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Identity Crisis of Migrant Workers in Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen*

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By

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Mr. Rup Narayan Bhattarai has completed his entitled “Identity Crisis of Migrant Workers in Monica Ali’s *In the Kitchen*” under my supervision. He carried out this research from May 2013 to September 2013. I, hereby, recommend his thesis to submit for viva voce.

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**Letter of Approval**

This Thesis entitled “Identity Crisis of Migrant Workers in Monica Ali’s *In the Kitchen*” submitted to Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Rup Narayan Bhattarai has been approval by the undersigned members of research committee.

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## **Abstract**

Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen* expresses the working class's position through identifying the exploitation and ways of striking them. Ali attempts in presentation of the different community occupying a large land in England. The author seems to have dealt with the communal issues especially the immigrants' economic condition and their overall lifestyle. In course of coping with this issue, Ali has been too much biased and unfair. Despite not having adequate information about immigrant, she pretends to have known a lot which is pretty clear in the novel *In the Kitchen*. Yure, the central character, her mouthpiece has been portrayed in such a way that she has always revolted against the Immigrant culture and lifestyle. It discloses the innermost motive of the writer that she herself is too preoccupied with the concept that the Immigrant culture and people of its followers are orthodox and rigid which is in fact partially true. Thus, the novel in its entire is the misrepresentation of the Immigrants.

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### I. Diasporic Consciousness in Ali's *In the Kitchen*

The research work on *In the Kitchen* portrays the daily bustle of the kitchen staff in an eminent, centrally-located London hotel which employs mainly recent immigrants. Some of them living illegally in Britain and, though it returns to ethnic minority concerns, it is the contention that they are tackled from perspectives which are foreign to the expectations of readers in terms of characterisation, genre and topics approached. So, the novel records the painful memories of the labors in foreign land. More than that, this novel has expressed the desire of the immigrants who want to save their identity. It expresses perpetual lamentation on the part of diaspora, who have developed their own distinctive cultures which both preserve and often extend and developed their original cultures. In particular, it explores the idea of searching position and struggle for identity in foreign land. It presents that the diaspora can have the identity of foreign land which is completely different than their original. There are diaspora people suffering from different kinds of crisis.

This novel *In the Kitchen* contains two self-contained social structures that allow tracing of Britain's fault lines and the busy kitchen of a hotel restaurant in central London where Gabriel Lightfoot, the main character, is executive chef. He is 42-year-old English chef who goes through an identity crisis right after, and not by chance, the body of Ukrainian porter Yuri is found dead in the hotel cellar. His breakdown is linked to several related circumstances: his father, who lives in a provincial town, is dying from cancer; his long-term relationship with his fiancée deteriorates just as he feels attracted to a young Eastern European prostitute, Yuri's friend, who eventually becomes his lover; he discovers untold truths about his eccentric mother and, to make things worse, his plans to open a restaurant on his own start to crack down. It is no coincidence that his most salient personality trait is

evoked by his own surname, Lightfoot, since early in the novel we witness his tendency to run away from important decisions or compromise with others.

Gabriel Lightfoot is not one candidate who faces identity crisis in Britain, all the migrant worker face the difficulty in the foreign land. So, there is a struggle for identity in every part of the globalized world. There are new forms of classe are appearing because of globalization and people have been migrating, journeying and travelling for millennia, across great distances. The workers attempt at international regulation of migratory flows have met with limited success. Many states find it very difficult to mobilize internal support for tracking illegal migrants and are in some cases highly dependent economically on their labors. The labors migrate to imperial cores and cities from the hinterlands and the countryside in search of work to expand and contract of nomadic societies.

Born in Bangladesh and raised in Bolton, England, Monica Ali didn't intend to write her life's story in this novel, and she hasn't, but the theme of the in-between, peripheral life of the immigrant experience still resonates in the core of her novel. Ali's rich characters and their search for balance make *In the Kitchen* an inviting read. This novel is the representation of her own consciousness as a diasporic people who have collected experience from different territory than the national identity. It is at times comic, then tragic, and this is one of those books that the reader will take their time finishing, just so the reader can keep reading it.

All of her work of art tries to explore the identity crisis of the migrant workers in foreign land. In this connection, a critic Patricia Bastida-Rodríguez in her criticism on *In the Kitchen* entitled "The Hidden Face of the New Millennium: Migrant Exploitation and Reader Expectations in Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen*" sees this novel as a crime novel which reflects the vigorous life of the worker in foreign land. She



gives the incidents and the painful situation of the migrant as a crime against the humanity. In her own words:

Ali can be considered as one of the first women writers in her ethnic community – if not the first – to publish a crime novel in what can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to widen her readership and get free from the burden of representation while still tackling topics which are of concern to her. Whether her attempt at the new genre can be considered successful or not is quite a different matter, as some critics do not seem to find coherence in her combination of a crime plot, the protagonist's identity conflicts and the discussion of multicultural Britain. (60)

In this way, the immigrant issue is also dealt with throughout the novel. Problems of immigrants who came from Bangladesh in the first wave differ from those of their Children.

Different critics have analyzed the novel *In the Kitchen* from multiple perspectives which preserves the universal nature of the novel. Psychological, socio-cultural, comic, structural and critical visions are the common agenda of the critics while analyzing this novel. Carol Birch has offered a new critical reading to *In the Kitchen*. He says the novel is written in original fashion that studies the interpersonal intricate relationship of readable people in a highly textured prose. In his own word:

. 'The economy is very, very This identity crisis extends to the nation. 'It's going to the dogs,' says Gabe's dad, maintaining that the economy is a house of cards. 'Bless him, no,' a two-faced New Labour politician tells Gabe strong, as the chancellor keeps telling us.' Britain is as run-down as the once grand Imperial Hotel, and the statues of

central London portray 'men who had turned the course of history, and for whom it would never turn again.' The old order is gone and the new does not know itself. (4)

A number of critics have linked the style of the novel to identity crisis. As in other genres, its language is straight forward and simple, but *In the kitchen* is filled with tragic and subtle meanings. Birch weaves together complex stories, but in its simplest outline the plot unfolds the story of diaspora and their painful condition aroused by society. How the people become violent nature. It is only their discriminative nature. It reveals how the collision between the old culture of modern England, who have developed their own distinctive cultures which both preserve and often extend and develop their original cultures and the new world of cultural revolution towards Ali best efforts and creates which we experience in this beautifully written and powerful novel. So, the critic Marie Arana analyzes identity perversion at the center of the novel. She writes:

Through the prism of Gabe's crisis, Ali deftly portrays a nation that, like the hotel, is losing its sense of self. The solid, working-class, northern racism of Gabe's family offends his metropolitan sensibilities, but the sense of nostalgia for a more cohesive community is poignant. In a prescient scene, given that this novel is set in the days when they could smoke in bars. (9)

Eventhough, Arana's Criticism focuses on the power of the writing style in the novel. This novel focuses on gap between the working class people and the owner. Arana further tries to prove that it captures the real scenario of the then society, the condition of the working class people.

