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Rhetorical Analysis of Globalization in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Lisa Duggan, in *The Twilight of Equality?*, analyzes the ways in which neoliberalism has permeated American politics since the mid-to-late twentieth century. Specifically, she argues that adherents of neoliberalism insist on maintaining the economic, the social, and the cultural separate from one another. But, as she clarifies, it is not difficult to see that "in the real world, class and racial hierarchies, gender and sexual institutions, religious and ethnic boundaries are the channels through which money, political power, cultural resources, and social organization flow" (xiv). Duggan points out that, contrary to what neoliberal ideology claims about its overarching concerns with economic policy, one cannot deny the profound ways in which this framework intersects with people's lives. In talking about ways for progressives to see through the contradictory actions of neoliberal regimes, Duggan contends that their policies are designed to address economic turmoil and internecine violence: "But they also expose neoliberalism as a ruse of neo-imperialism, founded in force and coercion, rather than the program for world peace, prosperity and democracy through 'free markets' and 'free' trade that its avatars promote" (70).

Although this essay does not directly address real-life examples of neoliberalism's effects on class, race, culture, gender, and ethnicity in the United States, it does analyze neoliberalism's connections to globalization, a significant theme in Arundhati Roy's novel, *The God of Small Things*. Set in the town of Ayemenem, in Kerala, India, the novel unfolds tragically after the premature death of Sophie Mol at the end of the 1960s, which ultimately leads to the disintegration of her extended family. The audience experiences this traumatic event through fraternal twins Rahel and Estha, whose emotional devastation as a result of their cousin's death is manifested in their estrangement and exile. Twenty-three years after Sophie Mol's death, Rahel and Estha, still unable to recover from this event and its attendant consequences, are reunited in an inexplicable act of incest. Running through Roy's narrative is the aftermath of British dominance in India. Indeed, the remnants of British imperialism (a precursor to

neoliberal thinking), further exacerbate the violence that inextricably links the Ipe, Kochamma, and Paapen families. Roy's novel, moving forward and backward in time, suggests that what happens to families at the local level is directly linked to larger political and economic forces at the global level as well. History seems inescapable, even as characters constantly attempt to adjust their constructed realities to uphold the remnants of British rule and the framework of the Indian caste system. Remarkably, however, it is not these characters that suffer the consequences of their actions; in reality, it is the children, their divorced mother, and the Untouchable worker who are made to suffer for the misdeeds of others. In poetic and yet stark language, Roy demonstrates how these victims are irreparably harmed and, in the case of the worker, at least, killed at the hands of the state. In this essay, I argue that the ways in which British imperialism and globalization affect the world of the novel can be seen in the connections between the local and the global, the marginalization of the other, and the disappearance of bodies enacted by the state.

To begin to realize the dire poverty that has surrounded Rahel and Estha for most of their lives, it is instructive to consider the opening lines of the first chapter. In "Paradise Pickles & Preserves," Roy sets the scene by depicting the unrelenting heat and rain in Ayemenem: "[In May] the nights are clear, but suffused with sloth and sullen expectation. But by early June the southwest monsoon breaks and there are three months of wind and water with short spells of sharp, glittering sunshine that thrilled children snatch to play with. The countryside turns an immodest green. Boundaries blur as tapioca fences take root and bloom" (3). Roy describes the natural environment as temperamental, as the words "sloth" and "sullen" connote lack of productivity and despair, uncontrollable, because of the southwest monsoon, and punishing, because of the brightness of the sun, which is set in stark contrast to the joy of the children. Yet the joy of the children is immediately followed by a description of the "immodest" color of the countryside and the permeable boundaries of the vegetation. Despite the unforgiving monsoon season, however, Rahel returns to Ayemenem after many years to find her twin brother, Estha. Rahel's trajectory to locate her brother provides glimpses of the tragic past that had unfolded many years before, with the drowning of Sophie Mol, Chacko and his ex-wife Margaret Kochamma's daughter, and which leads to Rahel's separation from and exile of Estha, the demise of Ammu, and the death of Velutha (20). Sophie Mol's death and funeral bring to the surface the fractured relationships within the Kochamma family: "Though Ammu, Estha and Rahel were allowed to attend the funeral, they were made to stand separately, not with the rest of the family. Nobody would look at them" (7). Ammu and her children are seen as responsible for Sophie Mol's death and so are punished by being excluded from the sadness that bonds the other family members. Yet their grief leads to life-long despair and trauma for Ammu and Estha as well as restless wandering for Rahel. Roy observes that, right after the

