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**THE FIGURE OF “HOMO SACER” IN NADINE  
GORDIMER’S “THE PICKUP” AND KIRAN DESAI’S  
“THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS”**

**“HOMO SACER” FIGŪRA NADĪNES GORDIMERAS  
ROMĀNĀ “PIKAPS” UN KIRANAS DESAJI ROMĀNĀ  
“MANTOTĀ NOLEMTĪBA”**

MASTER THESIS

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## ANOTĀCIJA

Dotais maģistra darbs atspoguļo analītisku imigranta tēla lasījumu, kā Džordžo Agambena koncepcijas “homo sacer” iemiesojumu, mūsdienu postkoloniālajā literatūrā. Šajā darbā tika analizēti divi romāni: Nadīnes Gordimeras “Pikaps” (2001) un Kiranas Desaji “Mantotā nolemtība” (2007). Darbā tika pielietota Džordžo Agambena (1998) politiskā teorija. Pētījums tika veikts ar mērķi interpretēt “homo sacer” figūras attēlojumu izvēlētajos romānos, izmantojot salīdzinošo literāro pieeju. Romānu interpretatīvo lasījumu manāmi pastiprināja tādi postkoloniālo literāro studiju metožu veidi kā starpdisciplināritāte un kontekstualitāte. Pētnieciskā darba rezultāti attēlo imigrantu tēlus, kas tiek reducēti līdz to kailajai dzīvībai un pakļauti tādiem procesiem kā marginalizācija, kapitālisms un nekoloniālās mobilitātes politika.

**Atslēgvārdi:** Džordžo Agambens, *homo sacer*, postkoloniālā literatūra, Nadīne Gordimera, Kirana Desaji, globālā mobilitāte

## ABSTRACT

This master's thesis presents a critical reading of immigrant characters in contemporary postcolonial immigration novels as the literary embodiments of Giorgio Agamben's figure of "homo sacer" in the global postmodern age. Two literary works were analyzed, Nadine Gordimer's "The Pickup" (2001) and Kiran Desai's "The Inheritance of Loss" (2007). The study uses Agamben's (1998) political theory as the theoretical framework for the analysis of the novels. This research is carried out, using the comparative approach to the literary analysis of the selected novels, focusing on the interpretation of "homo sacer".

Interdisciplinarity and contextuality, significantly enhancing the interpretive reading of the novels, are important modes of this research and argument, provided by the methodologies of postcolonial literary studies. The results of this research reflect how immigrant characters are reduced to the human condition that Agamben terms as 'bare life' and subjugated to the processes of marginalization, capitalism and neo-colonial politics of mobility.

**Key words:** Giorgio Agamben, *homo sacer*, postcolonial novel, Nadine Gordimer, Kiran Desai, immigration

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## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
1. Approaches to a comparative analysis and interpretation of the novels <i>The Pickup</i> and <i>The Inheritance of Loss</i> .....	4
2. Politicised life and the sovereign power.....	8
2.1. The theory of biopolitics.....	8
2.2. Politicised life: inscription of <i>zoē</i> into <i>bios</i> .....	9
2.3. Sovereign power- the mechanisms of functioning .....	11
3. The figure of <i>homo sacer</i> .....	14
3.1. <i>Homo sacer</i> : historical references and defining features .....	14
3.2. Human rights and the modern-day <i>homo sacer</i> .....	16
3.3. Camp: the modern-day zone of indistinction .....	18
4. Literature review: the studies of the figure of <i>homo sacer</i> in global mobilities.....	20
5. Representative writers of postcolonial literature: Nadine Gordimer and Kiran Desai.....	28
5.1. Nadine Gordimer and her oeuvre .....	28
5.2. Kiran Desai and her oeuvre .....	31
6. An immigrant figure as the figure of <i>homo sacer</i> in Nadine Gordimer's <i>The Pickup</i> .....	34
6.1. Abdu as the embodiment of <i>homo sacer</i> in South Africa.....	34
6.2. Abdu and Julie: state of existence in a desert village .....	37
6.3. Conclusions .....	39
7. An immigrant figure as the figure of <i>homo sacer</i> in Kiran Desai's <i>The Inheritance of Loss</i> .....	41
7.1. Biju as the embodiment of the figure of <i>homo sacer</i> .....	41
7.1.1. The low-caste indians as <i>homines sacri</i> .....	41
7.1.2. Biju's existence in new york .....	42
7.2. <i>Homines sacri</i> in the village Kalimpong .....	44
7.2.1. State of exception between the GNLF and the police. ....	45

7.3. Conclusions .....	48
8. Comparative analysis of the characters as embodiments of <i>homines sacri</i> in N. Gordimer's <i>The Pickup</i> and K. Desai's <i>The Inheritanc of Loss</i> .....	50
8.1. Biju and Abdu: immigrant life in the status of <i>homo sacer</i> .....	50
8.2. Potentiality to become a figure of <i>homo sacer</i> .....	53
Conclusions .....	55
Theses .....	59
References .....	61

## INTRODUCTION

The 20<sup>th</sup> century is marked by such major historical events as two world wars, the emergence of totalitarian regimes, the process of decolonization and globalisation (Søren, 2011). The byproduct of all these processes was global migration. One of the spheres that responded to the intensification of mobility was literature. Suddenly, the world experienced an influx of immigration literature to an unprecedented degree.

The immigration literature became an unavoidable part of the system of English literature. According to Frank Søren (2011), after the second world war, the amount and significance of immigration literature accelerated so greatly that its impact was reflected in the post-World War II literary history. As the influx of immigration literature created a distinct section from the “core English writers” (Ibid). This transformation served as a testifier of its “growing literary, sociological and phenomenological importance” (Søren, 2011: 2).

The influence of mobility on literature also affected the field of literary studies, which had to reconsider its approach to English literature. It became clear that scholars had “to take into consideration multiple geographies” that were a result of “various and uneven practices of world circulation” (Tilbe & Khalil, 2019). Scholars like Rebecca Walkowitz (2006) and Ali Tilbe and Rania M. Rafik Khalil (2019) emphasize the importance to study immigrant fiction. As it expresses “social memory and the highest possible consciousness of migration” (Ibid.). Migration entails a simultaneous correlation and dynamics between people and society. Thus, as Walkowitz (2006) stresses, the influence of migration not only falls on the part of literary system produced by migrants, but also “literary system as a whole that is influenced by the political and social processes of migration” (Søren, 2011).

According to Tilbe and Khalil, “mobility is a response to manifold of causes: economic, social, education and political” (Tilbe & Khalil, 2019). Therefore, mobility has a potentiality to disclose the concealed side of marginalization, capitalism and neocolonial politics in the modern-day world. According to scholars like Davis et al. (2017) and Mayblin (2017), the major influx of migrants in the present-day migrant crises comes from post-colonial territories. Hence, the interest of scholars from social, cultural and, most importantly, post-colonial studies with the processes of marginalisation, exclusion, othering and racial categorization of migrants (Netz, 2004).

The connection between marginalised, displaced people and colonial historicity, has been studied by numerous scholars. Stoler (2013) and Gregory (2004) state that the modern-day social injustices have traces of colonial past. Scholars like Ek (2006), Walia (2013) and others suggest that processes of exclusion, othering and racial categorization are “legacies of

imperialism” (Netz, 2004). Besides the research indicating the traceability of process of marginalisation to the colonial past, a number of scholars have found postcolonial fiction as a valuable imaginative form that addresses the experience of people who are affected by forced mobility. Moreover, postcolonial immigration fiction interwoven “with real-life experiences provides a link between the novel reality” (Tilbe & Khalil, 2019) and the world that is affected by neo-colonial politics, global inequality and capitalism (Davis & Isakjee, 2019: 216).

The central subject of scholarly interest is life of the marginalised, voiceless and rightless humans. It has been approached from variety of perspectives, amongst them is a political theory proposed by Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben. Agamben’s concepts of bare life, state of exception and sovereign power (Agamben, 1998), are gaining increasing attention of the academia, since the concepts seem to resonate with the re-emerging social and political issues of the present-day world. For the past few decades, Agamben’s research has been applied in the explorations of the identity and location among irregular migrants (Zembylas, 2010, Oudejans, 2019), people subjugated by economic force (Wing- Ching Ho, 2014) and the aspect of gender in relation to bare life (Sarah, 2009, Masters, 2009). However, there has not been done an extensive research, using Agamben’s political concepts, in regard to the ways in which postcolonial literature depicts and reflects the experience of marginalized and excluded life that is posited in a state of uncertainty by the neo-colonial politics of mobility. Therefore, the study, presented in the master thesis, is a critical reading of immigrant characters in contemporary postcolonial novel as the literary embodiments of Agamben’s figure of *homo sacer* in the global postmodern age.

The **goal** of the research is to analyse the figure of *homo sacer* in Nadine Gordimer’s *The Pickup* and Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*.

**The research questions:**

1. How is the figure of *homo sacer* represented in postcolonial immigrant novels?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the representation of the figure of *homo sacer* in N. Gordimer and K. Desai’s novels?

The following **enabling objectives** have been formulated for the present research paper:

1. to overview the approach to literary analysis
2. to overview the theoretical material on politicized life and sovereign power
3. to study the figure of *homo sacer*
4. to review scientific literature related to G. Agamben’s political theory
5. to overview the socio-historical background of N. Gordimer and K. Desai
6. to analyze the figure of *homo sacer* in N. Gordimer’s *The Pickup*

7. to analyze the figure of *homo sacer* in K. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*
8. to compare the representation of *homo sacer* in both novels

**The research methods and methodologies** for the present research are literary analysis and comparative analysis.

The present Thesis consists of eight chapters and 19 sub-chapters:

The **first** chapter focuses on the explanation of the interdisciplinarity as the chosen approach for the literary analysis of the present paper, as the comparative analysis of the two novels from different postcolonial contexts includes an interdisciplinary perspective on literary process and production within economic, political and cultural conflicts and historical changes.

The **second** chapter deals, first, with the review of the theoretical material in relation to politics of identity, location and sovereign power. Secondly, it explores the connection between the latter mentioned concepts.

The **third** chapter studies the figure of *homo sacer* as well as introduces such closely related and vital concepts of Agamben's analysis as the zone of indistinction and the camp.

The **fourth** chapter presents the overview of the scientific literature that uses political concepts proposed by Giorgio Agamben.

The **fifth** chapter focuses on the socio-historical background, literary genre and general themes of the Nadine Gordimer and Kiran Desai's oeuvre.

The **sixth** chapter presents the analysis of the figure of *homo sacer* in Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*.

The **seventh** chapter presents the analysis of the figure of *homo sacer* in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

The **eighth** chapter presents the comparison of the representation of the figure of *homo sacer* in Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup* and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*.

# 1. APPROACHES TO A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE NOVELS *THE PICKUP* AND *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

The aim of the study is to analyze the figure of *homo sacer* in the two selected post-colonial novels. This type of literary analysis implies an inter-disciplinary competence at the intersection of post-colonial cultural and literary studies, and contemporary political theory.

The literary analysis of the present study is postcolonial and comparative. First, literature can be seen as a valuable imaginative “form that most adequately answers to and expresses contemporary world” (Frank, 2008: 22). According to Georg Lukács (1971), novel, as the dominant genre of modern literature, has the ability to reflect “the fragmentary nature of the world’s structure into the world of forms. [...] All the fissures and rents which are inherent in the historical situation must be drawn into the form-giving process and cannot nor should be disguised by compositional means” (Lukács, 1971).

Secondly, postcolonial literature, conditioned by the colonial historicities, gives an insight into the lives of ordinary people who exists in the spaces affected by the colonial past. According to Dinah Birch and Katy Hooper, postcolonial literature can be defined as “that which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship and offers a reshaping or rewriting of the dominant meanings pertaining to race, authority, space, and identity prevalent under colonial and decolonizing conditions” (Birch & Hooper, 2012). Margret Drabble defines postcolonial literature more generally by stating that it is a “body of writing emanating from Europe’s former colonies which addresses questions of history, identity, ethnicity, gender, and language” (Drabble, 2000: 808). Some of the most distinguished postcolonial writers are Chinua Achebe, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Nadine Gordimer, Anita Desai, Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie and others. What makes postcolonial literature especially relevant is that it touches upon the aspects of the present and future development that is engulfed in the “neocolonial globalized times” (Viswamohan, 2011: 260).

In addition to that, postcolonial literature addresses the experience of the marginalized people affected by the imperial and post-imperial ideologies. According to Anna Laura Stoler (2013), when looking at the social injustice of various forms, typically it is possible “to track the tangibilities of empire as effective histories of the present” (Stoler, 2013: 29). Thomas Davis and Arshad Isakjee claim that “critical scholars look towards the colonial nomos of yesterday to make sense of the inequalities of the present” (Davis & Isakjee, 2018: 216). Furthermore, Derek Gregory states “the capacities that inhere within the colonial past are routinely reaffirmed and reactivated in the colonial present” (Gregory, 2004: 7). Thus, it can be considered that postcolonial literature explores relevant subject in social, postcolonial and

political studies such as identity, dislocation, immigration, race and homeland (Viswamohan, 2011). Furthermore, Emily Apter (1995) argues that postcolonial critics “were contemporary successors to the founders of comparative literature” (Young, 2013: 687).

Comparative literary analysis foregrounds the act of comparison as its “organizing rationale” (Young, 2013). It “responds to the relational comparative frameworks in which intellectual enquiry takes place” (Manning & Taylor, 2007: 75). Moreover, literature does not exist in a vacuum, unaffected by the external influences, it is rather a part of the space which is affected by a myriad of forces and formed as a response to these forces. According to Matthew Arnold, “everywhere there is a connection [...] no single event, no single literature, is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literature” (Arnold, 1987). Thus, comparative literary analysis enables one to expand the margins of literary analysis by placing it in a more global space. The effect of the latter mentioned interconnectedness in the age of globality is seen as an integral part of postcolonial cultural and literary studies.

Postcolonialism is closely interrelated with the process of globalization. Since in the globalized world the distinction between local and global dissipates and turns into a space of transactional torrents and junctures of “people, communication forms and practices, technology, money, [and] ideologies” (Venn, 2006). Hence, the postcolonial space turns into a complex system constituted of multiple worlds and “scapes” (Appadurai, 1993). These constitutive parts interact with each other and form one “complex and mobile organism” (Venn, 2006: 5). According to Couze Venn (2006), the complexity of postcoloniality can be studied only by

establishing at the analytical level clearer or more explicit links between postcolonial studies and cognate fields such as cultural studies, political economy, gender studies, the social studies of the technosciences and the theorization of subjectivity” (Ibid.).

As postcolonialism is fundamentally interdisciplinary, thus interdisciplinarity, as a mode of research, plays a vital role in postcolonial literary studies and in an enhanced interpretive reading of postcolonial literature.

Various interpretive approaches to study literary texts from different perspectives have been used in humanities and social sciences. Starting from the 1920’s, scholars in the field of literary studies have been seeking to look for analytical tools by transcending disciplinary boundaries. According to Cristina Arsene-Onu, scholars have been examining various approaches and notions in such fields as “cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychoanalysis, history, geography, the sciences, and theology” (Arsene-Onu, 2008). This tendency to draw insights from other disciplines and use those insights for a more comprehensive literary analysis is referred to as interdisciplinary approach. As the presented

paper intends to analyse the selected post-colonial novels with the themes, so germane to debates on global modernity and coloniality in political and cultural theory, it is vital to present an overview of the interdisciplinary approach to literary analysis.

According to Roberta Franka (1988) and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (1998), the term interdisciplinarity entails the idea that this term sets to convey. First of all, interdisciplinarity refers to the idea that information from other conceptually similar fields could be used in order to analyze a literary work. Secondly, it also indicates that frameworks and methodologies pertaining to other disciplines might be useful and employed in literary analysis. Moreover, the primary advantage of interdisciplinarity is its potential of unveiling complex aspects of the literary text and its literary specifics in its socio-cultural, political and philosophical significance. As Roland Barthes (1977) states, “interdisciplinarity is always transformative in some way, producing new forms of knowledge in its engagement with discrete disciplines” (Barthes, 1977:155). Arsene-Onu refers to interdisciplinarity as means for shedding more light “onto a certain piece of literary text” (Arsene-Onu, 2008). The literary analysis of the present study applies the notions developed in the political theory of Giorgio Agamben.