One of the renowned critics Stephen Frears in his critical essay *In the Kitchen* tries to explore the racial issue raised in the novel. Sense of nostalgia and

belongingness towards the nation and nationality is also beautifully presented in this novel. He says:

The novel *In the Kitchen* portrays a nation that, like the hotel, is losing its sense of self. The solid, working-class, northern racism of Gabe's family offends his metropolitan sensibilities, but the sense of nostalgia for a more cohesive community is poignant. In a prescient scene, given that this novel is set in the days when you could smoke in bars, Gabe worries about the fragility of a debt-based economy, and Fair-weather, the New Labour junior minister backing the restaurant, smoothly reassures him that this is not the issue.(12)

Similarly, critic Katherine A. Evans in her critical essay on *In the Kitchen* tries to reflect the real lifestyles of the exploited migrant workers in Britain. This criticism tries to present the socio-cultural condition of the migrant workers. Their struggle for the identity is also highlighted in the novel according to Evans. Ali's issue-driven third novel, *In the Kitchen*, concerns the uneasy lot of a multicultural group. In Evan's own words:

Gabe suffers his own mental breakdown and ultimately finds himself on an illicit onion farm in rural England with a group of exploited agency workers like those employed in his kitchen. The physical move from city to country mirrors Gabriel's personal development as he comes to understand his own implication in the exploitative labor practices of the hotel kitchen. By the time Gabe has suffered a nervous breakdown and ended up on the onion farm, the tables have clearly turned.(9)

The entire picture of Gabriel is presented here in order for making clear that he is a crucial character and most of the actions in the novel move around him. In the same vein Katherine A. Evans comments that *In the Kitchen* is an attempt to explore the underbelly of the culinary world through the fictional but aptly named kitchen of London's Imperial Hotel. The kitchen that Ali portrays is a melting pot of cultures and dialects, full of exploited agency workers and clashes of culture. At the center of the novel is the hotel's head chef, Gabriel Lightfoot, a 42-year-old Northern English chef recently hired as a part of the Imperial's renovation project. Gabriel has plans to use his stint at the Imperial as a stepping stone towards launching his own restaurant and settling into the adult life he has envisioned for himself. In pursuit of this goal, plans for which are underway, he remains as aloof as possible from the international milieu that surrounds him—so much so, in fact, that many of the kitchen scenes are likely to disappoint fans of Gordon Ramsey's kitchen drama. Gabriel seems unable to muster enough energy to even raise his voice at the staff members who behave however they please in his kitchen.

Hence, this study centralizes on the identity crisis that prevails at the core of the novel. How immigrants emerge as new identity and undergo the different layers of exploitation and oppression designed in the form of the community is the main point to discuss in the present research.

None of these critics focuses on Diaspora criticism in terms of fragmented subjectivity. Issues of identity and rich image and complex ideas are the elements of Ali's novel. My claim, in this research is how worker Uru is fragmented because of crisis of identity and how a person Sulman suffers from lack of individual when his subjectivity is fragmented because of the working condition, because of the imbalance between homeland and intellectuality.

The word diaspora comes from a Greek word meaning dispersal and was originally applied to the condition of Jewish people living outside Palestine. With the development of post colonialist theory the term has been extended to cover a range of different cultural and ethnic groups held together by shared cultural or religious commitment and having some sense of exile from a place or state of origin and belonging. A diaspora is a scattered population with a common origin in a smaller geographical area. Diaspora can also refer to the movement of the population from its original homeland.

Diaspora makes study of an expatriated people in the expatriated land who are socially and culturally fragmented. Individual experiences a kind of uneasy, being unable to adjust with the new situation. Individual neither can join to his roots nor can reach to the existence of expatriated groups of people who can retain a collective sense of identity. Diaspora involves the situation of being in between both the root culture and target cultures. Regarding diaspora, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin write, "Diasporas, the voluntary or forcible movement of people from their homelands into new regions, is a central historical fact of colonization. Colonialism itself was a radically diaspora movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions"(68). Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin say diaspora is a central historical fact of travelling and border crossing. The racial and cultural identity is blurred with the culture of new region but one is not accepted as the pure candidate of the new region. The process of moving from native place and culture to the unknown place and culture gives birth to the diasporic situation.

Immigration is the most crucial element behind the concept of diaspora. So, the concept of diaspora first originated through emigration but later on it developed into the form of its other extensive discourses like nationalism, hybridity,

multiculturalism. Its concept has been derived from that of dispersal experiences of the ancient Jewish people from Israel in sixth century BC. Although in the present context, it has come to merge into the postcolonial theory. An Indian critic Sudhir Kumar points out about the diasporic condition and experience in this way:

The diasporic consciousness, as some critics aver, presupposed the predominance of such feelings as alienation, dispersal, longing for the ancestral homeland, a double identification with the original homeland and the adopted country (the des-padres dialectic), identity crisis, remembering myths related to the homeland, protest against discrimination of all sorts in a new land etc., the metaphor of imaginary homelands does sum up the conditions of the diasporic communities well. (70)

As immigrants resettle in the foreign lands, things do not seem easy to them because in the new horizon, they face a new scenario which is different from their own homeland. They find difficulties to adjust themselves in the culture, language religion, and customs of others. They feel the sense of loss and sense of selfless identity. The migrated writers get their self-identity through their writing. Their writings are the secure places to express their origin and target culture, which used to give them perfect identity.

In this connection, there is an appropriate to discuss about Salman Rushdie. Rushdie is taken as the one of the prominent diasporic writer who reflects his past in India while living in England. He has depicted the postcolonial scenario in his *Imaginary Homeland* and reflects the politicizing ideas and techniques in literature, religion and culture. He seeks the memories of past in the homeland life. He exposes

his identity, alienation and nostalgic event of past in the *Imaginary Homeland* in this way:

A few years ago, I revisited Bombay, which is my last city, after an absence of something like half my life. Shortly after arriving, acting on an impulse, I opened the telephone directory and looked for my father's name and amazingly, there it was; his name, our old address, the unchanged telephone numbers, as if we had never gone a way to the unmentionable country across . . . then I went to visit the house in the photography in and stood outside it. (9)

Rushdie's above line clearly proves that diasporic people cannot forget his homeland even after being outside, it means that a person can be taken outside for his homeland but not his mind. Diasporic people love everything belonging to his/her homeland like food, culture, people, language etc.

In this connection, in Ali's *In the Kitchen*, the hero and all the characters from working class people go through a moment of crisis over their own identity. They are brought up in a multicultural society and in a family which speaks many languages.

