

The Role of Implied Author in Postcolonial Texts: A Study in the God of Small Things

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Abstract

*Implied author as an integral part of narrative structure maintains his presence throughout the text. For an author to be implied means that his authorial presence in the text is different from the presence of the narrator and the real author. The purpose of this research work is to explore the reasons as to what makes Roy as the writer of *The God of Small Things* implicit in her critique of political and social issues happening in India. This is a qualitative research. While using unit analysis method, well-marked passages have been highlighted from the text. These passages from the text have been matched with the interviews and the books on political and social issues by the same author, Arundhati Roy, by employing intertextuality as a research tool. It has been concluded that the concept of implied author is mostly used by postcolonial writers, writers of women's studies and the writers of diaspora studies so as to provide an implicit criticism on the society.*

Keywords: *Implied Author, Implied Criticism, Postcolonial Narratology, Postcoloniality.*

Introduction

In literary studies Implied author is an authorial character distinct from the real author and the narrator in a text. This term was first coined by Wayne C. Booth in 1961 in 'The Rhetoric of Fiction'. In the depiction of any narrative the author employs different techniques, such as First person narrative, Third person narrative, Omniscient narrative, including change of points of view. In any narrative, however, the author might claim for objectivity, it is impossible for a writer according to Booth (1961) to hide his intentions. The concept of Implied Author emerged with the 'death of the author' as proposed by some theorists such as Foucault and Barthes's assassination attack on the authors (Booth, 2005). And in reply to this claim for objectivity, Booth suggested the concept of Implied Author which means that a silent presence of the author is always there in the text. How can, according to Booth, an author remain objective regarding his work as we read as a reader. Booth (1961) further elaborates the concepts in suggesting that for some novelists, being implied means rediscovering or creating themselves. It may be called implied author, 'official scribe' or the author's other self as proposed by Booth (1961). Implied authors are present in postcolonial texts, the texts from migrant literature or diaspora literature, or literature from marginalized, colonized people or from minority communities.

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy (1997) is also a book from a writer who is herself a Syrian Christian minority in India. *The God of Small Things* has been set in Indian Kerala, the traditional place, the author of the novel herself belongs to. The place is a coastal region, connecting the area to different places

around the Subcontinent including the imperialist forces invading from West and North. It had had great impact on the social milieu of India. Hinduism was already a dominant religion of the region. In 52 AD Syrian Christian also entered the region, especially Kerala due to its conducive geography. Therefore, the region absorbed different influences including caste system from the Arians and class and gender from the age long traditional system. In this social milieu, as a writer of minority and migrancy, Roy is critical of age long traditions in India's social setting. She raises her voice against social oppression, class, caste and gender discrimination which results in social injustices. The political career of Roy herself suggests that she is against these social discriminations. It is perhaps this milieu which compels a writer not to remain aloof from a creative effort of her own. For a writer, such as Roy or Salman Rushdie, to refer to another writer of the category, it is impossible to remain objective in the narrative as some literary scholars of objectivity such as Barthes and Foucault theorize.

While going through the text of *The God of Small Things*, there come various situations in the narrative in which the text is ideologically charged, the beliefs, Roy professes in her personal life. Ideologically and stylistically one can deconstruct the text through which one can establish the fact that Roy herself is speaking implicitly in the narrator's place, such as the situation of Marxism in Kerala, women's marginalized status and the lower status of Untouchables, to mention a few. It is in this context that the objectives of the study need to be highlighted.

Objectives of the Study

- By undertaking the research on the concept of Implied Author with reference to *TGST*, the objective of this research work is to highlight the point that postcolonial writers are implied in their criticism of their society. By employing the technique of masking and using Implied Author, they mask their intentions although the authors' presence can be felt throughout their narratives.
- By conducting the research on *TGST*, main objective of the study is to relate narrator's view in the text with the real author, Arundhati Roy and to show that the views expressed by the narrator are same as expressed by Roy in her nonfiction work such as her personal interviews and her political work such as *War Talk* published in 2003.

