a complete

[2] Patel is one of the most common Indian surnames, predominantly in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka. It was considered as a status name, from an official title meaning "village headman". It is also one of the most common Indian surnames in Britain (HANKS; COATES; MCCLURE, 2016, p. 2053). In Kiran Desai's novel, Bomanbhai Patel is not identified as Jemubhai's relative.

[3] Argentinian-born feminist philosopher María Lugones places together two frameworks of analysis, studies on gender, race and colonization and the theory of coloniality of power developed by Aníbal Quijano, to study the "colonial/modern gender system". According to Lugones, colonization was a process that imposed not only racial inferiorization, but also gender subordination. Based on different studies by Oyéronké Oyewùmí and Paula Gunn Allen, María Lugones explains that modern/colonial gender relations were constructed and imposed by colonizers, just as the idea of race was created by them. The intersection between coloniality of power and gender enables new readings of colonial and post-colonial relations and a differential construction of gender along racial lines (LUGONES, 2008).

project of assimilation (YOUNG, 2015, p. 21). He remarks that the principle of cultural respect seems liberal and enlightened. However, it could also be an assumption of a fundamental difference between:

> the civilized and the savage, of racial inferiority, of the inherent inadequacy of other peoples, who would never be in a position to be equal and who were therefore not even worth educating beyond the most basic level. It was easy in this situation to conflate race with class assumptions, for the British also assumed that their own lower classes, as well as those of the empire, were not up to being educated, or argued that giving them knowledge would be dangerous for political stability (YOUNG, 2015, p. 22).

Therefore, the colonizers did not agree in educating the masses, but in maintaining their cultures and religious values. Only the elite citizens would have the opportunity of being educated according to the colonizers' standards in order to impart loyalty to the British and prepare them to work for the Crown. However, even those upper-class citizens were not considered equals to British citizens.

Desai's novel highlights that during British rule, colonial practices were present everywhere in India. Before departing Piphit, Jemubhai and his father waited on the train platform between benches labeled "Indians Only" and "Europeans Only" (DESAI, 2006, p. 36). Even if the Crown provided an English education for Indian elites, it was highlighted that they were not equals to Europeans. Thus, segregation also existed in higher social classes.

Colonial influence already permeated Jemubhai's ideas and behavior before traveling abroad. Thinking about Jemubhai's ship voyage, his mother prepared him a "decorated coconut to be tossed as an offering into the waves, so his journey might be blessed by the gods" (DESAI, 2006, p. 36). Nonetheless, he felt ashamed of this tradition and decided not to throw the coconut. The future judge also felt humiliated in front of his cabinmate because his mother prepared him a snack that was smelly by the time Jemubhai decided to take a look at it: "The cabinmate's nose twitched at Jemu's lump of pickle wrapped in a bundle of puris; onions, green chilies, and salt in a twist of newspaper; a banana that in the course of the journey had been slain by heat" (DESAI, 2006, p. 37). Instead of being grateful because his mother had prepared him something to eat during the journey, Jemubhai felt inferior as he imagined that his mother prepared the snack in case he lacked the courage to go to the ship's dining salon, given that he could not eat with knife and fork (DESAI, 2006, p. 38). Jemubhai saw Indian traditions and manners as inferior to the Western code of behavior.

When he arrived in Cambridge, in 1939, searching for a room to rent, Jemubhai suffered a lot of prejudice. Many English landlords did not open their doors to talk to him or

said that their lodgings were already full. After visiting twenty-two homes, he arrived at Mrs. Rice doorstep. She did not want him as a tenant, but she was concerned that her house was too far from the university to receive more attention from lodgers. The English woman offered him a room, a small breakfast every day and decided to call him James (DESAI, 2006, p. 38-39).

At the university, Jemubhai found fertile soil to his loneliness. He worked at least twelve hours a day and retreated into a solitude that made him similar to a shadow. He spoke to nobody for days. The young man felt prejudice as elderly ladies changed places when he sat next to them on the bus, and in occasions in which girls said he stank of curry (DESAI, 2006, p. 39). As a consequence, the narrator says that Jemubhai grew stranger to himself: he found his own skin odd-colored, his accent seemed peculiar, he washed obsessively every morning and forgot how to laugh. Feeling barely human, the young immigrant wanted to appear anonymous in the crowd (DESAI, 2006, p. 40). He assimilated the values from the colonizers' culture and felt as a person of lesser rank.

Jemubhai found a shelter in the university's library. He stayed there all day long studying and returned to his rented room to work late into the night reading the assigned contents to his examination: *Indian Criminal Procedure*, the *Penal Code* and the *Evidence Act*, for instance. After three years, he had his Probation Finals, in June 1942. The twelve examiners asked questions which he wasn't prepared to answer, such as how a steam train worked and if he could describe the burial customs of the ancient Chinese. Last, Jemubhai was asked who his favorite writer was. After Jemubhai's answered "Sir Walter Scott", a professor asked him to recite a poem by the Scottish novelist and poet. Jemubhai's answer made them chuckle as his recitation still had the rhythm of Gujarati, because he had not practiced the Received Pronunciation as he barely spoke for years while in Cambridge (DESAI, 2006, p. 111-113). Therefore, Jemubhai felt inferior and humiliated as a foreigner.

Through flashbacks, the elder Jemubhai remembers more occasions in which prejudice against ethnicity marked his stay in England. His memory brings back a situation in which a group of English children mocked and threw stones at him in the street:

> Six little boys at a bus stop. 'Why is the Chinaman yellow? He pees against the wind, HA HA. Why is the Indian brown? He shits upside down, HA HA HA.' Taunting him in the street, throwing stones, jeering, making monkey faces. How strange it was: he had feared children, been scared of these human beings half his size (DESAI, 2006, p. 208-209).

Jemubhai lived even worse experiences in which he did not try to fight back. He saw another young Indian man being beaten and he did not call for help or intervene in the situation:

> Another Indian, a boy he didn't know, but no doubt someone just like himself, just like Bose, was being kicked and beaten behind the pub at the corner. One of the boy's attackers had unzipped his pants and was pissing on him, surrounded by a crowd of jeering red-faced men. And the future judge, walking by, on his way home with a pork pie for his dinner—what had he done? He hadn't said anything. He hadn't done anything. He hadn't called for help. He'd turned and fled, run up to his rented room and sat there (DESAI, 2006, p. 209).

During this time, he did not feel welcome in England and retreated into solitude. The narrator comments that Jemubhai did not experience the culture he admired so much because he avoided contact with others:

> He saw nothing of the English countryside, missed the beauty of carved colleges and churches painted with gold leaf and angels, didn't hear the choir boys with the voices of girls, and didn't see the green river trembling with replications of the gardens that segued one into the other or the swans that sailed butterflied to their reflections (DESAI, 2006, p. 40).

The results of the examination made him cry for three days. He received the lowest qualifying mark in the oral examination, but his written test brought up his score. Still he was not included in the list for admission in the ICS. After a supplementary list was organized in accordance with attempts to Indianize the service, Jemubhai's name was listed at the bottom of the page. The future judge was accepted and had a probation period of two years (DESAI, 2006, p. 117-118).

Regarding the colonial discourse, Bhabha highlights the importance of the concept of "fixity" in the ideological construction of otherness (BHABHA, 1994, p. 66). The objective of this discourse is to construct the colonized as "a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (BHABHA, 1994, p. 70). At the same time, the colonized is seen as "other" and yet knowable and visible. In Desai's novel, Jemubhai was seen as "other" by English people; he was mocked by them and discriminated against because of his race and ethnicity. Even when he tried to mingle with other people in Cambridge, by talking in English and behaving according to western social manners, he suffered prejudice.

Homi Bhabha also points out mimicry as one of the strategies of colonial power and knowledge. Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, "as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (BHABHA, 1994, p. 86). Therefore, in

colonial mimicry, members of a colonized society imitate the culture of the colonizers in the hope of having more opportunities or power. However, mimicry may also be an essential tool to resist colonialism. Boehmer stresses that once-colonized writers have used the novel, the forms of European poetry, the imitation of dominant symbols in literature and songs by "adopting and adapting the white man's tongue, they learned to speak up for themselves" (BOEHMER, 2005, p. 162). Writing in colonial times, they used the colonizers' language to represent their marginalized views of the world. While, in *The Inheritance of Loss*, the young Jemubhai did not use mimicry to resist colonialism, assimilating the culture of the colonizer even in face of prejudice. Kiran Desai, as a postcolonial writer, creates a literary text that critically portrays the colonialist mindset that was perpetuated by many English and Anglicized Indian inhabitants during imperial rule.

When considering diaspora, we must question how diasporic subjects relate to "home" and the nature of their belongingness or displacement. Jamaican-born cultural theorist Stuart Hall, in his essay Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad, published in 1999, presents some examples from Caribbean immigrants that maintain a strong sense of belonging to their country of origin. Still the scholar observes that these trends are not homogeneous as identities become multiple in the diaspora and people can relate in different ways to their places of origin. For instance, some immigrants may feel dislocated when returning to their birth places (HALL, 1999, p. 2-3).

Hall highlights that a closed conception of diaspora and homeland is associated to ideas of a fixed tradition and the authenticity of a particular culture and people. However, the theorist underscores that these are constructs, foundational myths. Hall argues that cultural identities are not fixed, because societies are composed of many peoples with diverse origins (HALL, 1999, p. 4-5). The critic clarifies that the closed conception of diaspora rests on a binary conception of difference as it depends on the construction of an Other. According to Hall, a syncretized configuration of cultural identity requires Jacques Derrida's notion of *differance*, differences that do not work through binaries, but through the sliding of relational meanings (HALL, 1999, p. 7).

In Desai's novel, upon returning to his family in Piphit after five years, Jemubhai felt as a foreigner. He had grown unused to the long resting afternoons and did not feel at home. Moreover, his new ideas of privacy did not match the family's habit of examining his belongings (DESAI, 2006, p. 167). Along with his hairbrush and comb set in silver, Jemubhai carried a "pom-pom with a loop of silk in a round container of powder" in his toilet case (DESAI, 2006, p. 166). The judge's wife, now called Nimi, picked his powder puff, a strange

object to her, and stuffed it inside her blouse (DESAI, 2006, p. 166). Her husband alarmed the entire household in search of his puff. Some members of Jemubhai's family did not understand why he had to use that object and mocked him: "'Ha ha', laughed a sister who was listening carefully, 'we sent you abroad to become a gentleman, and instead you have become a lady!'" (DESAI, 2006, p. 167). Jemubhai thought "they would have the good taste to be impressed and even a little awed by what he had become, but instead they were laughing" (DESAI, 2006, p. 168). The young ICS judge had assimilated the colonizer's ideas. He even disregarded his wife and considered her less beautiful than the English girls he had seen during his time abroad: "An Indian girl could never be as beautiful as an English one" (DESAI, 2006, p. 168). It is possible to say that there is a double displacement in Jemubhai's narrative. He does not accept his relatives and wife as he believes they are "thieving, ignorant people" (DESAI, 2006, p. 168). Simultaneously, his family does not recognize Jemubhai's manners and behavior as typical of an Indian person. Therefore, he is teased because of his Anglicized ways.

Ksenija Kondali underlines that "with cultural values, eating habits and tastes that are utterly English, Jemubhai elevates himself above others in his community, retreating into self-imposed isolation". This turns him into a stranger in his own country. The critic suggests that his form of Anglophilia feeds his self-hatred and scorn for his Indian past, other Indians and his country of origin (KONDALI, 2018, p. 111-112). In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the narrator comments that Jemubhai made efforts to be like the English as he envied them. Simultaneously, the judge hated his Indian nationals. Thus, he would be disliked by both nationalities, because he could not fit in any of them and had turned into an unpleasant person: "He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both" (DESAI, 2006, p. 119).

Jemubhai's life as a touring official in the civil service was based on a colonial tight routine. In the state of Uttar Pradesh, he drank tea, bathed, dressed up, ate toast, rode into the fields and measured the properties. After lunch, he tried cases, even in other languages, had his afternoon tea and went fishing or hunting. By dinner time, he filled out registers and "recorded the random observations of a cultured man, someone who was observant, schooled in literature as well as economics" (DESAI, 2006, p. 63). He acquired the manners and tastes of the colonizer. If any object was moved from its place or any meal was late, he would lose his temper, he demanded the so-called British punctuality (DESAI, 2006, p. 60-61). As a "successful" product of colonization, Jemubhai sees himself as inferior in relation to the

English and yet superior in relation to other Indians, including his own family. The effects of colonization upon him are still quite visible in his old age, long after India has become a nation state. He is embittered, intolerant towards everyone, and very lonely.

The effects of colonization go far beyond the personal realm, though, and the tools of power used to achieve domination are diverse. The English language, for instance, has proved extremely efficient both for control and communication across continents. The linguistic and cultural consequences of imperialism have changed the global scene. According to Indian linguist Braj Bihari Kachru, in India, only Sanskrit, English, Hindi and Persian have acquired pan-Indian intranational functions. The scholar observes that English "has acquired a *neutrality* in a linguistic context where native languages, dialects, and styles sometimes have acquired undesirable connotations. Whereas native codes are functionally marked in terms of caste, religion, region, and so forth, English has no such 'markers,' at least in the non-native context" (KACHRU, 1995, p. 290, emphasis by the author). English is not associated with any Indian ethnic or religious group. Therefore, governments acknowledge the advantages of using this language as it provides a linguistic tool for the administrative cohesiveness of a country and is a channel for wider national and international communication (KACHRU, 1995, p. 291). English continues to be perceived as a language of power, prestige and opportunity. Thus, even after India ceased to be a British colony, a colonial perspective is still present in Indians' imagination and culture as the English language is persistently seen as more prestigious and useful than national languages, because it allows its speakers to engage in the contemporary capitalistic system of work and study.

The export of language, literature and learning to the colonies was a part of a civilizing mission through imperial control. After independence, those societies are still subject to neocolonial forms of domination, such as the development of new elites supported by neocolonial institutions and the development of internal divisions based on ethnic, linguistic or religious discriminations (ASHCROFT; GRIFFITHS; TIFFIN, 1995, p. 2). According to Stuart Hall, the transition to the post-colonial in a general way was characterized by:

> independence from direct colonial rule, the formation of new nation states, forms of economic development dominated by the growth of indigenous capital and their relations of neo-colonial dependency on the developed capitalist world, and the politics which arise from emergence of powerful local elites managing the contradictory effects of under-development […] it is characterized by the persistence of many of the effects of colonization, but at the same time their displacement from the colonizer/colonized axis to their internalization within the decolonized society itself (HALL, 1996, p. 247-248).

Hall emphasizes that the colonial is not dead, because its effects have been perpetuated in the former colonial societies, now independent nation states. Therefore, the consequences of colonization in India permeate Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*.

India as a multicultural society, with diverse religions and beliefs, was always fragmented in regions. Nonetheless, in 1947, the dismemberment of British India into two independent states, the Union of India (now the Republic of India) and the Dominion of Pakistan — formed by West Pakistan, now the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and East Pakistan, now the People's Republic of Bangladesh—, created a refugee crisis as it displaced fifteen million people, leading to large-scale violence across the country and severe loss of lives. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 dissolved the British Raj or Crown Rule in India. The Partition was based on religious divisions among Hindus and Muslims. It involved the partition of two provinces, Bengal and Punjab. The Partition resulted in one of the greatest migrations in human history. Millions of Muslims headed to West and East Pakistan, situated very far apart, while millions of Hindus went in the opposite direction. However, many hundreds of thousands never made it to their intended destination (DALRYMPLE, 2015).

Various theories had been invoked to explain why the British partitioned India in religious lines. Professors of History Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, in *Modern South Asia* (2004), highlight two current theories. First, there is the "two-nation theory" which defends that Indian Muslims were always a distinctive and separate community that had resisted assimilation into their Indian environment. Second, another theory blames imperialism and the British classical theory of divide and rule. That is, according to this theory, the British had encouraged the maintenance of religious divides and prejudice between Hindus and Muslims (BOSE; JALAL, 2004, p. 135). The fact is that the Partition displaced millions of people who had to travel to specific areas in which their religious values were accepted, while many perished in their journeys or in riots and massacres based on ethnic divides. Kiran Desai does not depict the Partition in detail in her novel, but its consequences are criticized in a passage that portrays the end of the Second World War, conflicts in India and its independence from the British Crown. After the Partition and India's Independence, millions of inhabitants were displaced. Moreover, in India, the British who used to work for the Crown left the country and Indians assumed their positions, such as Jemubhai did in Desai's novel:

> War broke out in Europe and India, even in the villages, and the news of the country disintegrating filled the newspapers; almost a million were dead in riots, three to four million in the Bengal famine, thirteen million were evicted from their homes; the birth of the nation was all in shadow. It seemed appropriate.

> The judge worked harder than ever. The departure of the British left such a vacuum of power, all Indian members of the ICS rose to the very top, no matter what side they had taken in the independence movement, no matter their talents or expertise (DESAI, 2006, p. 307).

After India's independence, in 1956, the States Reorganization Act abolished some provinces and reorganized the territory in favor of new states that were based on language and ethnicity. Consequently, several new states were created in India. However, many claims from populations who demanded their own state were not heard. Desai concentrates part of her narrative in a violent agitation organized by the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), a movement during the 1980s that demanded a separate state of Gorkhaland in the northern part of West Bengal:

> there was a report of new dissatisfaction in the hills, gathering insurgency, men and guns. It was the Indian-Nepalese this time, fed up with being treated like the minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs (DESAI, 2006, p. 9).

In the novel, a group of young Gorkhas robbed the judge Jemubhai and his property in February 1986. They threatened the judge and his family. The boys demanded his old guns from the Indian Civil Service days; they also carried bottles of alcohol and food and hygiene supplies. Besides that, the group made the judge, his granddaughter and their cook prepare tea for them as if they were gentle visitors (DESAI, 2006, p. 4-8). Desai portrays both Gorkhas' political demands, such as a separate state of Gorkhaland, and their actions, such as invading wealthy families' properties and stealing resources to provide for the movement.