funeral, Ammu takes her children to the police station, but she is told to go home because “the Kottayam Police didn’t take statements from *veshyas* or their illegitimate children” (9, emphasis in original). By drawing attention to the words “*veshyas*” and “illegitimate” which the police officer uses to describe Ammu’s and her children’s status, Roy shows that they are not protected by the legal framework, that they are not subjects recognized by the state. Ammu’s reaction and that of her children to her crying reveals the hopelessness of the situation: “It was the first time they’d seen their mother cry. She wasn’t sobbing. Her face was set like stone, but the tears welled up in her eyes and ran down her rigid cheeks. It made the twins sick with fear” (10). Although I will say more about Ammu and her children’s status as strangers who must be banished, I focus on this first chapter for what it reveals about the children’s attempts to cope with the loss of Sophie Mol. As though the following brief sentence might exemplify Estha’s diminished existence, Roy observes that, “Estha occupied very little space in the world” (12). Though not re-returned by force like her brother, the harrowing death of their mother causes Rahel to respond by going away to America, where she falls in love with, marries, and divorces a man. She then attempts to eke out a living as a waitress, “[a]nd then for several years as a night clerk in a bullet-proof cabin outside Washington” (21). In these failed personal and professional endeavors, the audience perceives the inescapable feeling of despair, one that has been engendered by a violent history marked by conquest and domination.

In the first chapter, Roy draws attention to the inevitability of history on local and global levels by moving abruptly from one moment to another and complicating the narrative structure. This narrative strategy forces the audience to read with care and to consciously make connections among passages. As she notes, “In a purely practical sense it would probably be correct to say that it all began when Sophie Mol came to Ayemenem. Perhaps it’s true that things can change in a day. That a few dozen hours can affect the outcomes of whole lifetimes” (32). Although the repeated “it” in the first sentence leaves the reader wondering about her reference, Roy seems to suggest that everyday decisions can alter lives forever. But Roy does not settle for an easy explanation, when she refers to larger historical forces, even more powerful than political and religious movements: “Equally, it could be argued that [history] actually began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch Ascendancy, before Vasco da Gama arrived, before the Zamorin’s conquest of Calicut . . . It could be argued that it began long before Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into Kerala like tea from a tea bag” (33). This passage, ending with the reference to the influence and spread of Christianity suggests the irony of the characters’ lives, especially in the case of the Untouchables, whose conversion cannot free them from their position in the

caste system in turn which imposes boundaries on social and sexual relations. As we will see later on, Velutha's and Ammu's violation of the Love Laws sets in motion, or perhaps speeds up, the disintegration of the Ipe, Kochamma, and Paapen families. Besides the pervasive influence of the Caste system on a local level, economics is also a multidirectional force in the lives of these families. For example, Rahel mentions that the family business was forced to close because the Food Products Organization found its jam jelly too watered down to fulfill its requirements.

