

Postcolonial Places as Reconstructs of Colonial Culture: A Reading of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Abstract

Places in *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy create a symbolic image of the postcolonial Indian culture whereby the private state of postcolonial places reinscribes dominant cultural ideologies. Using Henri Lefebvre's theory of "space production" and space hegemony, the article studies the inherent colonial control over a culture rife with political tensions. Drawing on this theory, the article connects postcolonial places in the novel with ideological and physical colonial hegemonies. The article also emphasizes how places in postcolonial narratives can be manifestations of the failures of national culture and the dominance of subtle, flowing colonial hegemony. Personal, everyday life places in the novel (The Ayemenem House, The History House, and Baby Kochamma's Garden) signify the "brittle" ambivalence of the postcolonial cultural scene of Kerala. Each of these locations represents the postcolonial identity and its manifestation in domestic places in the Indian culture, as opposed to its gradually eradicated indigenous identity. Postcolonial places, it is concluded, can be read as reconstructs or revisions of colonial culture and consequently cannot harbor real postcolonial hybridity or pre-colonial authenticity. Postcolonial places can reinvent, replicate, and redesign colonial ways. It is then surmised that there are deeply rooted foreign cultural images and inscriptions in the indigenous culture, utilizing "place" as a form of "space" hegemony. These images affect—as the conclusion shows—not only postcolonial domestic places but also their "placeless" residents victimized by class prejudices, enforcing a reproduction of colonial hegemony in a culture where historical restoration has failed through hybridity.

Keywords: Postcolonial Place, Colonialist Ideology, Space Hegemony/Production, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*.

1. Introduction

Events in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) are located in Ayemenem, Kerala, in post-independence India, and cover days in the lives of characters in 1969 and

1993. Typical interpretations of the novel focus on themes like Christianity, Marxism, the caste system, and feminism since the social context of the novel depicts "the callousness of the caste system, class exploitation and the feminine woes in an age old patriarchal social framework" (Ismail, 2014: 67). Personal, everyday life places in the novel (The Ayemenem House, The History House, and Baby Kochamma's Garden) represent the "brittle" ambivalence of the postcolonial cultural scene of Kerala. Each of these locations—we argue—represents the postcolonial identity and its manifestation in domestic places in the Indian culture, as opposed to its gradually eradicated indigenous identity. Since places manifest the residue of colonial legacy, they cannot harbor real postcolonial hybridity or pre-colonial authenticity. Places create a symbolic image of the postcolonial Indian culture whereby postcolonial places embody the dominating cultural ideologies. Thus, postcolonial places act as reconstructs of colonial culture.

Øyunn Hestetun (2008) validates the notion that literary texts as "cultural representations" are "historically produced and historically contingent" (44). This implies that events, characters, and places in these texts are representations of local history and culture. In a sense, the novel's postcolonialism is a revision of an inseparable colonial past. Although the aspect of the Empire's subliminal, hegemonic control is discussed frequently in this novel, the concept of space/place, together with its significance as a trope for hegemony, has not been thoroughly investigated. The present article connects postcolonial places to the indigenous culture's domestic places to indicate the failure of the nation's hybridity. Domestic places in the novel (the Ayemenem House, the History House, and Baby Kochamma's Garden) reconstruct their indigenous roots and displace their post-independence culture only to enforce colonial ideology. The article applies Henri Lefebvre's theory of 'the production of space' to argue the subliminal control of the colonial ideology and its control over the postcolonial culture of India. The places studied in *The God of Small Things* are essential to the novel's unfolding events, including the characters residing in or contributing to the build and maintenance (or lack thereof) of these places. According to Hillenbrand (2006), "many postcolonial texts use the story of the individual to tell the story of the nation" (634). This allegorically national dimension of postcolonial texts can be applied to the treatment of postcolonial places as well since they can figure a revision and even a replication of colonial structures.

The last section of the article focuses on Velutha's (an Untouchable Paravan) displacement and gradual abolishment from the indigenous and colonial history and culture. Velutha, against all other characters in the novel, tried to find a "place" for himself, but the culture—whether indigenous or colonial—does not allow him the "space" to do so. Therefore, we take Velutha to be an instance of space hegemony. The three places mentioned before have serious ramifications on him. They are analyzed as an instance of prominent colonial hegemonic displacement. Postcolonial everyday life places portray the marginalization of the cultural Other affected by the ideological and social colonial residue implemented in postcolonial India. The article reveals the use of places and locations to ambivalently represent the gradually eradicated indigenous and postcolonial cultures. It asserts not only the failure of the indigenous culture's resistance to colonial appropriation but its seamless immersion in it, and its rejection of the resistant other. In brief, the article emphasizes how places in postcolonial narratives are productions or representations of colonial ideologies and how colonial legacies negate both genuine postcolonial hybridity and pre-colonial authenticity.

