

Bio-surveillance and the Immobilizing Journey in *The Inheritance of Loss*

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Abstract

This article focuses on the notion of bio-surveillance in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) from the perspectives of Ajana and Foucault. It tries to discuss why postcolonial journeying, despite its reputation for upsetting the old colonial paradigms of cultural demarcations, has ended up in the invisible biocitizenship of diasporic figures. To this end, the article elaborates on the biometric measures, ranging from the classic model of Anthropometry to the most advanced biometric technologies, and their deployment at the service of securitization in the center of empire. It is argued that these measures, by keeping the colonial paradigm of otherization intact, have divided society into friends / enemies and, later, reduced the latter into the bare life of invisible biocitizenship. Hence, it can be remarked that postcolonial journeying, despite its apparent dissolution of meta-narratives of identity or cultural geography, underpins the 'us-versus-them' binary and proves immobilizing. This means that the open-gate policy cannot wipe out the racist blemish from the West's reputation since the racism which roots in bodily features (including skin) conducts identity, citizenship, and immigration policies. Hence, racial minorities are always the other, even though their bodies are subject to change.

Keywords: biopower, post-colonial journeying, biometric measures, Kiran Desai, biocitizenship

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Introduction

Once the colonial regime reified space through maps and overwrote its fluidity with absolutism of cartography, the advent of postcoloniality and multiculturalism should have heralded an era of fluidity. In other words, as Harvey (1989) remarks, space, already “annihilated” through “time” by capitalism’s speeding up of profit-making in Fordism, gained back its place in post-Fordism. Such reclamation, denaturalized “space” and the spatial orders and, thus, turned “multiplicity, nomadism, and miscegenation” – as challenges to the favored notion of purity – into “figures of virtue” (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 362). Along with that, difference re-emerged as the basis of human life and raised an awareness of the *fictitious* nature of homogenizing spatial order. Such consciousness later proved sufficient not only to upset the legacy of the imperial-capitalist conceptions of time/space but also to come up with a change, even if it would be the revision of space as “fluid and chaotic, dynamic and dialectical” (Upstone, 2009, p. 11). Accordingly, movement, especially in the form of journeying, materialized such flux and was approved liberating enough to counter the main ruling narrative.

As a result, it would not be far from expectation if the concept of journey was considered an indispensable motif in most narratives of postcolonial diaspora: a motif which was mostly deployed to realize “the inversion of the long-established binaries in order to give voice to the minorities” (Siahmansouri & Hoorvash, 2020, 98). Hence, the motif of journeying, since its deployment in postcolonial literature, has realized a sense of “heterogeneity” and “in-betweenness” resulted from the challenges posed to the Euclidian conception of absolute, fixed space and provided by an escape from “the limits of national space” and racial prejudices (Casey, 1993, p. 275). In fact, journey as “a metaphor for a world [. . .] could undercut national belonging with an international perspective” and celebrate a multicultural, nonhierarchical spirit of the age (Upstone, 2009, p. 57). Furthermore, it could realize *multicultural chronotope*, a phenomenon used by Tolkachev (2013), to create a “heterogeneous time and space” (Shevchenko et al., 2019, 1140).

Therefore, this research focuses on the restrictions that the notion of journeying west or postcolonial journey has belied: the biometrics measures and the bare life to which the ex-colonized migrants are doomed. Furthermore, it discusses the ways migrants or refugees are metamorphosed into invisible figures of homo

sacres upon whose bodies the oppressive political measures are written. To this end, this research uses the notions of cultural studies and the neo-left by applying Ajana's (2013) notions of "bio-surveillance" and "biometric citizenship" along with the *Foucauldian* concept of biopower. It argues that journeying in Desai's work (2006), despite its association with spatial fluidity, heterogeneity, and fragmentation, is actually failing in undercutting the long-established hierarchies of liberal humanism. Furthermore, it demonstrates how exiting west can, oddly, reinforce and demarcate cultural borders, racial identities, and social hierarchies to which the ex-colonized have been subjected. Hence, it can be concluded that journeying west, as a complex notion, cannot just be approached as "a simple escape from power structures" for Desai (Upstone, 2009, p. 66). On the other hand, it is "essentially implicated in how such constructs function" (Upstone, 2009, p. 66). Therefore, power-laden, journeying replaces the classic notion of race and contributes to the formation of a new world order where the classic model of national citizenship is replaced by a neo-liberized, biometric one.