The subject of the presented paper is the figure of *homo sacer*. It is the concept in political theory proposed by Giorgio Agamben and claimed intensively for analytical debates and empirical studies across humanities and social sciences. Moreover, Agamben’s work has significantly contributed to the field of language and literary studies (see Watkin, 2010). The ideas around the concept of *homo sacer* developed by Giorgio Agamben in his work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) serve as a useful theoretical framework to understand and explain contemporary forms of human existence as forced mobilities, and ‘zones of uncertainty’ (Agamben, 1998) intensively and persistently reflected in contemporary literary writing (Castillo, 1990; Mukherjee, 2002; Zephaniah, 2001 etc.). Contemporary writers address the human condition of those who are entrapped in postcolonial zones of indistinction, where the boundaries between law/ violence, order/ chaos, inside/ outside are non-existent. This condition which can be referred to as existence of *homo sacer* or bare life will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. In short, the figure of *homo sacer* constitutes a new perspective that shines light on the underlying mechanisms that affect the lives of those who are seen as stateless, voiceless and most importantly rightless.

To conclude, as the aim of the study is to analyze the figure of *homo sacer* in postcolonial literature, the paper employs comparative and postcolonial literary analysis. The selected methods and methodologies enable one to look at complex subject matters “as a part of matrix of influence and response” (Manning & Taylor, 2007). In the case of the present

study, it allows to approach themes that are relevant in postcolonial studies and addressed in postcolonial literature, such as identity, dislocation, immigration, race and marginalization. The literary analysis has an interdisciplinary perspective, which is instrumental in the use of political concepts proposed by Giorgio Agamben, that allow one to study people who are affected by forced mobility. Thus, explaining ways in which postcolonial and neocolonial politics of mobility influence the process of marginalization.

## 2. POLITICISED LIFE AND THE SOVEREIGN POWER

The political theory proposed by Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben introduced various concepts such as *homo sacer*, bare life, state of exception, zone of indistinction, the camp etc. Yet, in order to form a more comprehensive view of the figure of *homo sacer* it is vital to overview such important aspects as the initial politicization of biological life and the potentiality of sovereign power to enforce the latter mentioned politicization. Therefore, the objectives of this chapter are (1) to overview the theory of biopolitics proposed by Michel Foucault, as an introduction to Agamben's first argument, (2) to outline the first inscription of natural life into politics and (3) to study the sovereign's working mechanisms, as they condition the existence of the figure of *homo sacer*.

### 2.1. The theory of biopolitics

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is a well-known French post-modern philosopher. He has published many influential works such as *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1976). His genealogical method of research has resulted in an extensive theory on the subjects of power and knowledge. In addition to that, his research on the topic of biopolitics is essential for the introduction of Agamben's first argument and for understanding the radicalised figure of *homo sacer* at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

According to Michael Foucault, power cannot be described with a single definition. Thus, Foucault presents a set of characteristics pertinent to power. First, "power is 'always already there', that one is never 'outside' it" (Foucault, 1980: 141). Hence, power is omnipresent (Taylor, 2011). Second, power should not be understood only in terms of restriction, repression and violence, but also production (Foucault, 2003). Power is not one-dimensional. Third, power exists on macro and micro- levels. Thus, force relations could sprout simultaneously from a governmental institution (macro-level) and family (micro-level). Finally, the fourth characteristic relates to the purposefulness of power and underlying force relations. As Richard Lynch states, "there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives" (Lynch, 2011:22). Moreover, these objectives are not stagnant, but are rather in a constant state of transformation. Thus, Foucault proposes three different forms of power that were employed throughout the history.

Michel Foucault in *Society Must Be Defended* (1997) outlines and describes three distinct forms of power: (1) sovereign power, (2) disciplinary power, and (3) biopower. The difference between these three forms of power relates to the reach and influence of the sovereignty's power on such vital aspects of human existence as life and death.

The sovereign power is the form of power that existed till the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is a form of power that is capable to interfere with human life at the level of death and life. According to Foucault (2003), the extent of sovereign's power was illuminated only after it exercised its right to take somebody's life. Ultimately, the sovereign within the realm of the sovereign power had "the right to take life or let live" (Foucault, 2003: 241). The scope of the authoritative power of the sovereign was questioned by scholars, thus subsequently modified.

At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the world experienced the occurrence of the disciplinary power. According to Johanna Oksala (2011), the difference between the sovereign power and disciplinary power was that the former destroys the body but the latter one recreates it. According to Foucault, the disciplinary power was used "to ensure the spatial distribution of individual bodies [...] and the organization, around those individuals, of a whole field of visibility" (Foucault, 2003: 242). Disciplinary power kept track of people through the involvement of various institutions. However, with the rise of the Industrial Revolution and constant migration, society faced new challenges related to safety, birth-rate, morbidity etc. As a result, a new form of power sprouted along the side of disciplinary power.

In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a new form of power took up the regulation of the existence of society. As a consequence of constantly emerging health related dangers, a new form of power called biopower took up the duty of overlooking and governing life. According to Foucault (2003), this new form of power shifted its gaze from an individual body to a group or the masses. Both disciplinary power and biopower co-exist and function under the term- biopolitics (Foucault, 2003). According to Chloe Taylor (2011), disciplinary power focuses on individual bodies and operates on the level of institutions, while biopower focuses on "man-as-species" (Foucault, 2003) and operates on the level of the State. The focus of biopolitics is life. However, death as such is never lost from its purview of control. According to Foucault, "power has no control over death, but it can control mortality" (Foucault, 2003: 248). Moreover, according to Foucault, the emergence of biopolitics was the first instance when natural life was brought into the centre of politics. However, Agamben argues that natural life has been at the basis of political life since the Classical Age.

## **2.2.Politicised life: inscription of *zoē* into *bios***

According to Agamben (1998), natural life has been at the basis of political life/ existence since the Classical Age. Moreover, he believes that the mechanisms that ensured the inscription of the natural life into the political one, are still relevant to this day. Thus, the objectives of this subchapter are (1) to distinguish the two aspects that were thought to

constitute life in the Ancient Greece and (2) to use Aristotle's idea to examine how these two aspects were implemented in the everyday existence of people.

The Ancient Greeks described life as consisting of two aspects: *zēo* and *bios*. *Zēo* is the “simple fact of living common to all living being (animal, men, or god)” and *bios* is “the form of way of living proper to an individual or a group” (Agamben, 1998:1). One can instantly notice the distinction between “common” and “proper” ways of life. This distinction sheds light on life in the *polis*. *Zēo*, as natural life, was never explicitly mentioned within the *polis*. It was perceived as strictly a part of the domestic existence or “as merely reproductive life” (Agamben, 1998:2). Therefore, these two aspects existed in different spheres, namely domestic and the public one. Yet, based on Aristotle's work it is possible to deduce that they were closely intertwined.

In *Politics* (1995), Aristotle presents one of the ideas that plays an essential role for the development of Agamben's arguments. As Aristotle refers to the process of villages unifying into a city-state, he states that it is done “for the sake of life, [yet] it exists for the good life” (Aristotle, 1995). Agamben interprets this quote as referring to humans who are “born in regard to life, but existing with regards to the good life” (Agamben, 1998:2). From this perspective simple life is *zēo*, whereas good life is *bios*. According to Agamben, this idea explains the process through which natural life is included into the *polis*. Namely, a human being is born into *zēo* but automatically turns into *bios* since he is born within the *polis*. According to Agamben, “politics were the place in which life had to transform itself into good life and in which what had to be politicised were always already bare life” (Agamben. 1998: 7). Thus, natural life/ bare life is the basis upon which the political being of the human is based. The natural life is included through its exclusion. This process is similar to the way voice (*phone*) turns into language (*logos*). As Aristotle explains:

Among living beings, only man has language. The voice is the sign of pain and pleasure, and this is why it belongs to other living beings. [...] But language is for manifesting the fitting and the unfitting and the just and the unjust. To have the sensation of the good and of the bad and of the just and the unjust is what is proper to men as opposed to other beings, and the community of these things makes dwelling in the city. (Aristotle, 1995: 10-11)

According to Agamben, “the living being has *logos* by taking away and conserving its own voice in it” (Agamben, 1998: 7). Consequently, the way one acquires political existence, is the same one acquires language. Identical mechanism of inclusive exclusion is put to action by the sovereign in the creation of the figure of *homo sacer*. Thus, it is essential to examine the mechanisms according to which sovereign functions. As it is impossible to understand the figure of *homo sacer*, without understanding that which conditions it.

### 2.3. Sovereign power- the mechanisms of functioning

The figure of a sovereign is a vital element in the process of unveiling the figure of *homo sacer*. Thus, the objective of this sub-chapter is to examine the sovereign power from two perspectives (proposed by Agamben): logical and topological. First of all, the logical perspective focuses on the Ancient Greek poet Pindar's fragment 169 and the sovereign's ability to function as a transition point between law and violence. Secondly, the topological perspective examines the reach of the sovereign's power through Carl Schmitt's theory.

According to Agamben, "the sovereignty is the point of indistinction between violence and law" (Agamben, 1998: 32). The statement is inspired by Pindar's fragment 169. Pindar is a Greek philosopher and poet, whose work has served as a point of reference in the research of the modern political states (see Hölderlin 1954, Schmitt 1974). Pindar's oeuvre is reflective of the political debates of the time, namely the Classical Age. Starting from the 4<sup>th</sup> century, sophists held heated arguments vis-à-vis the concept of law. According to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2016), the main task was to decide on the connection of law to *nomos*(order) and *physis* (nature). Pindar's fragment 169 depicts the story of Hercules and the rather violent way he establishes order and constructs civilization outside of the *polis*. Hence, Agamben sees Hercules as the embodiment of the sovereignty and uses Pindar's fragment to describe the capacity of the sovereign power.

Based on the Pindar's fragment 169, Agamben suggests that sovereign seems to have the ability to operate in different domains: *nomos* and *physis*. Sovereign, as an authority, is the one who is at the center of order (*nomos*), while at the same time is capable to influence the state of nature (*physis*). According to Hobbes, "sovereign is the only one who presents the incorporation of the state of nature in society, or, if one prefers, as a state of indistinction between nature and culture, between violence and law" (Agamben, 1998:35). Therefore, it is possible to deduce that sovereign power is capable to be in-between two states and function as a point of transition of the law (order) into violence (state of nature) and vice versa. Agamben (1998) calls it a sovereign's paradox, as it is "the mechanism by which sovereign is capable to suspend juridical order, while placing himself outside of that order" (Minca, 2006: 389). To expand the understanding of the sovereign power, it is essential to look at it from the topological perspective.

According to Carl Schmitt," the sovereign stands outside the juridical order and, nevertheless, belongs to it, since it is up to him to decide if the constitution to be suspended *in toto* "(Schmitt, 1985). It is important to clarify that the sovereign's decision is not meant as the absolute authority of the sovereign, but rather as "the inscription within the body of the

*nomos* of the exteriority that animates it and gives it meaning” (Agamben, 1998:26).

Agamben intends to explain the mechanisms of the sovereign power by using Schmitt’s topological perspective in relation to the concepts of order and chaos.

Carl Schmitt is a well-acknowledged political theorist, who published a book called *Nomos of the Earth* (1950). His work focuses on geopolitical issues and intends to trace the origins of the European order. Schmitt sees *nomos* (order) “as ‘spatially concrete, constitutive act of order and orientation’ that itself is constrained by ‘earth as the mother of law’ “(Berge, 2019). It is the ‘appropriated’ land that encapsulates territorial order (*Ortung*) and the juridical order one (*Ordnung*) (Agamben, 1998: 19). Yet, once the concept of the *nomos* is established, one might wonder in what way does the juridical and territorial order expand? Agamben answers this inquiry by stating that “the rule lives off exception itself” (Agamben, 1998: 27).

Order cannot be established in the space of chaos. Therefore, the sovereign power needs to create a state of exception that serves as a means to establish order on the outside and eventually include it into the inside. According to Paul Kahn, “exception is constantly between law and chaos” (Kahn, 2011:43). Thus, the sovereign needs to include a certain part of the outside (chaos) into the zone of exception to form a connection to the juridical order. As “to refer to something a rule must both presuppose and yet establish a relation with what is outside relation (non-relational)” (Agamben, 1998: 19). Moreover, one needs to remember that the state of exception automatically results in exclusion. In this case “what is excluded in the exception remains in the relation to the norm in the form of the latter’s suspension” (Minca, 2011). Everything that is within the state of exception is included only through its exclusion. This process is referred to as inclusive exclusion. Consequently, if exception is the primary step to include something into the law, thus the sovereign power and the state of exception is at the basis of the juridical order. Moreover, anyone who is captured in the state of exception is exists in a space where outside/inside and violence/law are indistinguishable and is turned into a figure of *homo sacer*.

To conclude, Michael Foucault proposed three form of power that eventually resulted in the appearance of biopolitics. According to Foucault, with the appearance of biopolitics natural life was inscribed into politics. However, according to Giorgio Agamben the natural life has been inscribed in the politics since the Classical Age. To prove his point, he looks at the Ancient Greek concepts *zoē* (natural life) and *bios* (political existence) that are seen as the constituent parts of life. Despite the general assumption that natural life is excluded from *polis*, Agamben uses Aristotle’s idea to explain that once an individual is born (*zoē*) within the city-state, he is transformed into a citizen (*bios*). Yet, the transformation takes place at the basis of natural life, which does not disappear but is rather suspended. Therefore, the natural

life is inscribed in the order through its exclusion, namely the inclusive exclusion. The same process is employed by the sovereign. The sovereign is the one who functions as a point of transition between outside/ inside, law/violence and *nomos/ physis*. Moreover, the sovereign power has the ability to decide on the initiation of the state of exception, which applies to the order by disapplying it. Thus, sovereign has the power to create a space which exists between law and violence, and where order does not function according to the norm. Any life that is captured within the state of exception is reduced to its bare life and is referred to as the figure of *homo sacer*. Hence, the figure of *homo sacer* is examined in Chapter 3

### 3. THE FIGURE OF *HOMO SACER*

According to Michel Foucault, “for millennia man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question” (Foucault, 1976). The focus of modern politics and, especially, modern democracy is *zoē*. The natural life that, during the Classical Age, was thought to be exclusively private, nowadays diffuses into the *bios*. Natural bare life “gradually begins to coincide with the political real, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoē*, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction” (Agamben, 1998:9). Zones of irreducible indistinction are the spaces where *homines sacri* are entrapped. Thus, the objectives of this chapters are (1) to overview the history of the figure of *homo sacer* and distinguish its main features, (2) to learn about the shift in the nexus between the human rights, nation- state and citizenship and (3) to study the phenomena of camp, as the most radical form of the zone of indistinction.

#### 3.1. *Homo Sacer*: historical references and defining features

In the book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), Giorgio Agamben introduces the figure of *homo sacer*, which was originally constituted in the Ancient Roman law. The purpose of this reference is Agamben’s intention to trace the connection between the ancient figure of *homo sacer* in the state of *sacratio* and bare life under the sovereign ban. In order to better understand bare life, it is essential to define the originary figure of *homo sacer*.

*Homo Sacer* is “an obscure figure of an archaic Roman law, in which human life is included in juridical order solely through its exclusion” (Agamben, 1998:8). In other words, *homo sacer* (sacred life) is an individual who is stripped of his rights and reduced to his bare life (Agamben, 1998). The sacred life is the one that cannot be sacrificed yet can be killed with impunity (Berge, 2019). Therefore, as Catherine Mills (2008) concluded, in this case bare life is not just a natural life, but rather life that is exposed to the purest and most extreme forms of violence. The reason for examining the figure of *homo sacer*, is to find a possible connection to the modern political state and illuminate the running mechanisms behind the bare life under the influence of the sovereign power (Agamben 1998:83).

The term *sacer* or sacred, carries within itself a long-debated meaning. The main question regarding this term, is how is it possible for a person to be sacred, yet at same time exist in state where s/he cannot be sacrificed yet can be killed with impunity? One might assume that the label “sacred” would protect an individual from external danger, yet in reality

this label seems to automatically expose him to the threat of being killed without punishment. Generally, the explanation is sought within the realm of divine. There are two views as to what the syntagma “sacred” stands for. One group argues, that the idea of being sacred refers to the point in history where the penal law was not distinguished from that of a religious one. Thus, a “death sentence appeared as a sacrifice to gods” (Agamben, 1998:72). The other group, states that the sacredness of an individual refers to his “consecration to the gods of the underworld” (Ibid.). Therefore, the reason why *homo sacer* cannot be sacrificed is because, s/he is already a part of the divine code. However, according to Agamben, the debate about the sacredness of the figure of *homo sacer* is focused on the wrong aspect. The latter mentioned groups use the framework of analysis, which is not fruitful, but rather creates a “scientific mythologeme”. (Agamben, 1998: 75). According to Agamben, the sacredness of *homo sacer* does not so much “indicate a conceptual ambiguity internal to the sacred, as many have argued, as the abandoned status of sacred man in relation to the law” (Mills, n. d.).