*In the Kitchen* deals with Gabriel's kitchen who is an immigrant Britain. There are many with horrible stories in working place. Gabriel's personal reclamation projects his entryway to the underground economy and a shadowy world of illegal immigration. A maddeningly elastic labor politician one of Gabriel's backers in a new restaurant delivers a fine oration showing that depending on how to look at it. Britain has either hatched its dead industrial skin to become a dynamic knowledge-based economy or put over a huge fraud. It searches in the concept of Diaspora who found the immigrants labors are suffer much.

The Diaspora approach to the state starts from the assumption that capitalist societies are inherently lying to crises which originates in regular cycles of economic stagnation and continual outbreaks of class war between capital and labor. The migrant people as they resettle in foreign countries have to face a lot of different problems in terms of all aspects like culture, language, food and others. They are always considered to be outsiders through the eyes of native people.

Diaspora writings capture both the problems and experiences of the migrants. The writers in diasporic texts try to recollect their past through the help of memories, nostalgia and familial myth. The writers not only re-visualize their history of origin, offer the reader all exotic and fantasies of their homelands, and compel us to re-examine its authenticity. They also reaffirm their distinct identity as subjects constructed by diaspora.

This novel shows the intimate identity relationship between the native people and the immigrant people. This novel comprises the lack of morality and common decency of the affluent classes who are allowed to run to save identity. Ukrainian porter also exposes the false consciousness of the proletariat who are subjugated by this ruthless system.

In the novel, the immigrant workers display the worst characteristics of the animals they represent, recklessly attempting to destroy each other in a territorial fight with animalistic shortsightedness. The novel discusses about the bull lords in over his herd, driving away weaker males and thus milling the social decisions. The ones driven away become isolated, and, deprived of the life giving society of the herd, they starve to death. The bear is a large predator that destroys other animals in order to survive. The bull and the bear control the power base in their territories, ensuring the maintenance of their positions by the wealth of their strength and size. They also



manipulate their respective societies by enforcing a class structure in which the weaker males are not allowed to breed, thus even establishing control over the genetic makeup of their societies.

*In the Kitchen* is a sharp lesson to materialistic societies of the rank evils of social systems that base their economy on an undervalued working class. By taking the society from the wealthy who run the system to the poor who are most affected by the system, Ukrainian porter is giving the society a broad picture of the methods used by an unchecked bourgeoisie to destroy himself and rob individuals of their humanity. As the issue of hypothesis at hand demands, Diaspora is the theoretical tool applied in analyzing the text. But in doing so, it does not cross the frontier of the textual analysis. It is justified with the supports of different writers and critics from the respective domain.

The thesis has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents an introductory outline of the work—a short introduction to Monica Ali and a short literature review. Moreover, it gives an overview of the entire work. On the basis of the theoretical framework of Diaspora concentrating on identity crisis on foreign land - the concept of diaspora discussed by Salman Rushdie, Homi K. Bhabha and other critics; the second chapter analyzes the text at a considerable length. It analyzes how the novel *In the Kitchen* deals with the struggle of migrant workers for the identity in foreign land. So, this chapter tries to prove the hypothesis of the study – the migrant workers work in the kitchen and try to find out their identity via their consciousness emerged when they are in foreign land. And finally, the third or the last chapter sums up the main points of the present research work and the findings of the research.

## II. Diasporic Identity in Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen*

The present study analyzes the issue of the struggle for identity in foreign land in Ali's *In the Kitchen* from the Diaspora perspective. Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen* lightens the ways in which it challenges reader expectations by focusing on migrant experience from an unconventional perspective which includes male focalisation, the use of genre fiction and the depiction of immigrant communities different from Ali's in terms of cultural background and time of arrival. This analysis argues that by offering the exploration of a man in crisis the novel resists classification and provides a thought-provoking reflection on migrant exploitation in Britain which concerns itself with the life of ethnic minority groups and women workers in East London.

In the first place, its protagonist is the white, English, middle-class executive chef at the hotel, Gabriel Lightfoot, who offers his androcentric, Eurocentric viewpoint throughout the narrative. Having a male focaliser is very rare in fiction by women from ethnic minorities, which is usually mainly autobiographical and female-centered. However, this does not mean the novel does not focus on gender issues. In fact, it can be argued that *In the Kitchen* has at its core gender relations in the twenty-first century globalized world. Moreover, the immigrant communities depicted in the narrative – mainly African and Eastern European – come from areas on the globe which are culturally remote from that of the author and much of the plot deals with their problematics as recently arrived. As a matter of fact, hardly any character belongs to Ali's ethnic community, which makes the plot more foreign to a readership ready to find South-Asian communities as the main focus of her writing.

*In the Kitchen* is set at the heart of London and opens with the accidental death of a Ukrainian porter named Yuri who works for the Imperial Hotel and whose corpse reappears in almost endless nightmares that haunt the executive chef Gabriel

Lightfoot, one of the only two white Englishmen in the kitchen. Disturbed by Yuri's mysterious death, Gabriel undertakes some investigations and uncovers the restaurant manager and other kitchen staff's secret and illegal acts of driving migrant workers into prostitution and slavery. Although *In the Kitchen* addresses the problems of immigrant, it is distinguished from the former in the sense that crisis of economic and national identity of the migrant workers is dealt in the novel. Ali moves away from her Bangladeshi immigrant community and focuses attention on the predicaments of the migrant workers and sex slaves mainly from Eastern European countries joining the European.

*In the Kitchen* produced by immigrant communities in Britain has experienced a shift from positions which were mainly marginal in previous decades to a central position in the Britain. This has been perceived as part of a renovation which has also included a growing centrality of writing from the geographical margins. In the new millennium this tendency has been accentuated as a consequence of an increasing interest in the literary portrayal of the cultural changes produced by immigration in the last decades and the new British identities they have generated. This can be observed not only in the high number of literary prizes which have been recently awarded to writers from ethnic minorities but also in their important presence in overviews of contemporary British fiction published in the last years which often incorporate sections devoted to their contribution.

The protagonist of *In the Kitchen*, Gabe, is born and raised in England. He is the chef of the hotel Imperial. But his employees are not, as they are of different origins, and some from former colonies. When one of them is to describe his chief Gabe, he simply explains that he is two things; white and male. This shows Gabe's

position at the hotel compared to the others. Gabe represents the colonial power while the other workers are his and The Imperial's colonized subjects.