Literature Review

As one of the youngest authors ever winning the Booker Prize, Desai has attracted considerable attention, and her book has been approached from different perspectives. For instance, Ezard (2006) quoting Sutherland remarks, "Desai's (2006) novel registers the multicultural reverberations of the new millennium with the sensitive instrumentality of fiction. [. . .] It is a globalised novel for a globalised world" . Likewise, Jackson (2016) believes that Desai's novel is not written to celebrate the corresponding notions of the postcolonial world, as this study present, and tries to prove how Desai's work has problematized the central concepts of postcolonial type of fiction and passed beyond and represented a new type of fiction she calls cosmopolitan.

For Sunmugam (2015) the inner conflicts and the identity crises which the characters undergo throughout the story seem noteworthy. She focuses mostly on identity crises and psychological fragmentation.

In a similar approach, Poon (2014) focuses on the notion of loss deployed in the title of the Desai's book and tries to elaborate how the sense of loss has been symbolically represented in the novel. Furthermore, she discusses how such a sense

leads to the formation of hidden, invisible scripts of life, each of which exemplifies a state of injustice and pain for diasporic underprivileged subjects. Focusing on the notions of loss and pain, the present study, however, broadens the scope to go beyond loss as a personal issue and include the basics of humanness: that is, the right to live and die.

Masterson (2010) in his interesting article discusses the troubles of dislocation in Desai's novel. He focuses on Desai's notion of diaspora and the way her "protagonists [are] struggling to build their lives anew in a foreign land" (p. 409). Furthermore, he puts forth that the "celebrations of fluidity and flow are often only applicable to a privileged few" (p. 301). However, he does not elaborate on the procedures undertaken to realize such fluidity and movement.

Loh (2016), in an article, shifts to the notion of capitalism and discusses the notion of class differences and the damaging impacts of the colonial rule upon cultural and economic life in India from the past up to now. Loh, nevertheless, mostly discusses the causes of such compulsory dislocation of the poor rather than the quality of such journey imposed upon them as it is discussed in the present study.

For Sabo (2012), Desai's work is distinguishable due to the novelty of book's topic: "The phenomenon of transnational labor eking out a living in the USA" (p. 375). Besides, she finds the book interesting because of its representation of the actuality of the life led by the underprivileged diasporic figures in the West. Even though Sabo tries to move beyond the celebrated postcolonial notions of hybridity and mobility to foreground the real nature of globalization, her stand does not elaborate the notion of control, as discussed in this study. Sabo's is mostly concerned with the socio-economic difficulties migrants undergo in the era of global capitalism.

In Spielman's (2010) article, one can come across a broader approach. He regards Desai's novel as a portrayal of "a radical postcolonial subjectivity in which flexibility, assimilation, and multiculturalism are preferable to maintaining difference" (p. 74).

However, it is Jackson (2016) who tries to surpass most of the preceding readings and open a new horizon to the novel. In her approach, she describes Desai's work as a new kind of fiction more aptly termed as cosmopolitan than postcolonial

since “it moves beyond the cultural categories described in postcolonial theory while acknowledging inequalities of power” (p. 77).

Similarly, this research tries to shift its focus away from a postcolonial reading of the text and elaborate on the functions of biopolitical power in Desai’s work; that is, the way migrants are controlled unknowingly within the center of the empire to counter or eliminate any kinds of threat on their parts

Methodology

Procedure

As a library-based study, this research relies on a textual analysis deploying cultural studies and the neo-left by applying Ajana’s (2013) notions of “biosurveillance” and “biometric citizenship”. Since Ajana’s theoretical perspective is a triangulation of Foucauldian concept of biopower and Agamben’s (1980) notion of the homo sacer, it has been tried to give a brief introduction on Foucault’s notion of biopower and Agamben’s (1980) concept of sovereign biopolitics at first.

Later on, such notions are discussed regarding the post-global era of high-tech devices and of cross-continental flight, when governance and notions of national security and public safety have become deeply significant. Such serious concerns necessitate a further elaboration on some early measures having been undertaken to ensure national security such as Anthropometry. Then, the notion of security is taken further and discussed in regard to immigrants and racial ethnicities within the West. To clarify how the biological notion of race has been involved with politics, the writer discusses Desai’s (2006) acclaimed work to illustrate the ways biometric measures have been deployed in areas of border passing, immigration policies, citizenship, and health care.