But it is not just the business that fails; it is also the members of Rahel's family that are somehow deemed inadequate, due to violent marriages, divorces, and unlawful relationships. Rahel searches for a satisfactory explanation regarding her family's decline which she sees as symptomatic of a deeper problem: "[T]his difficulty that their family had with classification ran much deeper than the jam jelly question . . . They all broke the rules. They all crossed forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down, who should be loved and how. And how much. The laws that make grandmothers grandmothers, uncles uncles, mothers mothers, cousins cousins, jam jam, jelly jelly" (31). *Paradise Pickles & Preserves* brings to the surface the family's other difficulties: namely, Pappachi's brutality and Chacko's inept handling of the business. In Rahel's search for an explanation, she shows how the public and private are closely linked, because it is in the commercial public space of the business that class, gender, and politics intersect in unsettling ways. This tragic intersection is most evident in Ammu and Velutha's illicit affair, as a result of which they both become criminals. An example of how these characters are transformed by the state occurs soon after Sophie Mol's body is found floating in the river. In the exchange between Inspector Thomas Mayhew and Ammu, he speaks the "coarse Kottayam dialect of Malayalam" (perhaps assuming that she cannot speak English and is uneducated), treats Ammu like an object by focusing on and tapping her breasts with his baton (9), despite what the slogan hanging on the wall in his office proclaims: **"Politeness. Obedience. Loyalty. Intelligence. Courtesy. Efficiency"** (10). While the slogan seems to suggest that the police, as enforcers of the state's regulations, are committed to maintaining order and the best interests of the public, this exchange reveals how such order is brutally imposed through arrogance and disrespect. If we return to Lisa Duggan's assertions about the close relationship between neoliberalism and (British) imperialism, its historical ancestor, we can begin to recognize how state agencies seemingly established for the common good in fact use rhetoric to persuade citizens of the validity of their actions. The exchange between Ammu and Mayhew also reveals the conflicted relationship between law enforcement and Indian society because he, himself, is a product of the colonizers. More specifically, Mayhew embodies the legal framework, left by the British colonizers, in a local community whose identity is still being defined by the effects of globalization. In a later chapter, we are offered a fuller description of

Mayhew's perspective on the caste system, while taking Baby Kochamma's statement concerning Velutha's alleged threats: "'You people,' [Inspector Mayhew] said, 'first you spoil these people, carry them about on your head like trophies, then when they misbehave you come running to us for help'" (247). As someone who enforces the laws of the state, Mayhew's pragmatic approach is evident: Baby Kochamma's family should not have engaged with the Paravans. In Mayhew's perspective, mixing the social classes without consulting with the police brings about chaos and destruction of the social order. In a fuller account of Velutha's capture, torture, and death at the hands of Mayhew and his deputies, towards the end of the book, Roy aptly contrasts the precision of the police against that of the religious fanatics and invading forces: "Unlike the custom of rampaging religious mobs or conquering armies running riot, that morning in the Heart of Darkness the posse of Touchable Policemen acted with economy, not frenzy. Efficiency, not anarchy. Responsibility, not hysteria" (293). As an arm of the state, the police can use brutal force to uphold the Indian caste system and to appease the factory workers who had begun to protest the high wages Velutha, a Paravan, receives.

Turning to a discussion of the consequences of British Imperialism on the culture of globalization which Roy's novel addresses, it is useful to consider how policy decisions that shape historical events globally similarly affect lives at the local level. The lasting effects of British colonialist policies permeate Roy's second chapter, "Pappachi's Moth." According to Roy, it was because of the British occupiers in Malabar that Velutha's status as an Untouchable would be altered, as his grandfather became an Anglican to avoid being labeled as an Untouchable. Even though people like Velutha's grandfather, known as the "Rice Christians," received a small compensation, "It didn't take them long to realize that they had jumped from the frying pan into the fire" (71). Perhaps these new converts to Christianity hadn't understand the profit motives of the British colonizers or their intention to separate them from the rest of Indian society, but Roy's comparison makes clear that their fate had not improved. Once India gained sovereignty, there were further financial consequences for the converts: "After Independence they found they were not entitled to any government benefits like job reservations or bank loans at low interest rates, because *officially, on paper*, they were Christians, and therefore casteless. It was a little like having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse, not being allowed to leave footprints at all" (71, *emphasis added*). These new Christians' loss of geographic identity, erased from official British records, has left them unable to petition the state for recognition and protection. In *Networking Arguments*, Rebecca Dingo argues that one way to analyze how the language in policy documents affects the rhetoric of globalization involves seeing how this language circulates at the local level. Dingo argues: "To network arguments, feminist rhetoricians must not only consider the places where rhetorics travel and are deployed but also the external social, economic, and political

influences that serve as exigencies for particular policy arguments about women” (17). Dingo’s explanation regarding the ways in which local and global policies are enacted offers a productive framework for analyzing the lasting effects of British rule on the citizens of Ayemenem. Considering Dingo’s claim that policy documents suggest ways in which rhetoric circulates from one nation to another, Roy’s observations about the new Christians points to the challenges of using written documents to enact economic changes within the social framework. Roy suggests that Velutha’s forbearers who had become Rice Christians to escape their identity as Untouchables, no longer existed in their own country. If we consider the transformation of the new Christians after India’s independence as an example of the power of language to alter realities, we can begin to see how histories and identities are erased.