Colonial history is shown through employees at the hotel, especially Suleiman from India, but also through characters who come from countries that might be characterized as former colonies. Benny from Liberia tells the story of his Congolese friend who was imprisoned while his family was murdered because of his political views. Another friend, Kono, became a child soldier, while the former doctor and now chef Nikolai from the Soviet Union, was judged a spy and traitor when he discovered that chemicals let out in the water caused birth defects and proceeded to publish his findings. The Ukrainian Olek has a math degree, but came to England to escape poverty. With his passport taken away from him by his new employers, a shed to live in, small pay checks and no rights, all he wants is to get back to his country of birth. Many of the characters the readers meet have an education, but have to content themselves with manual labour. They must take any job offered, even if they are underpaid. They have no rights, and have to do the jobs no one else wants. One may argue that they are slaves in a modern British Empire.

These characters represent diaspora, a term used to "describe the combination of migrancy and continued cultural affiliation that characterizes many racial, ethnic and national groups scattered throughout the world" (Ashcroft and et al. 425). *In the Kitchen*, illustrating the liberty and equality that every human being should experience in an ideal world. But colonialism is one of the aspects that has prevented this principle.

These characters are more conscious about their identity. Identity is bound with culture and it shapes further development as well as further progress. Cultural values are related with our identity and loss of cultural heritage emerges as a

dominant problems among modern people especially to diasporic people. In this connection, Homburger Erikson also writes that,

Identity-consciousness is, of course, overcome only by a sense of identity won in action. Only he who 'knows where he is going and who is going with him` demonstrates an unmistakable if not always easily definable unity and radiance of appearance and being. And yet just when a person to all appearances, seems to 'find himself' he can also be said to be 'losing himself' in new tasks and affiliations, he transcends identity – consciousness. (301)

As discussed by Homberger in above mentioned paragraph, all the characters in the novel face the crisis in their identity after the migration in the foreign land in search of the happy and prosperous future.

### **Gabriel Lightfoot: A Man in Crisis**

The novel *In the Kitchen* focuses on Gabriel's development from total confusion to a new start in life. The reader can certainly say that Gabriel changes his attitude to life throughout the narrative, and particularly towards the end, and his relationships with women plays an important role in his evolution. Indeed, Gabriel's conflicts with women – his secretary, his girlfriend, his sister, his lover – are to a great extent the trigger of his mental collapse and clear indications of the fragility of his personal relations.

A significant part of the novel's play with reader expectations is connected to the choice of protagonist and his characterization. As several reviewers have highlighted, Gabriel Lightfoot is portrayed as a "deeply unlikeable" person a "flawed man" (Arana 2009); indeed, he appears as a self-centered, 42-year-old English chef who goes through an identity crisis.

From the very beginning of the novel, Gabe is in identity crisis. It is beginning from the death of Yuri in the kitchen basement. When the porter Yuri is found dead in the hotel basement, the reader sees the first sign of Gabe feeling that he has failed. He starts thinking of what he should have done, and shows his insecurity. Thus, this death marks the beginning of Gabe's identity confusion and the search to find out about who he really is:

What if Yuri was not dead? Benny had told him with a calm and unquestionable certainty that Yuri was dead. But what if he was still alive? There was a pool of blood around his head and he didn't look like a living thing because his legs, his chest, were blue, but who wouldn't be cold, stretched out naked and bleeding on the icy catacomb floor? Gabe should have checked for a pulse, he should have put something soft beneath Yuri's head, at the very least he should have called for an ambulance. (13)

Through this incident, death is starting to trouble Gabe. He is haunted by nightmares about his former colleague, and dreams that he himself is buried in food. The saying "Nightmares won't kill you" (122) helps Gabe to a certain point, but eventually his quest to find out about Yuri's life, why he was down in the catacombs and why he died, becomes an obsession.

The commis chef Nikolai, one of Gabe's best workers, is really a doctor. He finds "the nightmares to continue to subsist because Gabe feels responsible for the death" (291). Yet, he also believes that the significance of Yuri's death is that "it is insignificant, and therefore so troubling" (360). Gabe has stopped caring about so many things in life, and he eventually seems to realize this through the incident of his

colleague. According to John S. Stephenson in *Death Grief and Mourning*, the severity of grief is not dependent on social interaction between two persons:

Individuals may grieve over the loss of someone with whom they had only a brief, cursory relationship. A person may grieve deeply over the loss of someone with whom they have not actually interacted, but whom they strongly identified. The determining factor is not necessarily the proximity of the individuals or the social significance of the relationship, but rather the importance that the griever assigns to the lost person. (137-38)

Gabe and Yuri did not have a close relationship. Still, Yuri's death is very upsetting to Gabe who begins to grieve for him. As the protagonist starts to investigate Yuri's life, he discovers that they had one crucial thing in common: loneliness. Using Stephenson's theory, it seems like the fact that they both are lonely is what causes Gabe to be so troubled by the death, and to mourn Yuri.

Another relevant component in Gabriel's crisis is his perception that most of his employees at the hotel kitchen come from non-British backgrounds. In fact, only one member of his staff is British. Since, as the narrative advances, he discovers that most of them have personal histories of suffering and survival which have little in common with his easy youth of high ambitions. His breakdown is thus connected to a growing alienation in him and a realization that most aspects of his life have changed in unexpected ways. This also includes, significantly, the city of London, with its new social geography he does not recognize any more as a consequence of its position as one of the centers of twenty-first century globalised economy. Monica Ali explains in the novel, "London was slipping away from him. The longer he lived here, the less familiar it became" (370).

In this way, the geography of London is a frequent presence in the novel with some of its landmarks as the background for important episodes in Gabriel's life, such as the British Museum in the scene when he finally tells Charlie about Lena. Travelling on the tube or walking along its streets are also often described quite carefully.

### **Cultural Marginality and Crisis of Identity**

Cultural marginality is another facet of diaspora. It focuses on the behavioral pattern, system of beliefs, customs, and organization of the marginal groups as distinguished from the cultural patterns of the dominant group. Paige writes in his *Education for Intercultural Experience*:

Cultural marginality describes an experience; one typical of global nomads and others who have been molded by exposure to two or more cultural traditions. Such people do not tend to fit perfectly into any one of the cultural to which they have been exposed but may fit comfortably in the edge, in the margins, of each. (1)

In this way, cultural marginality is in and of itself neither bad nor good although the experience has the potential to be both. It is characterized by the potential for on the one hand, feeling at home nowhere, and on the other hand, feeling at home everywhere.

The central character Oona is indeed her mouth piece that is found criticizing the Caribbean way of life so minutely and subtly that she appears innocent and sympathy winner everywhere throughout the novel. Ali has also shown the fact that the opponents of the English culture and life turns to be failure through the reflection of Yuri. His failure is not the personal and individual one. Rather it represents the failure of the whole non-westerners who go to the European countries with high



ambition and glamour in order to have hilarious career in the respective disciplines. Hence it gets pretty clear that Ali is responsible for all these slaps given to the cheeks of the non-westerners especially people.