In the end, it delivers a counter-narrative to the conventional perception of postcolonial journey as boundary breaking and unrestricted. In fact, it discloses how ex-colonized migrants, once taking all troubles to enter the center of empire, are still treated as the cultural other subjected to the vast violent system of surveillance.

Critical Approaches and Concepts

Bio-power Even though the general outlook associates racism, currently practiced within the center of empire, with the old colonial system of thought, for

Foucault it is mostly resulted from the changes the western political system has undergone since the nineteenth century. Such changes brought forth a new discursive power Foucault (1980) refers to as biopower. What distinguishes this modern version of politics is the ways governments adopted to approach people's life. If in classic politics, man was considered a "living being with the additional capacity for political existence" who could be disciplined as an individual, in the modern version man is part of a population whose life must be "administered as a whole" (1990, p. 139).

This shift of attitude toward people's life, consequently, has changed the strategies of the governing system from a disciplinary one, concerned with individuals, to a controlling one which tries to manage the population. Such control in modern politics is exerted through two different models; one model is managing the human body, and the other is administrating the life of population which Foucault calls biopolitics. If in the first model, all efforts are put in "to maximize capacities, increase its usefulness and docility, and integrate it into efficient systems," in the second model the statistical norms such as "the measurement of birth and mortality rate, longevity, reproduction, fertility, and so on" are deployed to manage the lives of people (Foucault, 1990, p. 139). However, with the advent of Capitalism both models are incorporated to assure the thriving of the system. In fact, economic growth and financial gains were guaranteed if population and people's bodies could be managed and deployed accordingly. However, such exerted control is beyond a simple intervention in "the level of life to improve it, [to] sustain it, and increase its chances;" it is, in fact, "about death: the right to 'let die'" (Foucault, 2003, p. 245). It is for this latter part that racism is incorporated into modern politics once more:

Racism takes up a function that is intimately intertwined with death. It is the function by which killing is made acceptable in order to eliminate biological threats (not only diseases but also the 'bearers' of diseases) and enhance the national stock (through eugenic practices, for instance). (Ajana, 2013, p. 36)

In fact, racism through its division of population into different sub-groups could allow for a better surveillance and warding off the possible threats posed by the national other. In addition, its exclusionary approaches could ensure national

integrity and unity by pushing the national other to the margins of society and killing him, even though killing here does not just imply a restricted sense of the word; that is, lack of life. Killing, in fact, involves “the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people or quite simply political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on” (Foucault, 2003, p. 256). Thus, it can be noticed that this notion of killing has much in common with what Giorgio Agamben has described as bare life when elaborating on the figure of homo sacer. Borrowing the term from ancient philosophy, Agamben uses it to describe the life of those people “who may be killed without being sacrificed, whose life is exposed and abandoned to violence and death, whose killing is excluded from notions of punishment, execution, and condemnation entailed within the realm of law” (1998, p. 83). For Agamben, the figure of homo sacer represents an in-between, liminal character simultaneously inside and outside the law; that is, he is included in the law to the extent that he can be punished or killed by that legal system but excluded so much that his murderer is not executed (1998, p. 79). Stuck in an ambivalent condition, homo sacer portrays a figure of ‘exceptional status.’ Agamben describes such status as “bare life”: a “life that has been captured in the sovereign sphere where it is permitted to kill without committing homicide” (1998, p. 83). This status, in fact, represents a ‘zero stand’ where “the ‘unpunishability’ aspect of the death taking place regularly within or under the gaze of Western democracies” is well depicted (Ajana, 2013, p. 40).

This status awaits all those repressed figures (migrants, refugees, detainees, and so on) whose cultural or political positions place them outside the mainstream of western society. Furthermore, it leads to the emergence of an inner enemy whose very presence justifies the formation of the state of emergency (Ajana, 2013, p. 110). In this state, securitization is tightened up, and law can suspend itself whenever it finds national integrity in danger. The scope of such securitization is not, however, limited to the state level and the dividing of society into friends/enemies, us/ them. It incorporates the social level as well and becomes concerned with assigning fixed identities to securitize identity:

A process by which the flexibility and negotiability of identities are contained and suppressed. It is a way of founding and declaring a collective monolithic identity on the basis of the existential threat to which it is supposedly exposed, and through

the intensification of certain affects that contribute to the formation of political and social groupings. (Ajana, 2013, p. 111)

The purpose is to ensure state security against the national other. To this end, a variety of techniques ranging from the classic model of Anthropometry to the most advanced biometric technologies are used to prevent identity fraud. The point, however, is that whatever measures are adopted by the West, they demarcate ethnic, racial borders, and, consequently, reconfirm collective identities and social hierarchies.