The Gorkhas have inhabited the Himalayan region for ages. According to the *Encyclopedia of Stateless Nations: Ethnic and National Groups around the World* (2016), a number of small kingdoms formed the Gorkha Kingdom. It conquered neighboring principalities that were consolidated as the Kingdom of Nepal. The first Anglo-Gorkha War (1814-1816) resulted in the loss of territory and the British right to recruit soldiers from the Gorkha tribes. Since the second half of the 19th century, the British encouraged Gorkhas from Nepal to settle in the Darjeeling area to work in the tea industry. They are descendants of Nepali migrants to British India. Their language, Gorkhali, is related to the languages spoken in Nepal (MINAHAN, 2016). Considered as a minority group despite comprising an expressive number of the population, the ethnic group in the region of West Bengal has expressed the desire to have their separate administrative unit since the beginning of the 20th century. Nevertheless, only in 2012 was a Gorkha Territorial Administration signed as an

autonomous district council, which has some autonomy among its state, but the resolution has not attended all the demands from the Gorkha population.

Kiran Desai portrays the GNFL in her novel as a group formed mostly by men from Nepali descent that demanded the territory in which generations of Nepali have lived in India, working as servants or soldiers and without proper rights. Gurkhas or Gorkhas served as soldiers to the East India Company, the British Indian Army, and the British Army and Indian Army after independence. In the novel, first there were posters in the market referring to old discontents: "We are stateless"; "It is better to die than live as slaves"; "We are constitutionally tortured. Return our land from Bengal" (DESAI, 2006, p. 126). The messages appeared in unusual places such as rocks and the trunks of trees. Then, the marches began:

> But then one day fifty boys, members of the youth wing of the GNFL, gathered to swear an oath at Mahakaldara to fight to the death for the formation of a homeland, Gorkhaland. Then they marched down the streets of Darjeeling, took a turn around the market and the mall. 'Gorkhaland for Gorkhas. We are the liberation army' (DESAI, 2006, p. 126).

The movement for a Gorkhaland is an example of the consequences of colonization in India. After independence from colonial rule and the formation of states in the new nation-state, there was the increase in ethnic divisions. The claims from specific populations, such as Indian Gorkhas, were not contemplated in the nation-state reconfiguration organized by the Indian government. Consequently, there were insurgent movements. In Desai's novel, in a fiery speech given by one of the members of the GNFL in the 80s, it is possible to observe how Gorkhas fought for the Indian nation (and also for the British before) and they did not receive benefits for their loyal service:

> 'In 1947, brothers and sisters, the British left granting India her freedom, granting the Muslims Pakistan, granting special provisions for the scheduled castes and tribes, leaving everything taken care of, brothers and sisters.
> 'Except us. EXCEPT US. The Nepalis of India. At that time, in April of 1947, the Communist Party of India demanded a Gorkhasthan, but the request was ignored. ... We are laborers on the tea plantations, coolies dragging heavy loads, soldiers. And are we allowed to become doctors and government workers, owners of the tea plantations? *No!* We are kept at the level of servants. We fought on behalf of the British for two hundred years. We fought in World War One. We went to East Africa, to Egypt, to the Persian Gulf. We were moved from here to there as it suited them. We fought in World War Two. In Europe, Syria, Persia, Malaya, and Burma. Where would they be without the courage of our people? We are still fighting for them. When the regiments were divided at independence, some to go to England, some to stay, those of us who remained here fought in the same way for India. We are soldiers, loyal, brave. India or England, they never had cause to doubt our loyalty. In the wars with Pakistan we fought our former comrades on the other side of the border. How our spirit cried.[…]

> ‘Here we are eighty percent of the population, ninety tea gardens in the district, but is even one Nepali-owned?’ asked the man.
> ‘No.’
> ‘Can our children learn our language in school?’
> ‘No.’
> ‘Can we compete for jobs when they have already been promised to others?’
> ‘No.’ (DESAI, 2006, p. 158-159, emphasis by the author).

Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* also portrays people of Nepali descent and their struggle to study and find work in the region of West Bengal during the 80s. It is possible to suggest that the character Gyan personifies young Nepalis’ difficulties to find proper work positions. A young graduate from Nepali descent who lived in Kalimpong, he participated in some of the marches organized by the GNLF as he was discontent with the lack of opportunities for Gorkhas in the region (DESAI, 2006, p. 156-158). His family struggled to provide him with a better education. His sisters were deprived of opportunities so he could study and graduate in Accounting — as Jemubhai’s sisters had been deprived in order to provide his education in colonial times. What happened to the judge and his sisters continued in the following generations. The narrator describes how Gyan’s family made sacrifices so he could be properly educated and dressed. As a consequence, the young man looked and acted as someone significantly different from his family and their social economic background. The harsh conditions in which the family struggled to live were not manifested in Gyan’s appearance and manners:

> The house didn’t match Gyan’s talk, his English, his looks, his clothes, or his schooling. It didn’t match his future. Every single thing his family had was going into him and it took ten of them to live like this to produce a boy, combed, educated, their best bet in the big world. Sisters’ marriages, younger brother’s studies, grandmother’s teeth—all on hold, silenced, until he left, strove, sent something back (DESAI, 2006, p. 256).

The narrator explains that Gyan had difficulties to find proper work as Indian Nepalis suffered prejudice in the region, a discrimination that started in colonial times and continued after India’s independence. For instance, a wealthy Anglophile Indian lady, named Lola, who lived in Kalimpong, makes clear that she does not trust Nepalis: “‘I tell you, these Neps can’t be trusted. And they don’t just rob. They think absolutely nothing of murdering, as well.’” (DESAI, 2006, p. 45). The discrimination against Nepalis crosses social barriers. The judge’s cook, Panna Lal, who has been extremely poor all his life, also manifests his prejudice against Nepalis in a conversation with the judge’s granddaughter. The cook thought that Nepalis were less intelligent than other ethnic groups, because of their eating habits. Therefore, the cook thought that the tutor Gyan was not Nepali because the young man seemed intelligent:

> ‘It is strange the tutor is Nepali,’ the cook remarked to Sai when he had left. A bit later he said, ‘I thought he would be Bengali.’ […] ‘Bengalis […] are very intelligent.’ […] ‘It’s the fish,’ said the cook. ‘Coastal people are more intelligent than inland people.’ […] ‘Coastal people eat fish and see how much cleverer they are, Bengalis, Malayalis, Tamils. Inland they eat too much grain, and it slows the digestion—especially millet—forms a big heavy ball. The blood goes to the stomach and not to the head. Nepalis make good soldiers, coolies, but they are not so bright at their studies. Not their fault, poor things.’ (DESAI, 2006, p. 73).

In the novel, through the recommendation from the principal of a local college, Gyan was offered a position as Mathematics and Science tutor to Sai, Jemubhai’s teenage granddaughter (DESAI, 2006, p. 70-71). The young Indian Nepali told Sai about his family and his ancestors’ loyal work as soldiers for the British Army during imperial rule. Gyan’s narrative chronicles how Gorkhas dutifully served the Crown and had not been rewarded properly. Families lost many members who served as soldiers in military conflicts. Their quality of life did not improve after working for the British Army; Gorkha families suffered terrible losses and continued to work hard mostly in tea plantations and small services, victims of oppression and inequality (DESAI, 2006, p. 141-143).

Kiran Desai’s novel portrays some of the demands from this particular group during the 80s. In a dialogue, two wealthy Anglophile Bengali sisters, Lola and Noni, question why Nepali was not taught in schools in the region. They imagined that one possible consequence of the implementation of this policy would be the organization of statehood demands, such as Gorkhaland, because the Nepali language would already be taught in schools — a primary recognition of their legitimacy over the region:

> ‘Obviously the Nepalis are worried,’ said Noni. ‘They’ve been here, most of them, several generations. Why shouldn’t Nepali be taught in schools?’
> ‘Because on that basis they can start statehood demands. Separatist movement here, separatist movement there, terrorists, guerillas, insurgents, rebels, agitators, instigators, and they all learn from one another, of course […] [said Lola]’ (DESAI, 2006, p. 128-129).

Struggles between different nations have occurred not only during imperial rule, but also after its end and during the organization of an independent state of India. Consequently, the matter of border divisions has been influential in the lives of the populations that inhabit these places. In the novel, Desai portrays some of the conflicts and border modifications that occurred in the regions of eastern and northeast India and neighboring countries. For example, the sisters Lola and Noni discuss the matter of borders in the region they have been living for more than twenty years. Towns such as Darjeeling and Kalimpong were ruled by the

Kingdom of Sikkim and the Kingdom of Bhutan, respectively. In the 19th century these towns were annexed by the British, who helped in the creation of heterogeneous borders: "Lola: […] 'When did Darjeeling and Kalimpong belong to Nepal? Darjeeling, in fact, was annexed from Sikkim and Kalimpong from Bhutan.' […] Noni: 'Very unskilled at drawing borders, those bloody Brits'" (DESAI, 2006, p. 129).

Elizabeth Jackson highlights the absurdity of drawing borders in a region that was already troubled by disputes and served as a refuge for people from other troubled areas (JACKSON, 2016, p. 35). The narrator in Kiran Desai's novel comments on the disputes that have occurred in the region and how foolish it was to insist in drawing borders in such a heterogeneous territory:

> Here, where India blurred into Bhutan and Sikkim, and the army did pull-ups and push-ups, maintaining their tanks with khaki paint in case the Chinese grew hungry for more territory than Tibet, it had always been a messy map. The papers sounded resigned. A great amount of warring, betraying, bartering had occurred; between Nepal, England, Tibet, India, Sikkim, Bhutan; Darjeeling stolen from here, Kalimpong plucked from there— despite, ah, despite the mist charging down like a dragon, dissolving, undoing, making ridiculous the drawing of borders (DESAI, 2006, p. 9).

In contemporary times, colonialist practices are perpetuated through the disguise of modernity and its global neoliberal system of capital and labor. In his essay Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality, originally published in 1992 in Spanish as Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad, Aníbal Quijano makes clear that Western imperialism (mainly Western European dominators and their Euro-North American descendants, together with Japan) is colonialism's successor as the relationship between the Western culture and other cultures continues to be one of colonial domination. The colonial structure of power produced racial, ethnic and national discriminations among colonized populations. This power structure dictates the other social relations of classes or estates. Thus, the majority of the exploited and discriminated come from former colonies (QUIJANO, 2007, p. 168).

Based on the colonization of the imagination of the dominated, cultural Europeanization was transformed into an aspiration. Quijano explains that it was a way of participating in and achieving the same material benefits and power as the Europeans (QUIJANO, 2007, p. 169). Cultural coloniality had different effects across the world. According to the scholar, in Asia and in the Middle East, the high cultures could never be destroyed with such profundity as in Latin America. Nonetheless, in the East, the cultures were placed in a "subordinate relation not only in the European view, but also in the eyes of

their own bearers" (QUIJANO, 2007, p. 170). Coloniality is still the most general form of domination in the world today since colonialism ended.

Coloniality of power is based on "racial" social classification of the world population under Eurocentered world power, in which there is a relationship of biologically and structurally superior and inferior. However, Quijano highlights that coloniality of power is not exhausted in the problem of "racist" social relations, because it has pervaded the Eurocentered capitalist colonial/ modern world power (QUIJANO, 2007, p. 171). For instance, in the constitution of European modernity/ rationality, only European culture is seen as rational, while the other cultures are regarded as unequal and inferior (QUIJANO, 2007, p. 174).

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the imagination of Jemubhai Patel was colonized with the ideas of British superiority in relation to Indian knowledge and culture. Jemubhai accepted the idea of British superiority and he also considered himself superior in relation to Indians who have had no access to British education as he had. In the parts of the narrative set after India's independence and also in the United States, the coloniality of power is also identified, because modernity and globalization perpetuate the losses, divisions and injustices perpetrated in the colonial period. Thus, in this perspective, modernity is re-read within the framework of globalization. Modernity continues the colonial legacy as it hides the logic of coloniality of power in contemporary times.

Desai's novel explores the coloniality that is still present in the imaginary of Indians in the post-independence moment. They still consider immigrating to nations such as the United States and England, because these are seen as superior countries, where people have better living conditions and work opportunities in comparison to India. This same coloniality/ rationality is applied to Indians who do not want to return to their country of origin, because it is seen as an underdeveloped nation. In New York during the 80s, the young immigrant Biju talks to Mr. Kakkar, the owner of a travel agency, about going back to India, his country of origin. Mr. Kakkar replies that Biju would make a big mistake if he went back to India. From his own experience, after thirty years abroad, Mr. Kakkar regards the United States as a more developed country than India. He points out America's excellent facilities, such as the plumbing, as advantages to persuade Biju to stay in the U.S. Mr. Kakkar also highlighted the possibility that relatives and friends would ask for Biju's savings or that he might even be robbed in the way back home. The coloniality of power is clear in Mr. Kakkar's discourse as he sees the country of origin as an underdeveloped and dangerous place to live:

> ‘You are sure you want to go back??’ he said alarmed, eyes popping. ‘You’re making a big mistake. Thirty years in this country, […] of course, and I have never gone back. Just even see the plumbing,’ he indicated the sound of the gurgling toilet behind him. ‘They should put their plumbing on their flag, just like we have the spinning wheel—top-class facility in this country.
> ‘Going back?’ he continued, ‘don’t be completely crazy—all those relatives asking for money! Even strangers are asking for money—maybe they just try, you know, maybe you shit and dollars come out. I’m telling you, my friend, they will get you; if they won’t, the robbers will; if the robbers won’t, some disease will; if not some disease, the heat will; if not the heat, those mad Sardarjis will bring down your plane before you even arrive’ (DESAI, 2006, p. 268-269).

Paul Jay stresses that contemporary globalization is characterized by a simultaneous acceleration of globalization and nationalism (JAY, 2010, p. 118). Both movements are present in Kiran Desai’s novel. Jay observes that the New York portions of *The Inheritance of Loss* explore the contemporary effects of globalization on a diasporic group of migrant workers in a metropolis that could be almost anywhere, while the alternating chapters set in Kalimpong analyze the persistent effects of colonialism and ethnic conflicts in northeast India (JAY, 2010, p. 119), that have been discussed previously in this chapter regarding the demand for a Gorkhaland in West Bengal.

Coloniality is also present in ex-colonies, now independent nation-states that are dependent upon Western economical agreements. Stuart Hall emphasizes that the history of globalization was concurrent with the era of European exploration, conquest and formation of the capitalist world-market (HALL, 1999, p. 9). The post-1970s phase of globalization has a planetary perspective and global operations. The shifts of global market may influence the lives of people in the remotest corners of the world.

According to Ranasinha, the novel signals the artificiality of shifting national borders (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 65). The town of Kalimpong in the 1980s is itself a cosmopolitan mix of populations, languages and religious traditions. Ranasinha remarks that even such an isolated community, with rudimentary telecommunications, has links that reach across the world. It participates in “a planet-wide movement of people, ideas and things” (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 65). For instance, in Kalimpong, the judge is Cambridge-educated, while his cook’s son, Biju, becomes an illegal immigrant to the U.S. like other young men from the town. Some of the judge’s neighbors are Anglophile Bengalis — the sisters Lola and Noni —, a Swiss priest named Father Booty who had lived in the town for forty-five years, a gentleman farmer named Uncle Potty who had been a student at Oxford, Afghan princesses who were given refuge by the Indian government after independence and a doctor who had a son studying in the United States during the 1980s. Even a small town as Kalimpong

represents how globalization has increased the connections between different parts of the world even if these connections do not indicate greater equality among the town's inhabitants.

Ranasinha indicates the polarization between the Global North and South in Desai's novel. For instance, Western tourists that visited West Bengal were exploitative, buying Tibetan treasures, converting the goods' prices to American dollars, while tips for servants were calculated in local currency (DESAI, 2006, p. 298). There is also a distinction between pensions among the Indian Civil Service employees. The payment received by English ICS pensioners was higher than that received by Indians who had worked for the same organization (DESAI, 2006, p. 204). Therefore, it is possible to observe that globalization intensified the trade of goods and movement of people between continents. However, the Global South is still regarded as a place where people can earn less to do the same work as someone in the Global North.

In a passage from Desai's narrative that is set in New York, during the 80s, businessmen are having lunch in an elegant upper-class restaurant. While the young illegal Indian immigrant Biju is working at this restaurant, he listens to the businessmen dialogue about exploiting Asia's consumerism possibilities. It is clear in Desai's portrayal that Western capitalist businessmen view the East as a new frontier in terms of consumerism that may enhance Western neoliberal influence over Eastern cultures and economy. In this conversation, there are no concerns regarding improving the populations' living conditions, but selling them as many foreign products and services as possible. The coloniality of power is present as Asia is seen as a means to increase Western global market sales and influence in the continent:

> 'We need to get aggressive about Asia,' the businessmen said to each other. 'It's opening up, new frontier, millions of potential consumers, big buying power in the middle classes, China, India, potential for cigarettes, diapers, Kentucky Fried, life insurance, water management, cell phones—big family people, always on the phone, all those men calling their mothers, all those mothers calling all their many, many children; this country is done, Europe done, Latin America done, Africa is a basket case except for oil; Asia is the next frontier. Is there oil anywhere there? They don't have oil, do they' (DESAI, 2006, p. 136).

Desai's novel unveils the legacies of cultural and economic subjugation (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 66-67). Coloniality demonstrates how in a new economic order Western dominant nations remain exploiting former colonies in different ways. In the past, they were regarded as exploitation colonies that produced goods, increased trade to/from the metropolis and served as port facilities, without mentioning inhabitants cheap labor force as soldiers, servants and coolies in different parts of the world. In the post-independence moment

and contemporary age, ex-colonies are seen as cheap labor force to sustain modernity/globalization basis and as consumers of Western products and culture.