Arundhati Roy’s novel implicitly engages in a conversation about the effects unequal power relationships, not only at the international level, but also at the local level. In other words, the influence of British colonialism, especially personified in Ammu and Chacko’s now-deceased father, in the second chapter, leads to a discussion about the family’s roots. In “Pappachi’s Moth,” Ammu identifies her father as “. . . an incurable British CCP which was short for *chhi-chhi poach* and in Hindi meant ‘shit-wiper’” (50, emphasis in original). Ammu’s observation, perhaps, is a reference to the anger she feels because of her father’s unwillingness to accept that her ex-husband’s boss, Hollick, was even capable of contemplating sexual interest in someone else’s wife: “Pappachi would not believe her story—not because he thought well of her husband, but simply because he didn’t believe that an Englishman, *any* Englishman would covet another man’s wife” (42, emphasis in original). Pappachi’s reverence for British morality, expressed in religious terms by referring to one of the Ten Commandments, forecloses alternative testimonials from his own daughter and his son-in-law. By denying Ammu’s report, Pappachi conveys the message that his perspective of the British male colonizer as exemplary is unquestionable. However, as Roy also points out, “Already there were a number of ragged, lightskinned children on the estate that Hollick had bequeathed on tea-pickers whom he fancied. This was his first incursion into management circles” (41), which is another example of how British colonizers like Hollick, objectify and exoticize the “other.” The implication is that Ammu’s beauty and fecundity can be used to secure her husband’s precarious job prospects. Ammu’s position is further compromised because of her gender: “Though Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chacko, whenever he was dealing with food inspectors or sanitary engineers, he always referred to it as *my* [italics in original] Factory, *my* pineapples, *my* pickles. Legally this was the case, because Ammu, as a daughter had no claim to the property” (56). Chacko’s public language, intended for government authorities, shows how descriptions of reality can be altered to fit the intended audience’s needs.

If we consider Dingo's treatment of international policies and their impact on gender, nationality, and class as part of a rhetorical network, we can see that Pappachi's beliefs about the British deeply influence how he sees the women in his own family, as subservient and incapable of doing work that matters. An example of how he denigrates his wife's potential is in the following lines: "Pappachi would not help [Mammachi] with the pickle-making because he did not consider pickle-making a suitable job for a high-ranking ex-Government official. He had always been a jealous man, so he greatly resented the attention his wife was suddenly getting" (46). Roy's suggestion that Pappachi is obsessed with status, as a result of his long-held government job during the British colonial period, implies that he has been thoroughly acculturated to validate and believe in the legitimacy offered by the bureaucracy. While Pappachi does not emerge as a sympathetic character, Roy's portrayal of his professional failures offers another layer to the ways in which British colonialism worked at the political level: "[He] had been an Imperial Entomologist at the Pusa Institute. After Independence, when the British left, his designation was changed from Imperial Entomologist to Joint Director, Entomology. . . His life's greatest setback was not having had the moth that *he* had discovered named after him" (47-48, emphasis in original). Pappachi's transition from "Imperial Entomologist" to "Joint Director," occurring as a result of political events on a "macro" level, offers another example of Dingo's analysis of language changing at the local level. Dingo's suggestions about recognizing the connections between the local and the global and how they change, based on rhetorical occasions, offers a deeper understanding of Pappachi's motivation for expending great energy in order to maintain a positive image in the community. According to Roy, "He worked hard on his public profile as a sophisticated, generous, moral man. But alone with his wife and children he turned into a monstrous, suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning. They were beaten, humiliated and then made to suffer the envy of friends and relations for having such a wonderful husband and father" (173). Pappachi upholds the rules of the British colonialists by presenting himself as a respectable figure in public; but he asserts his violent ways in private, because he understands that maintaining the public and private separate is in his best interest. After retiring from his job and moving from Delhi to Ayemenem, Pappachi becomes especially violent when Mammachi establishes her new business enterprise: "He slouched about the compound in his immaculately tailored suits . . . watching Mammachi supervise the buying, the weighing, the salting and drying of limes and tender mangoes. Every night he beat her with a brass flower vase. The beatings weren't new. What was new was only the frequency with which they took place" (47). Pappachi's constant surveillance and physical violence against Mammachi suggest that the unequal power relationship permeates the public and private spaces they inhabit.