Identification: The Strategy of State Surveillance In the current era, the need for a more secure society depends on the variety of techniques that the state uses to identify its members. Hence, identification has turned into one of the major concerns of many modern states. However, the question is how such identification should be undertaken. It is obvious that the simple act of name registration or carrying papers is not a reliable way to prove one's identity. Hence, to increase the reliability of that procedure, the states have to make connections between identity and one's body, even if this process proves problematic due to consistent physical changes. To maximize such reliability, states should make use of technologies to "control individual identities in the most accurate way" (Ajana, 2013, p. 26).

The most classic type of these technologies is Anthropometry which was widely used in the nineteenth century. This physical tool which had originally been designed for creating a criminal history is "the first rigorous system for archiving and retrieving identity" (Gates, 2005, p. 41). Anthropometry involves two stages to identify people: "description and classification"; Finn marks that in the first stage the dimensions of specific parts of body "including height, head length, head breadth, left middle finger length, left little finger length, left foot length, left forearm length, right ear length, cheek width, etc" are measured (2005, p. 24). In the second stage, the recorded measurements were filed and printed on specific cards (Ajana, 2013, p. 27). This technique was quickly replaced when fingerprinting was introduced as a reliable technique. In Ajana's view, this new technique, not only seemed much simpler and cheaper in comparison but also offered a very particular feature; that is, "a physical trace of body" (2013, p. 27). However, with western geographical expansion, these two systems, once used to enhance social security against criminals, were also deployed for discriminatory and racist practices against those

cultural others in the center of empire (Kaluszynski, 2001). It means that those states demanded nomads, immigrants, or travelers from other countries to carry some passbooks to verify their identities at the time of their departure. Such measures not only subjected journey to harsh surveillance but also transform it to “a pre-offense” (Kaluszynski, 2001, p. 132).

The implied message of such procedures was a negative admission of difference by the mainstream culture as well as a function creep which gradually transformed citizenship from a legal right to a cultural one. In that case, “merely [the] formal citizenship of the national community was provided by its laws, and the more substantive membership derived from the historic ties of language, custom, and race” (Gilroy, 1993, p. 46). The consequence was a highly demarcated compartmentalization of the social space into the insider and the outsider. This scenario became even more apocalyptic due to postcolonial and capitalistic measures such as the recruitment of cheap labor forces from the ex-colonies.

With an increase in the number of these cultural others and the anxiety they provoked, the biopolitical system is set to work: that is, the policy of let die, to borrow Foucault’s term. With this policy, the cultural other is let in yet diminished into an invisible, shadow citizen who is inclusively excluded; that is, an inside outsider who never feels a sense of belonging. With the emergence of such citizens, society, then, witnesses the formation of a new living status somewhere between zoe (natural life) and bio (civil life) which was called bare life and signified an exceptional status.

Hence, the cultural other, too invisible to appear in public, became entangled in a situation far worse than a constant show-me-your-paper style of life. Even though some people succeeded in gaining national citizenship, their cultural citizenship could not, still, be obtained since they should acquire an exceptional status and prove to be “more human than human” (Žižek, 2002, p. 11). Consequently, the national other finds himself stuck in the invisible borders of “non-places” (Augé, 1995).

Such status means “shadow citizenship” whereby one is reduced into an invisible monolith stripped of any particular identity and bereft of any claims to life (Norris, 2000, p. 41). This destiny seems inevitably important to the West since it provides the West with a kind of exteriority defined as “the innermost center of the

political system” (Norris, 2000, p. 42). That is, the West permits the migrants in to provide an example of what the West should not be like. Thus, migrants are important to the West just to that extent: to be negated. Such negated life is what awaits almost all homo sacers, even if it reveals the falsity of democratic claims of the West and challenges its so-called humanitarian measures. Restricted to the-unaccounted-for, invisible, “deading life”, the other is diminished day after day while refusing an immediate death (Mbembe 2001). He seems to have got stuck; he can neither depart nor settle in; then, he realizes he has undertaken the most immobilized journey.