Therefore, in the light of above mentioned objectives, the question arises as to why postcolonial writers are implied. This research work aims to study as to why Roy is implied on several occasions in the narrative, *The God of Small Things*. To answer this question well marked passages from the text are analyzed in the light of Roy's interviews and her political and social critiques, such as her books and essays. Secondary sources have also been studied so as to provide authenticity to the implied author in the text. It has been concluded that the implied author is working throughout the text, constructing an ideology through her silent presence.

Literature Review

The concept of implied author refers to the author-image which is present in a text in different forms. This image might be present in a text ideologically, stylistically and aesthetically and the presence of the author can be found through indexical signs in the text. Every cultural product is the result of its maker, however, the concept of implied author is often the part of linguistic texts, particularly in the context of narratology. It is common with the writers to put their beliefs in their texts to realize certain possibilities which are not possible to express in real life, therefore, the implied author is more radical than the real author. The concept became popular with Booth in 1961. Many readers use it as positioned somewhere between the real author and the fictive narrator. Those adopting a critical stance on the implied author suggest it as a reader's construct therefore the indexical signs represented by the text can be decoded differently by different readers. The presence of implied author can be deconstructed from the text by the story told by author, the setting, the choice of characters or the positioning of the narrator and his/her point of view in the narrative (Schmid, 2009).

In her criticism of implied author Fludernik (2009) observes that implied author is currently famous in literary studies. The idea of 'The Death of the Author' by Ronald Barthes, does not appeal to British Cultural Studies and New Historicism. These approaches construct texts as ideologically charged discourses as against the Structuralists' approach of the author as an individual, responsible for the text. Figure of the author is also an emerging concept in the texts produced by the writers of ethnic minorities, or people who are the victims of social discrimination, e.g. writers of postcolonial text, literature of migration and women's writing.

During past few decades analyzing contextual features of a text has become prominent so as to look more closely at the sociological issues. According to Harman (2005) implied author does not appear in the text nor he has a voice in the narrative but he is an integral part of the narrative structure. He constitutes the ideology of the text. The world view emanates from the narrative which can be teased out of the text by looking closely at the word choice, humour and the manner in which the characters are depicted in the narrative.

A clear distinction between the historical writer, an implied writer and the narrator as explained by Nelles (1993) is that the historical writer writes and the historical reader reads, the implied author means and the implied reader interprets, the narrator speaks and the narratee listens, further clarifies the concept of implied author.

Booth (1961), noted 'Author's judgment is always present, always evident to anyone who knows how to look for it'. Though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear'. All narratives according to Booth convey the beliefs, norms and judgment and values what Bakhtin calls ideology. All stories, no matter how much they are neutral, depict what they communicate implicitly or explicitly the critiques on moral, political and religious issues. Booth emphasizes the role of values in the depiction of narratives although the structuralists' scientific view of analyzing the text cannot be negated, values of a text should also be taken into account. It is this reference to the author's judgment that the study of the text reveals authorial's voice.

The construction of Ideology in the narrative is also highlighted by Prince (2005) in his essay 'Postcolonial Narratology'. Regarding the status of Narratology, according to Prince, theorists have no consensus. In spite of various domains of narratology, e.g structuralist narratology, postclassical and postmodern narratology, socio or psychological narratology and even of different modules e.g. ideological, feminist and queer takes, the subject still needs theoretical stand or it should generate new proposals. Still further, as of the retarded growth of the subject, postcolonial narratology also lacks new elaborations and proposals. The reason might be that the boundaries of postcolonial is as vague as that of narratology itself. Even then the subject is quite helpful in determining the ideology or values constructed by the narratives. Postcolonial narratology is rather sensitive to the concepts such as mimicry, hybridity, fragmentation and the otherness. These boundaries expand further into postcolonial concepts such as power, class, sex and gender, including other features such as colonizing and the colonized, race and ethnicity, assimilation, and ambivalence etc. In this context *The God Small Things* represents construct ideology which is indirect critique of Roy.