Desai's novel also portrays how the exploitation of underpaid laborers from ex-colonies sustain the privileged way of life of Western cosmopolitan elites, a discussion that will be developed in the third chapter of this thesis. According to Ranasinha, the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* questions market globalists' claims that economic globalization is the path to prosperity for the underprivileged (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 64). Coloniality is present in the idea of the "American dream" that is sold to underprivileged immigrants as a way to prosper and achieve success if they migrate to the post-modern metropolis and work hard enough. Ranasinha also argues that the "narrative traces the material circulation of goods, but again with an emphasis on the structural inequality between the global North and South, which makes locally produced food unaffordable for local populations" (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 66). It is noteworthy that the inequalities that existed between colonies and the imperial metropolis during the colonial period are rearranged in the post-independence period as there is a sharp disparity between the Global North and South. Through the analysis of coloniality in the novel, we are able to clearly see modernity as a continuation of colonialism.

After the colonial period, it seemed that nations had won their independence and were free to rule their own affairs. However, what is understood through the perspective of Postcolonial and Decolonial studies and clearly delineated through the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* is that the mechanisms of modernity have hidden the coloniality that permeates our times. Former colonies have inherited broken populations, assimilated cultures, economic disorders, government corruption, dependency on foreign capital and an underdevelopment that is not repaired by powerful national elites, who have been influenced by colonial modes of thinking and acting. Thus, countries such as India and its populations that have been exploited by European nations have inherited the loss of their hopes, culture and beliefs and have been infused with assimilationist ideas that are, unfortunately, still perpetuated by modernity/coloniality. Harsh living conditions and few if any perspectives for a better future have certainly influenced migratory movements from the Asian subcontinent to Western metropoles, as we will discuss in the next chapter.

2 **MAPPING DIASPORAS, HOME AND (NON)BELONGING**

The meanings attached to the term "diaspora" have changed throughout time. *The postcolonial studies dictionary* (2015) explains that the original Greek term meant "to disperse", considering the dispersal of pollen and spores of plants that take root and flourish elsewhere in a new soil (NAYAR, 2015, p. 48). According to *New keywords* (2005), the most well-known use of the term diaspora occurs with reference to the history of forced dispersion of the Jewish people. Apart from Jews, other groups as the Armenians, Africans, Irish and Palestinians can refer to a traumatic historical event as the beginning of a forcible displacement from their homeland (ANG, 2005, p. 82).

In contemporary readings, the term diaspora describes a forced or voluntary movement of people from their homelands to a new place. For instance, immigrants, expatriates, refugees, guest workers, exile communities, and overseas communities who have a history of dispersion are examples of diasporic groups (ANG, 2005, p. 82-83). Moreover, diaspora and migrations are now treated as the causal factor in the populating of new regions of the earth over a vast historical period, starting with the supposed origins of mankind in Africa (NAYAR, 2015, p. 48). Therefore, Ien Ang highlights that the classic definition of diaspora emphasized the traumatic past of a dispersed group, while recent usages consider trauma in the present, "in the contemporary experience of marginalization or discrimination in the nation state of residence" (ANG, 2005, p. 83).

Ang's deliberations are pertinent to the analysis of characters in contemporary novels which portray diaspora and migration. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* depicts multiple narratives of diaspora, each unique in its way. The characters' journeys reflect subjects that are dear to diaspora studies, such as the poor immigrants' relations to home and the question of (non)belonging in the new place of residence.

In the chapter Globalisation, Labour, Narrative and Representation in Arundhati Roy, Monica Ali and Kiran Desai, Ruvani Ranasinha explains that Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) features "a range of complex dispossessed female protagonists, fatherless children, exploited factory workers and Dalits" (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 51), while both Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen* (2009) highlight a "'new' category of vulnerable peoples: illegal immigrants entering the USA and Great Britain" (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 51-52). The scholar observes that the exploitation of the disempowered underclass increases the inequality of these societies. Therefore, Ranasinha

suggests that both novelists seek to give narrative voice to migrant workers affected by changing work patterns (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 52).

In her turn, Rositta Joseph Valiyamattam, regards Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* as powerful accounts of the interface between individual lives and national scenario in India between 1960 and 1990 (VALIYAMATTAN, 2016, p. 63). Desai and Roy reveal a deep concern for "the downtrodden in societies ridden with caste, gender and class conflicts" (VALIYAMATTAN, 2016, p. 64). Therefore, Ranasinha and Valiyamattam agree with Desai's concern about oppressed Third World immigrants.

Thus, this chapter aims at investigating diasporas, the matter of home, and the concern with (non)belonging and displacement in *The Inheritance of Loss*, with a particular focus on characters that inhabit the margins of the novel's social sphere.

In the chapter Nation, Migration, Globalization: Points of Contention in Diaspora Studies from *Theorizing Diaspora* (2003), Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur discuss the term "diaspora" regarding its historic origins and meaning after World War II, underscoring that it refers to communities of people dislocated from their native homelands through migration, immigration or exile (BRAZIEL; MANNUR, 2003, p. 1). In Desai's novel, there are examples of immigrants that voluntarily leave their birth places in order to work, in the hope of achieving better life conditions. For instance, Panna Lal, the cook, experiences an internal diaspora. The Indian male, Hindi-speaker character migrates as a teenager to work for the judge Jemubhai Patel in a distant part of India, leaving his family behind.

Panna Lal's first job was as "the lowest all-purpose *chokra* boy in the kitchen of a club where his father was pudding cook" (DESAI, 2006, p. 60, emphasis by the author). He was ten years old and received a meager salary half his age, five rupees. A few years later, Panna Lal's father bought fake recommendations for his son so he could apply for the position of servant in Jemubhai's touring activities as a judge (DESAI, 2006, p. 63). His father admitted that the boy needed training, but added the advantages of hiring him: Panna Lal could make a new pudding for each day of the year and his expenses would be cheap. Finally, at the age of fourteen, Panna Lal was hired by the judge and started working as a cook.

In the narrative present, the cook is depicted as an extremely poor person; his "house is still made of mud with a thatch roof" (DESAI, 2006, p. 67). In addition, he was growing old too fast because of a lifetime of hard work:

> looking as leather-visaged, as weathered and soiled, as he did now, and as he would ten years later. A poverty stricken man growing into an ancient at fast-forward. Compressed childhood, lingering old age. A generation between him and the judge, but you wouldn't know it to look at them. There was age in his temperament, his kettle, his clothes, his kitchen, his voice, his face, in the undisturbed dirt, the undisturbed settled smell of a lifetime of cooking, smoke, and kerosene (DESAI, 2006, p. 19)

After the judge retired and decided to live in a faraway estate in Kalimpong, where nobody knew him, the cook also went to continue working, now as the judge's only servant. Panna Lal had had a wife who died when their son, Biju, was five years old (DESAI, 2006, p. 14). After the accident, the young Biju experiences displacement for the first time, as he was raised by his grandmother, away from his father, in a distant village in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Upon growing up, Biju will be further displaced when he becomes part of the flux of poor immigrants that seek better economic opportunities far away from their country of origin. The setting of the novel changes from India to the city of New York during the 80s, the cosmopolis which daily receives immigrants from all parts of the world in search of better conditions of life and work. The narrator describes the challenging conditions of those who arrive in the United States and are destined to stay as illegal immigrants:

> They arrived at the airport with one dollar in their pocket and his phone number, seeking admittance to an apartment that was bursting with men already, every scrap rented out: Rashid Ahmed Jaffer Abdullah Hassan Musa Lutfi Ali and a whole lot of others sharing beds in shifts (DESAI, 2006, p. 95).

Braziel and Mannur observe that it is important to distinguish diaspora from transnationalism. They describe transnationalism as "the flow of people, ideas, goods, and capital across national territories", while diaspora refers specifically to the forced or voluntary movement of people from one or more nation-states to another (BRAZIEL; MANNUR, 2003, p. 8). That is, diaspora addresses the migrations and displacements of subjects. In contrast, transnationalism speaks to globalization and global capitalism, as it includes the movements of information, the traffic of goods, products and capital across geopolitical terrains through multinational corporations (BRAZIEL; MANNUR, 2003, p. 8). In *The Inheritance of Loss*, both diaspora and transnationalism are represented, with a special emphasis on the former.

However, transnationalism is also illustrated, for instance, through the movements of information in the novel. In his article Diasporas (1994), James Clifford suggests that diasporas usually presuppose longer distance and a separation like exile. The anthropologist emphasizes that dispersed peoples, once separated from homelands, find themselves more and

more in border relations to their old country thanks to modern technologies of transport and communication (CLIFFORD, 1994, p. 304). During the 80s, most part of the communication between the cook Panna Lal, in Kalimpong, and his son Biju, in America, is possible primarily through the exchange of letters. In a letter written when he had just arrived in New York, Biju wrote:

> […] 'Respected *Pitaji*, no need to worry. Everything is fine. The manager has offered me a fulltime waiter position. Uniform and food will be given by them. *Angrezi khana* only, no Indian food, and the owner is not from India. He is from America itself.' (DESAI, 2006, p. 14, emphasis by the author).

In his letters, the young man hides from the father his precarious working conditions as an undocumented immigrant and the constant need to change places of employment. Biju told his father "more or less the same thing each time except for the name of the establishment he was working for" (DESAI, 2006, p. 17). The narrator, who comments that this repetition provided a coziness that helped Panna Lal hope for a better future, chronicles the tortuous path the letters have to endure in order to reach their destiny:

> They would never know how many of them went astray in all the rickety connections made along the way, between the temperamental postman in the pouring rain, the temperamental van across the landslides on the way to Siliguri, the lightning and thunder, the befogged airport, the journey from Calcutta all the way to the post office on 125th street in Harlem that was barricaded like an Israeli army outpost in Gaza. The mailman abandoned the letters atop the boxes of legal residents, and sometimes the letters fell, were trampled, and tracked back outdoors. But enough came […] (DESAI, 2006, p. 95).

In some rare occasions, father and son were also able to communicate through the telephone although they had to depend on others as they did not have a telephone set at home. Biju stood in a phone booth, while his father, back in India, had to visit a friend who worked as a watchman for a wealthy family. In this family's guesthouse, there was a telephone encircled by a lock and chain, which enabled servants to only receive phone calls. Biju would call to this residence and then ring again two hours later, so his father could arrive and talk to him (DESAI, 2006, p. 229). Thus, in this particular setting the reality experienced by the diasporic destitute who wants to maintain contact with home is even more complicated as he might have access to some resources of communication, but this takes a lot of effort.

Braziel and Mannur suggest that "diasporic subjects are marked by hybridity and heterogeneity— cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national — and these subjects are defined by a traversal of the boundaries demarcating nation and diaspora" (BRAZIEL; MANNUR, 2003, p. 5). They note that diaspora does not transcend differences of race, class, gender and

sexuality, nor can diaspora stand as a single category of analysis (BRAZIEL; MANNUR, 2003, p. 5). Therefore, each diaspora is different as subjects are composed of a heterogeneous arrangement of categories, and these must be taken into consideration during the study of diasporic characters.

In the same theoretical volume, Arjun Appadurai provides a framework to understand the global cultural economy. In the chapter Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy (2003), Appadurai describes five types of imagined world landscapes that help explain the nature of a new global economy: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes (APPADURAI, 2003, p. 31). He defines an *ethnoscape* as a "landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live *In:* tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups" (APPADURAI, 2003, p. 32). Therefore, Biju, the 19-year-old immigrant whose journey is represented by Kiran Desai, is a diasporic male character marked as Indian, Hindu, young, poor, lower caste immigrant. After his mother's death, Biju had to live with his grandmother "on the money his father sent each month" (DESAI, 2006, p. 102). When he gets older, the father encourages Biju to go abroad to work.

Underscoring the heterogeneity among diasporic subjects, the narrator makes it clear that even the very process of embarking on a diasporic journey was harder for someone as poor and inexperienced as Biju. His first tentative to work abroad failed when a recruiting agent for a cruise ship line appeared in Kalimpong to solicit applications for waiters, vegetable choppers and toilet cleaners (DESAI, 2006, p. 179). Biju paid the amount of money he was asked but became a victim of a fraud (DESAI, 2006, p. 181). His second attempt was through an application for a tourist visa in the American embassy, which was accepted. The narrator depicts the crowds of people camping outside the building, who had traveled from distant villages to apply for a visa (DESAI, 2006, p. 182), and exposes the corruption involved in this process:

> Sometimes every single paper the applicants brought with them was fake: birth certificates, vaccination records from doctors, offers of monetary support. There was a lovely place you could go, clerks by the hundreds sitting cross-legged before typewriters, ready to help with stamps and the correct legal language for every conceivable requirement (DESAI, 2006, p. 183).

When Biju finally manages to get his visa and travel to the "land of opportunities", what he experiences contrasts drastically with the expectations he, like so many immigrants, had nursed. Commenting on the reality that awaits the diasporic subject arriving in the U.S.,

Ruvani Ranasinha suggests that "the new forms of division, segregation, and policing that have arisen in the megacity […] sit in tension with North America's founding narratives of freedom and democracy and subsequent claims to manifest destiny" (RANASINHA, 2018, p. 239). Ranasinha suggests that these divisions also undermine the country's self-perception as a home and refuge to all exiles (RANASINHA, 2018, p. 239). Therefore, when discussing the concepts of home and belonging, one needs to consider the reception the host country gives to those who arrive. Once again, the degree of (non)acceptance of arriving immigrants is conditioned to the manner in which a group "comes to be 'situated' in and through a wide variety of discourses, economic processes, state policies, and institutional practices" (BRAH, 1996, p. 179). Thus, each diaspora must be analyzed in its historical specificity.

According to Ranasinha, South Asian migration to the United States has changed through the decades. The Immigration Act of 1924 was designed to prohibit the entry of South and South-east Asian immigrants in the United States (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 5). It also established a system of national quotas that limited the number of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. After four decades, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished this practice of quotas based on nationality. Instead "it favoured skilled middle-class professionals" and reuniting families (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 5). Therefore, skilled professionals dominated migration to the U.S. during the 60s and 70s. The scholar explains that post-1980 migration to the U.S. began to be increasingly composed of working-class migrants, alongside those escaping political unrest.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Biju travels to the US in 1983 for economic reasons, hoping to make a better life for himself and to support his ageing father. Biju can be considered as part of Appadurai's *ethnoscape*, as he joins the shifting populations of illegal immigrants and transient subjects. The narrator comments that Biju: "worked at Don Pollo—or was it The Hot Tomato? Or Ali Baba's Fried Chicken? His father [Panna Lal] could not remember or understand or pronounce the names, and Biju changed jobs so often, like a fugitive on the run—no papers" (DESAI, 2006, p. 3).

According to the narrator, Biju arrived in the US with a few dollar bills and an address from his father's friend, Nandu, "who lived with twenty-two taxi drivers in Queens" (DESAI, 2006, p. 98). Nandu was a man from the same village in which Biju and Panna Lal grew up (DESAI, 2006, p. 18). He worked as a taxi driver in New York and was recommended by Biju's father as a friend who could help the young man when he got to the metropolis. However, the Indian taxi driver did not welcome Biju. Nandu did not answer Biju's phone calls and had tried to hide when the young immigrant arrived in his doorsteps. Biju had been

waiting for two hours in the street when Nandu opened the door and found Biju standing there. He discouraged Biju's hopes of working in the cosmopolis and advised him to go back to India (DESAI, 2006, p. 98). The taxi driver "met someone at his work who told him of the basement in Harlem and ever since he had deposited Biju there, Biju had never seen him again" (DESAI, 2006, p. 98-99). Biju joined the population of illegal immigrants that lived in precarious accommodations in the city. The only person he had thought he could trust in this new environment, Nandu, left him alone and abandoned among foreigners. Thus, Biju's arrival and adaptation to this new life was painful since the beginning.

Sunita Sinha, professor at Lalit Narayan Mithila University, India, argues that Biju epitomizes "the plight of the illegal immigrant who has no future in his own country and endures deplorable conditions and semi-servitude working illegally in the US" (SINHA, 2007, p. 273). On opposite sides of the globe, Biju and his father lose themselves in the fantasy about America, the cook hoping for better things for his son, while Biju lives "the grueling reality of life as a poor and illegal resident" (SINHA, 2007, p. 273).

Biju is portrayed as a shy, naïve, young man, who starts to learn about the world and its contradictions during his stay in the cosmopolis as an illegal employee. He learns about the Indian diaspora and how immigrants like him have reached far lands in search of better opportunities. In a conversation with a fellow worker, Biju discovers that Indians have migrated to different countries other than those he knew were common destinies among Indian diasporas:

> 'Where is Guatemala?' he had to ask.
> 'Where is Guam?'
> 'Where is Madagascar?'
> 'Where is Guyana?'
>
> 'Don't you know?' the Guyanese man said. 'Indians everywhere in Guyana, man.'[…]
>
> 'Trinidad full of Indians!! Saying—can you believe it?—'Open a caan of saalmon, maaan.'
>
> Madagascar—Indians Indians.
>
> Chile—in the Zona Rosa duty-free of Tierra del Fuego, Indians, whiskey, electronics. […]
>
> Kenya. South Africa. Saudi Arabia. Fiji. New Zealand. Surinam. […]
>
> Indians, yes, in Alaska; a *desi* owned the last general store in the last town before the North Pole, canned foods mostly, fishing tackle, bags of salt, and shovels; his wife stayed back in Karnal with the children, where they could, on account of the husband's sacrifice, afford Little Angels Kindergarten.
>
> On the Black Sea, yes, Indians, running a spice business.
>
> Hong Kong. Singapore.
>
> How had he learned nothing growing up? England he knew, and America, Dubai, Kuwait, but not much else (DESAI, 2006, p. 21-22, emphasis by the author).