Discussion

The Inheritance of Loss

Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), is a cosmopolitan narrative that takes place in a variety of places including America, England, and India. It narrates the parallel life stories of Jemubhai Patel, an Indian Judge and Biju, a poor, Indian immigrant. Incorporating these parallel stories, Desai provides a comprehensive picture not only to:

Historicize her Indian protagonists’ diasporic journeys but also to highlight the parallels between Indian diasporas in the colonial past and in the neoliberal present, showing how late capitalism, like colonialism before it, operates along a similar logic of exclusion of the racial other. (Sabo 2012, p. 384)

Expanding the scope of her work, Desai, thus, delivers an inclusive work to elucidates the exclusion to which the racial other is subjected.

Bio-citizenship

If biometrics is defined as the measurement of life, it can “provide us with a very valid example of what Foucault terms biopower; that is, the form of power being directed at the biological existence of individuals and populations, at man-as-species- body” (Ajana, 2013). Hence, body is the major domain through which the manipulation of a person can happen. One area in which such manipulation is deployed is citizenship; that is, one’s status as a citizen is affected by the bodily features one embodies. Furthermore, it is one’s body which labels one as an insider or the homo sacer.

In Desai's work such sway of bodily features in social status can be felt most of all in Jemubhai's life. A retired judge living in a dilapidated house in a village, Jemubhai lived for years outside India to study law at Cambridge. That experience has been so harrowing that since then he felt "despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both"(Desai, 2006, p. 126).As a racial other whose identity was defined by his face, Jumbhai became subject to a variety of direct and indirect biometric surveillance in English society and later in India. An outsider, he undergoes the most violent inclusive exclusion:

Elderly ladies, even the hapless— blue-haired, spotted, faces like collapsing pumpkins— moved over when he sat next to them in the bus, so he knew that whatever they had, they were secure in their conviction that it wasn't even remotely as bad as what he had. The young and beautiful were no kinder; girls held their noses and giggled, 'Phew, he stinks of curry'. (Desai, 2006, p. 46)

Isolated and alienated, Jumbhai is reduced to the bare life of invisibility. No one recognizes him, and "for entire days nobody spoke to him at all, his throat jammed with words unuttered, his heart and mind turned into blunt aching things" (Desai, 2006, p. 46). He was stuck somewhere between life and death; his status resembles the purgatory Agamben describes as "threshold of indistinction," where "what was presupposed as external—the state of nature— now reappears in the inside—the state of exception" (1998, p. 37). To be part of the state, thus, seemed futile since his goal was assimilation into a culture whose basis was the exclusion of the other. The more Jumbhai was geared towards anthropometric measures, the higher he grew a stranger to himself and underwent "double exclusion into which he is taken and [of] the violence to which he finds himself exposed" (Agamben, 1998, p. 82). Hence, he "found his own skin odd-colored, his own accent peculiar [, and] began to wash obsessively; concerned he would be accused of smelling" (Desai, 2006, p. 47).

Bereft of his own identity, Jumbhai, then, changes his name into James. Even turning into an "ideal other," he, still, could not feel a sense of belonging. Such "subjective violence" resulted in Jumbhai's abjection (Žižke, 2007).He, thus, retreats further "into a solitude that grew in weight day by day. The solitude became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow" (Desai, 2006,

p. 46). He lived in England, but since excluded into the margin, 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” (Desai, 2006, p. 47).

Likewise, Biju undergoes such double exclusion in America, though in a postcolonial era. Such exclusion is metaphorically manifested in places where Biju’s and his alike work: “perfectly first-world on top, perfectly third-world twenty-two steps below” (Desai, 2006, p. 30). Isolated from mainstream culture, Biju has been pushed into the non-places of kitchens in restaurants and cafes. His life resembles living in an Agambian camp—that inescapable zone of indistinction—far away from real America: Biju “was, on his way home, without name or knowledge of the American president . . . Without even hearing about any of the tourist sites—no Statue of Liberty. . . . Brooklyn Bridge, Museum of Immigration (Desai, 2006, p. 293).