Agamben (1998) argues that the sacredness of *homo sacer* is expressed through its abandonment. What is meant by this statement is that life which is banned is abandoned by law. As Jean-Luc Nancy states, “to abandon is to remit, entrust, or turn over to [...] a sovereign power and to remit, entrust, or turn to its ban, that is, to its proclaiming to its convening, and to its sentencing”( Nancy, 1993: 44). First of all, it is important to clarify that in the times of the Ancient Rome, people were under control of two types of law: *ius humanum* and *ius divinum*. Thus, when it is said, that *homo sacer* can be killed without impunity, it indicates that he (*homo sacer*) is excluded from the civil law. As in a normal case, it would be a punitive act regarded as a homicide. The sacredness of *homo sacer*, hence suspends the law by disapplying it. Moreover, the moment it is said that the figure of *homo sacer* cannot be sacrificed, s/he is excluded from the divine law. Therefore, according to Agamben:

[...] *scaratio* takes the form of a double exception, both from the *ius humanum* and from the *ius divinum*, both from the sphere of the profane and from that of the religious. The topological structure drawn by this double exception is that of a double exclusion and a double capture, which presents more than a mere analogy with the structure of the sovereign exception. (Agamben, 1998:82)

Consequently, the figure of *homo sacer* finds itself in the absolute zone of indistinction. It is not a part of the civil and social community, while at the same time it has not yet entered the sphere of the divine. In addition, to the figure of *homo sacer* in the Roman law. A similar figured referred to as *loup garou* or *wargus* (Agamben, 1998:105) existed in the Germanic law.

In the Germanic law, whoever broke the “peace” (Fried: the term used for the law-ordered community), was labelled a werewolf or a wolf-man (Agamben, 1998). Once someone broke the law, he was considered to be dead, as he was excluded from the protective community. As a wolf-man, one could be killed without impunity. The wolf-man was pictured as a man having a wolf’s head and a human body. It is crucial to point out the apparent and constant state of transformation that is not finite. The ban targeted at the criminal puts him in the zone of indistinction. As Calvaca states, “to ‘ban’ someone is to say that anyone may harm him” (Agamben, 1998). That means, that the wolf-man is excluded from the city and juridical order, in a sense that he is not protected by it. Moreover, the wolf-man cannot be considered as a part of nature or *physis*, as he still has a relation to the law and the city. According to Agamben:

“the life of the bandit [...], is, rather, a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, *physis* and *nomos*, exclusion and inclusion: the life of the bandit is the life of the *loup garou*, the werewolf, who is precisely *neither man nor beast*, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither.  
(Agamben, 1998:105)

Both *homo sacer* (in the context of the Roman law) and wolf-man (in the Germanic law), helps to present a basic outline of the state in which bare life resides. Essentially, bare life finds its own being inclusively excluded under the state of exception within the zone of indistinction. Yet, in order to constitute a comprehensive rendering of the modern-day *homo sacer*/ bare life, it is essential to present historico- contextual basis as the substance for the outline of the figure of *homo sacer*. The following chapter focuses on the shifting nexus between human rights, citizenship and nation-state.

### **3.2.Human rights and the modern-day *homo sacer***

A major shift in regard to the concept of human rights, happened when people realized that, paradoxically, being human has little to do with having human rights. With the release of the Declaration of the Rights (1789), a new concept came to forefront; human rights and the safety of a human depends on the state of citizenship. According to Hannah Arendt:

The concept of human rights based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships- except that they were still human. (Arendt, 1979:299)

The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen was released in 1789. The declaration is vital in demonstrating the inscription of human life in the juridical order. In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), Agamben underlines two articles from

the declaration which clarify the nexus between human rights, citizenship and nation-state. The first article states that “every man is born with inalienable and indefeasible rights” (Agamben, 1998: 127) , and the second article modifies the first one by stating that “the goal of every political association is the preservation of the natural and indefeasible rights” (Agamben, 1998:127). Therefore, the first statement indicates that a human being has human rights. However, the second statement clarifies that only being a citizen would ensure the protection of the latter mentioned rights. Therefore, it is evident that natural life is at the basis of the order, it is portrayed as a foundation upon which the citizenship is built. “Rights are attributed to man (or originate in him) solely to the extent that man is the immediate vanishing ground (who must never come to light as such) of the citizen”. (Agamben, 1998:128) Consequently, for some time the connection between birth and nation was indistinguishable. However, the events of the World War I interrupted the established connection between birth, citizenship and human rights.

The endeavor of modern democracy to eradicate “the space between *zoē* and *bios*, so that the bare life would not exist” (Mills, 2008:70) crumbled with the events prompted by the World War I. It resulted in an immense flow of migration and introduction of denationalization and denaturalization. These processes put the old concept of birth and nation under a question and shuttered the foundation of the nation-state ideology. The disjuncture reached its peak and total lack of functionality with the emergence of the German Reich with Adolf Hitler at the forefront. The result of the friction in the nation- state ideology led to the moment, when “citizenship was something of which one had to prove oneself worthy and which could therefore be called into question” (Agamben, 1998:132).

The moment birth within a nation-state ceased to be considered citizenship worthy, the radicalized biopolitics commenced. In this sense, the focus shifted to the natural life. The biological bodies were put against the backdrop of political and judged on their political value. Therefore, if the sovereign power can initiate the state of exception and create a zone of indistinction where individuals come into immediate contact with sovereign violence, then the moment the modern biopolitics enter the stage, the decision affects masses (e.g. Agamben’s examples refer to the Nazi Germany and a number of executed inhumane acts such as euthanasia of mentally disabled part of the population, human experiments on prisoners and life with “no political value”, and mass extortion of Jewish part of the population). According to Agamben, “when life and politics- originally divided, and linked together by means of the no-man's land of the state of exception that is inhabited by bare life- begin to become one, all life becomes sacred and all politics becomes the exception”. (Agamben, 1998:148)

### 3.3.Camp: the modern-day zone of indistinction

An instrumental part of Agamben's political theory is his writing on the concept of the camp. First, Agamben looks at the camp in the most total and cruel shape, meaning the concentration camp. Yet, later he proposes the idea that the general structure of the camp is still existent nowadays. The concept of the camp is discussed in this chapter, due to the reason that it is the modern-day version of the zone of indistinction where the bare life resides.

Agamben's example of the totalized version of the zone of indistinction in the form of the camp is the one that appeared in the Nazi State during the state of emergency. The state of emergency was called *Schutzhaft*, also referred to as "protective custody" (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n. d.). It started as measure taken to neutralize the state enemies, thus putting them in the concentration camp. According to Holocaust Encyclopedia, "prisoners were not confined within the normal prison system but in concentration camps under the exclusive authority of the SS (Schutzstaffel; the elite guard of the Nazi State)" (Ibid.). Introduction of the state of emergency meant "suspension of the articles of the German constitution that guaranteed personal liberties" (Agamben, 1998:167). The state of emergency lasted 12 years, thus eventually normalizing it.

According to Agamben (1998), the camp is the result of the state of exception that is normalized. In this case, the unlocalizable state of exception has been localized. The camp presents itself as the space where the power is not mediated through a standard procedure. It is rather a space where the bare life faces unmediated force in the form of absolute violence. Essentially, the purpose of focusing on the structure of the camp is that it indicates the potentiality of the camp to manifest itself in various shapes and forms. Agamben sees the camp as the expression of the state of exception in the modern settings, starting from detention centers to detention spaces in airports. "The camp can be put as the 'nomos' of modernity and subsume under one and the same notion the camp of refugees" and "the zones where illegal migrants are parked by national authorities" (Rancière, 2004: 301). According to Agamben, "in all these cases, an apparently innocuous space actually delimits space in which the normal order is de facto suspended and in which whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on law but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily act as sovereign". (Agamben, 1998:175) Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the stabilization of the camp-like structure in the modern world is a symptomatic phenomenon which indicates the inability of the modern juridical order to deal with the rupture that was brought by the inscription of the bare life in it (Ibid).

To conclude, *Homo Sacer* is "an obscure figure of an archaic Roman Law" (Agamben, 1998). It is someone who cannot be sacrificed yet can be killed with impunity. Agamben looks at the sacredness of *homo sacer* as double exclusion, both from *ius humanum* and *ius divinum*. Beside the figure of *homo sacer*, the Germanic law had a similar figure referred to as *loup garou*. Both of these figures serve structurally as a prototype for the modern-day *homo sacer*. Moreover, the modern-day rendering of the figure of *homo sacer* was shaped by the rupture in the nexus between human rights, citizenship and nation-state introduced by The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. The rupture was brought forth by the events of the World War I, that resulted in the radicalization of biopolitics. The peak of the radicalized biopolitics manifested in the form of the concentration camps in the Nazi Germany. According to Agamben, camps with similar functions still exist till this day. Moreover, they can be found on different levels of juridico- political order and in most of the cases do not posit themselves as camps. While, at the same time they maintain their basic function of reducing human beings to their bare life.

#### 4. LITERATURE REVIEW: THE STUDIES OF THE FIGURE OF *HOMO SACER* IN GLOBAL MOBILITIES

Since Giorgio Agamben introduced the concepts of *homo sacer* /bare life, state of exception and zone of indistinction, a plethora of research has been published using his theoretical framework. Thus, in order to outline the main tendencies and currents in the academic world in relation to Giorgio Agamben's political theory, the objective of this chapter is to review scientific literature that uses his theoretical framework.

The larger part of accessible scientific literature that uses Agamben's theoretical framework is related to the displaced and marginalised people affected by the neo-colonial politics of mobility in the contemporary globalised world. A considerable amount of research is dedicated to the study of irregular migrants as *homines sacri* and their treatment by nation-states. An extensive research has been done by Prem Rajaram and Carl Grundy- Warr (2004).

Prem Kuram Rajaram and Carl Grundy- Warr in the article "The Irregular Migrant as Homo Sacer: Migration and Detention in Australia, Malaysia, and Thailand" (2004) look at the irregular migrants as figures of *homo sacer* in the context of three different countries: Australia, Malaysia and Thailand. The authors acknowledge the media's influence on the image of irregular migrants, since irregular migrants are associated with a threat and in some cases the word 'immigrant' is substituted with 'terrorist'. The article emphasizes the idea, that once the immigrant is seen as the threat it automatically sanctions the creation of such a control mechanism as detention camps. As in detention camps "refugee becomes a controllable figure" (Rajaram & Grundy- Warr, 2004: 41). However, each country deals with irregular immigration in their own manner.

Australia, through various intersecting policies, has turned the whole country into a state of exception. First of all, there are pre-emptive measures that prevent irregular migrants from ever obtaining residence permit or legal status in general. Secondly, as the whole country functions as a state of exception, Australia permits the sovereign power to transfer irregular migrants to the offshore camps. Once the irregular migrants are on the off-shore camps, Australian government shakes off any responsibility for their future (Rajaram & Grundy- Warr, 2004: 43).

Malaysia's attitude towards irregular migrants is affected by two processes. First, a considerable influx of irregular migrants is attributed to the economic need for cheap labour. Consequently, when the country experiences recession the same irregular migrants are

excluded and turned into *homines sacri*. Second of all, Malaysia's nation-building strategies oscillate from communalistic to nationalism centred ones (Rajaram & Grundy- Warr, 2004). Thus, depending on the nation-building strategies, the country is either welcoming to irregular immigrants or not. Interestingly enough, it does not matter if the immigrant workers are legal or illegal, either way they are depoliticised and abused both by the police and other citizens. Moreover, there are a lot of cases of gender-specific abuse in the form of rape.

Thailand has lately received a huge influx of immigrants from Myanmar/ Burma. Thailand has demonstrated a tendency to present immigrants as a threat to the national geobody (Rajaram & Grundy- Warr, 2004: 53). The refugees and irregular migrants are accused of robberies, pollution and violence. Hence, these accusations are used as a reason for "early repatriation of refugees and other undocumented migrants" (Ibid.). In addition to that, the media and the police blame all the criminal activity that is detected near the detention camps on the migrants. They are referred to as "the problem" (Grundy- Warr, 2002). According to Nezvak Soguk (1996), people who live in detention camps/ temporal camps are looked at as the bearers of the "anarchy from the outside" (Soguk, 196: 294). Therefore, irregular migrants are seen as a threat to national security and reduced to their bare life. Similar type of research has been done by Michainos Zembylas in the article "Agamben's Theory of Biopower and Immigrants/ Refugees/ Asylum Seekers" (2010).

Zembylas (2010) examines the question of identity in relation to the figure of immigrant/ refugee/ asylum seeker and how the representation of these figures is affected by liberal/ humanitarian and educational discourse. As the latter mentioned figures are usually represented as *homines sacri*, Zembylas proposes new ways how to think about immigrants/ refugees/ asylum seekers and how to inject those ideas in the educational discourse.

Zembylas (2010) points out that there are two ways that asylum seekers/ refugees and immigrants are usually seen by the public. On the one hand, they are constituted as the Other and potential threat to the national security. This narrative, mainly generated by the media, promotes a phenomenon referred to as fearism, which is "the systematic production and perpetuation of fear on others" (Fisher, 2006). While, on the other hand, the humanitarian discourse presents immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers as human beings that need to be aided (Zembylas, 2010: 31). Zembylas finds issues with both of these views and points out that they only solidify the standardised image of the latter mentioned groups.

Zembylas (2010) encourages educators and scholars to incorporate in their work a broader array of critical views on the concept of citizenship. He suggests thinking in the terms of critical citizenship, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and others. As "the current formal, taught curriculum of citizenship produces a relatively narrow scope and set of meanings for

what citizenship is and can be” (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006: 657). Similar research in the attempt to rethink the image of people who are considered *homines sacri*, has been done by Patricia Owens in “Reclaiming ‘Bare Life’?: Against Agamben on Refugees” (2009). Owens (2009) looks at the act of resistance of Australia based refugees who sutured their lips in protest to the unjust treatment. Inspired by Hannah Arendt’s political theory, Owens (2009) proposes a different way how to view refugees who are reduced to their bare life. In addition to that, a research worth mentioning is Joseph- Achille Mbembe’s “Necropolitics” (2003), which proposes a modified view of *homines sacri* in camps around the world. He suggests looking at *homines sacri* as people who “are subjugated to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead” (Mbembe, 2003: 40). Besides the extensive research in relation to the identity of marginalised and displaced masses as the embodiment of *homines sacri*, a vast number of research has been dedicated to the relation between the camp and refugees/irregular immigrants/asylum seekers.

Olga Zeleva in “Biopolitics, borders, and refugee camps: exercising sovereign power over non-members of the state” (2017), conducted a study on the refugee camp “The Friedland” in Germany. According to Zeleva (2017), camps serve for a specific purpose of delineating a national identity. They attest the way sovereign decides upon inclusion of certain individuals based on their cultural, linguistic, historic or even racial elements (Rembold and Carrier, 2011: 363). Zeleva’s research points out a number of aspects that delimit the possibilities of the people that reside in the latter mentioned camp. The camp “The Friedland” is situated outside the city, thus it prevents any kind of integration in the social life. The refugees are reduced to their bare life, as even their temporal IDs, that are valid only within the camp, have papers for meal stamps attached to them. Therefore, they are reduced to their biological existence and pure physiological needs (Zeleva, 2017). Overall, the proclaimed active choice and free will offered to refugees is prevented by implicitly imposed passivity. However, a research done by Čarna Brkovič (2018) intends to prove that refugee camps and people residing in them, should not be considered as passive *homines sacri* caught within a state of exception.

Brkovič’s article “The Everyday Life of *Homo Sacer*. Enclave Urbanism in Podgorica, Montenegro” (2018) focuses on the figure of *homo sacer* at the camp for displaced people in Podgorica, Montenegro. Her main point is that the camp does not strip individuals of their rights. Based on the anthropological research carried out by herself, she concludes that there are “complex sociopolitical relationship within the camp” (Brkovič, 2018: 11). Brkovič acknowledges the importance of Agamben’s political theory, as “the concepts of slavery and barbarism as the concepts of otherness and exclusion from equal political rights [are] already

justified” (Fiskesjö, 2012). However, she stresses that Agamben’s concept of *homo sacer* lacks “‘degrees’ of detention and of atrocity within zones of exception in different geographical and political contexts” (Rajaram and Grundy-War, 2004). As the families that reside in the Montenegro camps have complex social relation, despite their poor living conditions. People from the camp have the ability to apply for the work permit and obtain jobs. Additionally, the author claims that people in the camp are happy with their living conditions as they improve every year. In short, the idea is that *homines sacri* are not passive, but rather active and resistant. The idea of irregular migrants being relatively active agents, has been also proposed by Nanda Oudejans (2019), who introduces a new perspective on invisibility of irregular migrants.