However, in that same conversation with Ammu, Chacko calls their father an “*Anglophile*” (50, emphasis in original), the connotations of which are a bit more palatable than “shit-wiper.” Perhaps Chacko quibbles about the word choice because he does not want to offend his audience, Estha and Rahel. In any event, Chacko’s disagreement with Ammu shows how one’s perspective changes by shifting focus from the individual to the communal level, characterized by familial bonds. However, Chacko is also concerned to show the deeply-historical roots of the family: “They were a *family* of Anglophiles. Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away. He explained to them that history was like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside” (51, emphasis in original). Even though he or she cannot reclaim and make sense of the past, each member of the family is somehow implicated in it. Both in the physical arrangement of the narrative, beginning with the first chapter, and then throughout the book, Roy offers brief descriptions of the distant past that are interspersed with later historical developments. Chacko’s statement presciently suggests that there is no possibility of coming to terms with Sophie Mol’s death: “It would have helped if they could have made that crossing. If only they could have worn, even temporarily, the tragic hood of victimhood. Then they would have been able to put a face on it, and conjure up fury at what had happened. Or seek redress. And eventually, perhaps, exorcise the memories that haunted them” (182). But, in addition to Sophie Mol’s death, Rahel and Estha’s are captive witnesses to India’s violent colonialist remnants in the enactment of Velutha’s execution.

Despite the twins’ personal understanding of these tragedies, the official narrative surrounding Sophie Mol’s drowning and Velutha’s murder points to profound ways in which the circulation of ideas in public documents changes in relation to time and context. For example, the newspapers report on the events in order to inform their audiences. Roy notes, “It had been in the papers. The news of Sophie Mol’s death, of the police ‘Encounter’ with a Paravan charged with kidnapping and murder. Of the subsequent Communist Party siege of Paradise Pickles & Preserves, led by Ayemenem’s own Crusader for Justice and Spokesman of the Oppressed” (286). The newspaper stories circulating around the death of Sophie Mol offer different versions of how she died and, while none of these represents a truthful account, the reader can see that they are produced for public consumption. More than the newspaper stories themselves, however, it is the people, in positions of power—with something to lose—who create their own reality of what happened. Specifically, Roy discusses the important role that Baby Kochamma plays in reconstructing and explaining the interactions between her divorced niece and the Paravan working in the factory: “[She] misrepresented the relationship between Ammu and Velutha, not for Ammu’s sake, but to contain the scandal and salvage the

family reputation in Inspector Thomas Mathew's eyes" (245). Just as Pappachi did not seem to care about Ammu's image when his daughter was still married, Baby Kochamma does not intend to save her reputation as a divorced woman, either. Furthermore, Baby Kochamma realizes that she is appealing for help to the state-sanctioned law enforcement agency, and so she becomes convinced of her story. Roy describes how, in retelling the encounter with her and Mammachi, Baby Kochamma unintentionally conflates Velutha's behavior with that of the man who had denigrated her at the march: "She described the sneering fury in his face. The brassy intolerance in his voice that had so frightened her. That made her sure that his dismissal and the children's disappearance were not, could not possibly be, unconnected" (247). Roy suggests that Baby Kochamma eloquently makes her case to the police inspector, so that there are no doubts about the horrors that could be visited by a sex-crazed Paravan on three women alone in a house" (247). So as to create the feeling of complete reliance on Roy, for the truth of what happened in the encounter between Velutha and the two women and how it is then transformed for Baby Kochamma's purposes, the reader must pay close attention to the arrangement of the text. Observing that "'[w]e'll see about that,' [became] enhanced and embroidered into threats of murder and abduction," Roy suggests that reality can be altered to fit the needs of the powerful and that the trajectory of Velutha's words from the heated exchange to the police interview is finally lost without the author's omniscience (269).