It seems Biju has been inspired by the same “bootleg copies” of American movies like other Indian, “but how to move into the mainstream? . . . perfectly infiltrated and working within the cab system of the city. But how to get their papers?” (Desai, 2006, p. 106) He was in as Harrish-Harry had been, but “confusion was rampant among the ‘*haalf* ‘*n*’ *haf*’ crowd; the Indian students coming in with American friends, one accent one side of the mouth, another the other side; muddling it up, wobbling then” (Desai, 2006, p. 155). Biju feels unsettled watching Harrish-Harry’s status:

Harish-Harry— the two names, Biju was learning, indicated a deep rift that he hadn’t suspected when he first walked in and found him, a manifestation of that clarity of principle which Biju was seeking. . . . He tried to keep on the right side of power, tried to be loyal to so many things that he himself couldn’t tell which one of his selves was the authentic, if any. (Desai, 2006, pp. 155-156)

Likewise, Biju has developed such rifts and felt like an inside outsider when he has thought that some restaurant owner is “kind enough to hire Biju, although he found him smelly” (Desai, 2006, pp. 30). Such splits are highly like Jumbhai’s; however, they Biju’s conditions are worse since he can neither leave nor

stay. *Sans-papiers* (paperless), he is stuck. And his experience of movement has proved “damaging” (Upstone, 2009):

Mobility is a dream that is unavailable to labor diasporas, who may easily cross geographical borders, but not socio-economic ones. The novel thus debunks the myth of the U.S.A. as a land of opportunity for postcolonial immigrants who undergo not only racial discrimination, but also economic exploitation within their own diasporic communities. (Sabo, 2012, p. 385)

Illegal, Biju symbolizes a “shadow”, “permanent-underclass” citizen “who exist[s] outside the normal circuits of civility and control” (Ajana, 2013 p. 133). Therefore, he could “disappear overnight[and his] addresses, phone numbers did not hold” (Desai, 2006, p. 109). As a modern homo sacer, Biju has “lived . . . illegally in America and been condemned to movement” for years (Desai, 2006, p. 109). It is after such time that he realizes there is “no system to soothe the unfairness of things” since the other is *less* human (Desai, 2006, p. 207). For people like Biju, laws in the non-places of bare life such as motorways, cafes, and restaurants are suspended (Augé, 1995, p. 96). He has to “endure a constant state of anxiety and fear for not having residence or work permits” (Desai, 2006, p. 195). Furthermore, his exclusion from the anthropological places of bio-subjects Biju to a wide range of violence for which “the guilty would never pay” (Desai, 2006, p. 207); and the system would never care, as Harish-Harry, the café owner, reminds him:

How can I sponsor you?! ... If you are not happy, then go right now. . . . 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 I'll snap my fingers and in one second hundreds of people will appear. (Desai, 2006, p. 195)

Sans-papiers, Biju has to “succumb to cheap labor, harsh working conditions”, and unexpected dismissals (Desai, 2006, p. 195). He is treated like “l'homme jetable, the ‘disposable human being’” (Ajana, 2013, p. 132). Such fate not only turns the “American Dream” into a nightmare but also shatters the illusion of English “civility” (Albritton, 2007, p. 169). Feeling lost, Biju no longer thinks of immigration as a heroic act, but quite the contrary. For him:

It was cowardice that led many to America; fear marked the journey, not bravery; a cockroachy desire to scuttle to where you never saw poverty, not really, never had to suffer a tug to your conscience.... Experience the relief of being an unknown transplant to the locals and hide the perspective granted by journey. (Desai, 2006, p. 306)

Hence, From Ek's view, these centers of empire—England and America—despite their facades of democracy and freedom confirm the idea that “colonial models were brought back with something resembling colonization,” although in the form of ethnic racism rather than the internal one (2006, p. 369). Therefore, if in the past such racial stratifications were applied to people within a population, now racism seems to have been “inscribed in the mechanisms of state power and, thus, has gone biopolitical” (Ek, 2006, p. 367). However, the function of this new type of racism was “not so much the prejudice or defense of one group against another as the detection of all those within a group who may be the carriers of a danger to it” (Ek, 2006, p. 369). In other words, such mechanism affirms “one form of life [the inferior] as a threat to another form [the superior]”; to assure the safety of the latter, the system feels justified to exclusively include the members of the former (Foucault, 2003, p. 317). “Exclusively included”, Jemubhai and Biju

Walked the line so thin it was questionable if it existed, an imaginary line between the insurgents and the law, between being robbed (who would listen to them if they went to the police?) and being hunted by the police as scapegoats for the crimes of others. (Desai, 2006, p. 289)