While commenting on the architectonics of *The God of Small Things*, Prasad (2004) says that authorial voice is present throughout the novel. In the book Roy touches on a variety of social and political themes, sometimes commenting explicitly sometimes implicitly, e.g. class and caste system in India, Communism in Kerala, gender issues etc. This book, *Global Dissent: Essays on Arundhati Roy* is a commentary on Roy's political and social activism, the large things in the novel, such as the message of Christian missionaries, the schemes of Marxists and political parties, capitalist makeover in pickle factory. In the same book, Pravan Jani calls for serious reading of the text as according to her the third person narrative, and the implied author and the real author share opinion on the communism in India and specially in Kerala. It is this point in the novel where many critics point out the convergence of opinion of the narrator, the implied author and the real author.

Methodology

The implied author of various works by a single author shows certain common features and therefore constitute *oeuvre* author, a term used by Booth which refers to a career author' (Schmid, 2009). While using the idea of implied author, I have employed intertextuality as a research tool i.e. 'the effective presence of text A within text B', Genette as mentioned in Schmitz (2008, p. 81), to compare *The God of Small Things* with the other works by Arundhati Roy such as her personal interviews and her nonfiction political works. By studying both her nonfiction works and the fictive work thematically, for the present study *TGST* I have tried to extract the presence of real author. Ideologically, the beliefs she expresses in her critique of *The God of Small Things* are compared with her nonfiction work such as the views she has expressed in her political book *War Talk*, a collection of political essays published in 2003.

Analysis and Discussion

The masking for an implied author becomes necessary when the real author has to hide his own self in order to avoid criticism from the society. According to Booth (1961) the lives would be intolerable if every time we give vent to our sincere thoughts. We as human being erase our sincere selves when we do not like it or when it is inappropriate for the moment to express ourselves sincerely. While reading *The God of Small Things*, there come various occasions in the novel where the author is implied. The real author comes into the narrative and becomes the implied author, replacing the narrator. The story is being narrated by an omniscient narrator who unfolds the story through different points of view. While commenting on Kerala's communism the narrator propounds as such:

Marxism was a simple substitute for Christianity. Replace God with Marx, Satan with the bourgeoisie, Heaven with a classless society, the Church with the Party, and the form and the purpose of the journey remained similar. An obstacle race with a price at the end. Whereas the Hindu mind had to make more complex adjustment (p. 66).

The above text shows Roy as an artist is implied. While commenting implicitly on the complexity of Hinduism such as its belief system and the hierarchies of caste it sanctions she is silent; silent as which adjustments Hinduism has to make. On the contrary, the belief system of Christianity is not that much complex. However, the difficulty in analyzing the complex situation as proposed above by the narrator is that the text being investigated and studied is highly charged with condensed meanings of Marxism. It presents political, economic and social interpretation of Marxism. It simultaneously presents a critique on the negative impact which globalization and capitalism have brought forth for the Indian society. This multiple interpretation of Marxism while reading the text closely poses challenges to the reader as well as to the researcher to locate the author's position. How can one justify Roy's position as Marxist in the novel which is anti Marxist in its voice?. However, what can be argued in defense of this paradox is that Roy's antagonism against Marxism is not toward the Marxism as proposed by Karl Marx and Engels but the Indian Marxism which has been proposed by Congress Socialists party, in 1934. Roy is both bitter against the Indian caste system and the role played by Congress Socialists Party to cover the weaknesses of Indian traditions under the guise of Marxism. Congress Socialists Party intentionally avoided such open questions as proposed by the minorities of India.

The Party without addressing the inequalities of the society went on to propagate egalitarianism in the name of Marxism. Marxism was a trendy brand for the Party to win sympathies of the people without addressing their real problems. In fact, as the narrator in the novel, Rahel, proposes that communism came into the Indian state of Kerala secretly or cleverly, ironically proposing Marxism as political system to redress inequalities without questioning the age long caste oppression. It transformed into new version of Marxism with its tilt towards Eastern Marxism. It only retained the inner core values of Hinduism while propagating and advertising Marxism for its democratic values (Tickell, 2007, p. 31). Roy's critique is against the flaws of Indian Marxism which could never challenge the plight of the oppressed whether the Untouchables, the

Indian minority or the Indian women. Therefore, Roy is obsessed with this hypocrisy in *The God of Small Things*.