Considering South Asian diaspora, in the chapter Globalization and Nationalism in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, Paul Jay, professor at Loyola University Chicago, remarks that:

> one of the first things Biju learns after arriving in New York is that he belongs to a global South Asian diaspora with a long history, and this knowledge upsets everything he knows about his own identity […] Biju's identity breaks loose from Kalimpong and becomes connected with a global diaspora of other lndians […] and to other tribes of migrant workers from disparate parts of the globe […] Far From finding these new connections liberating, Biju finds them confusing (JAY, 2010, p. 121-122).

After all, Biju had been brought up believing that Indians used to migrate only to First World countries. Therefore, this discovery makes him confused and disappointed with his own knowledge about the world.

James Clifford states that diasporas are different from travel, because they are not temporary. It involves a place to live in, maintaining communities, having collective home away from home (CLIFFORD, 1994, p. 308). Avtar Brah, in *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996), clarifies that at the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey. However, not every journey is a diaspora. As Clifford, Brah makes a distinction between diaspora and casual travel or temporary sojourn. Diasporic journeys are "essentially about settling down, about putting roots 'elsewhere'" (BRAH, 1996, p. 179). In *The Inheritance of Loss*, although Biju never puts roots in his diasporic destiny, there is an immigrant character that does his best to settle down in the United States and constitute his home away from home: Saeed Saeed.

Saeed Saeed is from Zanzibar, an archipelago, a semi-autonomous region from the country Tanzania. However, Saeed Saeed introduces himself differently: "I am from Zanzibar, *not* Tanzania" (DESAI, 2006, p. 53). Saeed Saeed also declares that he is the grandson of an Indian woman and that Zanzibar is full of Indians. Biju and Saeed Saeed met while working together in a bakery named Queen of Tarts in Manhattan. The narrator states that Saeed Saeed would become the man Biju admired most in the United States of America (DESAI, 2006, p. 53).

Brah highlights that all diasporic journeys "are composite in another sense too. They are embarked upon, lived and re-lived through multiple modalities: modalities, for example, of gender, 'race', class, religion, language and generation. As such, all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces" (BRAH, 1996, p. 180-181). Therefore, those modalities must be considered in a deeper analysis of each specific diaspora.

Steven Vertovec, in his article Super-diversity and its implications (2007), underlines a complex dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of immigrants who have arrived in Britain from the end of the 90s to the first decade of the 21st century (VERTOVEC, 2007, p. 1024). The scholar discusses a multiplication of significant variables that affect where, how and with whom people live (VERTOVEC, 2007, p. 1025). The anthropologist observes that multicultural policies in Britain continue to be conceived mainly in terms of African-Caribbean and South Asian communities of British citizens. These policies regard socio-economic mobility and segregation, based on ethnic or immigration classification alone. However, there is a growth of new, smaller, less organized and non-citizen immigrant groups from diverse places of origin (VERTOVEC, 2007, p. 1027). Therefore, Vertovec developed the concept "super-diversity", which means studying the interaction of variables such as country of origin, ethnicity, language, immigrations status, age, gender, education, occupation and locality when discussing migrations (VERTOVEC, 2007, p. 1044).

Steven Vertovec's ideas dialogue not only with Braziel and Mannur's (2003), but also with Avtar Brah's (1996). These scholars emphasize the importance of considering the multiple modalities through which the diasporic journey is lived and re-lived by the immigrant. In Desai's novel, Saeed Saeed was a young black male, Zanzibari, Muslim, Swahili and English-speaker immigrant, who used to be a troublesome man during his youth in Zanzibar. His own neighbors had all contributed to buy his ticket to the US so they could be free from him (DESAI, 2006, p. 79). Yet in New York, according to Biju's view, Saeed Saeed was not drowning. He was popular among fellow Zanzibaris, illegal workers and even Americans (DESAI, 2006, p. 76). Once he had been deported, but in two months, he was back to New York City with a new passport and a new name — Rasheed Zulfickar — thanks to bribery given to a clerk outside the government office (DESAI, 2006, p.79).

James Clifford recognizes the difficulty of maintaining exclusivist paradigms in relation to transnational identity formations (CLIFFORD, 1994, p. 304). Regarding this matter, Clifford mentions William Safran's essay Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return (1991) published in the first issue of *Diaspora* journal. According to Clifford, Safran proposes a defining model to diasporas: (1) they are formed by expatriate minority communities that are dispersed from an original center to at least two peripheral places; (2) these communities maintain a memory or myth about their original homeland; (3) these people do believe they are not fully accepted by their host country; (4) they see the ancestral home as a place to return when the time is right; (5) these communities are

committed to the restoration of this homeland; (6) there is a continuing relationship with the homeland, maintaining a collective identity (CLIFFORD, 1994, p. 304-305).

Clifford perceives the importance of Safran's discussion about diasporas; however, he cautions against the danger of defining diasporas by insisting on an "ideal type", as some groups may be identified as less diasporic because they do not fit in all the features indicated in Safran's model (CLIFFORD, 1994, p. 306). Anh Hua, in Diaspora and Cultural Memory, stresses that we must rethink "earlier versions of diasporic narratives with their fixed notion of home, identity, and exile, where the homeland is perceived nostalgically as an 'authentic' space of belonging, and the place of settlement as somehow 'inauthentic' and undesirable" (HUA, 2005, p. 195). Thus, diasporic characters can relate differently to their homeland and the host country.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Biju's diasporic narrative is different from Saeed Saeed's as they experience and adapt to the host country in different ways. Therefore, diasporas must not be considered through a narrow scope that regards only a few features to describe a plurality of lived experiences.

On the other hand, Panna Lal, Biju's father, had to leave his home while still a teenager in order to work as a servant to Jemubhai Patel. He followed the judge during all his trips to the countryside to procure the law in the far regions of India. Living in Cho Oyu, the cook finds accommodation in a simple and poor hut by the end of the judge's lawn. His physical home as an old man is fragile and susceptible to invasions, such as the police investigation that turned his place over: "The respect on the policemen's faces collapsed instantly when they arrived at the cook's hut buried under a ferocious tangle of nightshade. Here they felt comfortable unleashing their scorn, and they overturned his narrow bed, left his few belongings in a heap" (DESAI, 2006, p. 13).

Rositta Joseph Valiyamattam describes Panna Lal, the cook, as a "nameless universal figure who represents the master-servant divide and the desperation of the poor" (VALIYAMATTAN, 2016, p. 89). The scholar comments that he "feels like an intruder in the land he had loved for so long" as a consequence of the political turmoil that assaulted Kalimpong during the 80s (VALIYAMATTAN, 2016, p. 90).

Thallita Mayra Soares Fernandes, in her thesis *Nações em cima do muro: deslocamentos na poética de Kiran Desai* (2018), discusses how the cook remains unnamed until the final scene of the novel. According to Fernandes, this life fact represents the loss of his dignity and consequent humiliation throughout his journey. Unnamed, the cook lacks even

his subjectivity and humanization as his identity is linked to his function in the household: cooking (FERNANDES, 2018, p. 33).

It is perceptible that Panna Lal has contradictory feelings about India. In some situations, for example, he misses his village in a nostalgic way:

> 'How peaceful our village is. How good the roti tastes there! It is because the *atta* is ground by hand, not by machine . . . and because it is made on a *choolah*, better than anything cooked on a gas or a kerosene stove. . . . Fresh roti, fresh butter, fresh milk still warm from the buffalo...' (DESAI, 2006, p. 103, emphasis by the author).

Nevertheless, he complains about Third World problems, while he imagines First World countries as respectable places full of facilities and benefits:

> since the cook's desire was for modernity: toaster ovens, electric shavers, watches, cameras, cartoon colors. He dreamed at night not in the Freudian symbols that still enmeshed others but in modern codes, the digits of a telephone flying away before he could dial them, garbled television (DESAI, 2006, p. 55).

He displays an inferiority complex in relation to nations and people from the Global North. Panna Lal praises these nations and their culture: "The cook had thought of ham roll ejected from a can and fried in thick ruddy slices, of tuna fish souffle, *khari* biscuit pie, and was sure that since his son was cooking English food, he had a higher position than if he were cooking Indian" (DESAI, 2006, p. 16, emphasis by the author).

On the other hand, Panna Lal has an internalized prejudice against the Global South and he depreciates developing nations: "'Russia! But there aren't any jobs there.' Words again became deflated currency, third-world, bad-luck money" (DESAI, 2006, p. 25). Ruvani Ranasinha remarks that the cook has not escaped from internalizing colonial hierarchies (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 69). He even regards serving the judge Jemubhai as collapsing the social scale as his father and ancestors had served white men only, not fellow Indians: "The cook had been disappointed to be working for Jemubhai. A severe comedown, he thought, from his father, who had served white men only" (DESAI, 2006, p. 63).

Coloniality is so introjected in his identity that Panna Lal considers that as a servant he is a natural suspect in a case of robbery at the judge's crumbling mansion. Therefore, he agrees that the policemen had to inspect his hut because he believes in the idea that servants are almost always guilty: "'well, they have to search everything,' he said. 'Naturally. How are they to know that I am innocent? Most of the time it is the servant that steals'" (DESAI, 2006, p. 19). Thus, those are examples of the coloniality that is still present and tangled to the

imaginary of most former colonies' populations. This is one of his motivations to send Biju, his only son, to the United States.

Avtar Brah considers the representation of home in the context of diaspora and transnational identities. Brah emphasizes that the concept of diaspora "offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire which is not the same thing as desire for a 'homeland'. This distinction is important, because not all diasporas sustain an ideology of 'return'" (BRAH, 1996, p. 177). The scholar also indicates that "the problematic of 'home' and belonging may be integral to the diasporic condition, but how, when, and in what form questions surface, or how they are addressed, is specific to the history of a particular diaspora" (BRAH, 1996, p. 189). Therefore, concerns such as the question of home, a homing desire, the return to the homeland and belonging/ non-belonging should not be dealt with in a rigid manner, because they vary according to each specific diasporic subject.

In Biju's diaspora, for example, we observe that he yearns for home (DESAI, 2006, p. 81) and daydreams about his village (DESAI, 2006, p. 102-103). Sunita Sinha agrees that Biju longs for home and he is not immune from nostalgia (SINHA, 2007, p. 273). He misses his childhood in India, the sense of belonging to a nation and being part of a community, without realizing that the home he wishes to return to may not be there as he imagines it:

> Biju found himself smiling at the memory of the time the whole village had watched India win a test match against Australia on a television running off a car battery because the transformer in the village had burned out. All over India the crops had been rotting in the fields, the nation's prostitutes complaining about lack of business because every male in the country had his eyes glued to the screen. He thought of samosas adjoining a spill of chutney coming by on a leaf plate. A place where he could never be the only one in a photograph (DESAI, 2006, p. 270).

Stuart Hall, in his 1993 essay Cultural Identity and Diaspora (1993), considers the question of cultural identity, but also the idea of home and diaspora. The scholar echoes Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined community" as Hall states that we cannot go back home again, because the original place is no longer there; it has been transformed by History (HALL, 1993, p. 231-232). Iain Chambers (1990) highlights that "we can never go home, return to the primal scene, to the forgotten moment of our beginnings and 'authenticity', for there is always something else between. We cannot return to a bygone unit" (apud HALL, 1999, p. 3). In her turn, Mary Chamberlain (1998) studies life histories of Barbadian migrants to the UK. Many of her interviewees "feel that 'home' has changed beyond all recognition" and they are happy to be home, "but history has somehow irrevocably intervened" (apud

HALL, 1999, p. 3). This is what happens to Biju: when he returns home, he will perceive a completely different India.

Nikos Papastergiadis, in *The Turbulence of Migration* (2000), discusses the turbulence of modern migration and how it affects the way we understand our sense of belonging in the world (PAPASTERGIADIS, 2000, p. 2). According to Papastergiadis, "the metaphor of the journey, the figure of the stranger and the experience of displacement have been at the centre of many of the cultural representations of modernity" (PAPASTERGIADIS, 2000, p. 10-11). The critic notes that home is no longer defined in terms of a fixed location and that the dynamics of displacement is intrinsic to migration and modernity (PAPASTERGIADIS, 2000, p. 12). Likewise, while discussing migration, in the chapter Migrations, Diasporas, and Borders, Susan Stanford Friedman supports that migration is "a history of dislocation and relocation, displacement and emplacement, losing homes and making new homes, living in a limbo between worlds and adapting over time to new ways, being changed by and also changing the culture of the adopted land" (FRIEDMAN, 2007, p. 264). Therefore, Papastergiadis and Friedman agree that the feeling of displacement can be a result of the dislocations involved in migration, they suggest that there's a potential for transformation embedded in displacement.

Biju's displacement and isolation are discernible during his stay in the host country. Rositta Valiyamattan suggests that Biju embodies the plight of the have-nots during the economic crisis of the 1980s. His hopes are defeated and he "finds that life is hell for illegal immigrants shunned by well-settled Indians and harassed by employers and government officials" (VALIYAMATTAN, 2016, p. 91). The critic draws attention to the fact that Biju suffers from "the dehumanizing post-colonial dilemma with all its rootlessness, alienation and complexes" (VALIYAMATTAN, 2016, p. 96). It is possible to notice his displacement and loneliness in the novel. For instance, Biju spent some time working as a delivery boy, using a bike. When winter comes, he puts a padding of leftover newspapers down his shirt. However, this strategy is not enough to stand the cold weather and he begins to cry alone in the street, conscious of his great sorrow: "once, on his bicycle, he began to weep from the cold, and the weeping unpicked a deeper vein of grief—such a terrible groan issued from between the whimpers that he was shocked his sadness was so profound" (DESAI, 2006, p. 51).

To make matters worse his status as an undocumented immigrant forces him to a transient life, hiding from the authorities while searching for illegal opportunities of work in the global city. Biju "lived intensely" with other immigrants and all of a sudden they would

disappear. Hence, the young man felt lonely again and decided to avoid friendships as they caused him too much pa*In:*

> This was what happened, he had learned by now. You lived intensely with others, only to have them disappear overnight, since the shadow class was condemned to movement. The men left for other jobs, towns, got deported, returned home, changed names. Sometimes someone came popping around a corner again, or on the subway, then they vanished again. Addresses, phone numbers did not hold. The emptiness Biju felt returned to him over and over, until eventually he made sure not to let friendships sink deep anymore (DESAI, 2006, p. 102).

Several other characters share Biju's predicaments. Together, they represent a class of exploited, disadvantaged subjects who struggle to eke out a living without managing to escape the cycle of poverty that led them to leave their home countries in the first place.

Biju never feels at home in the host country. For most of his stay in the United States, his physical home in the diaspora is represented by the invisible lodgings in Harlem, where he can barely find space to sleep and feels constantly nervous (DESAI, 2006, p. 51-52). During the period he works for Harish-Harry at the Gandhi Café, he works and lives in the same space, but he and his fellow illegals have to sleep in the kitchen of the establishment; thus Biju does not find a home away from home there either:

> At the Gandhi Café, amid oversized pots and sawdusty sacks of masalas, he set up his new existence. The men washed their faces and rinsed their mouths over the kitchen sink, combed their hair in the postage stamp mirror tacked above, hung their trousers on a rope strung across the room, along with the dishtowels. At night they unrolled their bedding wherever there was room (DESAI, 2006, p. 147).

When the owner left, the employees slept on the tables of the restaurant because they found these more comfortable than the kitchen space. Excruciating accommodations are part of the daily life of many undocumented workers, who, as Biju, are subject to the cruelty of materialistic bosses. His daily life also presents far from the hospitable reception immigrants dream of finding in the diaspora. Instead, many face terrible working conditions and prejudice that will be discussed in detail in the third chapter of this thesis.

The metropolis does not usually welcome illegal immigrants. Like Biju, this shadow class has less access to the usual places that are visited by legal immigrants, such as touristic attractions and entertainment facilities. Biju stays in America for three years, but the narrator comments that he left the country without ever visiting tourist sights in New York and oblivious even to the name of the US president who was in charge when he lived there:

> In the mirror of this bathroom, Biju saluted himself. Here he was, on his way home, without name or knowledge of the American president, without the name of the river on whose bank he had lingered, without even hearing about any of the tourist

> sights—no Statue of Liberty, Macy's, Little Italy, Brooklyn Bridge, Museum of Immigration; no bialy at Barney Greengrass, soupy dumpling at Jimmy's Shanghai, no gospel churches of Harlem tour (DESAI, 2006, p. 286).

Illegal immigrants hope to survive and achieve success in the global city; sightseeing is not a priority. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Biju wanders through the ugly parts of the city, where unwanted homeless people and pets are found. Together with these other "invisible" inhabitants of the city, Biju experiences the shocking reality of the cosmopolis, a combination of loneliness and physical and emotional displacement:

> After work, he crossed to the river, not to the part where the dogs played madly in hanky-sized squares, with their owners in the fracas picking up feces, but […] He walked to the far end where the homeless man often slept in a dense chamber of green that seemed to grow not so much from soil as from a fertile city crud. A homeless chicken also lived in the park. Every now and then Biju saw it scratching in a homey manner in the dirt and felt a pang for village life (DESAI, 2006, p. 81);

> The park lamps had come on by the time Biju climbed the urine-stinking stone steps to the street, and the lights were dissolving in the gloaming—to look at them made everyone feel like they were crying. In front of the stage-set nightlight of the city, he saw the homeless man walking stiffly, as if on artificial legs, crossing with his grocery cart of rubbish to his plastic igloo where he would wait out the storm.
> Biju walked back to the Gandhi Café, thinking he was emptying out. Year by year, his life wasn't amounting to anything at all; in a space that should have included family, friends, he was the only one displacing the air (DESAI, 2006, p. 268).