Monica Ali's *in the Kitchen* continues to court controversy among the British diaspora due to its negative portrayal of immigrant. It reflects on the specific immigrant communities portrayed in the novel and the extent to which this can be considered an innovative feature in recent diasporic fiction produced in Britain. In the context of the new forms of oppression find in twenty-first century society. From the very first time these women are introduced we become aware of Gabriel's perception of them his girlfriend Charlie who wants a family above all and to be asked to move into his flat his superior sister Jenny, who finishes all his sentences as if she knew his thoughts better than himself his Caribbean secretary Oona who is the focus of his hostility for most of the narrative despite her being the one to support him later in his moment of breakdown:

There was something about Oona that infuriated him. [. . .] What offended him about Oona was simply this: her domesticity. When she blew into his office and sat down it was as if she had just got home with the shopping, looking forward to a cuppa and a chat. The way she talked, the way she walked, the way she pressed her bosom when she was thinking, all of it, at core, was irreducibly and inescapably domestic. In Gabe's experience, women who worked in kitchens – and there were a few – worked the hardest, swore the loudest and told the dirtiest jokes. It wasn't about being one of the boys, not necessarily, they could flirt like hell too but it showed they knew the rules. (18-19)

This passage makes evident his androcentric perspective as it shows to what extent he seems to reject the traditional association of cooking with the female domestic sphere while encouraging a masculine behaviour in women involved professionally in it.

According to Jeremy Hawthorn describes “a habit of mind and set of attitudes which are based upon a male perspective and which ignore female experience and interests” (7) and this is suggested in Gabriel’s perception of Oona as an incompetent worker, since he is following conventional, male-centered views of the professional world which belongs to the public sphere as an aggressive domain where femininity must be invisibilised. By portraying an androcentric focaliser, the reader is soon made aware of its unreliability and the distance created by having a third-person narrator is reinforced, as the gap between the character’s views and those of the implied author becomes more visible. This is further highlighted by a significant number of frivolous antifeminist comments on his part which are scattered throughout the narrative and constantly remind the reader of his androcentric attitudes.

The above mentioned ideas express the conflicting ideas due to the hybrid position. The conflicting ideas are the result of the characters hybrid position; most of the diasporic people suffer from their desire to belong to the host country to develop their career. Due to this desire, they develop mimicking nature in the host country. Their hybrid position leads them to plural identities and plural identities are the facts of diaspora. All the characters love their homeland in the novel *In the Kitchen*, even though, they are also content with host country and its development which is far better than their country. Radha Krishnan raises the problem of which identity is authentic in this way:

Whereas at home one could just Indian or Chinese, here one is constrained to become Chinese, Indian – or – Asian-American. This

leads to us the question: is the Indian in Indian American the same and therefore interchangeable? Which of the two is authentic. And which are merely strategy or reactive? (207)

Radhakrishnan raise the questions of plural identity of diasporic people. At home, a person belongs to his homeland culture that's why his identity becomes single. But when he becomes the diasporic figure, his identity becomes plural, diasporic people cannot relate their identity solely with their homeland rather their identity depends on both countries; cultures. So, Radha krishnan states the idea of plural identity rather than authentic identity.

*In the Kitchen*, Oona, a Caribbean immigrant is presented to be very much hostile to the life style of the immigrant. Ali through this character has expressed her biased attitude towards the immigrant settled in the kitchen. Hence, Ali tries to show the countenance of the immigrant in a designed way that can please the British. When Gabe is talking to Oona about the immigrant in this way. Gabe states:

Calling himself to order, he opened his notebook, thinking he would prioritize his workload for the rest of the day. In the kitchen the cooks bobbed and weaved. Suleiman slid on the oily patch but saved himself and earned a cheer. Gabe held his pen over the page. His mind become fogged. Impossible to pick out a single thought. His wrist locked and thought he wanted to write any old thing, to begin the process, he could not make a mark. (61)

It gets pretty clear that Suleiman is made to speak the inner thought of Ali. In fact Suleiman as an Indian common person does not have this negative attitude towards the immigrant. It is Monica Ali who has attempted her level best to reach the test of the English looking for the appropriate situation to insult the easterners. Oona as the

mouthpiece humbly accepts what Chanu tells her to do since she represents the women who belong to the Caribbean society and brought up in the orthodox culture. It is a great slap on the face of the non-westerners.

Gabriel's early obsession with Belarusian teenage prostitute Lena is the next element that characterizes his behavior, which can be interpreted as stemming from the desire for the racial Other explored by several theorists as a common occurrence in the white colonizer. Her ethnicity, her youth, her degrading profession and shattering experiences provoke in him a sexual attraction that leads him to total confusion in his life, particularly after he hides her in his flat and they start an affair.

Another character, Lena is portrayed as a mysterious, tiny, surly young woman who, interestingly enough, stands in direct opposition to his articulate, feminine, understanding girlfriend Charlie and it is significant that she appears to him as animal-like, reflection on the traditional attribution of non-human features to the second element in the binary self/Other. Her face is thin and rigid and her hands, which she holds twisted together at her chest, are fleshless claws. She has a feline nose, small and snub, high, skinny eye-brows and a pale scar of a mouth. It is difficult to tell, Gabe could not decide, whether she is pretty or not. What begins as a fantasy of possession is soon transformed into a reality even he is astonished at, in a physical materialization of his desire which makes him perceive her body parts as separate, thus emphasizing her subhuman nature:

Close to tears, he sat on the edge of the bed took and hold of her feet.

He appraised each toe, the pearly nails, each little knuckle, the delicate articulation of each joint. [...] marveling at how truly she was flesh and bone, *his Lena, his ghostly girl*. And the anklebones, they were real all right, the shinbones and the knees, and she raised her hips lightly so he

could raise her dress. He worked slowly up her body, connecting every part of her, putting her back together again. (307)

As he gets to know more details about her frightful experiences with her pimp and clients, on her migration journey. He realizes his attitude to her is also that of the sexual exploiter, which makes his guilt grow despite the attempt to justify his behavior as love.

In this way, the novel, *In the Kitchen*, however the shadow is a multi-layered image through which Ali represents not only the invisibility of the immigrants but the secrecy of the global network of sex slavery and forced labor in the age of globalization. Ali deals with the undercurrents of globalization the underground diaspora and a shadowy world of illegal immigration schemes through her representation of London as the contemporary. Mr. Maddox comments:

The imperial would never be truly great again. Jacques would never live up to its name. Great restaurants, like great hotels, delivered coherent design and consistent standards. Glasson's silk, please' flowers gave the game away. If the imperial were a person, thought Gabe, you would say here is someone who does not know who she is. (37)

It is the fact that the discriminatory attitudes displayed by some non-immigrant towards immigrant in the Diaspora betray their own frustrations, insecurities and lack of success in life. Non-immigrant often stereotype immigrant as uneducated and as not being proper diaspora as a means of voicing their disapproval about the immigrant tendency to stick to their own community and to marry within their own community. They see long-established immigrant families holding down good jobs and able to navigate the complexities of modern life and feel resentment and hate. It is so because

they feel out of place given the different immigrant language and culture. One should not blame non-immigrant too much but help them integrate better into the mainstream.