While referring to Velutha's death Rahel, the narrator of the novel satirizes Comrade Pillai's hypocritical attitude and says that Pillai lived in a society where one's death could be more profitable than his life would be. The fact is that Comrade Pillai could have protected Velutha as a party card holder. Same is observed by Tickell (2007). It is in this line of thought that Roy is critical of Marxism in India and especially in Kerala where Pseudo-Marxist leaders have remained silent on class and caste issues.

Such are the points of reference in *TGST* where IA makes her presence felt by the implied reader. According to Booth it is impossible for a postcolonial writer to remain objectively insensitive to the happening in the narrative. While investigating *TGST* one feels a silent presence of IA in the narrative. In this context, Friedman (2005) observes *TGST* as a political allegory. The space which Friedman refers to in the text, in fact, establishes the border spaces of class, caste and gender and these spaces are established by the colonial, postcolonial and postmodern forces in *The God of Small Things*. According to her, like *Midnight's Children*, Roy's novel is also a political allegory depicting Indian nation state from within, the power relations of gender and caste which are constructed in the postcolonial space. She emphasizes the need to interrogate social inequities. What connects the line between the border and space as proposed by Friedman is that these are the dilemmas of colonial and postcolonial phenomenon and Indian nation-state has to solve the issues to become a free nation. This spatial narrative is not devoid of an implied author as Booth tries to resurrect the implied author in 'The Resurrection of the Implied Author: Why Bother?' According to Booth (1961) this is not possible to eliminate the real author from the text in the form of implied author. Even the deference of expressed intentions of the real author and the IA is more relevant to the study and analysis of IA. No work of art can be completely objective as some of the proponents of objectivity in art propound; the purpose of an artist is to show and not to tell. An author must kill all of authorial signs from the text and it is these signs that help disclose an implied presence of an author. One such sign is evident when we analyze *The God of Small Things* when IA criticizes the social and political inequities of Indian society. IA's silent presence is again visible in the following passage where she criticizes double standards of Marxism in Kerala:

As a reformist movement they never questioned the traditional values of a caste-ridden, extremely traditional community. The Marxist worked from within the communal divides, never challenging them, never appearing not to. They offered a cocktail revolution. A heady mix of Eastern Marxism and orthodox Hinduism, spiked with a shot of democracy (pp. 66-67).

The above text shows Roy's criticism of communist party as they maintained their hierarchy in Hindu dominant society so that lower people could not stand for their rights. In fact the Communist party in India did not challenge the traditional caste system, and continued to pay lip service to the manifesto of the party. When Velutha comes to Pillai for the help when his love affair with Ammu is revealed, Pillai refuses to help him in the pretext that Party would not support a worker. The narrator's biting criticism can safely be said to be spoken by the implied author. While using intertextuality, i.e. 'the effective presence of text A within text B', Genette as mentioned in Schmitz (2008, p81), as a research tool, this would become clearer when the text of the novel is closely compared with the views of the author in her personal interviews:

I don't see much a great difference between *The God of Small Things* and my works of nonfiction. As I keep saying fiction is truth. I think fiction is the truest thing that ever was. My whole effort now is to remove that distinction. The writer is the midwife of understanding. It is very important for me to tell politics like a story, to make it real, to draw a link between a man and his child.....that's what I want to do. *The God of Small Things* is a book where you connect the very smallest things to the very biggest: whether it is the dent that a baby spider makes on the surface of the water or the quality of the moonlight on a river or how history and politics intrude into your life, your house, your bedroom (Roy, A, personal communication, July, 16, 2007).