Ranasinha perceives that "Biju's travails as an illegal migrant worker challenge dominant postcolonial literary representations of migrancy, which have long tended to view it as a free-floating cosmopolitanism and privilege" (RANASINHA, 2018, p. 242). Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida, in *Cartografias Contemporâneas: Espaço, Corpo, Escrita* (2015), emphasizes that Biju learns slowly that he must adapt and assimilate to the American way of life and capitalist perspective in order to survive in the host country. He must distance himself from beliefs belonging to the Indian tradition to fit in the system as a good immigrant (ALMEIDA, 2015, p. 176). Underprivileged, Biju has to decide between assimilation and sticking to his beliefs.

After observing a dead insect in a sack of basmati rice, Biju wonders about his own journey. He notes the contradictions and the injustice, because Indians had to travel around the world to be able to eat such a product without being rich, while it was extremely expensive close to home:

> While Saeed was collecting shoes, Biju had been cultivating self-pity. Looking at a dead insect in the sack of basmati that had come all the way from Dehra Dun, he almost wept in sorrow and marvel at its journey, which was tenderness for his own journey. In India almost nobody would be able to afford this rice, and you had to

> travel around the world to be able to eat such things where they were cheap enough that you could gobble them down without being rich; and when you got home to the place where they grew, you couldn't afford them anymore (DESAI, 2006, p. 191).

Three years after his arrival in the United States, Biju considers again his solitude, isolation, sadness and the possibility of losing his affection for his father and country if he managed to stay in the US, because he would become accustomed to the absence:

> If he continued his life in New York, he might never see his *pitaji* again. It happened all the time; ten years passed, fifteen, the telegram arrived, or the phone call, the parent was gone and the child was too late. Or they returned and found they'd missed the entire last quarter of a lifetime, their parents like photograph negatives. And there were worse tragedies. After the initial excitement was over, it often became obvious that the love was gone; for affection was only a habit after all, and people, they forgot, or they became accustomed to its absence (DESAI, 2006, p. 233, emphasis by the author).

Unable to assimilate to the new culture and to let go of deeply-rooted beliefs, Biju who is faced with unrelentingly harsh conditions of living during his stay in America, is assailed fear, self-pity and a growing nostalgia for home. In New York, Mr. Iype, the newsagent, tells Biju that the Indian-Nepalese are making a lot of trouble in the area of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. There are not only strikes, but the whole hillside is shut down. Biju is worried about his father as he has not received letters from home for a long time. The young immigrant phones home and he is reassured by Panna Lal that there is no trouble. The father omits from Biju the chaos that is dominating Kalimpong as the GNFL is demanding their rights over the region (DESAI, 2006, p. 228-232). In the following weeks, businesses are closed, properties are burned, the phone lines are cut and the roads are bombed in the area. Biju tries to phone his father again unsuccessfully. The newsagent alerts Biju that the region is under political turmoil and that the Indian-Nepalese are considered very violent (DESAI, 2006, p. 266). Nevertheless, as a consequence of his emptiness and displacement in the global city, Biju decides to return home.

His final journey is marked by suffering as he is robbed and humiliated in his way to Kalimpong (DESAI, 2006, p. 316). The thieves leave him a nightgown as the only piece of clothing available to return home in the middle of political chaos:

> One of the men, laughing wildly, pulled a nightgown off a hedge where it was drying. 'No, no, don't give that to him,' squealed a toothless crone, clearly the

> owner of the garment. ‘Let him have it, we’ll buy you another. He’s come from America. How can he go and see his family naked?’ (DESAI, 2006, p. 317).

Finally, he returns home and meets his loving father (DESAI, 2006, p. 324). However, he arrives with far less than he’d ever had as he loses his luggage, his savings and the gifts he had bought to his father, his pride and dignity.

Anh Hua highlights that “diasporic identities and communities are not fixed, rigid, or homogeneous, but are instead fluid, always changing, and heterogeneous” (HUA, 2005, p. 193). She explains that those living in the diaspora have a double perspective: “they acknowledge an earlier existence elsewhere and have a critical relationship with the cultural politics of their present home — all embedded within the experience of displacement” (HUA, 2005, p. 195). Although Biju perceives his homeland through a nostalgic view, he cannot return to the India of his imagination. The return to his home country is marked by a long journey, waiting and humiliation in the way to the raided Kalimpong. By the end of the novel, Biju seems more critical and aware about the double perspective mentioned by Hua, because he feels the marginalization, discrimination and nonbelonging suffered by the less privileged both at home and abroad.

Stuart Hall, in his 1993 essay, does not relate diaspora to “scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return” (HALL, 1993, p. 235). On the contrary, Hall observes the diaspora experience as marked by heterogeneity and diversity, by a conception of “identity” which lives with and through difference, by hybridity (HALL, 1993, p. 235). In contrast to Biju, Saeed Saeed is marked by hybridity as he negotiates his place both in Zanzibar and in New York.

Saeed Saeed used to be a troublesome young man in his home country. However, after his first diasporic movement to the United States and return to the homeland, Saeed Saeed is well received by his fellow countrymen (DESAI, 2006, p. 78-79). In New York, he transits easily through the whole city: “‘Ask me the price of any shoes all over Manhattan and I’ll tell you where to get the best price.’ Saeed Saeed again. How did he come popping up all over the city?” (DESAI, 2006, p. 190). Saeed Saeed feels at home in both countries. Thus, he is one of those “people on the move [who] construct homes away from home” (FRIEDMAN, 2004, p. 195).

James Clifford stresses that diasporic cultural forms can never be exclusively nationalist because there are multiple attachments. For instance, they inscribe practices of accommodation as well as resistance to host countries and their norms (CLIFFORD, 1994, p.

307). In Desai's novel, for instance, when Saeed Saeed comes back to America, he continues to find his way through the Big Apple.

Almeida highlights that Saeed Saeed overcomes the cosmopolis' rigid structure as he is able to insert himself comfortably in a system that insists on excluding destitute immigrants (ALMEIDA, 2015, p. 175). Therefore, he is able to negotiate his place like any other character, by adapting selectively to his new home — "'Biju! Hey man.' It was Saeed Saeed oddly wearing a white *kurta* pa-jama with sunglasses, gold chain, and platform shoes, his dreadlocks tied in a ponytail" (DESAI, 2006, p. 121, emphasis by the author) —, while maintaining part of his traditions: "Biju thought of Saeed Saeed who still refused to eat a pig, 'They dirty, man, they messy. First I am Muslim, then I am Zanzibari, then I will BE American'" (DESAI, 2006, p. 136). As a result, both immigrants and American residents feel secure next to him and want to enjoy his company.

On the other hand, Saeed Saeed faces some difficulties in complying with his Zanzibarian family's requests. He was asked several times by his mother to help other immigrants from Zanzibar who would arrive in the US. Saeed Saeed's mother dispensed his phone number and address to them (DESAI, 2006, p. 95). Once, while Saeed Saeed was working at the Queen of Tarts Bakery with Biju, he saw a group from fellow Zanzibarians waiting for him outside the bakery. Saeed Saeed was made desperate and decided to hide. He told his work colleagues to lie to the newcomers, saying that he did not work in that place:

> And in a second he was under the counter.
> '*Oh myeeee God!*' Whispering. 'Tribes, man, *it's the tribes.* Please God. Tell them I don't work here. *How they get this address!* My mother! I told her, 'No more!' *Please!* Omar, Go! Go! *Go tell them to leave.*'
> Outside the bakery stood a group of men, looking weary as if they'd been traveling several lifetimes, scratching their heads and staring at the Queen of Tarts (DESAI, 2006, p. 96, emphasis by the author).

Saeed Saeed used to help his fellow nationals. However, the apartment in which he lived was already full of residents. He explained to his colleagues that if he heard the stories from these newcomers, he would have to help them with everything they needed. For instance, he would have to find a space to accommodate them, share his food and help those relatives who would arrive later. Saeed Saeed compared North-American and Zanzibarian cultures. In America, each person would go shopping separately, prepare and eat their own food as his American girlfriend, Thea, did. In contrast, in Saeed Saeed's hometown the food and resources were shared between families and friends. Therefore, he believed that he would

not save money or food while working in New York if he helped every newly-arrived friend from his place of orig*In:*

> Saeed: 'Those boys, let them in, they will *never* leave. They are desperate. *Desperate.* Once you let them in, once you hear their story, you can't say no, you know their aunty, you know their cousin, you have to help the *whole* family, and once they begin, they will take *everything.* You can't say this is my food, like Americans, and only I will eat it. Ask Thea'—she was the latest pooky poky interest in the bakery—'where she live with three *friends,* everyone go shopping *separately, separately* they cook their dinner, *together* they eat their *separate* food. The fridge they divide up, and into their own place—*their own place!*— they put what is left in a *separate box.* One of the roommates, she put her *name on the box so it say who it belong to!*' His finger went up in uncharacteristic sternness. 'In Zanzibar what one person have *he have to share with everyone,* that is *good,* that is the *right way*— '*But then everyone have nothing, man! That is why I leave Zanzibar'* (DESAI, 2006, p. 98, emphasis by the author).

The dilemma faced by Saeed Saeed exemplifies the cultural differences immigrants have to bear and the unequal opportunities in their respective countries of origin. Even poor illegal immigrants are asked to help other newly-arrived foreigners. They perceive America as a land of opportunities for those who work hard enough. However, this capitalistic belief only helps to perpetuate broken hopes as most of these immigrants will not succeed in the US.

Rositta Valiyamattan defines *The Inheritance of Loss* as the quintessential post-colonial novel. According to Valiyamattan, "the ugly foundations of the glittering first world are laid bare" as Desai reveals the invisible slums created in American cities as people from all over the world race for the American dream (VALIYAMATTAN, 2016, p. 97).

In her turn, Narendra Khandait argues that Desai depicts different sides of the American dream. She first projects America as the most preferred destination for the jobless youth from the Third World countries. However, it "could be seen as an acknowledgment of America's success in selling its dream to the world and, on the other, could also be a critique on American policy of exploiting the poor countries for cheap labour" (KHANDAIT, 2008, p. 174).

The critic emphasizes that Biju and scores of young men from various Third World countries, all of whom had entered America on tourist visa and stayed back after its expiry, are condemned to the "shadow class" and exploitations (KHANDAIT, 2008, p. 175). Biju is an example of a displaced diasporic individual, because he longs for home and feels out of place, he misses his father and culture. However, he avoids making complaints to his father, as he understands that his father's hopes are dependent on him alone. Meanwhile, the cook, Biju's father, back in India, praises the son and boasts about him in the village. According to Almeida, both father and son are displaced and marginalized because they are considered

subaltern individuals wherever they go. For instance, in India, they suffer social exclusion, while Biju is exploited in New York (ALMEIDA, 2015, p. 178).

Nevertheless, in both Panna Lal's and Saeed Saeed's portraits, it is possible to observe how they give value to the idea of the American Dream. The cook highlights its advantages: "'America? No problem there with water or electricity,' he [the cook] said. Awe swelled his words, made them tick smug and fat as first-world money" (DESAI, 2006, p. 24), while Saeed Saeed "[…] pledge emotional allegiance to the flag with tears in his eyes and conviction in his voice. The country recognized something in Saeed, he in it, and it was a mutual love affair" (DESAI, 2006, p. 79). These subjects are influenced by coloniality as they regard their homeland as inferior in comparison to First World nations.

Valiyamattan argues that the colonial impact is seen in all the characters. For instance, Panna Lal dreams of working for a "white sahib" (VALIYAMATTAN, 2016, p. 96). Biju represents poor third world immigrants as

> the economic crisis of the 1980s leads millions to queuing up before Western embassies, cringing in their black skin and adoring the white-skinned officers who would decide their destiny. Illegal immigrants are dismissed after extracting cheap labour and lead a fugitive life. Many cannot escape and for those who do, it is too late to salvage a lost lifetime (VALIYAMATTAM, 2016, p. 97).

Rositta Valiyamattan summarizes Desai's critique in *The Inheritance of Loss*: "losing one's identity and yet pretending to retain it, enduring a divided existence and deep loneliness is the price paid for living in the great American melting pot" (VALIYAMATTAN, 2016, p. 99).

The movements of mass migrations after World War II have led to a different framework of diasporas. Diasporas were earlier regarded as the traumatic pasts of dispersed populations. In a contemporary view, "diasporas" can also refer to the traumatic experiences suffered by marginalized immigrants in the present. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* portrays the difficulties faced by economic migrants who have a background of poverty, prejudice and humiliations. However, the relation between each diasporic narrative and its concern with home and belonging is different as there are multiple variables that must be taken into consideration — such as country of origin, ethnicity, language, immigrations status, age, generation, gender, sexuality, education, occupation and locality as well as immigrants' reception in the host country — when studying diasporas. Biju, Panna Lal and Saeed Saeed are examples of underprivileged characters that are part of Desai's representations of diasporic subjects in her second novel. Nevertheless, each of them has a particular diasporic

journey. The ideal of the American Dream is what unites Panna Lal, Biju, and Saeed Saeed together with other foreigners who see the US as a way to escape the inequalities, poverty and conflicts in their respective countries. Desai's depiction of their shattered hopes, losses, and occasional gains (in the case of Saeed Saeed) along their diasporic journeys are a relevant and credible representation of how illegal immigrants live and struggle to survive in the world's global cities.

3 REVISITING COSMOPOLITANISMS, DIASPORIC MARGINALITY AND MIGRANT LABOR

Cosmopolitanism is a concept that proposes that humans can be citizens of the world through the sharing of intellectual ideas, moral codes and compassion. It is also central to the discussion of hospitality towards strangers and foreigners. However, critics have argued that, in the European tradition, the concept was manifested as a form of universal humanitarianism, where the upper-classes would assume the task of being protectors of colonial subjects, implying in intervention projects. Since the late 20th century, many scholars have proposed plural cosmopolitanisms that embrace diversity and include people who are in subaltern positions. These cosmopolitanisms may provide possibilities of agency and presence for those who are in the margins.

The term cosmopolitanism, meaning "citizen of the cosmos", has its origins with the Cynics and Stoics. Philosopher Kwame Akroma-Ampim Kusi Anthony Appiah, in the introduction to his *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006), suggests that there are two strands that intertwine in the notion of cosmopolitanism. First, the idea that we "have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship" (APPIAH, 2006). Second, we should take seriously the value of human lives and learn from our differences. According to Kwame Appiah, cosmopolitanism begins with the simple idea that we need to develop habits of coexistence in the human community as in national communities: living together, association, conversation between people from different ways of life (APPIAH, 2006). Thus, Appiah proposes cosmopolitanism as a possible solution to the collision of cultures in the world.

Bruce Robbins, professor at Columbia University, in his introduction to *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (1998), observes that cosmopolitanism has often seemed to claim universality as a fundamental devotion to the interests of humanity as a whole. The old ideal of cosmopolitanism refers to the allegiance to the worldwide community of human beings. Therefore, there was only one cosmopolitanism possible (ROBBINS, 1998, p. 2). The scholar highlights that contemporary readings have suggested that the term should be extended to transnational experiences that "are particular rather than universal and that are unprivileged" (ROBBINS, 1998, p. 1). Thus, recent usages of the term have recognized cosmopolitanisms as plural and particular. In addition, they are

located and embodied in actual historical and geographical contexts (ROBBINS, 1998, p. 2-3).

As Robbins, literary critic and scholar Silviano Santiago, in O cosmopolitismo do pobre (2004), comments about an older multiculturalism that refers to the Western civilization constructed by colonizers. Although this multiculturalism is portrayed as encouraging the pacific coexistence between different ethnic and social groups, its foundations lay on the idea of acculturation and silencing of minorities (SANTIAGO, 2004, p. 54-56). The scholar discusses a new form of multiculturalism that intends to regard poor migrants in global cities and underprivileged ethnic and social groups in nation-states: "the cosmopolitanism of the poor". He mentions the support given by NGOs together with civil society to sustain this movement and emphasizes that there is a strong need to reconfigure cosmopolitanism in order to consider new and old inhabitants that were marginalized throughout historical processes (SANTIAGO, 2004, p. 59).

The term "marginal" came into use in the 16th century to refer to something written or printed in the margin of a page. In the following centuries, its meaning was extended to diverse fields of study. *New keywords* indicates that, in the 20th century, the term marginal "was used to refer to an individual or social group isolated from or not conforming to the dominant society or culture; (perceived as being) on the edge of a society or social unit; belonging to a minority group" (PATTON, 2005, p. 203). In most contemporary usages, to be marginal is to have less power and to be at some distance from the center of power (PATTON, 2005, p. 204). In *The Inheritance of Loss* the question of marginality is addressed by Kiran Desai in relation to migration and cosmopolitanisms, making visible those themes and people who find themselves in the margins. Thus, this chapter aims at analyzing the meanings of cosmopolitanisms and the representations of migrant labor and diasporic marginality in Desai's novel, with a special focus on global cities and their inhabitants. The chapter also intends to study the fear of minorities that is related to immigrants' marginality.

In Cosmopolitas e subalternos: Kiran Desai e a poética do deslocamento nos espaços transnacionais from the collection of essays *A voz e o olhar do outro* (2010), Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida declares that contemporary cosmopolitan cities have become places that enable transcultural contacts. Simultaneously, cities are marked by conflicts and contradictions. The scholar observes that contemporary critics of cosmopolitanism emphasize the idea of plural cosmopolitanisms that focus on a range of new characters, such as refugees, diasporic subjects, immigrants and exiles that form a new cosmopolitan community (ALMEIDA, 2010, p. 115).

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the cosmopolis represented by Desai is populated by new and old inhabitants. These new residents are immigrants, mostly undocumented, who come from a variety of countries. In addition, she includes characters that are considered indigenous, either because they were born in the United States or because they have been there for a while and have assimilated the local culture. Desai's depiction of New York could be extended to other global cities around the world as her descriptions present a universal appeal.