Nanda Oudejans’ article “The Right not to Have Rights: A New Perspective on Irregular Migration” (2019) proposes a different perspective how the irregular immigrants, who reside in the zones of indistinction, could be perceived by the academia. The author of the article outlines two views on how the irregular immigration is approached. (1) Irregular immigrant is someone who is subjugated to the sovereign force and suffers from immediate violence. (2) Second view does not exclude the idea that an irregular immigrant is a figure of *homo sacer*, yet this figure is modified into someone who chooses the right not to have rights. The author of the article looks at a new rendering of a figure of *homo sacer*, as someone who willingly decides to stay in the corner, which the light of the law enforcement cannot reach. In this case “the irregular immigrant appears at the threshold of legal order where law is sovereignly capable of its own impotence”. The evidence provided by Oudejans, shows that people can lead a decent lives while staying in a country illegally, thus not being afraid of “the enforcement of a law that violently haunts [people] with a view to arresting, detaining, and deporting [them]” (Oudejans, 2019: 468). This aspect is explored in Jadon de León, Cameron Gokee and Ashley Schubert (2015) work that studies the case of US- Mexico border crossers as an example of bare life.

Jadon de León, Cameron Gokee and Ashley Schubert in “‘By the Time I Get to Arizona’: Citizenship, Materiality, and Contested Identities Along the US–Mexico Border” (2015) suggest that the border crossers are able to show signs of resistance. According to León et al., “the lack of identifiers (i.e., ID or contact information) or the process of encrypting personal information can be viewed as strategies of resistance to undermine the power of the state to deport or incarcerate people, as well as to prevent the exploitation of smugglers” (León et al, 2015: 468). However, the authors of the article point out that the border crossers are ultimately reduced to “bare life”. The Border Control refers to them “as ‘aliens’, ‘illegals’ and ‘bodies’” (Ibid., 469). Life of illegal border crosses has absolutely no

rights in the eyes of the Border Control, since their death has no consequence and they are exposed geographically to a merciless zone of indistinction (i.e., Sonoran Desert). It is up to the Border Control to decide whether the border crossers will be put into a detention camp, jail or deported. Despite these dangers, there are those irregular migrants who manage to cross the border successfully and find their asylum in the US. A particularly insightful research has been done by Nora J. Kenworthy (2012) on the undocumented migrants that are held in the state psychiatric asylums.

Nora J. Kenworthy in her article “Asylum’s Asylum: Undocumented Immigrants, Belonging, and the Space of Exception at a State Psychiatric Centre” (2012) looks at a specific group of undocumented immigrants who are held in a “captive displacement” in various state psychiatric asylums across the country. These immigrants have only expired documentation; thus, they have no means to receive an access to social benefits. Interestingly enough, the author of the article points out that all the names in the documents are replaced with pseudonyms so that the governmental institutions would not be able to find these groups. Despite the apparent humanitarian expression, the undocumented migrants are existing in the state of passivity. As “the routinization of displacement creates a social and cultural limbo”(Hooper, 2003: 21). This article once again suggests that the figure of *homo sacer* is not exposed to a complete violence and death, but rather is “clothed, fed, and given his hospital identification; but marooned he remains, looking out all day at view of the churning sea- at the impossibility, and inevitable danger of swimming elsewhere” (Kenworthy, 2012: 130). In addition to all of the latter mentioned research, it would be useful to mention a research done by Bulent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen in “The Culture of Exception: Sociology Facing the Camp” (2005), where they examine spaces like refugee camps, gated communities, rape camps and look at them as the states of exception. In addition to that, Kalpana Rahita Seshadri in “When Home is a Camp: Global Sovereignty, Biopolitics, and Internally Displaced Persons” (2008) reflects on the effect of the humanitarian aid on the everlasting status of displaced people. Finally, Diana Martins in “From spaces of exception to ‘campscape’: Palestinian refugee camps and informal settlements in Beirut” (2015) looks at the case when the camps are situated within the city, thus resulting in the fusion of refugees, citizens and others. Besides the research done on the aspect of the camp as a zone of indistinction and immigrants/ refugees/ asylum seekers as *homines sacri*, authors like Christine Sylvester (2005) and Ryszard Bartnik (2014) have analyzed postcolonial literature using Agamben’s political theory.

Christine Sylvester in “Bare Life as a development/postcolonial problematic” (2006) and Ryszard Bartnik in “On South African Violence Through Giorgio Agamben’s

Biopolitical Framework: A Comparative Study of J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Z. Mda's *Ways of Dying*" (2015) study the problematics of development in the postcolonial Africa and the issue of dehumanization during the apartheid and post-apartheid periods. The research of both scholars is carried out through the comparative analysis of postcolonial literature. Christine Sylvester (2006) concludes that in postcolonial countries such as Zimbabwe and Rwanda, the figure of *homo sacer* is constituted in the stage of transition. This transition from the period of apartheid into the equal state, ends up in a critical state of uttermost violence that produces bare life on all the levels (i.e., specific groups, such as tutsi, Jews, women and disabled people). Ryszard Bartnik (2015) focuses on the intertwining apparatuses that strip individuals of their rights, both during and after the apartheid period. Bartnik emphasizes that there is always "the other" or "the inferior". Moreover, he addresses the idea that everyone can become a figure of *homo sacer*, since the novels analyzed by Bartnik focus on the lives of white people in the midst of a changing nation. Sylvester and Bartnik's articles demonstrate how the modern-day zones of indistinction and *homines sacri* can be found in the contemporary postcolonial literature.

One of the most interesting research in the field of literature has been done by Peter Arnds. In the article "Of Monsters and Migrants: On the Loss of Sanctuaries in Literature as a Parable of Biopolitics in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries" (2019), he looks at three 19<sup>th</sup> century novels (e.g. *Frankenstein*"(1818), "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"(1830) and "Dracula"(1897)) and focuses on the representation of monsters and sanctuaries as a blueprint for modern-day "mechanisms and narratives of dehumanization in the migrant scenario"(Arnds, 2019:20). He insists that this research is important in the context of "ongoing debates over migration in Europe, the racially charged political climate in the US, and the global spread of neo-fascist groups spewing hatred and racism" (Ibid., 19). In each novel, the main character is considered a monster (*homo sacer*) who can only exist within a sanctuary (zone of indistinction), which according to Marc Augé (1992) is a non-place, that has no protective features of a sanctuary (Arnds, 2019: 22). In addition to the research dedicated to the study of literary work, Agamben's political theory has been used to study of contemporary art, photography and movies.

An insightful research and analysis of the art has been done by Anthony Downey in "Zones of Indistinction": Giorgio Agamben's 'Bare Life' and the Politics of Aesthetics" (2009). The author uses contemporary art to answer his question of "what does it mean to be reduced to 'bare life' and coerced into adopting the accursed role [...] of *homo sacer*?" (Downey, 2009: 115). He mentions artworks that represent such zones of indistinction as Guantanamo Bay, Algeria (during the civil war), disappearance of people in Columbia (i.e.,

Omar D's video "Proyecto para un memorial") and Tangiers that functions as *zone d'attente* (Yto Barrda's photography) (Downey, 2009). In addition to Downey's research, Greg Bourke in his article "Bare Life's Bare Essentials: When All You've Got is Hope- The State of Exception in *The Road*, *District 9* and *Blindness*" (2014), looks for examples of the state of exception in three different movies. All of the movies are "tied together by the common thread of the camp" and all of them refer to the "heart of the sensational, diabolical and disturbing world Agamben incarnates" (Bourke, 2014: 440). Some of the greatest takeaways of the analysis of these movies are that the modern-day camp is not so much obsessed with the execution of people, rather than constant exploitation of them. As Bourke states, "the camp becomes the all-pervasive exploitative nature of modern capitalist society. Moreover, there is [...] exploitation that recognizes other signifiers of difference, in this particular case, gender" (Ibid., 461). Agamben's political theory has been employed in the research done in the field of Gender studies.

Sarah Blake in her article "The War on Terrorism as State of Exception: A Challenge for Transnational Gender Theory" (2009) uses Agamben's proposed concepts to give additional perspective on the issues that are relevant in gender theory. In the article Blake focuses on the representation of the "Third World Women" among feminists and the discourse promoted by the US (in context of the "war on terrorism") of "liberation of Afghan women" to establish a state of exception and ultimately invade Afghanistan and Iraq (Blake, 2009:62). Similar issues have also been addressed by Cristina Masters in "*Femina Sacra*: The 'War on/of Terror', Women and the Feminine" (2009) where she compares the representation of the US female soldiers and the faceless Afghan and Iraqi women. Additionally, Ronit Lentin in the article "*Femina Sacra*: Gendered memory and political violence" (2006) discusses the treatment of female survivors of Transnistria war in Ukraine, as embodiment of the figure of *homo sacer*. Moreover, it is important to mention the research regarding the themes of capitalism and labor, since financial vulnerability is automatically a physical vulnerability.

David Whyte in the article "Naked Labour: Putting Agamben to Work" (2009) concentrates on the way human bodies are turned into docile bodies (in Foucauldian sense) and stripped of their rights for the purpose of economic production (Whyte, 2009). Special attention is paid to the undocumented workers, who are reduced to bare life. They have to work according to the policies and regulations, however, as they are haunted by the constant threat of deportation, they cannot request any improvements in their working conditions. In addition to the struggle of undocumented workers, Wing-Chung Ho in "Biopolitics, Occupational Health and State Power: The Marginalization of Sick Workers in China" (2014)

brings into focus discrimination of Chinese workers with occupational diseases within their own country. As Wing-Chung Ho states:

The lives of sick workers are both external and internal to the world. They are poised to struggle, with either participating in a normal working life or accepting their role as a sick person. At the same time, they also encounter the experience of double ambivalence as both identities fail to be understood in society. (Wing- Chunh Ho, 2014: 818).

Thus, judging by the presented articles it is possible to conclude that there is a tendency to see capitalist society as one of the vehicles that creates bare life, succumbed by the effect of the economic force.

To conclude, Giorgio Agamben's theory and main concepts have been highly relevant in the contemporary academic world. Scholars like Prem Kuram Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr (2004) have done a study on the treatment of irregular migrants by nation-states. Mbembe (2003), Owens (2009), Zembylas (2010) and Oudejans (2019) have dedicated research to the aspect of the identity of irregular migrants. Zeleva (2017) and Brkovič (2018) have studied the relation between the camp and bare life. Moreover, articles by Christine Sylvester (2005), Anthony Downey (2009), Greg Bourke (2014) and Ryszard Bartnik(2014) use Agamben's theoretical framework to analyze the contemporary cases of *homo sacer* and zone of indistinction in movies, contemporary art, photography and literature. In addition to that, the concept of the exploited body (a human reduced to his/ her bare life) has been pertinent in the studies related to gender and capitalism/neoliberalism. The presented literature review reveals the topicality and subsequent potentiality of Agamben's theory in the modern-day world.

## **5. REPRESENTATIVE WRITERS OF POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE: NADINE GORDIMER AND KIRAN DESAI**

Both Nadine Gordimer and Kiran Desai are important and influential women novelists. Their novels are attributed to the postcolonial literature, yet that does not automatically indicate the similarity of the represented themes in their novels. Each of these writers come from different socio-historical and geographical backgrounds. Hence, their writing is shaped by different experiences. Thus, to carry out a well-founded analysis of the novels, the objective of the present chapter is to provide contextual information on the selected authors and their novels.

### **5.1. Nadine Gordimer and her oeuvre**

Nadine Gordimer (1923- 2014) is a South African writer, whose oeuvre is highly influential in South African literary world. According to Michelle Goins- Reed (2019), “Gordimer’s fiction contributed to the history of South Africa and of the political environment that prevails outside and within her fictional worlds (Goins- Reed, 2019). Gordimer’s parents were Jewish immigrants (mother from England and father from Latvia). Thus, she was always involved in the social movements of the time. Gordimer was a part of an anti-apartheid movement and her work was banned during the apartheid (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannic, 2019).

In the post-war period, South African literature grew and flourished. The post-war period in South Africa was referred to as “the first birth” (Cooke, 1978: 533). According to William Ploomer, at that moment “South African literature in English language [was] in such a flourishing state that there [was] no longer any need to keep bending over to see if it is growing” (Ibid.). Interestingly enough Gordimer, alongside with Jack Cope, was one of those writers who decided to stay in South Africa and produce their fiction from within the country. Other writers, who were active during the “first birth” period, like Alan Paton, Peter Abrahams and Dan Jacobson, either switched to nonfiction or moved to other countries (Ibid.).

Gordimer’s writing developed and experienced major shifts though many decades. Her early writing was personal and private. It did not elaborate on broad social issues, despite the fact that Gordimer found herself in an ambivalent position. According to Stephanie Genty, “she [Gordimer] is both colonizer (white) and colonized (as a woman), and as a result neither colonizer nor colonized. She is both ‘outsider living inside’, ‘settled and alien’ “(Genty, 2003:83). Thus, she sided with a more private recollection of the milieu that she inhabited in order to explore her own self-knowledge. However, ultimately Gordimer made a decision to

turn her novels outwards as the situation in South Africa became worse. Her strong views against the apartheid guided her writing journey. Her main concern was to keep “the private and public aspects of her characters’ experiences unified. She attempted to do so mainly through focusing on the subjects of interracial sexuality” (Cooke, 1978: 534). Eventually, Gordimer realised that her work cannot avoid the responsibilities that she had as a writer.

In one of her works, Gordimer concluded that “in a certain sense a writer is ‘selected by his subject- his subject being *the consciousness* of his own era. How he deals with this is, to me, the fundamental of commitment” (Gordimer, 1975). Thus, Gordimer became aware that, as a writer, she has to give voice to stories that were never told, to explore those subject matters that were deemed as less important. Moreover, she became interested in the writing of the black community. As according to Gordimer, it is of great necessity to prioritise “African-centered consciousness” (Cooke, 1978: 536). Thus, as a writer Nadine Gordimer always found herself oscillate between being influenced by “the individual artistic creation” and “the pull of existing as a social being in a particular political context” (Lahti, 2013: 39). Ultimately, her fiction grew into critical realism.

The scholars have not come to a mutual agreement as to the style and genre that Gordimer abides by. Instead various literary critics and scholars have expressed their own postulates as to what Gordimer’s oeuvre could be categorised as. Monic Head (1994) describes Gordimer’s works as something that gradually moves from realism towards postmodern features (Head, 1994). Rita Barnard (2018) also sees Gordimer’s work as shifting “from formal impulse to formal impulse or genre to genre” (Barnard, 2018: 25). Gordimer’s work serves as a voice. It has a function of filling spaces that have been left empty. Hence, Gordimer describes her work as a part of critical realism. She defines critical realism as “work in which the social changes that characterize our era are the most truly reflected” and “and human condition is understood dynamically, in a historical perspective” (Gordimer, 1973: 32). Gordimer’s work is significant due to its focus on locally existent issues and their ability to posit them against the backdrop of a global context. According to Stephen Clingman, “Gordimer’s writing is always in some way in dialogue with an absent future” (Clingman, 1998: 13). Gordimer, as a writer, is known to use what is defined as “essential gesture” (Lahti, 2013: 40).

Essential gesture is writer’s ability to take a certain experience that might be restricted in an existent context and make it more meaningful and significant through writer’s imagination (Gordimer, 1988: 298). Gordimer’s characters are victims of different circumstances. They are affected and “interrupted” (Clingman, 2019) by their place of birth, race, gender. Gordimer uses essential gesture to widen the scope of her examination. She sheds light on her characters that come from post-colonial spaces or decide to reside in post-colonial spaces that

“are affected by racial and gender inequalities” (Goins- Reed, 2019: 54). This aspect is relevant when looking at the novel chosen for the analysis of the study. *The Pickup* (2001) is a reflection of Nadine Gordimer intention to apply essential gesture and “to reveal otherness among exponents of the East and West, thereby extending her examination to veer in the direction of globalisation, an important theme in current literature” (Cloete, 2005: 52).

Gordimer’s novel *The Pickup* talks about a love story between an illegal immigrant Abdu from an unnamed Arab country and a young bourgeois girl Julie Summers, from a financially stable family in Johannesburg. It is not an unusual plot in Gordimer’s work, as she is used to merging the private and public through the “subject of interracial sexuality” (Cooke, 1978: 534). At the beginning of the novel Julie’s car breaks down and she is aided by a young man named Abdu. After some time, they fall in love, but their everyday life is interrupted by a notice from the Department of Home Affairs. The notice states that Abdu’s residence permit has expired more than a year ago and now he has two weeks to leave the country. Eventually, Julie decides to leave South Africa with Abdu and move to his homeland, which is described as “one of those partitioned by colonial power on their departure, [...] one of those countries where you can’t tell religion apart from politics, their forms of persecution from the persecution of poverty” (Gordimer, 2002: 12). The novel depicts the topics of alienation, mobility, statelessness, the Other, race, gender and etc.