There is something about Oona that infuriated him. What offended him about Oona is simply her domesticity. When she blew into his office and sat down it was as if she had just get home with the shopping looking forward to a culpa and a chat. The way she talked, the way she walked, the way she pressed her bosom when she is thinking all of it at core is irreducibly and inescapably domestic. In Gabe's experience:

Women who worked in kitchens – and there were a few – worked the hardest, swore the loudest and told the dirtiest jokes. It wasn't about being one of the boys, not necessarily – they could flirt like hell too – but it showed they knew the rules. The professional kitchen was not the same as the domestic kitchen. The two were worlds apart. (19)

This passage makes evident his androcentric perspective as it shows to what extent he seems to reject the traditional association of cooking with the female, domestic sphere while encouraging a masculine behavior in women involved professionally in it.

After a long wandering through London under the influence of energizing drinks, his identity crisis is finally overcome towards the end of the narrative when he is determined to change his life and become a contented, lonely grateful man. It is only then that he gets involved into some action to solve the mystery surrounding Yuri's death and the strange encounters at the hotel, when he goes through a cathartic experience working on a Norfolk farm with a group of illegal immigrants, which precipitates his discovery of the truth and the intervention of the police. Whether we consider the literary portrayal of his breakdown and recovery successful or believable,

it certainly has philosophical implications in that it makes identity a central topic in the novel and, more specifically, androcentric, Eurocentric identity. All in all we can say *In the Kitchen* explores to a great extent a masculinity in crisis as a consequence of the pressures exerted by twenty-first century Western culture since Gabriel represents the struggle of contemporary British maleness to adapt to contemporary society and values, a struggle which is conveyed through focalization despite the challenge this implies of reader expectations.

### **Colonialism: Cause of Migration**

Another striking feature of *In the Kitchen* is the type of immigrant communities depicted in the narrative as these include mainly recently arrived individuals from areas on the globe such as Eastern Europe or Africa, often with little historical connection with the British colonial empire. This means that they are culturally and linguistically distant not only from Britain but also from the ethnic groups which migrated there after the Second World War from the British ex colonies. In addition, since most of the plot takes place in Gabriel's work context that is the kitchen at the Imperial hotel many of the characters portrayed are those working for him whose profile is mainly with the exception of Caribbean Oona that of a young or middle-aged male who has travelled to Britain alone escaping from a country in turmoil or the poverty of post-communist Europe, sometimes even illegally and leaving his family behind. That is the case of the porter found dead in the cellar, Ukrainian Yuri, who is discovered to have university training as an engineer to Gabriel's surprise; Russian obstetrician Nikolai, who sought political asylum after being considered a spy for being concerned about public health, or Liberian Benny, a former child soldier who tells tales of horror in his war-ridden country. Mr. Maddox comments:

The general manager took his time to replay, a small exercise of power. He started with seeming deliberation towards Rolly and Fair-weather, and then he glanced about the dining room. There is a man and women sat behind me, no don't start looking now, they are staying in the hotel. (99)

Despite the difficult trajectories most of them have had, the protagonist's attitude to his employees is somehow tinted with a superiority which hides an important dose of Eurocentrism, as he calls them humorously "his brigade, a United Nations task force"(129). Even lacks the interest to know where they come from though as he matures he develops a growing curiosity which leads him to establish a friendship with some of them. Every corner of the earth was represented here. Hispanic, Asian, African, Baltic and most places in between. Oona had taken on a new dishwasher from Somalia or somewhere pretty much like that. The other one was Mongolian and the third is from the Philippines. The room-service guy was fresh from Chile and Gabriel doubted that his English extended beyond fries and burgers and whatever else was on the menu. He has fitted in all right. It was touching, really to watch them all, every race, every color, and every creed.

The inclusion of these communities in the narrative seems to stem from the attempt to realistically depict Britain's globalised society at the turn of the new millennium with the new immigration trends that can be observed since the 1990s. Indeed recent studies have shown that the ethnic diversity of immigrants coming to Britain has grown in the last decade particularly after important immigration policy changes began to favour the arrival of Eastern European workers as members of the EU, which implies a rise in the arrival of immigrants with respect to previous decades and, thus, in the number of first-generation individuals, being the Polish community



the biggest foreign-born group in the UK nowadays. They are trying to break free from the expectations of representatively worker and critics might hold about the novel.

In this way, by focusing on first-generation migrants and ethnic communities which are not her own, Monica Ali is establishing a distance from her own autobiographical background – she is second-generation although born in Dhaka – and thus trying to break free from the expectations of representatively readers and critics might hold about the novel. In addition, she is placing the new immigrant populations on the map and inscribing their experiences, which in many cases have little to do with those lived by her own family or relatives as they are the consequence of new political and social circumstances. As a matter of fact, the South-Asian community to which Ali belongs is depicted in the narrative only through very secondary characters like Gabriel's Indian employee Suleiman, through the description of London areas which are now peopled by this ethnic group or in a passage which interestingly shows the contrast between the new reality Gabriel lives and the immigrant communities he remembers from his childhood in a Northern England town, where racist attitudes were generalised:

In Blant wistle there were only the Asians, or the Pakis as they were called then, maybe still were. They did only the night shifts as the mill, were just coming out as the morning shift went in. That was the way it was at first. Gabriel remembered the journey on the number 72, going down from the heights of Plodder Lane to the market square [...]. Michael Harrison's family lived there, 'marooned', said his father, among the Asians, and when the bus pulled in at the bus stop the

conductor shouted 'Khyber Pass' and rang the bell. People said things about the Asians. (129-30)

Hence, by reflecting on the forms of racism prevalent in 1970s Britain the protagonist is acknowledging British racist past and his own compliance to it, while suggesting that attitudes have changed in the 2000s and British society has now learnt to accept multiculturalism. However, the narrative itself contradicts Gabriel's perception, as he realises later on, by showing to what extent the exploitation of migrants is still a common occurrence, though in more subtle ways, and is even getting worse as a result of the global economy which rules a first world metropolis like London.

The above mentioned explanation shows the contrast between the new reality Gabriel lives and the immigrant communities he remembers from his childhood in a Northern England town where Marxist attitudes are generalized.