In this regard, the article uses postcolonial "places" to argue "space" hegemony without disregarding the overlap between the two concepts. Arguably, the major difference between space and place is that place is a tangible location, i.e. the setting in the novel, land, or a certain geographical location. Space, however, is more theoretical and intellectual. Space is represented in power and control over place. The intersection between place and space is manifested via power relations and the exercise of hegemony over the minds as well as the

land of the colonized. And space hegemony is what limits the options and decisions of the colonized, thus constricting a nation's cultural life and acting as an oppressive ideology.

The most significant show of dominance of the Empire or the colonial culture has been through place and space control. As Edward Said (1993) has pointed out in *Culture and Imperialism*, aside from the role of narratives and stories in colonial domination and subsequent resistance, colonialism is basically a struggle over land: "The main battle in imperialism is over land" (xii-xiii). Through place control, hegemonic representation devaluates the colonized place to its residents and reconstructs it as a place for imperial sovereign. The reclaim of the indigenous culture's postcolonial place reconstructs the culture and its identity; however, a national representation fails and is produced as colonial or imperial. This failure at nationalism is a result of the functioning of the spatial hegemony of colonial ideologies which intersperse all aspects of life.

What is significant in Henri Lefebvre's (1991) influential theory of "production of space" is the importance of hegemony in deciding the extent of social space, and consequently state and politics. Another important notion is that space is very specific; and although it can carry "a certain abstract universality" within, it remains exclusive or private depending on the society and its modes of production, which Lefebvre simulated to the Marxist modes of production. Such social space affects the actions of the society and its members' understanding of their place in the world (Lefebvre, 1991: 15). The concepts of the indigenous people's place and its colonial displacement establish the interacting connections of the colonized history and culture. The colonial separation of space and place creates the distinction of the orient and its occident as the "sense" of place permeates through the native history. The colonial process displaces this sense of place through alienating the language and history of the indigenous people, resulting in negation and distortion of the representation of place (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995: 161). The History House in the novel highlights such a distortion and its radical effects on the culture.

Postcolonial critics like Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak argue the discursive exercise and formation of power through hegemonic discourse. Lefebvre (1991), on the other hand, argues how power is exercised in and through space hegemony. He explains that in national societies and spaces the "modern state...imposes itself as the stable centre" where "an energy or force can only be identified by means of its effects in space, even if forces 'in themselves' are distinct from their effects" (Lefebvre, 1991: 22-23). Lefebvre has divided space into three interrelated major concepts: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces. They are the perceived 'physical', the conceived 'mental', and they lived 'social' in the same order (Lefebvre, 1991: 38-40). What concerns us in this article is the 'third space', i.e. the social or the lived, precisely the space of the colonized culture and how it is appropriated by the colonial ideology to maintain its dominance over such a space.

For Bhabha (2006) in "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences," cultural meanings and symbols "have no primordial unity or fixity" and are "constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation." In the thought of Bhabha, the liminal space between two cultures is a fertile site of cultural contention and production. Bhabha's argument is against cultural purity in favor of hybridity constructed in that "Third Space of enunciation." Bhabha (2006) concurs that the "productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance." However, he asserts that "by exploring this hybridity, this 'Third Space,' we may elude the politics of polarity and merge as the others of ourselves." Hence, polarity and inability to speak of ourselves and others are what we should expect if we fail to explore the hybridity of the Third Space. In Roy's (1997) novel, the colonial legacy haunting the places we consider in this article, like the History House for example, is still too heavy to allow for hybridity. And this failure of hybridity is closely attached to the failures of Indian independence / nationalism (i.e. postcoloniality) as well as colonialism since India suffers

from social ills like discrimination, class division, sexual molestation, patriarchy, and globalization effects, colonial mimicry, ...etc.

