KIRAN DESAI'S PORTRAYAL OF BRITISH RULE OVER INDIA: INVESTIGATING COLONIALISM AND COLONIALITY IN *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

A REPRESENTAÇÃO DO DOMÍNIO BRITÂNICO NA ÍNDIA POR KISAN DESAI: INVESTIGANDO COLONIALISMO E COLONIALIDADE EM *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

ABSTRACT

This article proposes a study of the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), by contemporary Indian-born writer Kiran Desai, by exploring some of the practices of colonialism and coloniality depicted in the novel. *The Inheritance of Loss* is a non-linear narrative, organized in fragments, that portrays the lives of Indian characters that belong to different generations and backgrounds. This paper aims at analyzing passages from the first decades of the 20th century that picture the British rule over India, some of the practices of colonialism introduced by the colonizers and the coloniality that permeates the Anglicized Indian character Jemubhai Patel in the novel. This paper emphasizes a fundamental strategy of colonialism used by the British rule in India which was the introduction of the English language and culture in that country. Homi Bhabha (1994), Gauri Viswanathan (1995), Elleke Boehmer (2005), Aníbal Quijano (2007), Walter D. Mignolo (2012), Robert J. C. Young (2015) are part of the theoretical framework that supports the article.

Keywords: British rule. Colonialism. Coloniality. Kiran Desai. *The Inheritance of Loss*.

RESUMO

Este artigo propõe um estudo do romance *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), da escritora indiana contemporânea Kiran Desai, ao explorar algumas das práticas do colonialismo e da colonialidade retratadas no romance. *The Inheritance of Loss* é uma narrativa não linear, organizada em fragmentos, que retrata a vida de personagens indianos pertencentes a gerações e origens diversas. Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar passagens das primeiras décadas do século XX do romance que retratam o domínio britânico sobre a Índia, algumas das práticas do colonialismo introduzidas pelos colonizadores e a colonialidade que permeia o personagem indiano anglicizado Jemubhai Patel. Este estudo enfatiza uma estratégia fundamental do colonialismo utilizada pelo domínio britânico na Índia que foi a introdução da língua e da cultura inglesas naquele país. Homi Bhabha (1994), Gauri Viswanathan (1995), Elleke Boehmer (2005), Aníbal Quijano (2007), Walter D. Mignolo (2012), Robert J. C. Young (2015) fazem parte do referencial teórico que sustenta o artigo.

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Palavras-chave: Domínio britânico. Colonialismo. Colonialidade. Kiran Desai. *The Inheritance of Loss*.

INTRODUCTION

Kiran Desai (1971-) is a contemporary Indian-born writer whose novels have been acclaimed by critics and scholars. She is the author of two novels, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). Desai 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. Despite Kiran Desai's notable works, she is not well known in academic Brazilian communities. Her literary output has been mostly studied outside Brazil.

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, we 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.

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. It 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.

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.

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 article proposes a study of some of the practices of colonialism and coloniality depicted in the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. Homi Bhabha (1994), Gauri Viswanathan (1995), Elleke Boehmer (2005), Aníbal Quijano (2007), Walter D. Mignolo (2012), Robert J. C. Young (2015) are part of the theoretical framework that supports the article.

BRITISH RULE, COLONIALISM AND COLONIALITY

In order to frame the context of the Raj, the British regime in India, some scholars suggest the examination of India's modern history from the 18th century onwards. Previously, the Mughal Empire used to be the most powerful empire the Asian subcontinent had ever known. It was funded by Babur, in 1526, and it lasted until 1857, when the Raj took over power in India. The Mughal Empire 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 local 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.

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).

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, thus 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.

Desai's narrative unfolds during the 1980's, but the novelist 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).

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.

The case of Jemubhai Patel

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Jemubhai Patel 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 enough money. 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[1]. 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 article, it is worth signaling that coloniality of power, to use Aníbal Quijano's term, often intersects with coloniality of gender[2]. For

1 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.

2 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

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.

However, the colonizers did not agree in educating the masses, but in maintaining their cultures and religious values instead. 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 from 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

relations and a differential construction of gender along racial lines (LUGONES, 2008).

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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 construction of 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.

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.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai points out how the British rule brought changes in the infrastructure, economy and culture of India, as this former colony was discouraged to compete with the metropolis. Thus, colonization was followed by the imposition of the rulers' own patterns of production and expression of knowledge.

It is possible to observe how English literary education in British India aimed at the shaping of character and of thought according to British cultural standards. This colonial strategy helped erasing a history of colonialist expropriation, material

exploitation, and class and race oppression brought by Crown rule, while Anglicized Indians still felt they were in prestigious positions in relation to fellow nationals. For instance, the imagination of Jemubhai Patel was colonized with the ideas of British superiority in relation to Indian knowledge and culture. Jemubhai accepted these ideas and he also considered himself superior in relation to Indians who have had no access to British education as he had.

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. The novelist unveils some of its strategies and reminds us how contemporary they still are, and why they must be exposed.

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