This is the line Agamben (1998) called the threshold of indistinction where Judge and Biju are floundering between death and life, pain and rest, and no one cares since they were unqualified and paperless as Harrish-Harry says to Biju. Such mechanism, thus, depicts an “inherently multi-layered definition of the notion of citizenship and . . . relevant instances of ‘thin’ conceptions of citizenship” (Ajana 2013, p. 120). It, also, introduces the notion of biometric citizenship which forces citizens “willingly, based upon the principles of choice, render themselves as flexible bodies in order to achieve the benefits of this privatized flexible citizenship” (Ajana, 2013, p. 125).

Biometrics and the Notion of Border Passing

In Lyon's (2018) view, surveillance changes its face as the situation or time alters; in the city or up in the air, people should expect to be monitored. Therefore, at the service of surveillance measures, travel cannot stop constant monitoring. The same is true about journeying west. It cannot be a simple escape away from the colonial structures. In other words, journeying sounds far more complicated than Judge's hope for cultural assimilation or Biju's wish for economic gains. It functions more like a power-laden "ground upon which various modes of discrimination and xenophobic activities are routinely exercised in the name of security and counter-terrorism policies" (Ajana, 2013, p.136). Such policies transform citizenship into a deal in which "migrants must 'pay their way' to qualify to be a citizen/ permanent resident" months prior to their departure (Ajana, 2009, p.135).

Desai portrays American Embassy in Delhi to be teemed with Indians. It is a pathetic scene of pleading Indians who succumb to blatant, painful humiliation at the embassy to be let out of their homeland. Their efforts are focused on proving themselves docile, civilized, and perfect for travel: "I'm civilized, sir, ready for the U.S., I'm civilized, mam" (Desai, 2006, p. 190). They try hard to appeal to the western "régime of truth" (Foucault, 1980, p. 131); that is, "to produce a truth for a representative of the sovereign" as he expects it (Salter, 2007, p. 59):

It was a fact accepted by all that Indians were willing to undergo any kind of humiliation to get into the States. You could heap rubbish on their heads and yet they would be begging to come crawling in. (Desai, 2006, p. 191)

Such embassy meetings usually end with those who "would be chosen [and] others refused, and there was no question of fair or not. What would make the decision? It was a whim; it was not liking your face" (Desai, 2006, p. 190). Invoking "biometric system of identity verification" (Pugliese, 2010, p. 3), such meetings are held to stratify people into distinct categories of the self and the other and turn Biju's postcolonial journeys into

A movement from the 'pan-opticon' of colonies to the 'ban-opticon' of center of empire in the sense that such controls are not necessarily disciplinary. . . . It is a ban-opticon in the sense that it seeks proactive control and risk management rather than

normalization. (Adey, 2009, p. 279)

With this system, the “physiological or behavioral information of migrants becomes evidentiary texts that will proceed to disclose the truth of a subject’s identity, of a subject’s authenticity and, even, of their intent” (Pugliese, 2010, p. 3). In fact, as Lyon (2018) asserts, “when a whole young family, not English-speakers and not ‘white’, are pulled aside not just for questioning, but for treatment quite different from that accorded to pale-skinned Anglophones”, not only are people’s fear and anxiety aroused, but also the onlookers’ sense of suspicion (p. 67)

Thus, postcolonial journey is as restrictive as it seems liberating. It restricts Biju as did the old colonial régime in Jumbhai’s case, although these two differ in the way they handled control; that is, if in colonial régime control was maintained through “the coercive exercise of power”, in postcolonial era it is kept through “the seductive promise of additional freedom, privileged rights, and flexible mobility”(Ajana, 2013, p. 125). These promises are so false that they thrill non-westerners “like a fairy tale and . . . begin to exert palpable pressure” (Desai, 2006, p. 66).

These promises are hollow since for people like Bijuto get the green card it requires hard measures of biometrics. First of all he should be reduced to information in his passport. As a result, a new body comes into being.

