

Representing the Subaltern: Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things

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Terror and Transformation in the Air: Postcolonial Imaginings of Air-Space

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Writers from Homer to Conrad and beyond once explored the sea voyage; now, new ways of imagining air-space and air travel are emerging in the works of postcolonial writers. Airports and flights figure in the fiction of Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Mathur Anurag, and Rohinton Mistry, and Salman Rushdie has generated a rich mythology of air-space. Flights are transformative experiences in several Rushdie novels: in *The Satanic Verses*, for example, he develops a network of allusions to air-space as one of the twentieth century's "defining locations" (5), to falls, metamorphoses, and the insubstantiality of solid ground. Air-space is also an arena for the exercise of violence. September last year brought to the U.S. a fresh awareness of the lethal power of aircraft. It turns out that there are a couple of intriguing links between Rushdie's fiction and 9/11. Yet for Rushdie himself, one consequence of 9/11 was Air Canada's announcement that it would no longer carry him. This adds to our sense of the complicated entanglements of fiction and reality, of air-space as a zone of transcendence and transformation vs. air-space as a zone of war, air travel as freeing some to fly but becoming inaccessible to others.

Representing the Subaltern: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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In this paper, I discuss the representation of various categories of subalterns in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. The novel features a range of subaltern subjects—widowed

and divorced women, working poor ostracized by their caste, children caught between elite and non-elite formations, and a community of Syrian-Orthodox Christians occupying a hybrid, uncertain space in the midst of a dominant Hindu majority. Taken together, their predicament serves as a pivot around which Roy spins a fascinating, aesthetically rewarding narrative.

Each of Roy's subaltern characters is distinct to the degree that she is made to stay in her place via specific operations of power. Ammu, the novel's principal character, is ostracized by the forces of patriarchy suturing both Christian and Hindu communities, while the forces that subalternize Velutha, an untouchable, lower-caste Christian, are somewhat differently situated. Like Ammu and other subaltern characters, Velutha occupies an uncertain space between the public and the private spheres, the Kochamma household and their pickle factory. His transformation from a mute subaltern who knows his sanctioned place in society to a speaking one (politically articulate, transgressive and resisting) marks the late turning point in the novel.

South Asian Linguistic Diversity and the World Wide Web

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One area of interest with regard to the World Wide Web is the degree to which the web promulgates a relatively unitary or a relatively diverse set of cultural models. An interesting proxy for this measure is not the number of languages but rather the amount of linguistic diversity found in a given medium. If we were able to measure the linguistic diversity of the World Wide Web, it would seem to be much closer to the monolingualism of the United States than to the kind of diversity seen in India, even within Indian parts of the web.