Clive Barnett (2006) explains postcolonialism as “the intimate relationship between representation in an epistemological sense and representation in a political sense, where this refers to a set of practices of delegation, substitution, and authorization” (154). This article clarifies the relationship between postcolonial places, i.e. one level of our understanding of space, and the politics dominating the culture, i.e. another level of our understanding of space. So, it deals with politicized representation and the figurative meaning of postcolonial places as reconstructs of colonial culture. In addition, it argues the effects of colonial hegemony over everyday life places; furthermore, it argues the unbreakable bond between culture, domination, and resistance in the use of places in literary works to manifest the reality of the nation and its colonial subjugation. What follows is a discussion of three major places in the narrative in terms of their representation of colonial and imperial ideologies.

2. The Ayemenem House and Colonial Ideology

The Ayemenem House is an important location of the family’s internal relations. It is the place where Rahel and her twin brother Estha return for home as the novel opens, which makes homecoming an essential theme in the novel and relates place to identity, roots, and history. It represents their cultural strife between diverse affiliations related to Marxism, Capitalism, Christianity, and caste divisions. Its eventual decline from the center of the Ipe family life to a rundown house, closed off from light, and Baby Kochamma’s negligence of her grand Garden in favor of a satellite TV establish the disregard of the native culture in favor of the colonial ideology long after reclaiming independence. Hence, place is symbolically used to figure the failures of independence and nation building against neo-colonial stratagems.

The Ayemenem House represents the notion of the aspired postcolonial culture’s utopia that the indigenous people thought would attain after independence. However, the Ipe family do not achieve their hope of an independent nation, but become a site of “exclusion and division rather than unity” (Ashcroft, 2014: 7-8). These partitions are the result of “the inheritance of colonial boundaries, colonial administrative structures, and colonial prejudices” (Ashcroft, 2014: 20). The representation of the physical decay of the Ayemenem House signifies the gradual loss of its indigenous identity ‘and that of its residents’ and its reproduction and representation of the colonial ideology.

Lefebvre (1991) asserts that space is owned and controlled through power and hegemony, and he argues the effects political status has on space and its control (48). Since the Ayemenem House is inhabited by the bourgeoisie Christian Ipe family, then through their political affiliations they aspire to own and control their own space. Lefebvre (1991) states that “the socio-political forces which occupied this space also had their administrative and military extensions...Those who produced space...were not the same people as managed it, as used it to organize social production and reproduction; it was the priests, warriors, scribes and princes who possessed what others had produced, who appropriated space and became its fully entitled owners” (48). The power controlling the Ayemenem House and its residents is colonial, and thus not only expanding its territory but also eradicating any other source of resistance. Roy (1997) asserts this notion when speaking of Velutha and his Paravan history, which can to some extent apply to the family’s hybrid characters: “It was a little like having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse, not being *allowed* to leave footprints at all” (74). Space is a social product, but it can disappear if the society failed to maintain it, which drives it to lose its entity, domination, identity, and reality (Lefebvre, 1991: 53). Space, therefore, is controlled through hegemony and appropriation perceived at large by

the colonial ideology. The Ipe family is steered by its Anglophile ways, leading to their alienation from their own history and heritage.

The “Anglophile” Ayemenem House carries its colonial ideology, which leads to condemning its contested Other. The Other to the Ipe family (a middle class Christian bourgeois) are the Paravan Castes, in particular the Untouchable Velutha, who attempts to escape his otherness as well as his enforced and confined ‘place’ by joining the communist party in Kerala. Cecilia Bonnor (2013) states that the private lives of individuals are connected to the public, political and economic realities where no one can elude history as they “constantly attempt to adjust their constructed realities to uphold the remnants of British rule and the framework of the Indian caste system” (50). Pappachi, the grandfather and owner of the Ayemenem House, is an Imperial Entomologist. He constantly keeps up appearances; “His light brown eyes were polite, yet maleficent, as though he was making an effort to be civil to the photographer while plotting to murder his wife” (Roy, 1997: 51). He dresses impeccably and drives around Ayemenem in his Plymouth; however, in the privacy of his home he beats his wife brutally (Roy, 1997: 48-50). This ambivalence of the private and public lives of the head of the Ayemenem House symbolizes the colonial ideology where its intentions contradict its actions. According to Giles, Roy allegorically depicts “the private (small) struggles of the Ipe family as a mirror of the public (large) identity struggles of the nation” (2011:2). Lefebvre (1991) states that hegemony is useful for analyzing the bourgeoisie’s actions related to space. Hegemony implies more than influence or use of violence and is carried through human mediation, especially politics. This includes its influence over institutions and ideas and therefore its total control of the political and social spaces (10).