*The Pickup* underlines the importance of space and borders. Gordimer often enough focuses on the aspect of ‘no man’s land’. As the space which can be labelled as “no man’s land”, is a space that “is undefined, natural in some ways, threatening in other, beyond the realm of safety” (Clingman, 2019: 15). Moreover, the novel reveals Gordimer’s application of essential gesture in regard to the national matters as well as the transnational ones (Lahti, 2013). Thus, Gordimer shows a certain interest in the aspect of borders: from geographical to more figurative ones, like body, authority and identity. According to Lahti,

“the novel traces the transformative interaction across borders: the border between bodies, the border between subjectivities, the border between national material conditions, and the border between representation and reality” (Lahti, 2013: 41).

The chosen novel depicts an interracial couple who has a hard time finding anything in common except their own physical bodies. The novel reflects the co-existence of two sides. On the one side are wealthy and privileged Westerners and on the other side, people like Abdu/Ibrahim with his “homelessness and his ambition, his being a nonperson and a person at the same time, captured by his two names” (Sullivan, 2001). Consequently, Gordimer’s novel *The Pickup* is an amalgamation of all the latter mentioned aspects that appear as a signature style and theme in Gordimer’s oeuvre.

## 5.2. Kiran Desai and her oeuvre

Kiran Desai is an Indian writer born in 1971. She has received her education in India, England and USA. Until the age of 14, she lived and studied in India. Later she moved for a year to England and finally settled down in the US. Currently, Desai lives in New York. Kiran Desai's mother is a famous and influential Indian writer Anita Desai. All of Desai's books are dedicated to the depiction of Indian society and its versatile experience. As a result of Desai's personal experience and observations while living in such countries as England and USA, the accounts of the situations that her characters face in her novels are harshly realistic. Desai is seen as one of the writers, who moved to the West and perceive themselves as a part of "the phenomena of life as a minority, along with postcolonial historicity" (Viswamohan, 2017: 259).

Kiran Desai's literary work is generally considered to be a great contribution to postcolonial literature. Desai's literary writings are normally attributed to the postcolonial fiction, as according to Elizabeth Jackson, "literary fiction produced by people designated as 'from the former colonies, whether they are classified as 'native' or 'diasporic', has been termed [...] postcolonial literature' (Jackson, 2016: 25). Yet, various scholars have an issue with such definite categorisation. Scholars have delineated countless themes that Desai's novels discuss and find the term "postcolonial" as delimiting. According to Jackson (2016), Desai's work should be looked at as something in-between cosmopolitan and postcolonial literature. Cosmopolitan literature being a product of globalization. Her novels focus on "the ramification of globalization and its end-state, globality, in an increasingly insular world", while simultaneously she also "engages in redescribing and reevaluating articulation of the postcolonial" (Viswamohan, 2011: 260-261). Desai looks at the world both on the national and global levels. According to Berthold Schoene (2009), postcolonial novel re-imagines the nation and cosmopolitan novel imagines the world (Schoene, 2009: 130). Consequently, scholars find it hard to settle on one specific categorisation of Desai's oeuvre, as it would be limiting to her literary potentiality. Nevertheless, Desai addresses the experience of those who are voiceless, disposed and stripped of any rights. The present research paper analyses the figure of *homo sacer* in Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, which won the Man Booker Prize in 2006.

*The Inheritance of Loss* focuses on various characters and their perspectives on the events that occur in the novel. The novel is set in 1986. One thread of the story follows a girl called Sai, who lives with her grandfather judge Patel and a cook in a small village called

Kalimpong. Both Sai and the judge are a part of the higher caste and are seen as anglicised Indians. Despite struggling with their own emotional and psychological turmoil, they happen to be in the middle of a rising conflict. The village is turned into a centre of revolution, where Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) protests all over the Northern West Bengal territories with an aim to established Gurkhaland state for Nepal-speaking Indians. This particular thread of the story depicts life on a more national level, while the other thread of the story depicts a life of an Indian boy called Biju (the cook's son) who manages to migrate to the US. Hence, the story shines light on a transnational experience. Biju lives and works illegally in New York and sees the reality of migrant workers in the land of opportunity. Eventually, he realises the conditions of his existence and the lack of opportunities that he possesses.

The novel present reader with such themes as globalisation, migration, mobility, “dislocation and the subsequent loss of background, history and identity” (Viswamohan, 2011). *The Inheritance of Loss* is considered as valuable addition to the postcolonial literature. First of all, Desai pays a lot attention to the aspect of migration. She paints a picture of different types of migrants; those who travel out of necessity and those who travel out of one's ambitions. Moreover, the novel dedicates a considerable part of the narration to the depiction of the First World countries as the opposite of perfect, secure and tolerant. In the novel these countries are depicted as a space where illegal immigrants find themselves existing somewhere “in-between” two worlds or realities (Viswamohan, 2011:264).

Second of all, the narrative of the novel touches upon the subject of nationalistic movements, that turn into something destructive (Viswamohan, 2011). In the novel most of the relevant issues are unveiled through the situation that is caused by the Gurkha movement that began in the 1986. The Gorkha National Liberation Front was founded by Subhash Ghisingh in 1980. The movement was fuelled by a constant “demands of the Nepali Indian minority for statehood” (Sabo, 2012: 376) in Darjeeling district of West Bengal (PTI, 2015). The protests led by GNLF finally resulted in the outbreak of violence, that lasted from 1986 until 1988. Eventually the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was established, which was a semi-autonomous body of government, and a relative peace was installed. Beside the two latter mentioned aspects, Desai also reflects on the stereotypical thinking that is immanent in everyone's mind despite their social, political or economic status. Ultimately, according to Aysa Viswamohan (2011), what Desai's novel showcases is that the neo-colonial imperative does not differ from colonialism that “has been based on a misrepresentation of the culturally different” (Chaudhuri, 2001).

To conclude, Nadine Gordimer's oeuvre is considered highly influential to the South African literature. Gordimer's writing style and topics of interest experienced few major shifts. Yet, eventually Gordimer settled down on storytelling that reflected the social conflicts of her milieu. Despite countless debates, Gordimer considered her work to be critical realism. One of her techniques was to combine the public and private, through exploration of interracial sexuality. Moreover, Gordimer used essential gesture to unveil the hidden aspects of people's lives such as race, gender and identity. Her novel *The Pickup* is an amalgamate of all the aspects that are characteristic to Gordimer's writing techniques and subjects of her interest. Alongside of Nadine Gordimer is an Indian writer Kiran Desai. Desai's personal experience of migration from India to the US, shaped her writing style and themes of interest. Desai's work is normally referred to as a part of postcolonial literature, although some argue that it can be also seen as cosmopolitan literature. Nevertheless, Desai reflects on the experience of people from former colonial territories both on national and transnational levels, since her work touches upon the subjects of globalisation, neo-coloniality, mobility, identity, race and others. In addition to that, her critically acclaimed novel *The Inheritance of Loss* depicts all the latter mentioned subject matters both on national (India) and transnational (migration to the US) levels. Although Nadine Gordimer and Kiran Desai are influenced by varying experiences, they both depict lives of those who are left at the margins of existence.

## 6. AN IMMIGRANT FIGURE AS THE FIGURE OF *HOMO SACER* IN NADINE GORDIMER'S *THE PICKUP*

The objective of the present chapter is to outline the figure of *homo sacer* in Nadine Gordimer's novel *The Pickup* (2002).

*The Pickup* talks about a love story between an illegal immigrant Abdu from an unnamed Arab country and young bourgeois girl Julie Summers, from a financially stable family in Johannesburg. At the beginning of the novel Julie's car breaks down and she is aided by a young man named Abdu. After some time, they fall in love, but their everyday life is disturbed by a notice from the Department of Home Affairs, stating that Abdu's residence permit has expired more than a year ago and now he has to leave the country in two weeks. Eventually, Julie and Abdu leave South Africa and embark on a new journey.

### 6.1. Abdu as the embodiment of *homo sacer* in South Africa

The novel depicts Abdu's experience as an irregular immigrant in South Africa and presents a pattern of features that influence Abdu's identity. From the beginning of the novel it is clear that Abdu's name is fake. Names generally play an important role in the constitution of one's identity. Thus, Abdu is constantly shifting from one identity to another. Throughout the novel, Julie reminds him that without a name he is invisible or rather concealed from the world. As when Julie finds out that Abdu's name is fake, she realises how strange it is that there are,

No record of him on any pay roll, no address but c/o garage, and under a name that was not his. [...] [Yet] there he was, a live presence in her room, an atmosphere of skin, systole and diastole of breath blending with that which pervaded from her habits of living, the food, the clothes lying about, the cushions at their back (Gordimer, 2002: 18).

Thus, Julie observes that although Abdu officially and juridically does not exist in Johannesburg, his biological body physically stands before her. Consequently, Abdu's lack of name reduces him to bare life that is bound to be exploited, since juridically there is no name that the rights could be attributed to. Moreover, everyone takes liberty in appointing different names to Abdu, thus framing a perception of his persona.

The moment Julie meets Abdu, she notices that he constantly wears dirty overalls. For Abdu, the overalls are a sign of his employment and subsequent belonging to the community. The overalls signify his legality, as, theoretically, if he is employed then he resides in South Africa legally. The moment Abdu takes off his overalls, it looks like he is "shedding a skin"

(Gordimer, 2002: 55), thus indicating that his overalls are a part of his fake identity. The first time Julie met Abdu, she described him as “unqualified, working ‘black’ “(Gordimer, 2002: 17). Yet, after she became acquainted with him, she described him as “intelligence dressed up as a grease-monkey” (Gordimer, 2002: 21). Generally, throughout the novel, the label “grease-monkey” is used to name his exploited nature of existence in South Africa, as he wears dirty clothes, does exhausting manual labour, lives in a garage and receives almost no money. Besides Julie, Abdu receives a myriad of different names from Julie’s friend group at EL-AY Café referred to as “The Table” (Gordimer, 2002: 23).

Julie’s friends or The Table are a group of unnamed people, who gather at EL-AY Café and discuss mainly subjects that are supposed to indicate their liberal views. Julie and her friends see themselves as a liberal and progressive group that lives in the Suburbs, far away from “the white- districts”. The moment Julie introduces Abdu to her friends, he is met with open arms and instantly labelled amongst themselves as the “oriental prince” (Gordimer, 2002: 36) or “Julie’s find” (Gordimer, 2002: 58). Moreover, when Julie tells her friends about the notice form The Department of Home Affairs, they do not see him as Abdu, but rather “the victim, the accused, the endangered, their friend Julie’s pickup” (Gordimer, 2002: 74). Abdu is not considered to be a separate human being, but rather a part of Julie. One realises that The Table cannot give Abdu any useful advice on his urgent issue, since The Table presents itself as a group of people who are within the juridical order and can rely on it, while Abdu exists outside the juridical order of the nation-state. Abdu and his existence are considered to be a part of the “alternative lives” (Gordimer, 2002: 88). Eventually, The Table recommend Abdu to disappear. Although, they friendly call him “Brother”, their advice for him is to disappear and blend in with “all these others, [...] Mozambiquans, Congolese, Kenyans, what not” (Gordimer, 2002: 86). Therefore, Abdu succumbs under the weight of his bare life and lack of opportunities. Moreover, due to the reason that Abdu is out of the purview of the jurisdiction within which function Julie’s friends, Julie is considered to be his representative.

Julie’s obsession with Abdu’s protection only solidifies his existence as a figure of *homo sacer*. Abdu’s lack of identity and future motivates Julie to be his representative. Yet, her view of Abdu’s situation shows the contrast between rightful and rightless human beings. Julie cannot grasp the extent to which Abdu is stripped of his rights, as she admires his existence:

He is here, and he is not here. [...] It is a state of suspension from the pressure of necessity to plan the way others have to plan; look ahead. There is no future without an identity to claim it; or to be obliged to it. There are no caging norms. It is very

precariousness the state is pure and free. The state the friends of the EL- AY Café table would like to attain (Gordimer, 2002: 36).

Therefore, Julie attributes Abdu's futureless life to a sense of freedom rather than entrapment. She fails to see how the lack of identity and thus legal representation, prevents one from claiming any rights. Moreover, the lack of rights is also expressed in Abdu's inability to claim any sort of ownership: neither material nor figurative.

Abdu's imperfect knowledge of English language prevents him from being seen by others as capable to speak for himself. Language is seen as one of the aspects that define one's identity and capacity to exist. When Abdu receives the letter from the Department of Home Affairs, Julie tries to explain every word to him, since Julie believes that she understands the letter better. Yet, it is not important to him, as,

He knows the form, the content, the phraseology; it is the form of the world's communication with him. She looks for loopholes, for double meaning that might be deciphered to advantage, that he knows are all stopped up, are all unambiguous. Out. Get out. Out (Gordimer, 2002: 53).

Moreover, Julie thinks that it is her responsibility to speak for Abdu when they consult various lawyers concerning Abdu's situation. For example, at the office of one of the lawyers, Julie states that "it is evident that Summer's daughter will be the one to speak" (Gordimer, 2002: 76). In this case, Julie's name serves for both of them. Furthermore, Julie perceives Abdu's direct and decisive speech as "the limitations of his use of her language" (Gordimer, 2002: 62). Thus, when Julie speaks about Abdu's situation with her friends at the EL-AY Café, they never ask Abdu's opinion. All of their ideas and solutions are just perpetuating Abdu's current state. For example, a friend referred to as "the poet" says that Abdu must hide,

He must go underground. There is a world underground in this city, in all cities, the only place for those of us who can't live, haven't the means, not just money, the statutory means to conform to what others call the world. Underground. That darkness is the only freedom for him (Gordimer, 2002: 59).

On another occasion, Julie's friends suggest that he should disappear as "that's the only way" (Gordimer, 2002: 86). He is seen a part of the mass of *homines sacri*. All the possibilities at one's disposal in juridical system, do not apply to Abdu and his state. Thus, Abdu is not included in the conversation, and his fate is decided for him. Abdu is aware of his exclusion from the conversation and ascribes it to his imperfect knowledge of the languages: "Dumb. Might as well be. When they are talking about matter you know better than they do or ever will. You are dumb if you cannot speak- speak their language as they do" (Gordimer, 2002: 90). Unfortunately, Abdu realises that the only useful thing about him is his body.

Abdu is on the same level with everyone else only in the realm of the biological existence. The difference between Abdu and Julie only disappears when they are making

love. As “in her body he was himself, he belonged to nobody, she was the country to which he had emigrated” (Gordimer, 2002: 193). The only right that Abdu seems to have is to engage his body. Moreover, the form of the ownership in Abdu’s case is Julie’s body. As when he tries to command Julie to do something, she interprets his assertiveness as him declaring: “I am the man who is not for you but who possess you every night: listen to me” (Gordimer, 2002: 82). Abdu and Julie have contrasting views concerning the purpose of Abdu’s body. For Julie it is something positive. She thinks that Abdu is proud of his body, as if it is reflective of his manhood. She refers to it as “his right” (Gordimer, 2002: 63), whereas Abdu uses his body and most importantly “love-making” (Gordimer, 2002: 201) as something that he has been reduced to. His biological existence and most importantly love making is the only way to communicate his frustration. Owing to the fact that no one wants to hear his opinion, he says to himself: “ You have to use your lips and tongue for other purpose, your penis and the soles of your feet, caressing hers in the bed, in place of your opinions, convictions” (Gordimer, 2002: 90). Moreover, he uses sexual intimacy as an expression of his rage and voiceless existence. In one occasion, when Abdu argues with Julie about the life in his home village, he experiences a gust of fury. “His body swelled with the blood of accusation and rage, a distress that gave him an erection, and that with a confusion of shame and desire, using her, could only be assuaged in wild love-making which she took for something else” (Gordimer, 2002: 201). Thus, for Abdu, Julie functions as a medium of communication. Yet, besides his initially objectified view of Julie, he falls in love with her. Furthermore, Julie decides to abrogate “any rights that are hers, until they are granted also to him” (Gordimer, 2002: 55) and leaves with Abdu for his Arab country.