The author gives prominence to the representation of the hopes, conflicts and difficulties faced by those who embark on diasporic journeys to work as undocumented immigrants in the cosmopolis. In contrast, Desai also portrays the lives of affluent Indians studying and working in America. These depictions reveal how social, cultural and ethnic differences mark experiences and access to global mobility, urban infrastructure, health care and job security.

Global cities as places where a multiplicity of cultures comes together is the main topic addressed by Saskia Sassen in *Globalization and its Discontents* (1998). Through immigration, highly localized cultures have become present in many large cities. While corporate power identifies these cultures as "other", they are present everywhere, and its members play crucial even if invisible roles in global cities. Therefore, Sassen gives prominence to the formation of new claims by marginalized people, who represent disadvantaged sectors of the urban population (SASSEN, 1998, p. xxxiv).

Kiran Desai's novel uncovers how subaltern immigrants sustain the basis of economic processes of globalization. As Sassen explains in her book, national and global markets require central places where the work of globalization gets done, the cities (SASSEN, 1998, p. xxii). The scholar calls attention to the whole infrastructure of jobs typically not marked as belonging to the corporate sector of economy: types of firms, workers, work cultures, and residential milieu that are not recognized as being part of globalization processes (SASSEN, 1998, p. xxiv). In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai portrays these disadvantaged people working in the basement kitchens (DESAI, 2006, p. 22-23) and as taxi drivers (DESAI, 2006, p. 98-99) in New York. Commenting on the role of these characters in the novel, Ruvani Ranasinha highlights how the exploitation of the underpaid laborers supports the upper-middle class characters' privileged way of life (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 70).

Professor Renato Cordeiro Gomes, in his article A cidade, a literatura e os estudos culturais: do tema ao problema (1999), stresses that there are many problems concerning the widespread population growth in global cities. He mentions pollution, poor public

transportation, sanitation problems and housing issues, among others (GOMES, 1999, p. 19). Gomes emphasizes the contrast between extreme poverty and extreme wealth concentrated in global cities. As a consequence, the critic points that the culture of fear and violence has been rising. Moreover, those cities are not homogeneous anymore as they are marked by multiple cultures in the same urban space (GOMES, 1999, p. 19-20). Therefore, Renato Gomes highlights the importance of urban studies and the relation between city and cultures.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, illegal immigrants have to bear unsanitary conditions and dreadful accommodations. They receive lower wages than documented workers and are subject to blackmail and humiliation by employers. While working in the Gandhi Café, Biju skidded on some rotten spinach on the kitchen floor and fell. His knee was hurt and he could not get up or walk by himself (DESAI, 2006, p. 187). The young immigrant said it was his boss' responsibility because the accident happened in the workplace. Harish-Harry, the owner of the establishment, did not take Biju to a doctor, because as an illegal immigrant, Biju would be discovered and Harish-Harry's business would be closed. In addition, the boss did not want to pay for his medical expenses. Biju received only fifty dollars from his employer and was told to lie down and help cutting the vegetables in the restaurant's kitchen. The boss even suggested him to leave his job and go back to India, where medical treatment was cheaper (DESAI, 2006, p. 189). Desai's novel, set in the 80s, illustrates how most undocumented workers are subject to a lack of rights, terrible working and living conditions and no proper health care.

Illegal immigrants may circulate in the same spaces as others inhabitants, but in different times of the day. Biju, for instance, feared deportation and avoided meeting police officers when he moved through the city: "At 4:25 A.M., Biju made his way to the Queen of Tarts bakery, watching for the cops who sometimes came leaping out" (DESAI, 2006, p. 75). Although they live in the same city, there is a spatial hierarchy and segregation concerning undocumented workers and inhabitants who have a legal status. Segregation is also strongly present in the workplace of most illegal laborers. Ranasinha remarks that "spatial hierarchy and the segregation of the New York restaurant economy is a powerful metaphor for the ordering of the undocumented migrant's existence" (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 77). Desai exposes how establishments such as restaurants maintain poor illegal immigrants separated and invisible from upper-class customers:

> *Biju at the Baby Bistro.* Above, the restaurant was French, but below in the kitchen it was Mexican and Indian. And, when a Paki was hired, it was Mexican, Indian, Pakistani.

> Biju at Le Colonial for the authentic colonial experience. On top, rich colonial, and down below, poor native. Colombian, Tunisian, Ecuadorian, Gambian (DESAI, 2006, p. 21, emphasis by the author).

Ranasinha underlines how Desai compares the exploitation of unregulated immigrants both in New York and in Paris, cities that belong to the Global North. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, while there are immigrants from around the world in New York, most immigrants at European cities come from their former colonies:

> What were they thinking? Do restaurants in Paris have cellars full of Mexicans, *desis*, and Pakis?
> No, they do not. What are you thinking?
> They have cellars full of Algerians, Senegalese, Moroccans. . . . (DESAI, 2006, p. 23, emphasis by the author).

The colonial segregation is perpetuated. Therefore, these diasporic destitutes end up as servants, invisible yet necessary to the proper functioning of elite spaces.

The excerpts selected from the novel so far clearly point to the importance of rethinking the concept of cosmopolitanism. In the article A cidade como arena da multiculturalidade (2004), Renato Gomes argues that in a post-modern and post-colonial moment, cosmopolitanism cannot be articulated from a single point of view. Like other scholars previously mentioned in this chapter, Gomes posits that we must take into consideration diversity and the discourse of those who are in the margins (GOMES, 2004, p. 11). Similarly, Desai's novel portrays the peripheral world in which the invisible and marginalized workers struggle to live and survive: "Then, of course, there were those who lived and died illegal in America and never saw their families, not for ten years, twenty, thirty, never again" (DESAI, 2006, p. 99).

The Inheritance of Loss draws attention to the claustrophobic and divided cityscape of New York, where illegal laborers are inhabitants:

> So Biju lay on his mattress and watched the movement of the sun through the grate on the row of buildings opposite. From every angle that you looked at this city without a horizon, you saw more buildings going up like jungle creepers, starved for light, holding a perpetual half darkness congealed at the bottom, the day shafting through the maze, slivering into apartments at precise and fleeting times, a cuprous segment visiting between 10 and 12 perhaps, or between 10 and 10:45, between 2:30 and 3:45 (DESAI, 2006, p. 187).

There, these undocumented workers manage to be unseen and unheard as there is the constant fear of deportation.

Desai represents the reality of people who are wanted only as servants to sustain a neoliberal economy. By situating her novel in the 80s, Desai denounces how these undocumented immigrants are exploited as cheap laborers. The narrator comments how establishments had a constant shift of illegal employees. At the Queen of Tarts bakery, "there had been Karim, Nedim, and Jesus" before "Biju, Saeed, Omar, and Kavafya" (DESAI, 2006, p. 102). After the bakery was closed because a customer found an entire mouse baked inside a sunflower loaf, Saeed "quickly found employment at a Banana Republic" (DESAI, 2006, p. 102). The narrator comments that Saeed Saeed would now sell sophisticated clothes in a shop "whose name was synonymous with colonial exploitation and the rapacious ruin of the third world" (DESAI, 2006, p. 102). What is more, the company hired an undocumented employee, probably offering lower wages and fewer benefits than those destined to legal citizens. In the novel, during his early days in America, Biju was invited several times by his work colleagues to visit "Dominican women in Washington Heights — only thirty-five dollars!" (DESAI, 2006, p. 16). Biju hid his shyness from his colleagues by saying that they would get some disease if they visited prostitutes. Biju did not decline the opportunity because these were Dominican women, but because he was a shy nineteen-year old man, who felt even younger then he actually was. Desai's novel does not develop this issue, but it is a noteworthy fact that the prostitutes are foreigners and, in all likelihood, illegal residents. Therefore, together with kitchen assistants, deliverers, servants, taxi drivers, sales assistants, these women represent a class of immigrants that have to work in undesirable and marginalized occupations in order to survive in the global city.

Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida, in *Cartografias Contemporâneas: Espaço, Corpo, Escrita* (2015), and Silviano Santiago, in O cosmopolitismo do pobre (2004), examine the uncomfortable position that the destitute occupy, as they are not wanted by the nationals, but their labor sustains the lifestyle of an elite. Sandra Almeida highlights that transient individuals from Third World countries are seduced by the promise of achieving better life conditions if they migrate to a First World nation. However, their hopes are defeated as they face exploitation, violence and abuse instead of a hospitable reception (ALMEIDA, 2015, p. 175). The novel *The Inheritance of Loss* gives prominence to the fact that migrants' labor force is the hidden basis that sustains authentic cuisine establishments (DESAI, 2006, p. 21). The narrator emphasizes employers' preoccupation with "the balance, perfectly first-world on top, perfectly third-world twenty-two steps below" (DESAI, 2006, p. 22-23).

Almeida stresses the fact that Biju not only works in the basement kitchens of New York's cosmopolitans restaurants, but he also lives in the basement of a building in the

bottom of Harlem during part of his stay in the global city. Hence, his position is literally inferior to the citizens of the cosmopolis, sharing the space with rats and insects (ALMEIDA, 2015, p. 174-175). This precarious accommodation is illegally rented "by the week, by the month, and even by the day, to fellow illegals" (DESAI, 2006, p. 51-52). The narrator criticizes this condition and the invisibility forced upon this shifting population of illegal workers who are marginalized: "There was one fuse box for the whole building, and if anyone turned on too many appliances or lights, *PHUT*, the entire electricity went, and the residents screamed to nobody, since there was nobody, of course, to hear them" (DESAI, 2006, p. 51-52, emphasis by the author).

In a postmodern moment, cosmopolitanism and democracy can no longer be articulated form a single perspective. In his article, The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism (2000), Walter D. Mignolo proposes not a cosmopolitanism managed from above, but a critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism emerging from the various spatial and historical locations of the colonial difference. Thus, Mignolo argues for a cosmopolitanism from subaltern perspectives that conceive diversity as a cosmopolitan universal project (MIGNOLO, 2000).

In Desai's narrative, only one undocumented character, Saeed Saeed, manages to overcome the barriers imposed by globalization in the global city. Desai's depiction of the United States during the late 20th century portrays few public policies that may help those destitute people who are working as illegals in the country. The immigration hotline, a service that enabled immigrants to seek help and ask for information about the green card does not provide Biju and his colleagues with the help they need "At the bakery, they called the immigration hotline as soon as the clock struck 8:30 and took turns holding the receiver for what might be an all-day activity of line holding. 'What is your status now, sir? I can't help you unless I know your current status'" (DESAI, 2006, p. 81). However, Biju and his colleagues did not identify themselves as undocumented workers to the immigration assistant on the phone. They decided to put down the phone as they feared that the immigration office might trace their telephone number and deport them. The novel also portrays people who have lived in New York as illegals most part of their lives. For instance, in the bakery, Biju and his colleagues watched TV shows on Sunday mornings on the Indian channel. One Sunday, an illegal Indian taxi driver working in New York appeared on the screen. The narrator comments that "he was illegal, his taxi was illegal, the yellow paint was illegal, his whole family was here, and all the men in his village were here, perfectly infiltrated and working within the cab system of the city" (DESAI, 2006, p. 99). The taxi driver questions how to get

their papers and become legal citizens. This passage suggests that many people accept to live as undocumented workers in the U.S. during entire lives in search of better living conditions for them and their relatives.

Kiran Desai not only criticizes economic processes that continue an imperial dynamic of power imbalance and coloniality, but also points out even if indirectly the need of a cosmopolitanism from below as a possibility of agency and presence to the marginalized people. Conversely, the author represents affluent characters that take advantage of an older cosmopolitanism, reserved to the elites. Oana Sabo, professor at Tulane University, suggests that Desai's novel ironically depicts cosmopolitanism primarily associated with Indian aristocratic classes, who can afford to experience a feeling of cultural kinship to the world (SABO, 2012, p. 378). These people are described as having the means to move through nations, to buy brand-name products and enjoy entertainment provided by the metropolis. In the American embassy in India, while Biju waited for a visa, an Indian upper-class citizen talked to an officer to explain that he wanted a visa for leisure purposes and he intended to return home as he did before: "'I have been abroad before and I have always returned. You can see from my passport.' England. Switzerland. America. Even New Zealand. Looking forward, when in New York, to the latest movie, to pizza, to Californian wine, also Chilean" (DESAI, 2006, p. 186). During Biju's application for a visa in India, the narrator observes how characters from the Indian elites try to distance and differentiate themselves from the crowd of poor migrants waiting for days to receive a visa:

> And those who waited for visas who had spacious homes, ease-filled lives, jeans, English, driver-driven cars waiting outside to convey them back to shady streets, […] all this time they had been trying to separate themselves from the vast shabby crowd. By their manner, dress, and accent, they tried to convey to the officials that they were a preselected, numerically restricted, perfect-for-foreign-travel group (DESAI, 2006, p. 185-186).

The novel portrays the old cosmopolitan style from Biju's employers, representative of an elite. Odessa and Baz are the owners of Brigitte's, a restaurant in New York's financial district. Odessa's discourse is marked by ideas of coloniality as she complains about populations from former colonies claiming their rights. After reading the international news, she criticizes and mocks the news of subaltern claims by comparing them to claims on ancestral Neanderthal possessions: "'Rule of nature,' said Odessa to Baz. 'Imagine if we were sitting around saying, 'So-and-so-score years ago, Neanderthals came out of the woods, attacked my family with a big dinosaur bone, and now you give back'" (DESAI, 2006, p. 134). The narrator comments that Odessa and Baz drank "Tailors of Harrowgate" Darjeeling

tea (DESAI, 2006, p. 133). The English tea which was cultivated in India was the same from colonial times. These upper-class citizens enjoyed it as the colonizers did in the past. The primary goods from India were sold to the cosmopolitan world by an European company, that received more profits than the farmers. Therefore, modernity continues many of the practices from colonialism.

Almeida highlights that some employers in the novel illustrate a wild capitalistic perspective as they exploit the transient individuals' labor force (ALMEIDA, 2015, p. 175). Harish-Harry, the Indian owner of the Gandhi Café together with his wife Malini express their capitalistic strategies by controlling employees, offering free housing in the kitchen of their establishment, reclaiming the tips, and forcing them to work more than fifteen hours a day for a quarter of the minimum wage (DESAI, 2006, p. 145-147). As other establishments, the sanitary conditions were terrible and the restaurant was full of rats. At first, Biju is attracted by the idea of working in an all-Hindu establishment, where people are ostensibly treated as a family and where he could respect his religious beliefs, including not preparing food with cow meat. Upon meeting Biju, Harish-Harry made clear that his establishment only served Hindu dishes and that all his employees were Indians: "To Biju he said: 'Beef? Are you crazy? We are an all-Hindu establishment. No Pakistanis, no Bangladeshis, those people don't know how to cook […]'. One week later, Biju was in the kitchen and Gandhi's favorite tunes were being sung over the sound system" (DESAI, 2006, p. 139). However, he starts to learn his boss' duality concerning business. Harish-Harry, a person with two names, is extremely flexible concerning his beliefs and actions. His Hindu version would support a cow shelter and treat customers as friends. On the other hand, his American and capitalistic version would become angry with his staff, despise clients behind their backs and exploit servants. This duality enabled Harish-Harry to assimilate capitalistic ideas and put them in practice in his business in the United States. He even keeps repeating axioms that show his capitalistic ve*In:* "'Find your market. Study your market. Cater to your market'" (DESAI, 2006, p. 145); "'Another day another dollar, penny saved is penny earned, no pain no gain, business is business, gotta do what ya gotta do'" (DESAI, 2006, p. 149). His apparent hybrid nature is above all self-serving. His ethnic side is more show than anything else while his practices are clearly corrupt and selfish.

Harish-Harry and his family are representatives of an elite that exploits the work of underpaid laborers. Their old ideal of cosmopolitanism depends on the profit made through the work of poor illegal immigrants, such as Biju and his fellows. The bourgeois family also has more opportunities than those that are denied to the destitute, such as buying a house, a

car and continuing their academic studies. The narrator comments how Harish-Harry and his family used to compare themselves to their wealthy Indian neighbors, the Shah's: "He [Harish-Harry] hoped for a big house, then he hoped for a bigger house even if he had to leave it unfurnished for a while, like his nemesis Mr. Shah who owned seven rooms, all empty except for TV, couch, and carpeting in white" (DESAI, 2006, p. 149). Their competition was not only related to material possessions, but also to social relations. Harish-Harry and his wife comment how their neighbors "hooked a bridegroom" to their daughter (DESAI, 2006, p. 234). In contrast, Harry's daughter was "becoming American" (DESAI, 2006, p. 148). She started dressing as an American girl and rebelling against her father, a fact that caused great sadness to the father. Thus, Harish-Harry's duality enables him to exploit his employees and to make profit based on their illegal work. He maintains a strong consumerism and competes with his wealthy Indian fellows in America about who has more possessions. Simultaneously, Harish-Harry wants his family to maintain Indian traditions, such as dressing as Hindus and behaving accordingly.

Kiran Desai also depicts Indian students in the United States that come from wealthy families. Ranasinha emphasizes that "Biju exists on the periphery of the lives of the affluent Indians in America. Their paths cross only when he delivers their take-away" (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 75). Desai portrays a group of Indian girls who belong to an English-speaking upper-educated class. They seem polite to Biju, but still maintain some distance as they belong to different strata from society:

> You should buy topi-muffler-gloves to be ready for the winter. The shiny-eyed girl said it many ways so that the meaning might be conveyed from every angle—that he might comprehend their friendliness completely in this meeting between Indians abroad of different classes and languages, rich and poor, north and south, top caste bottom caste (DESAI, 2006, p. 50).