Postcolonial critics like Frantz Fanon dispute the failure of the postcolonial middle class to represent its imperial Other (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995 : 156), which Roy verifies in the family’s inability to run a successful business or manage their personal lives for that matter. Yavini Naidoo (2015) incorporates Lefebvre’s “urban theory” in *The Production of Space* to regard social, natural, and absolute space as a “social product or construction that is not just a reflection of power relations but constitutive of a specific historical social reality and sense of everyday life.” He further indicates that social space production depends on the “dominant class’s values, and the hegemonic production of meanings that affect spatial practices and perceptions” (Naidoo, 2015:100). The Ipe family’s Anglophile attitude excludes them from their indigenous and postcolonial histories as well as their place in society and culture. Roy (1997) elaborates their cultural loss, narrating that “[t]hey 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” (52). The fact of their Anglophile state illuminates their desire to immerse themselves in the colonial culture and its rejection of them as unqualified representations of the Empire. In *Reevaluating the Postcolonial City*, Chambers and Huggan (2015) contend that:

[Postcolonial] cities reflect the double meaning inscribed within the term ‘postcolonial,’ which... registers both continuity and break, and which inhabits the rich tensions between these. Hence, the postcolonial city can alternately be seen as a dynamic site of social and cultural interaction in which colonial legacies have effectively been superseded, or as a riven site of social and cultural conflict in which colonial ways of thinking and acting are either deliberately or inadvertently reinvented and rehearsed. (786)

Lefebvre (1991) supports this statement; he asserts that the production of social space is a process that requires the society to obtain special “religious and political sites.” All subjects in this social space are “situated” in a certain way that allows them to “recognize themselves or lose themselves” (34-35). On the other hand, Melanie Murray (2009) regards the significance of Homi Bhabha’s concept of liminal space to the colonial house, “a house built to recreate the colonial dream” where history and tradition take place (440). She emphasizes the

representation of houses in postcolonial literature as a “trope” that reflects societal issues while determining a sense of place. Murray (2009) argues that houses and gardens are attributes of power and social class, where residents and their houses have connected destinies (441-442). Beswick, Parmar, and Sil (2015) underscore the importance of Lefebvre’s theory of space production to identify how space is produced through the individual’s utilization of it, which emphasizes the individual’s “experience and representation” and constructs space through the individuals’ cultural practices (791). However, it is crucial to mention that these cultural practices are influenced by colonial ideology, and hence by colonial rather than indigenous representation and placement.

Roy (1997) describes the house and indicates its continuous ambivalence and fading importance through time: “It was a grand old house, the Ayemenem House, but aloof-looking. As though it had little to do with the people who lived in it...Nine steep steps led from the driveway up to the front verandah. The elevation gave it the dignity of a stage and everything that happened there took on the aura and significance of performance” (165). The Ayemenem House as a postcolonial place is not a “static object so much as an ongoing process...Spaces are not simply the passive backdrop to significant sociohistorical action, rather they are a vital product and determinant of that action” (Kačavendić, 2014: 204). The house is a reconstruct of colonial violence and power that result in subversion, not only to the physical building, but to the lives of the hybrid generation residing in it, mainly Ammu and her twins. For the characters that carry the colonial ideology and dogma in them, i.e. Baby Kochamma, the house has become a shelter rather than a home or a place of pride and familial prosperity. The detachment between the house and its residents and the theatricality/artificiality of life there suggest the limitations and failures of postcolonial life, which also implies a recreation of colonial structures.

To conclude, the decaying condition of the Ayemenem House is a mirror of the colonial space it resides in and represents. A colonial image implies colonial ideology in practice among the bourgeois Ipe family whose extreme Anglophile attitude led to their exclusion from their indigenous history. Lefebvre (1991) states that “space, along with the way it was measured and spoken of, still held up to all the members of a society an image and a living reflection of their own bodies” (111). Space hegemony powered and controlled by colonial structures permits neither real postcolonial hybridity nor pre-colonial authenticity. It proves that postcolonial domestic places can reinvent colonial ways, and eliminate any other cultural representations in its place/space. Colonial hegemony affects postcolonial places and their residents, reconstructing these places as colonial. This social and mental hegemony makes postcolonial places part of colonial space as well.