On the other, through the growing frequency of compulsive gestures such as tearing his hair out and scratching his head to the point of bleeding, which can also be interpreted in Freudian terms as symptomatic of his growing insecurity. His interaction with his family contributes significantly to his breakdown with his family. His idolized mother had bipolar disorder and for that reason committed suicide confuses him deeply, whereas the conversations with his dying father and racist grandmother revive sad memories of childhood and reveal the changing landscape of provincial England, with the end of local industries, the settling of immigrant communities and the loss of national identity as it was traditionally perceived. In fact, through these and other characters contemporary British identity is often discussed in the narrative and eventually presented as a neutral, value-free identity, a non-identity, a vacuum. In his relationships with women, readers witness his failure at communication with them, which is symbolized in his failed attempt to explain to both his sister and his

ex-girlfriend the trouble he is going through. What is more, his lack of sincerity and commitment first with Charlie and later with Lena regarding his promise to find her much loved brother in London who turns out to be her boyfriend brings a realization of his failure as a man according to the old values of masculinity taught by his father: “The truth was, no avoiding it, that this was what he was like: weak-willed, unfocused, spineless” (349). His obsession to ask for the words to describe him as he is shocked to discover few people know him well enough marks the peak of his breakdown and suggests his outdated perception of identity as fixed and coherent, in contrast to its incompleteness and constant state of transformation.

The recent emergence of this exploration and of organized capitalist networks devoted to them gives an added value to the text. It is tackle in literature the social conditions of victims and perpetrators and particularly the situation of migrant prostitutes in Europe. But which are profoundly universal as they affect to a greater or lesser extent all individuals living in contemporary Western societies. Gabriel comments, “I have always had one or two, at work, said Gabriel. Why was he lying to her? What was the point? Nip out to the loading bay, have a breather – no harm in that is there” (283).

The denunciation of migrant exploitation found in the narrative is accompanied by another unexpected feature which is the presence of an important number of conventions from the working class. Some of them are related with the pattern the plot follows in its development while others are linked to specific motifs scattered throughout the narrative.

He needed to know now, and he needed to know urgently, what he is. He grabbed at words. Fair. He is fair, oh yes, everyone said so, and everyone knew it. He is fair and he was reasonable. That was him. A perfect description. Above all, he was

a reasonable man. Maybe not this morning with Oona, no, that was out of character.

He isn't really like that:

What am I? He thought. What am I? The question pinged round and round plaintively until, firing faster and faster, it took on a sharper edge. What am I? What am I? A nobody? A zero? Am I a hollow man? [...] What was he? Was he a man without qualities? A man about whom nothing could be said? (372)

After a long wandering through London under the influence of energising drinks, his identity crisis is finally overcome towards the end of the narrative when he is determined to change his life and become a contented, lonely, grateful man. It is only then that he gets involved into some action to solve the mystery surrounding Yuri's death and the strange encounters at the hotel, when he goes through a cathartic experience working on a Norfolk farm with a group of illegal immigrants, which precipitates his discovery of the truth and the intervention of the police. Whether we consider the literary portrayal of his breakdown and recovery successful or believable, it certainly has philosophical implications in that it makes identity a central topic in the novel and, more specifically, androcentric, Eurocentric identity.

All in all, it can say *In the Kitchen* explores to a great extent a masculinity in crisis as a consequence of the pressures exerted by twenty-first century Western culture, since Gabriel represents the struggle of contemporary British maleness to adapt to contemporary society and values, a struggle which is conveyed through focalization despite the challenge this implies of reader expectations.

### **Orientalism and Gender Bias**

Another striking feature of *In the Kitchen* is the type of immigrant communities depicted in the narrative, as these include mainly recently arrived

individuals from areas on the globe such as Eastern Europe or Africa, often with little historical connection with the British colonial empire. This means that they are culturally and linguistically distant not only from Britain, but also from the ethnic groups which migrated there after the Second World War from the British ex colonies, subject of most diasporic fiction in the 1980s and 1990s and of Monica Ali's first novel. In addition, since most of the plot takes place in Gabriel's work context, that is, the kitchen at the Imperial hotel, many of the characters portrayed are those working for him, whose profile is mainly with the exception of Caribbean Oonathat of a young or middle-aged male who has travelled to Britain alone escaping from a country in turmoil or the poverty of post-communist Europe, sometimes even illegally and leaving his family behind.

Thus, the novel visibilizes a face of globalisation which is usually hidden from view, that is, all the activities performed in the symbolic kitchens of global cities, while inscribing the experiences of their protagonists and the exploitation they are submitted to, though perceived through the eyes of a privileged character, Gabriel, who gradually develops an awareness of the situation. The dehumanization of such cities is expressed in a passage which metaphorically likens London to the central part of a digestive system, always in constant motion and whose voraciousness disintegrates everything it takes in," (309). This novel also deals about the women and their identity confusion when they left their homeland. It also elaborates the double marginalization of women. A prominent critic, Agitpapa avers regarding the novel's issue: "The book is about a Muslim woman working her way through a couple of men, out of purdah, and out into the brave new world of English style freedom" (12). He further adds:

It certainly does nothing to combat the current pernicious Western prejudices against Islamic societies and may even be seen as helping to prop the threadbare Anglo-American excuse for the horrors being perpetrated on Muslims in the Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, namely that of “spreading freedom”. So what I’m saying is that although Oona’s story may be totally credible, real, and well-told, the context in which the telling of that story takes place explains both the interest in book and the reactions against it. (12)

As the narrative advances, we discover through Gabriel’s investigation that the exploitation of migrants described in the novel hides an even darker side, since it involves specific criminal activities in which several members of the hotel staff are implicated. Firstly, a prostitution network which deceives young foreign waitresses at the hotel into becoming prostitutes; secondly, a human trafficking network which brings illegal Eastern European workers into Britain only to be forced to work under conditions of slavery on a Norfolk farm. The connivance or indifference of those around him, even London politician and benefactor Fairweather, exacerbates Gabriel’s mental breakdown and leads him to question the moral fabric of twenty-first century society in such a way that this seems to explain the nature of his dreams about Yuri’s death, as Nikolai suggests, “The significance of Yuri’s death [. . .] is that it is insignificant. That is why it is so troubling. That is why you dream” (260).

However, it takes the protagonist some time to realize that in his behavior towards Lena his attitude is also that of the exploiter, as he is always the one to decide when to have sexual relations while she merely submit to his claims following the pattern expected of a prostitute. His initial kindness by giving her shelter and listening to her sad stories of violent pimps and capricious clients, she is his charitable cause

soon turns into a possessiveness in which he does not recognize himself to such an extent that his own sexual impulses become alien to him, “His desire was a foul creature that climbed on his back and wrapped its long arms around his neck. What did it want with him? He would cage it if he could. One day he would have the strength to kill it, for it was not part of him” (239).