In Dingo's analysis of how public policy statements shape transnational rhetoric, she acknowledges the inherent challenges in determining how exactly these statements originate and change, as a consequence of "*transcoding*" (38, emphasis in original). We might extend her concerns about these imperceptible but crucial shifts to consider how they are insinuated in a private conversation. In Chacko's discussion with Comrade Pillai, in which they negotiate the cost of a new advertisement for the family business, the reader learns that: "[Chacko] had only intended to find out what was happening, where things stood [regarding the recent complaints from the factory workers]. He had expected to encounter antagonism, even confrontation, and instead was being offered sly, misguided collusion" (Roy 262). Comrade Pillai's accusation of Velutha, intended to plant suspicion in Chacko's mind about the Paravan's character, suggests that there is a disconnect between what the Marxist leader says in a private conversation and what he enunciates in his public speeches. Roy does not resolve the question about his complicity in Velutha's death: "Nobody ever learned the precise nature of the role that Comrade Pillai played in the events that followed. Even Chacko—who knew that the fervent, high-pitched speeches about Rights of Untouchables ('Caste is Class, comrades') delivered by Comrade Pillai during the Marxist Party siege of Paradise Pickles were pharisaic—never learned the whole story" (266). In the context of Roy's story, this instance of fragmented knowledge about the circumstances of Sophie Mol's death suggests that reality is constructed by those in

power. More generally, the implication is that public documents are changed to fit the local context.

After taking a look at the close linkages between international and local policies in Ayemenem in Roy's novel, I now turn to a consideration of how the narrative exposes the false sense of connectedness afforded by technology, another feature of the culture of globalization. Yet, alongside the widespread circulation of technology, the pervasiveness of decay and poverty are also revealed. More than twenty years after Rahel comes back to visit her relatives, Roy offers a glimpse of the decline of the Kochamma family, in saying that "[f]ilth had laid siege to the Ayemenem House like a medieval army advancing on an enemy castle. It enclosed every crevice and clung to the windowpanes" (84). In addition to the simile comparing the accumulation of decay to an invading army from the Middle Ages, Roy personifies dirt and decay which have replaced cleanliness and attentiveness in the Kochamma household. In this and subsequent chapters, there are glimpses of Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria engrossed in another passive hobby made possible by globalization, as they spend hours ingesting American television programs like *The Best of Donahue*. Perhaps television, which figures prominently in the decaying home of Baby Kochamma, does suggest a form of Dean's communicative capitalism, in Roy's observation that "[i]n an unconscious gesture of television-enforced democracy, mistress and servant both scrabbled unseeingly in the same bowl of nuts" (84-85). The unequal power relationship between Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria is displaced by the powerful images on the television set and thus suggests ways in which the mistress and the servant become voyeurs and consumers. Jody Dean, in *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies*, contends that "[c]ommunicative capitalism is a political-economic formation in which there is talk without response, in which the very practices associated with governance by the people consolidate and support the most brutal inequities of corporate-controlled capitalism" (24). Dean's definition of communicative capitalism suggests that vicarious participation in online communities creates the impression that people are fully engaged in critical political discussions. Watching television enables Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria to take part in the culture of globalization. For example, Roy describes how Baby Kochamma's addictive consumption of television images makes her anxious about losing her possessions: "Her old fears of the Revolution and the Marxist-Leninist menace had been rekindled by new television worries about the growing numbers of desperate and dispossessed people. She viewed ethnic cleansing, famine and genocide as direct threats to her furniture" (28-29). Dean contends that newer online technologies afforded by the growth of the Internet enable the transformation of political action: "Networked communication and information technologies are exquisite media for capturing and reformatting political energies. They turn efforts at political engagement into contributions to the circulation of content, reinforcing the hold of neoliberalism's technological