## **6.2. Abdu and Julie: state of existence in a desert village**

The novel is divided in two parts. One part focuses on the lives of Julie and Abdu in South Africa, whereas the second part focuses on their life in Abdu’s motherland. The author of the novel does not disclose the actual name of Abdu’s country of the origin. The only piece of information that is accessible to the reader is that it is an Arab country and that Abdu’s family house is situated close to the desert. Julie and Abdu got married right before they left South Africa, since Abdu insisted that he could not go home with a woman who was not his wife. The moment Julie and Abdu land in the airport, Julie sees a change in the way she feels, and the way Abdu is perceived by her and others.

For Julie airport is a zone of indistinction, where everything fuses together and it is hard to tell who has arrived and who is leaving. The airport is full of “the clumps of baggage,

residue of lives (which?), in a common existence- that- does- not- exist” (Gordimer, 2002: 110). Moreover, Julie feels that she dissipates in this environment as “she has no sense of who she is in this immersion” (Ibid.), whereas Abdu finally feels confident. Julie ascribes his confidence to his ability to speak expressively in his mother tongue. She says: “he was very efficient, engaging in exchanges of colloquial ease with those he approached” (Ibid.). In addition to the language that seemed to prevent him from being considered a legitimate part of the South African society, he can finally use his real name. His actual name is Ibrahim ibn Musa (Gordimer, 2002: 109). His real name grants him his identity and rights, however the latter mentioned aspects are only valid at the national level of his country. At the international level he still remains a figure of *homo sacer* that is included in the juridical order through its ban.

Abdu allows Julie to travel with him, only because he is assured that they will be able to obtain visas and move further to a more prosperous country. Despite the fact that Abdu has authority and rights within his own country, the slightest involvement in transnational affairs reduce him to a rightless individual. Whenever Abdu decided to go through all of the procedures to receive visa for both of them, he sees their contrastive use,

[For Abdu] the processes of applying for permission to enter someone else’s country from this one are numerous and set no definite period of their conclusion. The verdict- yes or no, and under what conditions- takes even longer” (Gordimer, 2002: 139).

Abdu has to go through countless procedures and has to fill in plethora of pointless application forms, that eventually “slip to the bottom of a pile, are wiped out by computer failure, and the process has to start over again” (Ibid.). Abdu is subjected to a merciless bureaucracy whereas Julie is only required to fill in a single form for her application for visa. She is called “the right kind of foreigner” and the one “who belonged to an internationally acceptable category of origin” (Gordimer, 2002: 140).

Abdu is the representative of the unacceptable category of origin, one that is scrutinized at every moment of his life. His country of origin automatically places him in a state of exception. Ibrahim is considered a danger, thus he perpetually resides in the zone of exception, where he can be treated as a figure of *homo sacer*. One of Ibrahim’s dreams is to go to the United States of America (which he eventually does). However, he points out that,

the equivalent national humanitarian symbols of the Lady With The Upheld Torch [...] no longer welcome but use the Light to frisk each applicant blindingly for possible connections with the international terrorism- people fighting for their own foreign ideological battles on other nation’s soil, or carrying in their body fluids the world’s latest fatal disease” (Ibid.).

Abdu is fully aware of what kind of person he is in the eyes of others. He is stripped of his voice and his words cannot affect the image that is assigned to him by the country of his

origin, that “claimed him by his birth, features and colour, his language, and the Faith” (Ibid). Abdu is fully aware of the image that has been moulded for him and the people from his country. He knows that he is denied entrance in certain countries, because they believe that he will be “a drug dealer, a white-slave trader coming to take girls, [...] a burden on a state” (Gordimer, 2002: 19). People who are marked as *homo sacer* are returned to their countries of origin “like dead letters” (Gordimer, 2002: 176). Moreover, even without focusing purely on the image of Abdu/ Ibrahim, is possible to spot the difference in the experience of transnational migration for Abu and Julie.

Julie is depicted as someone who can never lose her social, political and economic rights. She is welcomed and protected. Although, Abdu warns her that in his country she will not have the same privileges as in South Africa, her ultimate right is to legally migrate to whatever country she likes. Furthermore, Julie and her family friends refer to immigration as relocation. To relocate is “the current euphemism for pulling up anchor and going somewhere else” (Gordimer, 2002: 48). Although it is done out “of the constrictions of poverty or politics, or by choice of ambition and belief” (Ibid.) it still portrays the privilege and freedom to “relocate” upon one’s will. This is one of the aspects, that marks the major difference between Julie and Abdu. Abdu points it out to Julie multiple times throughout the novel. The reason why she accepts all the poverty that she experiences in Abdu’s village is because she can leave whenever she like. In one of the exchanges with her uncle, he says to Julie: “But don’t forget, darling, if it doesn’t work you can always get out” (Gordimer, 2002:143). Whereas Abdu needs to go through endless process of filling in application forms in order to get a permit. Moreover, in most of the cases he needs a recommendation from someone in the country that he is going to or has just come back from. Once more, his voice is not considered eligible, only someone else’s opinion of him is seen as desirable. That is why Ibrahim finally understands that him and Julie are from two different states of existence and she will never understand the extent to which he is reduced to bare life. He has to hold down his frustration and “swallow the reflux of evidence that privilege can never be brought to understanding of reality, of what matters, the dignity of survival against principles” (Gordimer, 2002: 223).

### **6.3.Conclusions**

Nadine Gordimer’s novel *The Pickup* reflects on array of important issues. Most importantly, it reflects on the life of *homo sacer*. In most of the cases the novel focuses on the subject of *homo sacer* through contrastive comparison.

The main characters Julie Summer and Abdu/ Ibrahim are posing as polar opposites in the sense of their background and present living conditions. Julie comes from a white, well-established, wealthy and privileged family. Whereas, Abdu comes from a poverty-stricken desert-village in an unnamed Arab country. As a figure of *homo sacer*, Abdu can be looked at in two periods: when he is in South Africa and when he is in his home country.

First, Abdu's rightless existence is brought forwards by his fake name. The fact that he has taken a fake name, means that he technically does not exist in the city. Moreover, he is reduced to a pure labour force. He cannot claim any labour rights or ask for health insurance. He is invisible and lives in a garage. Secondly, the lack of name and thus identification documents, prevents him from owning anything. The only thing that he can own is Julie's body through sexual intimacy. His physical/ biological body seems to be the only thing that he can control. Thirdly, language seems to play an important role in deciding who is a part of the community and who is not. Since Abdu's knowledge of English language was imperfect, he was viewed by others as unable to communicate his needs properly. Julie tends to feel the need to represent him and speak for him. Fourth of all, it is possible to see a difference between the contrastive position of Abdu and Julie in relation to the statutory law. Since the recommendations that Julie and her friends propose to Abdu are invalid for someone who is included in the law through the inclusive exclusion.

When Abdu and Julie arrive in Abdu's motherland, he gains control over things that he lacked in South Africa: his name, ownership and language. However, Abdu whose real name is Ibrahim is from an Arab country. Thus, internationally he lives in a constant state of exception since he is a part of the group that is seen as a potential danger. At the international level he has no voice, because in order to seem trustworthy he needs a recommendation from a reliable source. Moreover, in order to obtain a visa Abdu needs to go through relentless bureaucratic processes, whereas Julie just needs to fill in a single paper. Generally, Julie is free to leave any time she wants, while Abdu's fate is in someone else's hands.

To conclude, Abdu exists in a constant state of exception. Although he might have certain rights in his own country, he is rightless and voiceless at the transnational level. He is a figure of *homo sacer* because he happens to be a part of the country "that claimed him by his birth, his features and colour, his language, and the Faith" (Gordimer, 2002: 140).

## **7. AN IMMIGRANT FIGURE AS THE FIGURE OF *HOMO SACER* IN KIRAN DESAI'S *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS***

The presented chapter focuses on the analysis of Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. The objective of this chapter is to delineate a figure of *homo sacer* (or various groups of *homines sacri*) in Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2007). The analysis focuses on two storylines: (1) Biju's transnational experience and (2) the life of Sai and villagers of Kalimpong.

### **7.1. Biju as the embodiment of the figure of *homo sacer***

The first part of the analysis focuses on the life of a boy called Biju. His father entrusts him to travel to the US to find a good job and eventually become rich. Moreover, as the story evolves one learns of an unspoken responsibility of Biju to help his relatives and friends from Kalimpong to find a place to live and work in New York. However, eventually, Biju realises that his life abroad is different from what everyone else promised. His living conditions seem to be determined by a number of factors discussed in the successive sub-chapters. Thus, in the following subchapter the analysis focuses on Biju's nationality as a factor that categorises him into an indistinguishable mass.

#### **7.1.1. The low-caste Indians as *homines sacri***

In the novel, Biju experiences his rightless position when he intends to obtain a visa to travel to the U.S. The U.S. embassy functions as a space, where Biju and others enter a state of exception and it is the space that makes their marginalised state unavoidably evident. First of all, the representatives of the lower caste have no legitimate identification papers. Thus, they own only fake identification documents. The fake papers vary from birth certificate to vaccination records from doctors. Secondly, Biju mentions that it is impossible to predict who is going to obtain a visa. The workers at the embassy perceive low-caste Indians as simple mass that has to be dealt with daily. As Biju says:

Some would be chosen, and others would be 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, forty- five centigrade outside and impatience with all Indians, therefore; or perhaps merely the fact that you were in line after yes, so you were likely to be no. (Desai, 2007: 183)

People are reduced to simple “yes “and “no”. Within the embassy the workers can treat people any way that they want, as it is “a fact accepted by all that Indians were willing to undergo any kind of humiliation to get into States. You could heap rubbish on their heads and yet they would be begging to come crawling in” (Desai, 2007: 184). Besides being treated as one undistinguishable mass rather than individuals that have rights, the waiting room in the U.S. embassy is presented as absolute chaos where the state of nature resides.

There is a contrast in behaviour between how one acts when being in the waiting room amongst others and when one goes to the reception window. It is evident that the formation of queue is dictated by the laws that reduce people to their bare life, as there is “no place for manners” and the first ones to get to the front of the line are” wolf- faced single men“(Ibid.). When people are asked to line up to the window with a specific number, they rush there “tossing aside grannies, trampling babies underfoot” (Ibid.). Yet, the moment they get to the window they proclaim: “I’m civilised, sir, ready for the U.S., I’m civilized, mam” (Ibid.).

Moreover, Indians are seen as one mass of anonymous figures, disqualified as eligible for certain opportunities. This aspect is demonstrated by the feeling of exclusion that Biju feels upon his arrival to the U.S. On one occasion, Biju’s friend from Zanzibar tells him about the annual immigration lottery that everyone applies for. However, as it turns out “Indians were not allowed to apply” (Desai, 2008: 81), due to the reason that there are too many of them. If Indians were to apply, “the line would be stopped for years” (Desai, 2007: 83). Thus, for Biju as an Indian, the ability to obtain a green card and thus subsequent legal status is impossible. Consequently, Biju and others are doomed to remain “the shadow class” (Desai 2007: 102).

### **7.1.2. Biju’s existence in New York**

In New York city Biju comes across people who are pressured by the economic force. New York presents itself as a place, where Biju can see extent of the doom that he is subjected to. He comes to the U.S. with a two- week tourist visa. Yet, Biju decides to stay and earn money as an illegal immigrant. Eventually, Biju realises that it is virtually impossible to escape the shadow class.

Being an illegal immigrant, Biju is turned into a stateless person that has no rights. He is an illegal workforce that looms in basements of the city, sleeps in cramped rooms with dozen other people. In addition to that, the rooms are infested with cockroaches and rats. Biju has no valid documentation that would grant him the smallest amount of rights. Biju’s, as an undocumented immigrant, has no access to the health care system. For example, while

working in an all-Hindu cafeteria, Biju accidentally slips and hurts his knee. When he begs someone to take him to the doctor, the owner of the cafeteria responds that it is too expensive. In this moment Biju, as a worker, realises that he has no labour rights and can be easily fired with no medical expenses covered. The momentary pain reduces Biju “to animal directness” and he responds to the owner’s excuse by saying:

Without us living like pigs, what business would you have? This is how you make your money, paying us nothing because you know we can’t do anything, making us work day and night because we are illegal (Desai, 2007: 188).

Biju is not considered to be an irreplaceable part of the cafeteria. He is replaceable and therefore has no value as an individual, since the only reason why he works in all-Hindu place is because he is granted permission to live there for free. Yet, without paying rent his salary is automatically reduced below minimum and his tips are taken away. Thus, Biju has no job contract, no official place where to stay and no personal belongings.

The bare life that Biju is reduced to, is the one that lacks any protection and moreover lacks any ownership. There is nothing that officially belongs to him. Everything is common and shared. It is one of the aspects that Biju and his friend from Zanzibar Saed admires about America; the possibility to own things. Saed tells Biju story about a friend that lives with her roommates and they “go shopping *separately*, *separately* they cook their dinner, *together* they eat *separate* food. [...] One of the roommates, she put her *name on the box to say who it belongs to!*” (Desai, 2007: 98). Whereas Saed and Biju are supposed to share with everyone where “*everyone have nothing*” (Ibid.). Moreover, even when Biju attempts to buy things and bring them back to India, to display his success, he fails. As when he is given a ride by the GNLG army to his village, they rob him and leave him wearing only an old lady’s nightgown. It seems that being a *homo sacer* prevents one from marking one’s existence in any way. The figure of *homo sacer* is illegal, thus forced to be invisible. Yet, when one is invisible and resides in a state of exception, one has no rights.

For Biju, as an illegal immigrant, there is always a chance to be caught and deported by Immigration and Naturalization service (INS). Biju is constantly stopped and interrogated by the police on the streets of New York and it is apparent that he is chosen out of the crowd based on discriminatory profiling. However, he is relieved that the “Immigration worked independently of Police” (Desai, 2007: 75). As it grants him an opportunity to fall “again and again, through the cracks in the system” (Ibid.). The idea of deportation serves as an important indicator of somebody who is truly rightless, since one is “unearthed and deported” (Desai, 2007: 78) in an instant, without any power to resist. Despite being powerless once detected by the INS, the novel portrays *homines sacri* of New York as somewhat resistant.

The inhabitants that are subjected and reduced to a simple bare life, try to fight back and express their resistance in various ways. For example, one of Biju's co-workers wants to obtain a Green Card only because he wants revenge. He has been treated horribly in every country that he has worked in. Hence, the words that he likes to constantly repeat are: "your father came to my country and took *my* bread and now I have come to *your* country to get *my* bread back" (Desai, 2007: 135). Moreover, one of Biju's friend tries to settle down and eventually obtain a Green Card by marrying an American girl, who he does not love. Whereas Biju himself, tries to create an illusion of freedom, by choosing a workplace driven by his religious principles; a restaurant that does not cook pork. However, he realises that the only way that he can follow his religious tenants is to work in an all-Hindu place called *Gandhi café*. However, eventually, despite all of the latter mentioned efforts to postulate some sort of resistance, Biju understands that his years of work have not amounted to anything and he is someone who is just "displacing the air" (Desai, 2007: 268).

Biju sees himself as a representative of human life that is in eternal entrapment. All the options that would be available to life included in the juridical order present themselves as a dead- end to Biju. If Biju attempts to obtain a Green Card, he will be deported and returned to his initial position of caste-determined poverty and subjugation in India. The place where he sought freedom turned out to be a trap governed by neo-colonial politics. The only reason why Biju yearns to obtain a Green Card is to be free. Paradoxically, he learns that illegal immigrants "condemned to movement" (Desai, 2007), are restricted in their ability to travel. He wants to be able to "buy a ticket with the air of someone who could return if he wished, or not, if he didn't wish" (Desai, 2007: 99). Eventually, however, Biju, troubled by the news of military conflicts in his village, decides to move back to India. He puts all of his savings in his shoe soles, buys numerous electronic devices and travels back to India. Yet, as he arrives at his village (another zone of indistinction), he is robbed by the NFLS army and left almost naked in the forest. Unfortunately, it demonstrates a depressing scene of someone who always resides in a state of exception and is not protected.

## **7.2. *Homines Sacri* in the village Kalimpong**

The bigger part of the story follows the lives of Sai, the judge and the cook in the village called Kalimpong. Sai and the judge are Anglicised Indians of higher caste, while the cook (Biju's father) and Sai's lover Gyan is of a lower caste. The action takes place during the time when the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) commenced their protests that later evolved into violence. The conflict was mainly between GNLF and police of the region.

The village is inhabited by two completely opposite types of people- higher and lower caste. It is important to point out that Indian society is extremely segregated. The impoverished part of the population is discriminated against by their own fellow citizens. They are not seen as humans, but rather as “not the same species” (Desai, 2007: 30). The impoverished population exists on the margins of society and can also be found geographically on the margins of the village. At one point in the novel Sai decides to visit her Nepal-speaking boyfriend Gyan. She realises that she needs to go “to the other side of the mountain” to a place, which is “in a poor part of Kalimpong quite foreign for her” (Desai, 2007: 254). The impoverished population has limited options of possible jobs. Their jobs are usually manual ones. Besides functioning as cheap labour force, they find themselves in the role of scapegoats. As the cook points out:

It was the impoverished who walked the line so thin it was questionable if it existed, an imaginary line between the insurgent 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, 2007: 282).