Though the novel focuses very little on female development and Lena appears as the most enigmatic of female characters, it is significant that she finally rebels against Gabriel’s authority first by leaving the flat on her own to explore London, like a modern ready to appropriate the urban space as an inhabitant of the city, and later by reminding him of the commercial nature of their relationship. Her rebellion is hence a turning point in the narrative which makes Gabriel reflect on his own attitude and accept his share of responsibility for the evils of twenty-first century society. Prostitution, human trafficking and enslavement are some of the evils which are proliferating in the world as a consequence of global economy and it is no surprise that they all affect migrants in a direct way, as they are usually the victims of these forms of exploitation. By making them part of the plot of *In the Kitchen*, and not secondarily but as a central topic due to the direct implication of the hotel staff and the protagonist’s involvement, Ali is bringing to the forefront the fast spread and nearness of very lucrative forms of crime in the new globalised world which many people ignore or are indifferent to, thus making readers reflect on issues of moral responsibility and guilt.

In Ali’s novel, the kitchen has however hidden something even darker than illegal immigration or migrant exploitation. The hotel kitchen is not only the location but the breeding ground for sex-trafficking that has similarly taken advantage of globalization. As the Moldavian worker Victor reveals to Gabriel, the restaurant

manager cooperating with other kitchen staff and especially with the housekeeping supervisor, gets girls from the hotel such as cleaners and maids and sells them on. These girls are lured with photos and stories of singers, dancers, and waitresses and then sold “to the club, the bar, the whatever, that’s the line” (469).

Thus, the hotel, a common location of traveling in an era of globalization, provides a perfect base for sex-trafficking because of its beautiful system: “You’ve got a ready-made supply of girls. None of that business about getting them away from home, smuggling them all that shit. Less hassle, less expense, feed them through, get paid. Who’s going to care?” (470).

Sex-trafficking usually leads to forced prostitution as Lena has painfully experienced. Lena has been lured to come to London illegally to work as a nurse and yet upon arriving, as an illegal immigrant. She is coerced to become a sex slave. In order to hide from the pimp, she lives in the hotel basement with Yuri, even if she needs to bear a rat curled on the pillow. As represented in the novel, the Imperial hotel the kitchen and the basement in particular reveals the other, dark faces of London as a global city, which are embodied by the suffering bodies of the immigrants living and working underground.

Finally, the history of Gabe also ends in a positive way. Even though his father dies, his Nana is sent to a nursing home and the plans about his own restaurant are not realized, Gabe now seems to face a bright future. By the end of the novel, he is talking to Charlie on the phone, planning to meet for lunch. He has also let go of Lena, finally a selfless act. After all, Gabe has faced and accepted his background together with his own identity.

At last but not least, this novel offers a deep reflection on the realities of twenty-first century globalized society but using perspectives, topics and genres that



move away from those expected in British fiction by women from diasporic communities. The narrative introduces as the focaliser a white, male character who thinks himself politically correct but whose androcentric, Eurocentric ideology soon emerges in his relationships with others. The lack of identification the protagonist provokes in the reader is accompanied on the one hand by an exploration of contemporary masculinity and on the other by a criticism of Western indifferent, irresponsible attitudes towards the evils of global economy, particularly as we witness his exploitative relationship with the young Belarusian prostitute. If Gabriel can be considered a man in crisis, as most of the plot seems to confirm, it is also true that the whole narrative is perceived through his androcentric eyes and this raises the controversial issue of authenticity despite his eventual redemption after his cathartic experiences among immigrant slaves.

### III. Struggle for Identity in Monica Ali's *In the Kitchen*

Ali's *In the Kitchen* gives a transparent reflection of the Diaspora and cultural practices of the people who belong to them. The cultural practices carried out in the immigrant workers are shown in such manner that they are groundless and the matter of avoidance. It can say that by deploying easily recognizable patterns and motifs from immigrants, Ali is exploring new ground and challenging the expectations of readers, as the genre has been scarcely cultivated by diasporas from ethnic minorities in England. Hence, Ali can be considered one of the first women writers in her ethnic community what can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to widen her readership and get free from the burden of representation while still tackling topics which are of concern to her. Whether her attempt at the new genre can be considered successful or not is quite a different matter, as some critics do not seem to find coherence in her combination of a diaspora plot, the protagonist's identity conflicts and the discussion of multicultural Britain.

In *In the Kitchen*, the predominant motif of the shadow and the setting of the hotel and the kitchen manifest Ali's literary endeavor to seek out the periphery at the center and to create contemporary of Britain in the context of diaspora. By looking into how migrants work and live in the shadows how they are viewed as shadows and how shadow globalization affects them, Ali not only locates globalization in the everyday lives of immigrants but through the interplay between crisis identity and invisible subjectivity foregrounds the power of corporeal politics in the context of globalization. Globalization and shadow globalization as well are enacted through the immigrants moving working and commodified bodies.

The reason that diaspora defines revolutionary subjectivity through the prism of identity. Gabriel's rejection of this condition limits their ability to do this. Yet, not all diaspora go this while there might be some danger associated with their more speculative dispositions. They continually seek new and innovative means of conceiving social. This, it seems to me, remains the strongest and most valuable legacy of diaspora. It is one that we certainly should not be quick to abandon.

*In the Kitchen* offers a deep reflection on the realities of twenty-first century globalized society but using perspectives, topics and genres that move away from those expected in British fiction by women from diaspora communities. Firstly, the narrative introduces as the focaliser a white, male character who thinks himself politically correct but whose androcentric, Eurocentric ideology soon emerges in his relationships with others. The lack of identification the protagonist provokes in the workers is accompanied on the one hand by an exploration of contemporary masculinity and on the other by a criticism of Western indifferent irresponsible attitudes towards the evils of global economy particularly as we witness his exploitative relationship with the young Belarusian prostitute. If Gabriel can be considered a man in crisis as most of the plot seems to confirm, it is also true that the whole narrative is perceived through his androcentric eyes and this raises the controversial issue of authenticity despite his eventual redemption after his cathartic experiences among immigrant slaves. By challenging expectations of authenticity through a white male focalization in a female-authored ethnic minority text

While drawing attention to issues which go beyond the representation of her own ethnic community.

The novel can be said to focus on migrant experience the communities Ali depicts are totally alien to her own in terms of cultural background period of arrival and problematic faced since they do not experience the same forms of diaspora. Instead, they are subjected to more sophisticated types of marginalization and exploitation often linked to criminal practices to which undocumented immigrants are particularly vulnerable nowadays. Hence, by offering a cityscape that is unrelated to her second-generation immigrant background, Ali is exploring new territory while escaping from the autobiographical, and not acting as a mouthpiece for her community as readers had come to expect after successful semi-autobiographical novel.

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