

Abstract

Arundhati Roy's prestigious first novel (and maybe the only novel), *The God of Small Things*, has already come out for eight years. It contains such exuberance of topics, such as the inequality towards the untouchables, the physical and mental violence abuse upon woman, or the marginalization of the local culture under the influences of globalization, that it has earned the attention of many researchers from different fields even till now. Some of researchers consider the text as a fiction which presents postcolonial India, others find the book as a perfect demonstration of how proper English is transformed into a more experimental form; still others treat the novel as an assertion of female rights.

In this thesis, I more or less touch all of the above topics, and investigate them in the light of "the model of purity," the system which only recognizes the approved essence and wipes off anything that is not. Thus in this thesis the term purity refers to concepts of the hygienic purity, ritual purity, and also the purity in the ethnic and cultural aspect. I will give background knowledge to the book in Chapter One. Then, in Chapter Two I declare Roy's intention to mime the *grand narrative* in her novel, and how Roy's writing lays bare the fragility of The Great Stories and how they work to ensure the invisibility of the minor subjects. In Chapter Three, I extend my discussion to the character Velutha. Firstly I explain and interpret his essence by his untouchable background; then I will analyze how and why his impure essence makes him a victim of others' irrational malice. In Chapter Four, I also apply the opposition of purity and impurity to read the situation of the female characters in the novel. Like Velutha, the heroines Rahel and Ammu are also under surveillance of the purity code. The criterion of purity dictates not only the context of decent womanhood but also motherhood. The female protagonists are thus caught in the inescapable network of

purity. Finally, I will have a retrospective look on my thesis in Chapter Five. Apart from this, I will have a brief discussion about the social reality reflected in Roy's text as this issue once brought about controversy. This small debate will serve as my finale.