That Biju has a hard time making ends meet and cannot afford adequate winter clothing does not seem to cross the mind of the well-meaning young woman. The narrator remarks the physical segregation in the scene between these two different classes of Indians abroad: upper-class educated Indians girls, studying in the U.S., and a bottom-caste poor illegal Indian immigrant, who delivers take-away food. First, Biju stands at the apartment's threshold, separated from their domain, which was "suffused with Indian femininity in there, abundant amounts of sweet newly washed hair, gold strung Kolhapuri slippers lying about. Heavyweight accounting books sat on the table along with a chunky Ganesh brought all the way from home" (DESAI, 2006, p. 49). After delivering their order, there is a contrast

between Biju in the cold weather outside their window and the girls dining inside comfortably. The novel, in a sense, depicts two Indian groups apart that only intersect when Biju is serving the wealthy classes.

Biju's father, Panna Lal, is happy to hear that his doctor's son is also in the United States. Thus, Panna Lal naively believes that he and the doctor share some sort of recognition among their community in Kalimpong:

> He went into Lark's Store for Tosh's tea, egg noodles, and Milkmaid condensed milk. He told the doctor, who had come in to collect the vaccines that she stored in the Lark's fridge, 'My son has a new job in U.S.A.' Her son was there as well. He shared this with a doctor! The most distinguished personage in town (DESAI, 2006, p. 85).

As a matter of fact, in America both young men are living and being treated in different ways. While Biju suffers as an illegal laborer, the doctor's son, who belongs to an old cosmopolitan Indian elite, is studying in the U.S. However, Biju's father is unable to see this difference as he is blinded by his pride and by the illusion of his son's pursuit of the American Dream.

Silviano Santiago contributes to the discussion on cosmopolitanism as he explains that the destitute people in the world are attracted to the post-modern metropolis for economic and clandestine reasons. As a consequence, there is a new form of social inequality forged. There, living in poor neighborhoods and working as cheap labor force, those poor immigrants experience a future in which they do not participate properly, only as disqualified manual workers. They must be willing to accept household and cleaning tasks, for instance. Furthermore, the poor must agree to transgress the national immigration laws (SANTIAGO, 2004, p. 51). Desai exposes illegal workers' reality when Biju is forced to leave his job in a frankfurter snack bar because the manager of their branch was instructed to do a green card check on his employees: "Just disappear quietly is my advice" (DESAI, 2006, p. 15-16).

The question of undocumented workers and their efforts to stay in the host country may be related to a flexible notion of citizenship. Aihwa Ong, professor of Anthropology at University of California, Berkeley, argues that in the era of globalization a flexible notion of citizenship and sovereignty was developed as a strategy to accumulate capital and power (ONG, 1999). The term "flexible citizenship" refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that influence subjects to "respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions" (ONG, 1999). That is to say, subjects emphasize, and are regulated by, practices favoring flexibility, mobility, and repositioning in relation to markets, governments, and cultural regimes. Aihwa Ong

emphasizes that the multiple-passport holder is an apt contemporary figure, as he or she represents the split between state-imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migration, and changing global markets. A passport used to be a confirmation of citizenship and a proof of loyalty to a nation-state. However, now passports are becoming more related to claims to participate in labor markets (ONG, 1999).

Aihwa Ong's propositions are reflected in Kiran Desai's portrayal of immigrants who attempt to win a green card, a Permanent Residence Card (PRC), in the United States. This card is a proof that the legal immigrant who holds it has some of the constitutional rights that all American citizens have. In the novel, the characters' motivations lie in an attempt to live and work in the host country as legal citizens, who can travel freely between nations, receive benefits, better wages and avoid deportation.

In addition, considering immigration laws, Ranasinha states that "Desai illuminates how the market and global economy run by multinational corporations set the agenda for governments' immigration policies: the decision of who is of value and who is not" (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 78). For instance, it is noteworthy that the novelist portrays simultaneously governments' immigration policies influenced by global economy and immigrants' desire to be fortunate flexible citizens. Saeed Saeed is one of those who apply for the PRC lottery:

> The green card, the green card— Saeed applied for the immigration lottery each year, but Indians were not allowed to apply. Bulgarians, Irish, Malagasys—on and on the list went, but no, no Indians. There were just too many jostling to get out, to pull everyone else down, to climb on one another's backs and run. The line would be stopped up for years, the quota was full, overfull, spilling over (DESAI, 2006, p. 81).

During some time, Biju is also anxious and focused on winning a green card: "Without it he couldn't leave. To leave he wanted a green card. This was the absurdity. How he desired the triumphant After The Green Card Return Home, thirsted for it" (DESAI, 2006, p. 99). Ruvani Ranasinha acknowledges that the novel delineates "the extensive industry that has mushroomed in response to the growing pool of illegal migrants within Euro-American cities, for instance, when Biju and his friends are duped by a group that fraudulently claims to offer them the means to legitimise their residency" (RANASINHA, 2016, p. 79). That is, Saeed Saeed, Biju and other work colleagues try to obtain a green card through illegal means. They go to Washington Heights, a neighborhood in the northern portion of Manhattan, where Saeed lives, to "apply" for the card unsuccessfully:

> Finally a battered van came by and they paid into the cracked open door, handed over their photographs taken according to INS requirements showing a single bared ear and a three-quarter profile, and were thumbprinted through the crack. Two weeks later, they waited once more— they waited— and waited— and. . . . The van did not come back. The cost of this endeavor once again emptied Biju's savings envelope (DESAI, 2006, p. 101).

While working in the Gandhi Café, after suffering an accident, Biju quarrels with Harish-Harry, his boss, about the green card. Biju questions why his boss did not sponsor his employees for a green card. Harish-Harry argues against it and exposes the whole process of green card sponsorship by employers during the 80s:

> I have to go to the INS and say that no American citizen can do the job. I have to prove it. I have to prove I advertised it. They will look into my restaurant. They will study and ask questions. And the way they have it, it's the owner who gets put in jail for hiring illegal staff. If you are not happy, then go right now (DESAI, 2006, p. 188).

The owner of the Gandhi Café exploits his employees' labor force. However, he does not want to sponsor their green cards because he might be imprisoned for hiring undocumented staff. Harish-Harry even threatens to replace Biju as there were lots of people looking for a job. He wants his employees to believe that he was being kind to illegally hire them:

> Go find someone to sponsor you. Know how easily I can replace you? *Know how lucky you are!!!* You think there aren't thousands of people in this city looking for a job? I can replace you like this,' he snapped his fingers, 'I'll snap my fingers and in one second hundreds of people will appear. *Get out of my face!* (DESAI, 2006, p. 188, emphasis by the author).

Desai's novel also depicts another way to apply for a permanent residence card when Saeed Saeed marries an American citizen, a waitress who used to work with him. They got married and started practicing for the interviews that would be conducted in order to prove that it was a marriage in good faith, not a marriage of convenience: "She went to city hall with Saeed—rented tuxedo, flowery dress—said 'I do,' under the red white and blue. Now they were practicing for the INS interview: 'What kind of underwear does your husband wear, what toothpaste does your wife favor?'" (DESAI, 2006, p. 121). Hence, Saeed Saeed is an example of a successful flexible citizen, who finds alternatives to construct his home in the U.S. and to attain security and power under his circumstances. At the same time, this passage exposes the sham of the whole process. The apparently strict requirements imposed on those who want to be accepted as legals are often circumvented; what is more, yet another profitable enterprise flourishes, according to the "business is business" principle, to enable

illegal immigrants to get their green card as long as they are willing to spend a lot of money to do so.

In part of her novel, Desai gives prominence to poor illegal immigrants living in New York who belong to a vast illegal global underclass struggling with cultural displacement, poverty, and racial discrimination. Paul Jay notes that "the characters in the New York portion of Desai's narrative are people with precious little time for celebrating their diversity or experiencing the liberatory possibilities of hybridity or multiculturalism" (JAY, 2010, p. 120). The critic highlights that the novel focuses on uneven economic and cultural effects of globalization in the metropolitan West, and its tendency to create and explore an underclass of transnational diasporic workers. Jay examines the national divisions among illegal employees and the "difficulties of having to negotiate a complicated set of relationships based on unfamiliarity with one another's cultural worlds and old historical antagonisms carried over from their homelands" (JAY, 2010, p. 121). Many workers bring their ethnic conflicts with them when they migrate. For instance, Biju was brought up as a Hindu who hated Pakistanis.

In 1947, the dismemberment of the British India territory into two independent states, India and Pakistan (divided into east and west), forced the displacement of the Muslim population and aggravated the grievances that already existed between Hindus and Muslims. The Partition divided families, brought suffering and death to thousands. The hatred against the differences and the stereotypes created to portray each ethnicity became more deeply ingrained. Biju traveled to the U.S. during the 80s. While working in a French restaurant in New York, he got to know that there was a diversity of nationalities working in the same establishment. When a Pakistani arrived to work with him, he avoided talking to the man. Later, they started cursing and throwing cannonball cabbages at each other:

> He [Biju] found he could not talk straight to the man; every molecule of him felt fake, every hair on him went on alert. *Desis* against Pakis. Ah, old war, best war […]This war was not, after all, satisfying; it could never go deep enough, the crick was never cracked, the itch was never scratched; the irritation built on itself, and the combatants itched all the more.
> 'Pigs pigs, sons of pigs, *sooar ka baccha*,' Biju shouted.
> '*Uloo ka patha,* son of an owl, low-down son-of-a-bitch Indian.'
> They drew the lines at crucial junctures. They threw cannonball cabbages at each other (DESAI, 2006, p. 22-23, emphasis by the author).

Biju and the Pakistani's prejudice against each other resulted in their dismissal from the restaurant, because the sound of their fight might have disturbed the clients, affirmed their French boss. Biju faced more dilemmas concerning his prejudice against different nationalities during his stay in New York. The young Indian admired Saeed Saeed and wanted

to be his friend when they met. Nonetheless, Saeed was a Muslim, just as the Pakistani. The narrator comments that Biju started reasoning that Saeed was a kind man and was not a Pakistani. He could like Muslims and hate Pakistanis or he could still like Saeed and hate all the other Muslims. Biju found himself caught in a spiraling dilemma.

> Saeed was kind and he was not Paki. Therefore he was OK?
> The cow was not an Indian cow; therefore it was not holy?
> Therefore he liked Muslims and hated only Pakis?
> Therefore he liked Saeed, but hated the general lot of Muslims?
> Therefore he liked Muslims and Pakis and India should see it was all wrong and hand over Kashmir? (DESAI, 2006, p. 76).

The case turned more difficult as Biju tried to come to terms with the fact that Saeed Saeed was black. He remembered what he learned about black people at home: they were considered dangerous and a threat to single Indian girls, because black men would try "to impregnate every Indian girl they saw" (DESAI, 2006, p. 76). This unrealistic stereotype increased Biju's doubts: "Therefore he hated all black people but liked Saeed? Therefore there was nothing wrong with black people and Saeed?" (DESAI, 2006, p. 76). Biju's old prejudices and hatred accompanied him in his diasporic journey. The narrator observes that Biju "possessed an awe of white people, who arguably had done India great harm, and a lack of generosity regarding almost everyone else, who had never done a single harmful thing to India" (DESAI, 2006, p. 77). Thus, the coloniality in the imaginary and actions of Biju are very clear. He believes that white people were superior and that other nationalities were inferior to them and to Indians.

Modern western thought is abyssal as it excludes non-western ways of thinking. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, in the first chapter from *Epistemologias do Sul* (2009), entitled Para além do pensamento abissal: das linhas globais a uma ecologia de saberes, considers that there is an abyssal line between metropolitan societies and the colonial territories (SANTOS, 2009, p. 32). In one side of the line, there is the logic of regulation; while the other is based on the logic of appropriation. Santos argues that after the independence of many colonies in 20th century, the other side of this abyssal line was expanded. As a consequence, the metropolitan societies were also influenced by the logic of appropriation and violence. In addition, there is also the return of the colonial, represented by, for instance, the terrorists, the illegal immigrants and the refugees (SANTOS, 2009, p. 41-42).

Immigrants and refugees have knocked on other people's doors since the beginning of modern times. Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, in his *Strangers at Our Door* (2016), observes that massive migration is by no means a new phenomenon. Based on data by Paul Collier (2013), Bauman presents statistics that, between 1960 and 2000, there was a rise from

20 million to over 60 million immigrants leaving their countries of origin, mostly in the Global South, to the Global North. In contemporary times, Bauman explains that in the "developed" parts of the globe in which both economic migrants and refugees seek shelter, business interests welcome the influx of cheap labor and profit-promising skills. In contrast, most part of the populations from these countries see the newcomers as more competition on the labor market and expect more uncertainties and falling chances of improvement (BAUMAN, 2016). These immigrants and refugees are seen as strangers by people from the host countries, because inhabitants are suspicious of the immigrants' intentions. According to Bauman, the ignorance on how to deal with a situation which is not under control is a major cause of anxiety and fear. Bauman suggests that the bottom layers of society fear that immigrants might compete with them for jobs. These reactions might be closely related to rising "xenophobia, racism and the chauvinistic variety of nationalism" (BAUMAN, 2016). People from different sectors of society might be resentful of immigrants because they fear losing their achievements, possessions and social standing. Bauman's suggestion is to "seek occasions to come into a close and increasingly intimate contact with them [immigrants] — hopefully resulting in a *fusion* of horizons, instead of […] *fission*" (BAUMAN, 2016, emphasis by the author). The scholar believes that the interaction between plural points of view is a way to act in favor of a solution to the immigration crisis.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the rise of anti-immigrant feeling is highlighted by one of Biju's colleagues at the restaurant Brigitte's. Achootan reveals citizens' xenophobic attitude to immigrants as he compares American hypocrisy and British direct prejudice towards immigrants:

> 'But at least this country is better than England,' he said. 'At least they have some hypocrisy here. They believe they are good people and you get some relief. There they shout at you openly on the street, 'Go back to where you came from.' He had spent eight years in Canterbury, and he had responded by shouting a line Biju was to hear many times over, for he repeated it several times a week: 'Your father came to *my* country and took *my* bread and now I have come to *your* country to get *my* bread back' (DESAI, 2006, p. 134-135).

Once more we observe the need for a cosmopolitanism from below. Santos claims for a subaltern cosmopolitanism through movements that constitute a counter-hegemonic globalization (SANTOS, 2009, p. 50-51). He suggests the possibility of thinking through the perspective of the Global South, considering plural forms of knowledge besides scientific knowledge, promoting the interaction between those plural knowledges (SANTOS, 2009, p. 52-57). Sassen, Santiago, Appiah, Mignolo and Santos contribute to the study of plural

cosmopolitanisms and their reconfiguration. Nevertheless, in *The Inheritance of Loss*, it is almost impossible for the subalterns to participate in cosmopolitanisms. Their claims are usually not heard and their lives are made invisible by those who stand in superior status. As the narrative is set in the 80s, there were still few movements of subaltern cosmopolitanism to assist marginalized migrants to gain presence and agency in the global city.

Regarding the global and the local, Saskia Sassen stresses that globalization denationalizes national territory. This denationalization is mostly materialized in global cities. This is positive for government elites and their economic advisers. In contrast, when it comes to people, there is the rise of anti-immigrant feeling and the renationalizing of politics (SASSEN, 1998, p. xxviii). In The Question of Cultural Identity (1992), Stuart Hall discusses whether national identities are being homogenized in face of globalization. Hall presents a series of arguments in order to prove that this is a simplistic outlook. First, he observes that besides this tendency to global homogenization, there is a fascination with the difference and the marketing of ethnicity. Therefore, there is a new interest in the local. Second, the critic highlights that globalization is unequally distributed around the globe between regions (HALL, 1992, p. 304). Third, Stuart Hall explains that it may appear that globalization is only a Western phenomenon. However, cultural identities are being influenced by other identities all the time (HALL, 1992, p. 305). The scholar states that instead of thinking about the "global" as a substitute for the "local", we should consider a new articulation between the global and the local (HALL, 1992, p. 304). The scholar reflects that it is unlikely that globalization will destroy national identities. On the contrary, Hall suggests that globalization might simultaneously produce new global identifications and new local identifications (HALL, 1992, p. 304). He also refers to the possibility that globalization might lead to stronger local identities. For instance, through a defensive reaction from ethnic groups who understand the presence of other cultures as a threat (HALL, 1992, p. 308).

Regarding this movement to raise stronger local identities commented by Hall, Arjun Appadurai, in *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006) addresses the darker side of globalization. Appadurai analyzes in detail the 1990s as a decade of superviolence together with the first years of the 21th century, marked by a steady growth in civil and civic warfare, ethnic cleansing, and political violence (APPADURAI, 2006, p. 1-3). The critic recognizes that behind the idea of the modern nation-state, there is the idea of a "national ethnos" (APPADURAI, 2006, p. 3). This concept has been produced and naturalized at great cost, through "rhetorics of war and sacrifice, through punishing disciplines of educational and linguistic uniformity, and through the subordination of myriad local and regional traditions"

(APPADURAI, 2006, p. 4). Appadurai also remarks that the speed and intensity with which both material and ideological elements now circulate across national boundaries have created a new order of uncertainty in social life, for instance, as people question how many immigrants and refugees are among that nation (APPADURAI, 2006, p. 5). When there is social uncertainty, violence can create a macabre form of certainty and brutal practices (APPADURAI, 2006, p. 6).

In addition, Arjun Appadurai elucidates his concept of the anxiety of incompleteness:

> Numerical majorities can become predatory and ethnocidal with regard to small numbers precisely when some minorities (and their small numbers) remind these majorities of the small gap which lies between their condition as majorities and the horizon of an unsullied national whole, a pure and untainted national ethnos. This sense of incompleteness can drive majorities into paroxysms of violence against minorities (APPADURAI, 2006, p. 8).