It is a body that is defined in terms of information. Who you are, how you are, and how you are going to be treated in various situations, is increasingly known to various agents and agencies through information deriving from your own body; information that is processed elsewhere, through the networks, databases, and algorithms of the information society. (Ball, Haggerty, & Lyon, 2012, 177)

Assessed as unqualified and abnormal based on the analyses of these databases, Biju is pushed into corners of invisibility from which he cannot escape: “The green card, the green card. The . . . Without it Biju couldn’t leave. To leave, he wanted a green card. This was the absurdity” (Desai, 2006, p. 106). In fact, it seems that the claimed “privileged entitlements to flexible mobility” are “conditional and can only be obtained after submitting one’s biological data and fulfilling various pre-clearance criteria that are used to assess applicant’s risk level”(Ajana, 2013, p.

124). Biju cannot live up to those criteria. He is not flexible enough to let go of his old identity and beliefs; for instance, he still holds grudges against Pakistani Muslims and does not like to work in restaurants serving steaks:

Do you cook with beef? He asked a prospective employer.

We have a Philly steak sandwich.

Sorry. I can't work here. (Desai, 2006, p. 144)

However, these biometric categorizations and criteria which filter mobility presuppose an absolute conception of space. In such conception of space, there is an obsession with order and racial hierarchies; that is, everywhere, including non-places such as airports which are associated with diversity and heterogeneity, materializes the hierarchical terms of services and the futility of mobility.

On his way back home, immediately after his arrival, Biju along with other passengers is informed of the loss of his baggage. After an overall commotion and the protest staged against the irresponsibility of the airport personnel, these Indian passengers are briefed by Air France to find out Air France provides “compensation [only] to nonresident Indians and foreigners, not to Indian nationals” (Desai, 2006, p. 305). Mortifying the Indian passengers, Air France leaves “the NRIs holding their green cards and passports while looking complacent and civilized” (Desai, 2006, p. 305). Feeling belittled by such unfairness, an Indian woman lashes out at such double standards:

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? (Desai, 2006, p. 305)

Once she is finished with her protests, Air France officials try to persuade her by summoning up her inferior status as a third-world subject: “‘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. 305). In fact, by highlighting her so-called inferiority, Air France officials manifest a “logic of abjection” which attempts at “casting off or casting down persons and collectivities from a mode of existence into a zone of shame, debasement, and wretchedness” (Rose, 1999, p. 253). Such act of naming which is,

in Butler's words, symbolic of "the setting of a boundary and also the repeated inculcation of a norm" (1993, p. 8) further reinforces racial demarcations and cultural apartheid. In addition, it evinces how "movement itself becomes indicative of a political act" (Upstone, 2009, p. 66) and how "journeying is ... implicitly linked to a political context" (Upstone, 2009, 67), all despite the fact that ironically the "American, British, and Indian passports were all navy-blue" (Desai, 2006, p. 306).

Conclusion

The Inheritance of Loss foregrounds how body and its features are still deployed to fix one's identity and conduct one's citizenship in the current era, despite all the propagandas running in the West on freedom and democracy. Hence, the research focuses on the lives of two Indians, Jemubhai and Biju, who live in the West for a while. Magnifying the difficulties these immigrants have undergone, Desai tries to reveal how colonial patterns of invisibility, marginalization, and racial fencing have been reconfirmed and kept intact inside the West in a post-colonial era. Expanding the scope of novel from India to England to the U.S.A., Desai brightly tries to demonstrate all that is at stake when body is manipulated as the password/passport. Furthermore, the illustration of the hardships, of the isolation, and of the stigmatization that Jemubhai and Biju have undergone in the West discloses that the decolonization associated with journeying has proved less disturbing. Furthermore, it helps exemplify the variety of domains where biometric measures are deployed: from passing borders and immigration policies to healthcare and public welfare. Even if such vast scope of biometric enforcement has always been justified through a claim for national security assurance or cultural homogeneity, its categorization of the public, based on the threats people can pose to a nation, has proved problematic. The reason lies in the fact that such processes are generally claimed to assure life, while they inevitably endanger the life of the so-called threatening other. In fact, they justify the reduction of the other into the homo sacer who leads a death-in-life living which guarantees his gradual fading away. Living in the West, as it is seen in cases of Jemubhai and Biju, seems to end in the racial other's permanent purgatory status of inclusive exclusion, while the body, as the resource of such exclusion, is subject to change. Hence, it can be concluded that postcolonial journeying, despite the apparent mobility, has promoted a governing-

through-freedom policy; that is, the requirement for visas or Green Cards along with the harsh biometric measures is, in fact, to keep liberal humanism and its superiority intact.

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