This is also evident from Arundhati Roy's *War Talk* (2003) wherein she dubs India as a Hindu state working under the guise of secularism. Muslims can be murdered under the benign gaze of the state, and the massacre will not be brought to justice. According to Roy India is a secular nation at the heartland, in the metropolis but a Hindu state in the peripheries. If the 'secular, green' chief minister of Madhya Pradesh and the Congress Party want to change religious fundamentalism then it should fight against communalism. In this regard Roy (2003) intensifies her criticism on Vajpayee and narrates an incident of a Muslim woman, Saeeda's killing by Hindus in following ironic words:

Last night a friend from Baroda called. Weeping. It took her fifteen minutes to tell me what the matter was. It wasn't complicated one. Only that a friend of hers, Saeeda had been caught up by a mob. Only that her stomach had been ripped open and stuffed with burning rags. Only that after she died someone carved 'OM' on her forehead...The more the two sides try and call attention to their religious differences by slaughtering each other, the less there is to distinguish them from one another (p. 17).

For Vajpayee this is Hindu retaliation. For Roy, the question is, which scripture justifies? The Hindus' or of the Muslims'? According to Roy (2003) India is a flawed democracy with religious fascism. These words of Roy as nonfiction writer of *War Talk* exactly match with the text of *The God of Small Things* when Roy criticizes India's so called democracy, 'A heady mix of Eastern Marxism and orthodox Hinduism, spiked with a shot of democracy' (p. 67).

Roy is also implied on the issues faced by Indian women. What makes Roy's implied criticism on Ammu's death important here is her unceremonious funeral. Ammu was made to leave the Ameynem House after her affair with Velutha got public and she was left to die alone. The consequences of her transgression had far reaching effects. The Syrian Christian church refused to give her Christian burial. This transgression which Ammu took up signifies several interpretations. Roy intentionally implied it. By wearing the mask of implied author, she criticizes the institution of religion, in Ammu's case, Syrian Christianity. 'The church refused to bury Ammu. On several counts' (p. 162). While mentioning several counts, Roy suddenly becomes silent. She never explains what those counts possibly are. At this point there comes the implied audience which infers the meanings of the silent message. The 'several counts' signified by this phrase are multiple transgressions on Ammu's part. Ammu, is a woman which makes her status already marginalized in the society. She belongs to the marginalized Syrian Christian community, marries a Hindu Bengali, divorces him, and on a more serious count, makes love with Velutha, transgressing the boundaries of purity, not caring whether he is a Touchable Christian or a Touchable Hindu, not caring even for his Untouchability. Roy implies that Hinduism has its strict caste system and the Syrian Christianity assimilated this feature from Hinduism hierarchical system as over the centuries Syrian Christianity assimilated itself into Indian class and caste divide. Roy as an implied author seems critical of this treatment of Ammu by Syrian Christian church. Transgressing the boundaries set by the religion is an unforgivable sin. Roy is perhaps not critical of any one religion. She implied both Hinduism and the Christianity. Ammu as a female character in the text represents multiple transgressions of which religion becomes the final and lasting judgment on her character. In fact, the 'several counts' are never explained by the narrator, the real author or in our context, the implied author, only to avoid criticism from the society as the religion as an important institution plays a significant role in the society whether the dominant religion such as Hinduism or the less dominant religion such as Syrian Christianity in India, the religion to which Ammu belongs to or the real author Arundhati Roy herself belongs to.

Another criticism which is implicit in the depiction of hypocrite Keralite Marxist society, is a Keralite woman who is a prostitute, a *veshya* in Kerala term. This kind of woman presented in the novel represents another category of women who are marked and identified as different, ugly women by the Kottayam police. The police do so by removing their hair. This helps them to mark and identify these women for harassment. As Ammu transgresses the boundaries of caste and religion, therefore, she is categorized as a *veshya*, a prostitute in Keralite society. Her children, born out of such union, of Syrian Christian mother and a Hindu father are considered as illegitimate. This is how the society and the church marks her identity. Ammu's fear of being branded as a prostitute is so intense that she identifies herself with

Kottayam prostitutes whose heads are shaved off being the prostitutes so that the police should have no difficulty whom to harass. This fear constantly appears in her dreams while she tries to escape from the Kottayam police.