Even though, Kiran Desai's novel is set in the 80s, it already portrays a series of situations in which Biju is subject to prejudice because of his nationality, skin color, beliefs and social status. During his departure from the Baby Bistro restaurant, the owner said that Biju should use his time off to take a bath, suggesting he smelled (DESAI, 2006, p. 23). As an employee in Pinocchio's Italian Restaurant, an embarrassed Biju received "soap and toothpaste, toothbrush, shampoo plus conditioner, Q-tips, nail clippers, and most important of all, deodorant" from his boss to encourage more hygienic practices. A few days later, as he could not detect differences in Biju, the young man is fired (DESAI, 2006, p. 48-49). In the same establishment, the owners discussed that they were hoping for men from the poorer parts of Europe as "they might have something in common with them like religion and skin color, grandfathers who ate cured sausages and looked like them, too, but they weren't coming in numbers great enough or they weren't coming desperate enough" (DESAI, 2006, p. 48-49).

In another restaurant, Odessa, the owner, emphasized an ironic situation, because Hindus do not eat meet and, in New York, Biju was working in an establishment that offered "steak, salad, fries" (DESAI, 2006, p. 135). There, the young immigrant had to face Indian bankers and businessmen eating beef. First, Biju tried to differentiate between holy cows and unholy cows as a way of separating his beliefs from his job, because those who could see this difference would achieve success (DESAI, 2006, p. 135-136). Nonetheless, his consciousness was severely affected. Later, Biju reasoned that "one should not give up one's religion, the principles of one's parents and their parents before them. No, no matter what. You had to live

according to something. You had to find your dignity" (DESAI, 2006, p. 136). Then, he quitted his job while his employers said "He'll never make it in America with that kind of attitude" (DESAI, 2006, p. 137).

Appadurai proposes that social uncertainty and the anxiety of incompleteness can produce predatory identities. These identities claim the extinction of another collectivity for their own survival, because the second group is seen as a threat. The fear of small numbers as pointed by Appadurai is related to the fact that minorities in a globalizing world are a reminder of the incompleteness of national purity (APPADURAI, 2006, p. 51-53).

Thus, we can suggest that there are simultaneously a movement that promotes plural cosmopolitanisms — that considers the colonial difference and underprivileged ethnic and social groups — and at least a counter movement that encourages stronger local identities through the extinction of minorities.

Desai's novel unveils how South Global immigrants, both legal and illegal, face social segregation in relation to immigrants and travelers from the Global North. During a series of connections in airports, Biju is exposed to the inequality among the boarding gates destined to third-world flights in relation to North American and European sections. The narrator reflects on this unjust scene:

> The first stop was Heathrow and they crawled out at the far end that hadn't been renovated for the new days of globalization but lingered back in the old age of colonization.
>
> All the third-world flights docked here, families waiting days for their connections, squatting on the floor in big bacterial clumps, and it was a long trek to where the European—North American travelers came and went, making those brisk no-nonsense flights with extra leg-room and private TV (DESAI, 2006, p. 285).

In Calcutta, Biju overheard a fight over the Air France counter because many bags didn't arrive. The passengers had to fill out lost luggage forms. The policy of the company was that nonresident Indians and foreigners could receive compensation. However, Indians nationals would not receive compensation for their lost luggage. The Indians were outraged and complained to the Air France official:

> 'So, our family is in Jalpaiguri, we are traveling on' said one woman, 'and now we have to stay overnight and wait for our suitcases. . . . What kind of argument are you giving us? We are paying as much as the other fellow. Foreigners get more and Indians get less. Treating people from a rich country well and people from a poor country badly. It's a disgrace. Why this lopsided policy against your own people??'

> 'It *IS* Air France policy, madam,' he repeated. As if throwing out the words *Paris* or *Europe* would immediately intimidate, assure non-corruption, and silence opposition (DESAI, 2006, p. 298).

The unequal treatment which differentiates between nationals and foreigners is also present in airline companies as portrayed by Desai. Even legal immigrants have to bear discrimination against their origins in favor of more privileged nationalities.

As he arrives in India, Biju starts to feel that the pressure of being an unwanted immigrant is vanishing: "he felt everything shifting and clicking into place around him, felt himself slowly shrink back to size, the enormous anxiety of being a foreigner ebbing—that unbearable arrogance and shame of the immigrant. Nobody paid attention to him here" (DESAI, 2006, p. 300). Nevertheless, after Biju's final journey, he arrives with far less than he'd ever had.

The reality Biju and his fellow illegals experience in the cosmopolis is hostile because they endure long working hours, exploitation by employers, prejudice against nationality, skin color, beliefs, religious values and social status. Additionally, many immigrants suffer with precarious accommodation, along with physical, cultural and emotional displacement from their home country and families. They may receive lower wages and have no proper access to health care. Unfortunately, the conditions are not much different for the underprivileged in their place of origin as there is usually social and economic exclusion in developing nations. This class of destitute immigrants travels to the Global North in hope of achieving the American Dream. However, most of them struggle to survive and to provide for their families while abroad. Those who agree to leave part of their traditions and beliefs and assimilate the host country's culture may achieve some sort of success, but this is uncertain. Thus, Biju and most of his colleagues remain marginalized in both spheres. They do not take part in cosmopolitan privileges that are destined to the elites. Kiran Desai's critique of the maintenance of an old cosmopolitanism — represented by businesspeople, elites and upper-class immigrants —, and of globalization processes and capitalistic practices that exploit the underclass inhabitants of the cosmopolis reinforces the still urgent need of subaltern cosmopolitanisms — which embrace diversity and plural knowledges aiming at multiplying possibilities of agency and presence — both in the reality in which we live in and in the fictional world.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* in this thesis has explored three main perspectives grounded on Postcolonial/ Decolonial Studies and Cultural Studies. To begin with, I have focused on some of the practices of colonialism and coloniality, along with some of the effects of globalization present in Desai's novel. Robert J. C. Young's considerations on colonialism helped contextualizing the passages in which Desai portrays this period in her novel. Walter Mignolo and Aníbal Quijano provided the conceptualization of coloniality and reflections on how modernity continues the logic of colonialism through the disguise of progress and globalization. Secondly, I analyzed how underprivileged diasporic characters in the novel relate to their homes (in the country of origin and in the host country), taking into account their sense of (non)belonging to these places. The theoretical framework provided by scholars such as James Clifford, Avtar Brah, Stuart Hall, Jana Evans Braziel, Anita Mannur, and Ahn Hua was essential to characterize diaspora in contemporary times. Their discussions were helpful in questioning and understanding the various meanings of home and belonging, depending on specific contexts. Then, I examined the notion of cosmopolitanisms in relation to diasporic immigration, labor and marginality. The reflections by scholars such as Bruce Robbins, Saskia Sassen, Walter Mignolo, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Silviano Santiago were fundamental to the study of plural/ subaltern cosmopolitanisms. The chapters in Desai's novel that are set in New York address the predicaments of subaltern subjects, but with the exception of one character, Saeed Saeed, the others, especially Biju, do not develop any sense of agency during their years living in that city. The theoretical framework examined in this thesis in dialogue with Desai's novel suggest that *The Inheritance of Loss* may be regarded as a transnational piece of literature that critically portrays contemporary concerns.

As a diasporic writer herself, Desai crafts a work of art that examines the relevant question of immigration, with a special focus on underprivileged characters that inhabit the margins of the novel's social sphere. Kiran Desai portrays some of the reasons for immigrating, the life and work conditions in the host country along with the hopes and losses of diasporic undocumented workers. This "shadow class" pursues the American Dream, but the cruel reality faced in the host country makes clear that these undocumented laborers sustain the lifestyle of elite citizens, while the destitute only participate as servants in this process.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I have presented a critical examination of the colonial relationships that are portrayed in *The Inheritance of Loss*. The narrator mentions some of the consequences of colonization, such as the reorganization of towns, the constructions of railways and the establishment of the colonies as producers of primary goods. Desai also gives prominence to the colonial strategies used in order to make Indian citizens believe that the colonizers' culture was superior to theirs. By offering a Western education in English language to the elites, the colonizers were able to create a class of Anglicized Indians who regarded the English language, its culture and beliefs as superior to other non-western cultures. English was used as propaganda of the British Empire to present their culture, conquests and their superior intellect and morality. The strategy created a group of Anglicized Indian citizens who would work for the Crown according to Western standards and advertise the advantages and glories of British culture. Jemubhai Patel is a character that may represent this class of citizens who assimilated the colonizers' culture, language and beliefs. He worked for the Indian Civil Service for most of his life and saw Indian traditions and cultures as inferior. It is noteworthy that education tried to hide the exploitation and oppression inflicted by the British. However, even those who belonged to the Indian elites were not considered equals to British citizens. While studying abroad, Jemubhai suffered prejudice because of his race and ethnicity. The judge did not fit either in England or in India; he was despised in both countries because of his insistent attempts to be as an English man. Therefore, in colonial times, Indian nationals were seen as employees to the British, product consumers and as a group who could serve to expand British culture and possessions.

In the twentieth century, the consequences of India's colonization continued. Independence, which took place in 1947, was enacted though the dismemberment of India, separating Hindus from Muslims, thus dividing families while creating a refugee crisis, large-scale violence and innumerable loss of lives. The Partition increased ethnic divisions as the country was divided into the Republic of India and the Republic of Pakistan (divided into two areas, unequal in size and very distant from each other). Even after this tragic event, the stereotypes regarding Hindus and Muslims were perpetuated along with prejudice and hatred between these groups. Other ethnic groups were denied the right to their proper states after India's states reorganization. The Gorkhas, Indians from Nepali descent, for instance, had served the British and Indian armies for centuries as soldiers. However, they were not granted freedom to have their land and rule over their people.

The consequences of colonialism are still present in Gorkha culture and living standards. In the first decades of the 21st century, Gorkhas still serve the British and Indian

armies. For instance, Gorkha soldiers had worked in operations in Afghanistan until 2016. They had served in many armies, but for decades they had always received smaller pensions than their British counterparts after retirement. Under British government, they faced difficulties regarding their nationality status and residency. Some of them had to go to court in order to fight for their rights. In 2009, according to an article from *The Guardian*, there were some achievements as the UK High Court acknowledged that there was a debt of honor to Gurkhas and allowed veterans who had served for at least four years in the British army, together with their families, to settle in the UK as they had suffered a historic injustice (GILLAN, 2009). In 2013, a parliamentary inquiry was launched to investigate "grievances of Gurkha veterans including over pension rights, adult dependents, compensation, equal treatment for Gurkha widows and free medical treatment for veterans in Nepal similar to that provided for pensioners in the UK" (MEIKLE, 2013). After two hundred years serving the British as soldiers, Gorkhas face difficulties concerning their rights because they are not fully equals to British soldiers. The ex-colonizer metropolis still needs the labor from foreign workers to sustain their military activities.

In 21st century India, the Gorkhas are still demanding their own state. According to *The Territories and States of India* (2016), the agreement and organization of a Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) in 2012 has not yet been implemented. The GTA would have executive, administrative and financial powers, but not legislative ones (ROUTLEDGE, 2016). Nepali-speaking Gorkhas are still discontent. For instance, in 2017, there were violent protests and a 104-day strike in the region of Darjeeling for a separate state of Gorkhaland. The crisis was sparked by fears of Bengali language being imposed in schools where Gorkha students are a majority (HINDUSTAN TIMES, 2017).

Although partly set in the 1980s, Kiran Desai's novel discusses pertinent and current questions such as the treatment received by different ethnic groups, state demands by neglected populations and the inclusion of local languages in schools' curricula in India. Desai's narrative intertwines fictional characters and events to real demands from the West Bengal region. As just discussed, in the 21st century the Gorkhas' fight for their own state is still a matter of constant debate and protest in the region that carries the consequences from the colonization by the British and faces the difficult task of maintaining coexistence among a plural Indian population.

After India's independence, the country continued subordinate to the West for economic and political reasons. Globalization has extended the losses and injustices that used to happen in the colonial period. As Mignolo and Quijano theorize, modernity has brought

about a continuation of colonialism. Part of these harsh conditions are consequences of a past marked by colonialism and a present in which coloniality is perpetuated, not only in the imaginary of populations and governments, but also in a neoliberal view that aims to exploit former colonies and their inhabitants as cheap laborers, consumers and soldiers.

The second chapter of the thesis has focused on the diasporic movements of underprivileged characters, including their feelings towards their countries of origin and the host country, the United States. In Desai's novel, most undocumented immigrants leave their places of origin voluntarily in search of better life conditions. It should be noted that the very access to technologies of transport and communication is restricted to illegal immigrants. Most of these diasporic subjects face a contemporary experience of marginalization and discrimination in the cosmopolis. This study has proposed an analysis of the characters Panna Lal, Biju and Saeed Saeed as subjects that inhabit the margins of society. Their specific diasporic journeys were examined considering that diasporic subjects are marked by multiple modalities as theorized by Avtar Brah, Anh Hua and Steven Vertovec. The notion of home was also considered as not fixed, because subjects can relate in multiple ways to diverse places.

The painful reality experienced by illegal immigrants in the global city is very different from their expectations. First, undocumented immigrants imagine the US as a land of opportunities, freedom and democracy, but, as they arrive in the metropolis, these subjects observe that they do not have access to these golden opportunities. Biju's traumatic adaptation to the host country leaves him displaced and unhappy. He is nostalgic about his country of origin and cannot escape the cycle of poverty and exploitation in the host country. Biju never feels at home in the US. On the other hand, Saeed Saeed negotiates his place both in his home country and in the host country. He represents an exception in the universe crafted by Desai. In India, Panna Lal depreciates his home country in favor of Global North nations that are considered by him as developed countries, in which people have access to facilities, technology and can live without worries. Panna Lal has internalized the coloniality enacted by the West. In both countries, as portrayed by Desai, the destitute are destined to inequalities, poverty and loss. In T*he Inheritance of Loss*, the ideal of the American Dream is only a way to try to escape these circumstances, but they are generally maintained in the host country.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I have explored the concept of cosmopolitanism in relation to marginality and migrant labor. As some critics have argued, an older ideal of cosmopolitanism regarded humans as citizens of the world. However, this same cosmopolitanism is seen as a humanitarian approach used by the upper-classes to control the

less privileged. Scholars such as Bruce Robbins, Walter Mignolo, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Silviano Santiago emphasize the need for plural/ subaltern cosmopolitanisms that may consider transnational experiences of the poor migrants and underprivileged ethnic and social groups. The study of the concepts provided by this theoretical framework in comparison to *The Inheritance of Loss* has shown that in Desai's novel poor diasporic characters do not participate in plural cosmopolitanisms. They sustain the basis of economic processes as cheap servants and workers, who face terrible accommodations, lower wages, unsanitary conditions of work, humiliation and a lack of health care and rights. These undocumented immigrants such as Biju, Saeed Saeed, and others play crucial roles in global cities because their labor sustains the elite's privileged way of life. The shadow class is made invisible by their capitalistic cosmopolitan employers, as Harish-Harry and Odessa, and by a spatial segregation that is organized in order not to disturb the wealthy classes. In contrast, upper-class legal immigrants have access to travel, leisure, study and facilities while abroad. They take advantage of the older ideal of cosmopolitanism. Thus, Kiran Desai criticizes both economic processes that continue an imperial dynamic of power and coloniality and the illusion of the pursuit of the American Dream.

Besides the cruel exploitation, the underclass in Desai's novel also faces severe prejudice in the Global North. As explained by Arjun Appadurai and Zygmunt Bauman, the prejudice against immigrants is based on anxieties and ideas of incompleteness of national purity. Immigrants are seen by residents as dangerous people who may steal jobs or rob and hurt people. Therefore, Kiran Desai indirectly points out the need of subaltern cosmopolitanisms in her fictional work and in our contemporary reality.

As Desai's novel portrays, the rise of anti-immigrant feeling is not a new issue. The immigrant fluxes have been a constant concern in the first decades of the 21st century. Most recently, in the United States, the changes enacted by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will have a significant impact in the lives of millions of immigrants living legally in the country. For instance, according to the *Miami Herald*, USCIS plans to increase its fees in 2020, including an increase in the naturalization application for a US citizenship. The department will also charge asylum seekers for their application. The fees related to petitions for employment authorization and for removing conditions on permanent residence obtained through marriage will also increase. Changes will also occur in the Citizenship Test as permanent residents who apply for citizenship after December 2020 will face a "more challenging" test than earlier applicants ─ immigrants must prove they can read, write and speak basic English, along with an essential knowledge of US history and government. The

USCIS has changed the regulations related to "public charge" as an impediment to "obtaining permanent resident status or entering the United States with an immigrant visa" (ROTH, 2020). That is, applicants who fail to meet high income standards or receive public assistance, such as welfare, food stamps, public housing and Medicaid, will be rejected for temporary or permanent visas. The administration also plans to modify regulations that would change some of the rules "on the eligibility and waiting time for work permits based on pending asylum application" (ROTH, 2020). Lately, residents from nations such as Nigeria, Myanmar, Eritrea, Sudan, Tanzania and Kyrgyzstan face travel restrictions to receive immigrant visas from the US (KANNO-YOUNGS, 2020). These measures may be seen as efforts to refrain both legal and illegal immigration to the United States.

Despite immigrants' economic importance in providing services to the population, there is a harsh debate in the U.S. society concerning whether immigrants must continue to be accepted in the country. As Desai portrays in her novel, diasporic subjects play key roles in society as US born citizens do. However, mostly they are subject to prejudice, discrimination and fewer rights. These behaviors have not proven beneficial to society as a whole. The increase in ethnic, religious and political discriminations has weakened efforts in favor of a cosmopolitan society in which people can learn from differences and recognize the value of human lives. As Kwame Appiah discusses, there is a real need to develop habits of coexistence in the human community as a possible solution to the cultural conflicts in the world. Kiran Desai's reflections on colonialism and coloniality, diasporas, and cosmopolitanism as represented in *The Inheritance of Loss* depict a cruel reality that must be confronted and discussed in order to improve immigrants' condition instead of enhancing the differences and banning distinct cultures and populations from conviviality. Otherwise, loss will continue to be the main legacy to formerly colonized people.

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