Thus, it seems that the impoverished and the village can be compared to *homines sacri* existing in the zone of indistinction. However, the impoverished seem to resist in a way that helps them to get out of complete subjugation. For example, one of the main characters- the judge- is a representative of a higher class. However, he originally comes from a lower caste and ironically his father “owned a business procuring false witnesses to appear in court” (Desai, 2007: 57). As a representative of a peasant caste, “he was proud to influence and corrupt the path of justice, exchange right for wrong or wrong for right”, as “purity of answer was a false quest” (Ibid.). In addition to that, the judge’s cook (Biju’s father) has a side- job. He cooperates with the army in re-selling liqueur. Interestingly enough on one occasion the judge sees the exchange take place but chooses not to address it. The sight makes him realise that “something had changed in their relationship [between master and servant] within a system that kept servant and master both under an illusion of security” (Desai, 2007: 209). The observation foreshadows a change that only proves that everyone is a potential *homo sacer*.

### **7.2.1. State of exception between GNLF and Police.**

The conflict between the GNLF army and the police of the region demonstrates that in a state of exception anyone can become a figure of *homo sacer*. Everyone’s social, financial or political status loses any relevance if one is caught within the zone of indistinction under the state of exception or the ban. In the midst of the conflict, the most distressed are the higher caste members who presume that they are untouchables.

The novel demonstrates an evident shift in the understanding of the higher caste of who has rights and who does not. The traditional access to certain privileges vanishes the moment the state of exception is implemented. For example, sisters Noni and Lola (Sai's tutors), who are privileged high caste members, struggle to understand the situation in the village. The GNLf army chooses their house as their hideout during the period of conflict, since the GNLf army knows that the police will not search for them in Noni and Lola's place. The two sisters realise that:

The wealth that seemed to protect them like a blanket was the very thing that left them exposed. They amid extreme poverty, were baldly richer, and the statistics of difference were being broadcast over loudspeakers, written loudly across the walls. The anger had solidified into slogans and guns, and it turned out that they, *they*, Lola and Noni, were unlucky ones who wouldn't slip through, who would pay the debt that should be shared with others over many generations. (Desai, 2007: 242).

Lola and Noni experience a complete turnover of the traditional structure that they have been living in. When the two sisters notice that the GNLf army starts building tents in their backyard, they try to scare them with a call to the police, to which the army "shrugged, turned back, and kept on working" (Desai, 2007: 240). Everything that the sister's own and has rights for, is being questioned by the army. The army takes the land that the sisters' house stands on. Upon Lola's objection to their activity on their land, one of the army members exclaims: "along all roads, to a certain depth, it's government land, and that's the land we are taking" (Desai, 2007: 243). For the first time, the two sisters see the fusion of two separate spaces that were normally invisible to them. The normally unlocalizable zone of indistinction moves into their juridically ordered space and fuses with it. As they see that "the huts that had sprung up overnight were being populated by women, men, children, pigs, goats, dogs, chickens, cats and cows" (Desai, 2007: 244). At this point, Lola and Noni become potential *homines sacri* themselves, since they have no choice but to accept the situation that they are in. Moreover, the novel itself begins with a similar situation.

The novel commences with Sai, the judge and the cook being attacked by the GNLf army in their house. The house that is supposed to be the sanctuary and the untouchable place, where such high caste member as the judge resides, is simply violated by the Gurkha army. Within a state of exception, no life is irreducible. As during the raid of the house, the army takes guns, liquor and all the food, leaving the inhabitants of the house with nothing. Moreover, this particular incident not only shows the idea that everyone is a potential figure of *homo sacer*, but also the especially vulnerable position of women. After the army takes everything from the house, they request Sai to serve them tea and snacks. As they made the request, "they looked at one another, at her, looked up, down, and winked" (Desai, 2007: 5). At that moment, Sai admits that she felt "intensely, fearfully female" (Ibid.). This episode

indicates, that women and their bodies are *homines sacri* (or *femina sacra*) of different kind. Women are seen as someone that can be exploited sexually just because of their female body. All the latter mentioned aspects are revealed during the Gorkha movement. Thus, the unification of the Nepal- speaking Indians to form a new Gorkha state, is the initiation of the state of exception in the village of Kalimpong.

The GNLF consists of people who for centuries had no voice. The emergence of the front is fuelled by the hate that is still “distilled, liberating” (Desai, 2007: 161). Hate and fury is something that “was theirs by birth-right” (Desai, 2007: 161). Sai’s boyfriend, Gyan finds his substance and voice only when he joins the Gorkha movement. As “the very mingling of his voice with largeness and lustiness seemed to create a relevancy, an affirmation he’d never felt before” (Desai, 2007: 157). As someone who has been a figure of *homo sacer* his whole life, he is inspired by the resistance and power that the movement attains and at one point even voices an opinion “that the Gorkha movement take the hardest route possible”. His words eventually become reality.

The appearance of the Gorkha movement and successive violence involves the police. The police are portrayed as the sovereign power that has certain goals, yet the means of obtaining those are inhumane. The police have the power to take away one’s belongings under a claim that it is done to protect and maintain the national security, thus reducing one to his/her bare life. On one occasion, one of Sai’s friends, Father Booty accidentally takes a picture on a bridge that serves as a checkpoint and “India’s contact with the north” (Desai, 2007: 217). Father Booty’s actions anger the guards and they decide to take away his camera. After taking his camera, they decide to search his whole car and later they visit his house, subsequently stripping him of all of his belongings. Moreover, they find out that Father Booty has no papers and resides in India illegally. He is asked to leave India in two weeks, as he is described as posing “a threat to [the] national security” (Desai, 2007: 2017). The police has a tendency to reduce anyone to a state of complete bare life. For example, after the judge’s house is robbed by the GNLF army, the police are not able to find the supposed criminals. Hence, they pick up a drunkard off the street, torture him till he is blind and pronounce him guilty. Consequently, the people of Kalimpong find themselves entrapped between two sovereign powers that fight with each other: GNLF and the police.

On one side is the GNLF, that utilizes their power to incorporate all the villagers in their protests. As it is required, that “every family- Bengali, Lepcha, Tibetan, Sikkimese, Bihari, Marwari, Nepali, or whatever else in the mess- send a male representative to every procession” (Desai, 2007: 193). The families have no choice, as they warn every family that the absence of a representative will be punished in some way. The procession turns into

protest and finally grows into a bloodbath where hundreds of people find themselves in “the space between life and death” (Desai, 2007: 276). While, on the other side is the police that employ their sovereign power in the search of the GNLFF participants. Thus, anyone from the impoverished group can be captured by the police. Everyone “trembled at home for fear of being picked up, being tortured on any kind of flimsy excuse, the GNLFF accusing them of being police informers, the police accusing them of being militants” (Desai, 2007: 281). It is impossible to choose the safe side as everyone is targeted. Since the curfew (state of exception) was enacted for countless weeks, the population grew used to the horrors that they saw in the streets. Despite the hanging limbs of the enemies on the trees. The villagers,

were shocked by the violence, [but] they were also often surprised by the mundaneness of it all. Discovered the extent of perversity that the heart is capable of as they sat at home with nothing to do, and found that it was possible, faced with the stench of unimaginable evil, for a human being to grow bored, yawn, be absorbed by the problem of missing sock, by neighbourly irritation, to feel hunger” (Desai, 2007: 295).

Thus, the immediate sovereign violence becomes normalised and the villagers, who are the potential *homines sacri* in the state of exception under the curfew, grow used to their rightless position. As one of the two sisters concludes: “in such situation atrocities are committed under cover of a legitimate cause” (Desai, 2007: 246).

### 7.3. Conclusions

Kiran Desai’s novel *The Inheritance of Loss* speaks about the life of people that live both in India and outside of it. It reflects on the topics of coloniality and post-coloniality, globalisation, capitalism and societal segregation.

The novel depicts the story mainly of two characters: Biju and Sai/ the villagers. Biju’s story focuses on his illegal stay in New York and all the struggles that he experiences. Sai’s story focuses on the life in the village Kalimpong during the Gorkha movements. Both of these storylines reveal different perspectives on the figure of *homo sacer*.

Biju’s story reveals that his social status already presupposes the attitude towards him. As a representative of a lower caste, he is discriminated against within his own country of origin and lives in poverty. Although people of lower caste express intent to resist the absolute oppression, they are still perceived by others as “different species”. Biju’s social and economic status forces him to migrate to other countries. Yet, Biju ends up in a position where, either he is not welcomed in other countries or is exploited as a cheap labour force. People like Biju are seen as a simple biological mass that has little value and are treated like

animals. Since, even places like the U.S. embassy presents itself as an absolute zone of indistinction, where people fight for their freedom. The behaviour in the waiting room of the U.S. embassy seems to be dictated by the ‘rules’ of state of nature; the strongest wins. Although Biju succeeds in escaping India, he faces a plethora of new struggles along the way.

Biju as an undocumented immigrant in New York, is perceived as a sheer labour force and resource. Biju provides labour but does not receive anything back. He exists in the realm of bare life, as he has no labour rights and no health insurance. He does not own anything, as his pay is extremely low, and he lives in the basement of a restaurant. Moreover, Biju technically does not exist in New York, thus he leads an invisible life. As an invisible or illegal immigrant, who resides in the country, he can be deported at any time. Thus, he can experience an immediate sovereign power at any point of his stay in the U.S. Yet, it is important to state that Biju and others like him, who call themselves “the shadow class”, try to resist in many ways and escape a complete subjugation. However, in Biju’s case, it is visible that he is put through the life of *homo sacer* both internationally and transnationally.

In the story that focuses on the life of Sai and the villagers, the main idea is that everyone is a potential figure of *homo sacer* under the state of exception. During the Gorkha movement, the village is in the midst of a quickly escalating conflict between the GNLF and the police. Everyone that reside in that zone of indistinction is turned into a figure of *homo sacer*. Individuals of the higher caste are used by the GNLF army. Their houses are invaded, they are robbed at a gunpoint and women are in danger of being raped. Even though the Gorkha movement could be seen as a case of former *homines sacri* resistance, they are still hunted by the police, since they pose a threat to national security. The police act as the absolute sovereign power that attempts to establish order through the suspension of a standard juridical order and carry out actions that are inhumane. In order to find the members of the GNLF army, they pick random people off the street, torture them and hang their limbs on the trees in different streets. What is interesting about this case of a village-wide state of exception, is that at some point they get used to the atrocities that they experience every day. The acceptance of the state of exception can eventually lead to the normalization of it.

## **8. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS AS EMBODIMENTS OF *HOMINES SACRI* IN N. GORDIMER'S *THE PICKUP* AND K. DESAI'S *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS***

The analysis of Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup* and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* reveals different perspectives on the figure of *homo sacer*. Thus, the objective of this chapter is to compare the figure of *homo sacer* in N. Gordimer's *The Pickup* and K. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*.

### **8.1. Biju and Abdu: immigrant life in the status of *homo sacer***

In both of the analysed novels the two figures that stand out the most are Biju and Ibrahim, since they decide to embark on a journey of transnational migration. The portrayal of these characters, as figures of *homo sacer*, is done through various means. In order to delineate the similarities and differences between the figures of *homo sacer*, it is important to look at the treatment of them nationally and internationally. It entails mentioning the aspect of one's legal status, ownership, language and other defining elements.

Both Biju and Abdu (who I will further refer to as Ibrahim, since that is his real name), lack certain rights and human treatment both nationally and internationally. Biju is a representative of a lower caste in India. He is a son of a cook and has only a restricted set of jobs that he is able to do. Therefore, he is treated according to his social status. As it is seen in the novel, the lower caste usually finds itself residing in a state of exception where they have no legal rights that protect them from abuse. Whereas, Ibrahim is from an unnamed Arab country. He lives in a poor village surrounded by desert. Although, Ibrahim is not in such a subjected position as Biju, he also is prevented from rising from his poverty-stricken position. As, during his university years, he was a part of a dissident group and therefore is included in the records as someone who poses a threat to national security even within his own country. Consequently, both Biju and Ibrahim are a part of specific categories that exclude them from normal juridical order at a national level.

Biju and Ibrahim's countries of origin condition their treatment at an international level as well. The most distinguished treatment can be seen at the moment they intend to apply for a visa. As those moments reflect the evident process of categorisation ordained by such aspects as national, cultural and religious differences. Biju's first experience of being

treated purely based on his nationality is when he decides to travel to the U.S. The inhumane treatment can be seen in the U.S. embassy when Biju decides to obtain a visitor visa. He is treated like an element of biological mass in a sense that it is impossible to predict who will receive the visa or not. Moreover, when Biju is already in the U.S., he finds out that Indian people are refused certain opportunities purely because of the biopolitical circumstances. People from India are not allowed to apply for the Green Card lottery, since there are just too many of them. Therefore, Biju being Indian, is reduced to a pure biological mass that poses as an undesirable obstacle. A similar situation is with the case of Ibrahim. He falls into the category of people, who are always placed in a state of exception just because of their country of origin. As Ibrahim suggests, just because he comes from the country that claims, “him by his birth, features and colour, his language, and the Faith”, he is considered a potential danger to the national security of countries. Therefore, every visa application form is scrutinized and run through countless bureaucratic processes. There are certain countries that explicitly do not want to accept him and the only way to gain any legitimacy is to submit a recommendation from a respectable individual from the country that he intends to go to. In this case both Biju and Ibrahim are reduced to a rightless and voiceless form of life. Moreover, once Biju and Ibrahim arrive at their desired points of destination, they face a new array of circumstances that emphasize their uncertain state of existence.

Both Biju and Ibrahim illegally reside in the countries that they migrated to. Initially they arrived legally, yet eventually their visas expired and their status changed to the illegal one. In this case both of them have similar modes of existence. Since Biju refers to himself and other with the same status as him as “the shadow class” (Desai 2007: 102). Whereas Ibrahim is referred to as being invisible and someone who manages to disappear and slip through the cracks of the system. The ability of both of them to always be invisible to the law enforcement is due to their actual, physical conditions of existence. Biju lives and works in the basement of an all-Hindu restaurant. Thus, he literally exists under the city. While, Ibrahim works and lives illegally in a garage. Thus, both Biju and Ibrahim physically exist in the country, yet legally are not represented in any way. This eventually brings one to the aspects of identity and ownership.

Biju and Ibrahim have no ownership, since being an illegal immigrant indicates that nothing truly belongs to them. Biju and his friends admire American way of life and a possibility to own things. However, Biju is refused this opportunity due to his illegal status, which places him in the zone of indistinction where he experiences immediate power of the sovereign in the form of the immigration security officers. Biju realizes that he is one of the people who are “condemned to movement” (Desai, 2007: 102). Thus, things like names,

“addresses, phone numbers did not hold” (Ibid.). Ibrahim suffers the same type of problems, as his identity is shaken due to the fact that he does not get to keep his real name. He changes his name from Ibrahim to Abdu and loses his identity completely. Since, he has no future if he has no name. Ibrahim is given a manifold of names by Julie and her friends, such as brother, “Julie’s pick” (Gordimer, 2002: 74), “Julie’s find” (Gordimer, 2002: 58), “Oriental prince” (Gordimer, 2002: 36) and “grease-monkey” (Gordimer, 2002: 21). Additionally, the nameless and subsequently voiceless existence, leads Ibrahim to the inability to claim any material possessions, since there is no name that these things are claimed by. Interestingly enough, Ibrahim in contrast to Biju, turns his biological body into a means of communication.

Ibrahim is reduced to his bare life, where there are no other assets at his disposal other than his body. In the novel, Ibrahim multiple times speaks about the fact that only through sexual intercourse with Julie does he gain voice and feel like a human. Moreover, it is the only time when him and Julie are equal, as “in her body he was himself, he belonged to nobody, she was the country to which he had emigrated” (Gordimer, 2002: 193). Ibrahim also admits that “love-making” (Gordimer, 2002: 201) is the only way for him to express his fury. In contrast to Biju who only hangs around other undocumented immigrants, Ibrahim has an intense contact with the part of the community from which he is excluded, namely Julie and her friends. Ibrahim’s connection with the latter mentioned community foregrounds yet new aspects that exclude him.