Gender ideology is constructed in the depiction of the characters of Ammu and Chacko. This placement of Ammu's relation with Velutha and her comparison with a prostitute is striking. The contrast is even more striking when Ammu's character is placed parallel to Chacko's illicit relations with the women labourers in the Paradise Pickle factory. These relations of the so called Marxist, Chacko, are silently sanctioned by Mammachi under men's needs. "She was aware of his libertine relationship with the women in the factory, but had ceased to be hurt by them. When Baby Kochamma brought up the subject, Mammachi became tensed and tight lipped. 'He can't help having a Man's Needs'" (p. 168).

How Mammachi as a representative of her society, closes her eyes towards her son's sins. Her indifference towards her son's illegitimate relations shows that a man can be so powerful to deny the prohibitions of a society and stamped its authority, a woman can be so powerless that under such standards it becomes difficult for her even to save her life. Crossing the boundaries by a woman can have deadly effects. Roy, in fact, is bitter against the double standards of her society. The bitterness which another of her female characters, Baby Kochamma feels towards the society, one can say, is the reflection of Roy own bitterness as an implied author herself. The injustice which her female characters face and its depiction by the author is, in fact, her implied criticism towards the norms of Indian society. If a man can have his needs and society is silent at his unlawful means of satisfying his needs then why not a woman can have. Why not a woman can have an equal wages for a paid work while a man worker of the same factory can have. If a man can cross the boundaries of the religion and the society safely then why not a woman can. Why the society is ruthless towards a woman? That means that a woman has to live a sexually, economically and socially oppressed life. That a divorced woman requires no rehabilitation. This moral indifference in the representation of Mammachi as an elderly female character is important in the study of the implied author. These are the silent and subtle questions which Roy as an implied author seeks to explore. The questions are tossed back to the implied reader to be answered. In the depiction of this gender ideology again Roy seems implied. The presence of implied author of *TGST* can be extracted by comparing the text with Roy's nonfiction works such as her interviews. In an interview by (David Barsamian, personal communication, July 16, 2007) Roy expresses her opinion about Keralite women, who works throughout India and the world over earning money and sending home and even then for bargaining a marriage they have to give dowry. In the absence of the dowry they miss the chance of getting 'obligatory husband'.

I grew up in Ayemenem, the village in which *The God of Small Things* is set. Given the way things have turned out, it's easy for me to say that I thank God that I had none of the conditioning that a normal, middle class Indian girl would have. I had no father, no presence of this man telling us that he would look after us and beat us occasionally in exchange. I didn't have a caste, and I didn't have a class, and I had no religion, no traditional blinkers, no traditional lenses on my spectacles, which are very hard to shrug off (Roy, A, personal interview, 2004).

The analysis, while using intertextuality, of the above mentioned interviews and the primary sources show that Roy in *The God of Small Things* is implied. Her political and social interviews and the views of the narrator in the text share common thematic elements.

Conclusions

Through discussion and analysis of the concept of Implied author, implied criticism and the their role in *The God of Small Things*, it becomes clear that these concepts play an important role in postcolonial texts such as this novel by Roy. She is implicit in her social and political critique of Indian social structure. It has been concluded that postcolonial texts arise out of migrancy, diaspora, literature of migration and of minority etc. Each of these texts construct ideology, such as political, religious or gender ideology. Roy, in

fact, through her implied criticism deconstructs ideology, in *The God of Small Things*. The method she employs is of masking which is sometimes called, the author's other self or the implied author. Unlike Barthes and Foucault who maintain that good literature only shows and does not tell and that the literature should be as objective as possible, Roy as a postcolonial writer, born in multi religious, multicultural society could not remain aloof in her criticism of the society in the novel. She is silently present throughout the text as an implied author; time and again glossing the narrative with her own personal views. Research question as to why Roy is implied in *The God of Small Things* is finally answered. Postcolonial writers intentionally employ implied criticism in their narrative as to critique the social and political injustices and present the true picture to their audience.

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