3. Baby Kochamma’s Garden and Colonial Ideology

Baby Kochamma’s Garden as a landscape follows the rise and fall of the Ayemenem House. It represents the ultimate decadence of the indigenous culture, as much as the postcolonial one. The garden is reconstructed after Baby Kochamma’s return from the University of Rochester in New York to study ornamental gardening. The Garden can be considered a source of hope or a means for realizing the postcolonial utopia, as the supreme garden is “Eden.” Knepper (2011) argues how distant places can relate together through Jamaica Kincaid’s statement that “Eden is never far from the gardener’s mind. It is The Garden to which we all refer, whether we know it or not. And it is forever out of reach” (47). Baby Kochamma attempts to bring the colonial culture’s hegemony to include her in its representation. Her devotion to colonial ideology justifies her relentless control of the place where she “raised a fierce, bitter garden... [and] like a lion tamer she tamed twisting vines and nurtured bristling cacti. [However] after enduring more than half a century of relentless, picky attention, the ornamental garden had been abandoned. Left to its own devices, it had grown knotted and wild, like a circus whose animals had forgotten their tricks” (Roy,

1997: 26). The sudden shift is explained by finding a new interest: “Baby Kochamma had installed a dish antenna on the roof of the Ayemenem house. She presided over the world in her drawing room on satellite TV” (Roy, 1997: 27). This displacement is evidence of the postcolonial culture’s own displacement and the failure of creating the desired utopia. And drawing on Lefebvre’s theory, every society or “mode of production” produces a space of its own. Social space merges the social actions of its subjects with their everyday life spaces. This merge of “social space” serves as an analysis tool for society (Lefebvre, 1991: 31-34). However, since Baby Kochamma produced a space that surpasses her indigenous culture using her “colonial education,” the downfall of this garden was a justified end since it did not contribute to interpreting the society as it is, but as colonial hegemony produced it.

In addition, the Garden is an allegory of the postcolonial culture’s attempt to get immersed in the imperial process. Knepper (2011) argues that “the garden grows in living relation to a changing world order...[where] the organic spatial praxis of gardening can tell us something about the shifting relations among ideologies, powers, and actions in the world” (41). In addition, Knepper (2011) emphasizes Kincaid’s notion of the garden as a site for “spatial control,” where the gardener concurs it (44). However, in Baby Kochamma’s Garden this notion does not apply since Baby Kochamma fails at or maybe neglects maintaining it, which signifies the control of colonial space over her, as she ends up being locked in the Ayemenem House with all the windows closed. This is a space that represents all things colonial, and rejects all things indigenous.

The negligence of the Garden in the end testifies to the culture’s abortive attempts at hybridity, leaving no choice for the national culture but to become the Empire’s contestant in the postcolonial era. The Other is established not only in society but also in social and personal places where “landscape [is] formally distinguished from the place of origin as home/colony, Europe/New World, Europe/Antipodes, metropolitan/provincial... although... no effective models exist for expressing this sense of Otherness in a positive and creative way” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002: 11). Murray (2009) argues that the ruins of a house representing the Empire and its ideology signal its death. She demonstrates the “ambivalence” and “duality” of the house and its residents (441). Roy’s (1997) narration reflects Kerala’s diverse culture between Communism, Marxism, and Christianity, which determined the incessant strife among the different social classes and its inability to produce a political system to cover all different aspects of the society. Fanon (1967) asserts the possibility of creating a culture without a nation. However, such culture will not carry any bearing on everyday life and its struggles (Roy, 1997: 50). The postcolonial nation manifested in Baby Kochamma’s Garden has proved such theory, when it could not keep up with the hybridity of postcolonial culture, or fall back into its misrepresented indigenous history. The fact that the Garden was ornamental speaks of the absence of indigenous history, which causes its inevitable death.

The shift from outdoors landscapes into indoors confinement puts an end to Baby Kochamma’s social contradictions and internal conflicts. According to Lefebvre (1991), the state “neutralizes” all resistance through obliteration (23). While Baby Kochamma “took up television, [she] dropped the car and the garden simultaneously. Tutti-frutti. 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” (Roy, 1997: 295). Baby Kochamma represents the consciousness of the colonizer, the consciousness that manifested itself even stronger after the independence of India. When Rahel comes back to Ayemenem, she finds Baby Kochamma in the old house “still alive” while the grand family house is left to decay and its garden is dead (Roy, 1997: 1-2). This exposes the fact that colonial ideologies never depart from the native land and culture. Another example of the imperial ideology taking a permanent place in postcolonial India is Baby Kochamma’s study of the Bible only to put on “weekly exhibitions of staged charity” for Father Mulligan (Roy, 1997). The Christian empire that claims

salvation from poverty and marginalization, however, ends up asserting and further implementing subalternity and subversion to the indigenous and hybrid cultures.