Language functions as one of the aspects that instigate Ibrahim’s exclusion and subsequent reduction to bare life. Most of the conversations related to Ibrahim’s life are mediated through Julie, as it is considered that Ibrahim’s poor knowledge of English prevents him from successfully participating in discussions. Whenever Julie tries to resolve the situation with Ibrahim’s illegal status, she never lets him speak, assuming that he will not understand the legal language. Ibrahim concludes that he has to use his “lips and tongue for other purposes” (Gordimer, 2002: 90). The exclusion of Ibrahim at the level of language, leads one to see the ignorance of the group to notice the conspicuous position of Ibrahim as a figure of *homo sacer*. The advice that Julie and her friends give Ibrahim is eventually inefficient, because they fail to realise that Ibrahim is a figure of *homo sacer*. Finally, Biju and Ibrahim as figures of *homo sacer* are similar in a way that they both are driven by the economic force. They are victims of forced mobility. The moment their visa expires they lose any possibility to claim any rights. Such influences as capitalism and neo-colonial politics of mobility, prevent them from obtaining a legal status that would improve their life. Hence, they result in a position of pure labour force. They are not seen as people who have worker’s rights. Thus, if they get injured their medical expenses are not covered by

the medical insurance. Moreover, if their employer treats them horribly, they are stripped of their rights and voice to fight back. Any attempt to voice their irritation would lead to them being fired. Despite the potential inhuman treatment, they are stimulated to migrate due to the economic force.

## 8.2. Potentiality to become a figure of *homo sacer*

One of the most significant ideas proposed by Giorgio Agamben is that everyone is a potential figure of *homo sacer*. The fact that one is not banned under the state of exception and captured in the zone of indistinction is only a matter of time or luck. Both novels present this aspect to a certain degree, however Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* demonstrates the latter mentioned aspect the best.

Both Gordimer and Desai's novels reflect to some degree on the idea that everyone is a potential figure of *homo sacer*. Moreover, both novels pay attention to aspect of gender in relation to the figure of *homo sacer*. In Kiran Desai's depiction it is evident that within a state of exception, that is caused by the conflict between the GNLFF and the police, inhabitants of Kalimpong are included in the state of exception through their exclusion from the juridical order. The aspect of gender was explored in two different social strati: higher and lower caste. On one occasion it was stated, that impoverished women cannot seek help at the police as they are sexually harassed by the policemen. Whereas, on another occasion, one of the main characters Sai (representative of the higher caste) is reduced to her female body, when Sai and the judge's house is robbed by the GNLFF army, Sai feels "intensely, fearfully female" (Desai, 2007). Desai's novel paints a picture of women being in an especially vulnerable position in a state of exception. A less drastic, yet exemplary case is represented in Gordimer's novel. Julie in South Africa was constituted as a strong feminist figure. Yet, the moment she is taken by Ibrahim to his motherland, she is reduced to the position of "his wife". On the surface this transformation might seem commonplace and insignificant. Yet, one finds out that in Ibrahim's country she cannot walk around the city alone. She has to be accompanied by her husband at all times. Although she retains her international rights (to travel anywhere she wants) and is amused "to be led [...], like a child" (Gordimer, 2002: 112), one of the categories (i.e. gender) that she represents has transformed her into a voiceless and rightless life, that now is represented by Ibrahim.

What makes Kiran Desai's depiction of the potential figure of *homo sacer* interesting is her focus on the incident that suspends the law in a specific region, thus capturing everyone in a sovereign ban. The depicted case is particularly interesting due to its temporality and

immediacy. Before the Gorkha movement the society was segregated, and everyone was assured that their fortunate or unfortunate position would be secured for ages. Yet, the suppression of the Nepal-speaking Indians by the nation-state backfired through the emanation of the Gorkha movement. As a result, the representatives of the higher caste were attacked and robbed by the GNLF army, while the lower caste was tortured and killed by the police in their search of the members of the GNLF army. Moreover, the sudden emergence of the state of exception turned into a chain of atrocities committed by both sides (the GNLF army and the police). Interestingly enough the committed atrocities gradually become a normalized occurrence, that does not drastically stand out from the day-to-day life of the villagers. In this case, the imposed state of exception could become the rule, as no one resists the exceptional behavior of the external forces.

To conclude, the characters of Biju and Ibrahim, as postcolonial figures of *homo sacer*, are similar in the way that both of them are discriminated and excluded against in their own country and at the international level. Both of them are affected by economic forces and put through forced migration. Moreover, once they reach their destination points, it is clear that both Biju and Ibrahim are entrapped into a wicked circle. The neo-colonial politics of mobility prevent them from obtaining a long-term visa, that would allow them to improve their living. This aspect leads to the choice to lead an illegal life, that turns them into invisible life, that has no rights, no voice, no home, no ownership and in most cases no identity. Thus, it is possible to detect how the novels reflect on the bare life of Biju and Ibrahim, that is affected by the neo-colonial politics of mobility, global inequality and capitalism. In addition to that, both of the analyzed novels tackle the suggestion that everyone is a potential figure of *homo sacer*. Kiran Desai's novel reflects on a special case when people are turned into *homines sacri* under the state of exception, caused by the conflict between the GNLF army and the police. In both Gordimer and Desai's novels a particular attention was paid to such defining aspect as gender. More importantly, how women take an especially vulnerable position, once they are stripped of their rights and are reduced to their bare lives.

## CONCLUSIONS

The goal of the present Master thesis was to analyse the figure of *homo sacer* in N. Gordimer's *The Pickup* and K. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. The research questions were as follows, how is the figure of *homo sacer* represented in postcolonial literature and what are the similarities and differences in the representation of the figure of *homo sacer* in N. Gordimer and K. Desai's novels.

Upon a critical consideration, the most suitable approach for the literary analysis of the present study was the interdisciplinary approach. The present study set the aim to analyze the figure of *homo sacer* in two postcolonial novels, hence the analysis entailed enabling competencies related to post-colonial cultural and literary studies, and political theory.

The political theory proposed by Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben was inspired by Michel Foucault's theory of power, which introduced the notion of biopolitics. According to Foucault, with the appearance of biopolitics, the natural life became politicised. However, Agamben's (1998) argument was grounded in the idea that the natural life/ biological life has been inscribed into the politics since the Classical age. Agamben proposed such examples as the Ancient Greek concepts describing life (e.g. *zēo* as natural life and *bios* as political existence) and Aristotle's writing on the *polis* that explains the process of inclusive exclusion of natural life in the political/ good life within the *polis*.

In his writing, Agamben emphasised the omnipotent position of the sovereign power that affects the process of inclusive exclusion. The sovereign power is the one who decides on the state of exception. It is the power that is capable of creating a space between order/ violence, inside/ outside and inclusion/ exclusion. Moreover, it is the power that decides who will be entrapped in the state of exception and become a victim of inclusive exclusion. Hence, turning them into *homines sacri*.

The figure of *homo sacer* is a concept taken from an archaic Roman Law. It is someone who cannot be sacrificed yet can be killed with impunity (Agamben, 1998). According to Agamben, the figure of *homo sacer* is a perfect example of a politicised life that is included in the political order through its exclusion. In addition to *homo sacer*, Agamben also introduces a figure of a criminal in Germanic Law referred to as *loup garou* or the wolf man. Both of these historically real figures are supposed to function as archetypal examples of bare life.

Agamben discusses two influential processes that shaped the modern-day figure of *homo sacer*: (1) publishing of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and (2) the

events following the changes brought forth by the World War I. The declaration solidified the idea that human rights was something that is granted to a human being by the sovereign power. Whereas the World War I resulted in consequences that took the latter mentioned aspect to the extreme, by radicalising the biopolitics and extending the reach of power to the extent that sovereign power is capable to strip an individual of her/ his rights. The peak of this radicalisation materialised a few years later in the shape of the concentration camp. Agamben argues that camps, that function as states of exception that turn individuals into bare life, still exist in the modern-day world. Although, they might not be posited as such.

The political concept of *homo sacer* has been employed in analytical debates and empirical studies across a variety of fields of study. Agamben's theoretical concepts have been used to study issues related to transnational migration such as the identity of irregular migrant (Mbembe, 2003, Owens, 2009) the treatment of irregular migrants by nation-states (Kuram Rajaram and Carl Grundy- Warr, 2004) and detention and refugee camps ( Zeleva, 2017, Brkovič 2018). Agamben's concepts have also been instrumental in the study of bare life in art: movies, literature and photography (Anthony Downey, 2009, Greg Bourke, 2014). Moreover, the concept of *homo sacer* has been useful in the discussions of issues relevant in gender studies and labour/ capitalism.

The postcolonial novels chosen for the analysis of the figure of *homo sacer*, have been written by writers from two different socio-historical contexts and different experience. Nadine Gordimer's oeuvre is highly influential in South Africa. Her novels express her anti-apartheid views. Moreover, her work is considered to be a part of critical realism, as she writes about such aspects as race, identity and gender, while combining the private and public aspects of social life. Her novel *The Pickup* is the exemplary representative of her writing techniques and themes of her interest.

Kiran Desai is an Indian writer, whose personal experience of migration has shaped her literary works. Her work is usually associated with postcolonial fiction. Her work addresses the lives of people who come from former colonial territories, both at the national and transitional levels. Her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* touches upon the subjects of globalization, neo- coloniality, mobility, identity and race. In general, the work of Gordimer and Desai depict lives of those who reside on the margins of existence.

The analysis of the figure of *homo sacer* in Nadine Gordimer's novel *The Pickup* mostly focuses on the experience of the main character Abdu/ Ibrahim and his transnational journey. Ibrahim as a figure of *homo sacer* is presented as someone who is subjugated to the process of marginalization solely based on the country of his origin. He is categorized based on his racial, cultural and religious differences.

Ibrahim's existence as an irregular migrant unravels in a manner that indicates his hopeless state of existence. Ibrahim, as an irregular migrant, does not have his real name nor any identification papers. Without the latter mentioned aspects he ends up not having any human rights nor workers' rights. Due to his state of uncertainty, he is not capable to own things and settle down. Moreover, his imperfect knowledge of English language makes him look in the eyes of others as inferior individual who cannot speak for himself. Hence, his only tool is his biological body and his medium of communication is an act of sexual intercourse.

The analysis of the figure of *homo sacer* in Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* focuses on two story lines: Biju's (transnational experience) and the village of Kalimpong (national experience). Biju as a figure of *homo sacer* is shown as someone, who leads a marginalized existence both on national and international levels. At a national level, he is a representative of a lower caste that entangles him in a pre-determined poverty. Whereas, at the international/ transnational level he is a victim of racial categorization, that prevents him from obtaining a long-term visa and other documentation, that would ensure his legal status. Biju, as the figure of *homo sacer* is forced to migrate due to the economic force, hence a major part of his status of bare life is affected by the realm of labour. As an irregular migrant, he is constrained to low-paid, manual jobs that only see him as cheap labour force and resource. As a result, he finds himself in a vicious circle that is almost impossible to escape.

In addition to that, Desai's novel addresses one of the perspectives proposed by Agamben regarding the idea that everyone is a potential *homo sacer*. As the events depicted in Kalimpong demonstrate, how a certain incident can initiate a state of exception, where everyone is turned into *homines sacri*. On top of that, it functions as the moment when everyone comes face to face with the unmediated sovereign power in the form of violence.

The comparison of the figure of *homo sacer* in the novels of Nadine Gordimer and Kiran Desai has foregrounded a set of similarities and differences in the experiences of marginalized humans today. Both Biju and Ibrahim as figures of *homo sacer*, are transitionally excluded from normal order based on such features as racial, cultural and religious differences. However, in comparison to Ibrahim, Biju is marginalized within his own country as he is a representative of a lower caste. Both figures of *homo sacer* are represented as irregular migrants, who are entrapped in an endless loop of subjugation. Due to the economic struggles within their own country, they are forced to migrate and seek a better life. Yet, the lack of identification papers pressure them to live an invisible life in a constant fear of being deported. The state of uncertainty conditions them to a stateless and voiceless existence.

One of the main differences between Biju and Ibrahim is Ibrahim's employment of his physical/ biological body. Biju's biological body demonstrates his vulnerable position in the realm of labour, whereas Ibrahim perceives his body as a tool. Although, Ibrahim is furious that he cannot use his mouth and tongue to speak. Yet, he chooses to use his body as a different medium of communication. He is depicted as expressing the sense of frustration, hope and transcendence of borders through sexual intercourse with his girlfriend. Biological body seems to be the only realm that presents him as equal to everyone else.

The final feature that has been depicted in relation to the figure of *homo sacer* is everyone's potentiality to be reduced to their bare life. Special attention has been paid to the aspect of gender. Desai's novel discusses the vulnerability of female body, once a woman is reduced to bare life. Whereas Gordimer addresses the contrastive position of Julie as a woman. In South Africa the main character (Julie) was considered to be an independent and self-sufficient human being. Yet, the moment Julie moves to Ibrahim's home country, she becomes "the wife" and is not allowed to wonder the streets of the city alone. Her representative becomes Ibrahim. Besides, the aspect of gender, Desai also discusses a general possibility for everyone, despite their social standing, to be included into a state of exception and turn into a figure of *homo sacer*.

To conclude, the study of the figure of *homo sacer* in N. Gordimer's *The Pickup* and K. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* has shown that, although the discussed characters come from different backgrounds, once they are turned into a figure of *homo sacer*, they are subjugated to the same conditions with few varying elements. A further investigation of this topic would be advisable, in relation to a more detailed study of such aspects as gender, race and religion, since they play a vital and determining role in the process of marginalization and subsequent exclusion.

## THESES

1. This Master's Thesis studies the representation of immigrant characters as the embodiment of Giorgio Agamben's figure of *homo sacer* in contemporary postcolonial novels. The novels chosen for the analysis are Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup* and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*.
2. The present study employs a comparative approach to the literary analysis of the selected novels. The enhanced interpretive reading of the novels is ensured by using such modes of research as interdisciplinarity and contextuality. Moreover, Giorgio Agamben's political theory serves as a theoretical framework for the analysis of the novels.
3. Giorgio Agamben's political theory expresses the idea that life has been politicized through its inclusive exclusion from juridico-political order, since the Classical Age. The inclusive-exclusive dichotomy, via the state of exception or the ban, can be installed by the sovereign power, that is capable of suspending the law and functioning as a transition point between outside and inside.
4. *Homo Sacer* is a figure in the Roman law who can be killed with impunity yet cannot be sacrificed, thus is excluded from the juridico-political order. *Homo Sacer* exists in the condition of 'bare life' that is entrapped into a zone of indistinction under the state of exception. *Homo Sacer* functions as an archetype for the contemporary reflections of 'bare life' in literature and arts.
5. Nadine Gordimer's oeuvre is affected by the social injustices of her socio-political milieu. Her writing reflects her anti-apartheid views. Moreover, her work addresses such aspects of human life as race, gender and identity on the levels of personal and public.
6. Kiran Desai's oeuvre is influenced by her migration experience. Her writing reflects the experience of people from former colonial territories both at the national and global levels. While, touching upon the subjects of neo-coloniality, mobility and identity.
7. The depiction of the figures of *homines sacri* in N. Gordimer's *The Pickup* and K. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* show that people are demarcated and reduced to bare life based on their cultural, racial and religious differences.
8. Immigrant characters, as *homines sacri*, are represented as the victims of forced migration, who are affected by the economic force. Therefore, to escape constant

pauperization, immigrants agree to the condition of illegal existence and subsequent life in a state and zones of uncertainty.

9. *The Pickup* and *The Inheritance of Loss* represent the *homines sacri* as people who are reduced to their bare life and are aware of their pure biological existence. For some *homines sacri*, while existing in the realm of bare life, their biological body is a sign of vulnerability, yet others see their bodies as a medium of communication.
10. Both Nadine Gordimer and Kiran Desai in their work emphasize the fact that everyone in the contemporary global world is a potential figure of *homo sacer*. The targeted groups of people that fall under the sovereign ban are ever changing. No one is secure against the ban and subsequent inclusion in the state of exception.
11. Both novels demonstrate how the aspect of gender concerning the immigrant figure as *homo sacer* plays a critical role. Since, the moment a woman is reduced to her bare life, her female body enters a state of vulnerability, possible exploitation and danger.

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## Dokumentārā lapa

Maģistra darbs „The Figure of “Homo Sacer” in Nadine Gordimer’s “The Pickup” and Kiran Desai’s “The Inheritance of Loss” ” (“Homo Sacer” figūra Nadīnes Gordimeras romānā “Pikaps” and Kiranas Desaji romānā “Mantotā nolemība”) izstrādāts LU Humanitāro zinātņu fakultātē.

Ar savu parakstu apliecinu, ka pētījums veikts patstāvīgi, izmantoti tikai tajā norādītie informācijas avoti un iesniegtā darba elektroniskā kopija atbilst izdrukai.

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