infrastructure” (31-32). Perhaps it is also noteworthy that, as Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria take part in the consumption, they no longer attend to products from an earlier time. For example, Pappachi’s Plymouth is steadily falling apart: “With every monsoon, the old car settled more firmly into the ground . . . With no intention of ever getting up. Grass grew around its flat tires. The PARADISE PICKLES & PRESERVES signboard rotted and fell inward like a collapsed crown” (Roy 281). Dean’s discussion of the ways in which people’s responses to advertisements in the Internet make them feel as though their opinions count relates to Baby Kochamma’s attempts at communication with coupons. As Roy observes, Baby Kochamma uses clichéd descriptions: “*Tangy Taste, Fresh Breath*. She had learned the smart, snappy language of television commercials” (281, emphasis in original). Baby Kochamma’s appropriation of the rhetoric used to advertise Listerine to describe how she feels after using the mouth-wash refers to the enjoyment that consumers are compelled to feel in this age of neoliberalism. As Dean observes, “Neoliberal subjects are expected to, enjoined to, have a good time, have it all, be happy, fit, and fulfilled” (67). In Baby Kochamma’s case, though, her sense of enjoyment from amassing prizes and diaries in her later years hides an uncomfortable reminder of her role in the events that followed Sophie Mol’s death.

Roy’s novel, depicting the effects of British imperialism and globalization, ultimately leaves readers with a lasting reminder of the ways in which powerful members of the community not only use the stranger or the “other” to uphold the social order, but also how agents of the state are deployed to eliminate the stranger once he or she is perceived as a threat to the common good. Rahel and Estha both have grown up listening to Mammachi, their maternal grandmother, talking about the Untouchables’ poverty and lack of agency. According to Roy, Mammachi remembers how Velutha’s father, Vellya Paapen, had been humiliated as a result of his status: “[S]he could remember a time, in her girlhood when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan’s footprint” (71). As a result of their mistreatment by the community, it is not difficult to see why Velutha’s predecessors converted to Christianity when the British occupiers offered what seemed like an opportunity to finally attain recognition, through sustenance. Sara Ahmed, in *Strange Encounters*, analyzes how communities are made more powerful when members recognize that the strangers among them are different. Through her analysis of the National Neighborhood Watch Association in the U.K., working together with law enforcement agencies, Ahmed suggests that the idea of the secure neighborhood exists alongside the amorphous image of the stranger (29). In Ahmed’s view, the stranger threatens the community’s security because he or she does not have a valid reason for engaging with those who inhabit the safe space represented by the location: “Strangers are hence recognisable precisely insofar as they

do not enter into exchanges of capital that transforms spaces into places. Strangers are constructed as an illegitimate presence in the neighborhood; they have no purpose, and hence they must be suspect” (31, emphasis in original). If we consider how Ahmed’s definition of the stranger or other works in Roy’s narrative, we can begin to see that not only the caste system but also the establishment of the British occupiers’ Christian churches render the Paravans and other Untouchables powerless. Under both social systems, Paravans are prohibited from earning a livelihood and entering into relationships with the Brahmins and Syrian Christians. Moreover, as Roy explains, these outcasts must erase traces of their existence, in case people like Mammachi should become contaminated by their presence. Despite the fact that Velutha and his father are permitted to work for the Kochamma family, throughout the novel there is a latent suspicion about their identity; and neither can escape the punishment of his status as a Paravan, especially at a moment when the family for whom each has worked many years feels threatened. This threat to the order of the caste system becomes a reality as a result of Velutha and Ammu’s illicit affair; and Vellya Paapen, who has lived through the brutality of the Caste system, knows that they will meet a violent end. Roy’s description of what Mammachi imagines must have occurred between her daughter and the factory worker gives the reader a sense of her disgust: “A Paravan’s coarse black hand on her daughter’s breast. His mouth on hers. His black hips jerking between her parted legs. The sound of their breathing. His particular Paravan smell. *Like animals*” (244, emphasis in original). Whereas she feels justified in arranging for Chacko to take care of his needs behind closed doors, Mammachi’s disproportionate anger upon hearing Vellya’s confession reveals not just her disgust, but also her anxiety about her family’s status in the community. According to Roy, “For generations to come, *forever* now, people would point at them at weddings and funerals. At baptisms and birthday parties. They’d nudge and whisper. It was all finished now” (244, emphasis in original). While Mammachi is repulsed by what she characterizes as Velutha’s predatory behavior, she is thrown into despair by Ammu’s recklessness.

While Mammachi may not be able to salvage her family’s reputation, dependent as it is on the community for its validation, the local government must intervene to punish the stranger who threatens the social order. Roy’s description of Velutha’s demise at the hands of the police vividly captures what she sees as “[m]an’s subliminal urge to destroy what he could neither subdue nor deify” (292). In this sense, Roy’s observation about the vigor with which the authorities carry out Velutha’s execution implies that strangers who threaten the domestic space of the home are transformed into criminals. By demonstrating how language is used to depict the stranger as a threat to the individual, Ahmed claims that “[t]he discourse of stranger danger involves *a refusal to recognize how violence is structured by, and legitimated through, the formation of home and community as such*” (36, emphasis in original). Ahmed seems to

suggest that violence is itself generated by the social order. In Roy's novel, we see how Inspector Mayhew and his officers use slogans to justify their brutality against those who are perceived as transgressors of the community's values. In this way, the slogans, interrogations, and police reports are used to protect the public interest, while the alleged criminal, Velutha, is no longer seen as an individual with a history. Jennifer Wingard in *Branded Bodies, Rhetoric, and the Neoliberal Nation-State* asserts that bodies are marked, used and disposed of, to fulfill economic objectives. It is not the bodies themselves that carry meaning, however; it is the category in which they are located that matters. As she explains, "When bodies are branded, people become no more than cogs in corporate or political machines, just like objects. No longer do bodies carry material identities nor do they carry the potential for citizenship" (12). The culture of globalization, in the widespread production of brands, works to support the state's neoliberal objectives. People are labeled and categorized which elicits emotional responses in the intended audience: "[Branding] works because it makes people who see themselves as citizens 'feel' better, less confused, more at home in the world" (14). In Roy's novel, Ammu occupies a liminal space, because of her status as a divorced mother: "They sensed somehow that she lived in the penumbral shadows between two worlds, just beyond the grasp of their power. That a woman that they had already damned, now had little left to lose, and could therefore be dangerous" (44). The citizens of Ayemenem categorize her as uncontrollable, as someone who does not fit into their society. Yet it is finally the law enforcement agency, representing the interests of the state that categorizes her as a *veshya* and her children as illegitimate. On the night that Ammu dies, she awakens from a nightmare in which she is assaulted by the police who threaten to cut off her hair as a sign of how she has tarnished her family's image: "They did that in Kottayam to prostitutes whom they'd caught in the bazaar—branded them so that everybody would know them for what they were. Veshyas. So that new policemen on the beat would have no trouble identifying whom to harass. Ammu always noticed them in the market, the women with vacant eyes and forcibly shaved heads" (154). Ammu's haunting description of what happens to these women suggests that such public branding is intended for certain audiences, so as to elicit their disapproval and to remind them of the state's duty to control them. This passage is striking for the ways in which physical abuse causes these women to lose their sense of self.

In her discussion of how the bodies of Jose Padilla, a U.S. citizen accused of terrorist connections, and Osama bin Laden, the deceased leader of Al-Qaeda, are branded as threats to American security, Wingard contends that "[i]nstead of merely becoming representations of what we must contain or expel, they become casualties of the nation-state's fear of its own loss of power" (98). By documenting the extensive torture Padilla undergoes after detention, Wingard suggests that the state uses his brand to unify the citizenry. While Padilla is stripped of

his identity, his body elicits sustained emotional responses from the audience. In Roy's narrative, the most apparent branding occurs in the brutal beating and death of Velutha: "If they hurt Velutha more than they intended to, it was only because any kinship, any connection between themselves and him, any implication that if nothing else, at least biologically, he was a fellow creature—had been severed long ago. They were not arresting a man, they were exorcising fear" (293). The community's sense of safety has been violated, and Velutha's body, which is no longer recognized as part of humanity and no longer identified with Velutha as a person, serves the police officers' purpose in restoring order.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* explores the subtle ways in which the culture of globalization permeates and is used to maintain the traces of British colonialism, which are embodied not only in state agents, but also among powerful members of the community. Despite India's sovereignty, remnants of the colonial past haunt the landscape and the people of Ayemenem. More particularly, the narrative offers insights into the global and local relationships between international institutions and their impact on local organizations. In its portrayal of state-sanctioned violence, racism, and hatred, projected onto the bodies of Ammu, her children, and Velutha, Roy's novel shows that neoliberal interests work to eliminate people's agency.

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