To conclude, the Garden's disintegration is a consequence of the colonial hegemony of space. Stuart Elden (2004) asserts Lefebvre's suggestion of a "distinction between the domination and appropriation of nature, with domination leading to destruction. This conflict takes place in space. Space is not just discovered by humans and occupied, but in the process it is transformed" (183). The Garden's transformation from grandeur to negligence and despair is evidence of the colonial hegemony's elimination of both the postcolonial hybridity as well as pre-colonial indigenous history. This colonial hegemony only allows colonial cultural images to reconstruct domestic postcolonial places, excluding any representation opposing its dominance.

4. The History House and Colonial Legacy

The History House is an abandoned colonial residence where its colonial hegemony—represented in the Ayemenem police—reestablishes its reign on the culture. The History House is basically the abandoned place of an Englishman who embraced native ways. Simultaneously, it is a site for maintaining cultural genuineness. It reproduces its place as the epoch of dominance and power when Velutha, 'the Untouchable,' is beaten brutally within its walls as punishment for deciding to surpass the place assigned to him by society and the caste system, and befriend the Touchables Ammu and her children. Lefebvre (1991) argues how power is exercised in and through space. He explains that in national societies and spaces the "modern state...imposes itself as the stable centre" where "an energy or force can only be identified by means of its effects in space, even if forces 'in themselves' are distinct from their effects" (23-22). In fact, place is a continuous "reminder of colonial ambivalence", asserting its involvement in identity and representation of the postcolonial cultural producer (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995: 162-165). Hence, colonial history is fixed and made real in portraits of material, lived-in places. Places that are "orphaned from their unique spatial and temporal context...can be fitted out with new paternities. Legitimized by an imperial discourse, they can even form future alliances of their own" (Carter, 1995: 376). However, these "alliances" are never indigenous, since the colonial ideology is the dominator of their space.

The History House is turned (years later) into a theater in a five star hotel, and it is ironically named "Heritage." The marginalization of the indigenous culture manifests itself in the colonial ideology's control of postcolonial places in addition to the appropriation of indigenous history by turning long narratives of the culture into mini-stories that are taken out of their native context and forced into a universal colonial history. The History House belonged to an "Englishman who had gone native...Ayemenem's own Kurtz. Ayemenem his private Heart of Darkness" (Roy, 1997: 52). This History House represents the Empire and its manufactured colonialism where, according to Fanon (1967), it does not only erase the indigenous culture, but "turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (37). Jamaica Kincaid (Knepper, 2011) in "A Small Place" argues the irrevocable effects on the culture, language, history, and the everyday life connotations like street names and government processes used by the residents of Antigua long after their independence (92-93). Roy's (1997) allusion to *The Heart of Darkness* signifies the colonial prejudiced disregard for the indigenous culture, language, and history of the sort given in Achebe's (1977) criticism of Conrad's novel. In addition, Paul Carter (1995) disputes the imperial preference of tangible places to change and manipulate, for they are "durable objects which can be treated as...further evidence of a universal historical process. Orphaned from their unique spatial and temporal context, such objects, such historical facts, can be fitted out with new paternities. Legitimized by an imperial discourse, they can even form future alliances of their own" (376). Roy (1997) states how the reproduction and appropriation of place results in

the rewriting of history, which leads to its eventual loss or erasure. This appropriation occurs when the local folk tales are shortened to fit the commercial and tourist needs, and not the representation of the indigenous culture. Produced space is a means of manipulation, domination, and discursive formation. In the words of Lefebvre (1991), “(social) space is a (social) product” (26). Hence, the more powerful the subject is the more space it will dominate.

The History House develops externally into a five star hotel; however, internally it obliterates the Indian history and culture. At the hotel, “ancient stories [are]...collapsed and amputated,” which reflects the postcolonial appropriation of native “toy histories that rich tourists came to play with” (Roy, 1997: 127, 307). This precludes the postcolonial hybrid culture from regaining its indigenous history since they are “locked out” from their own history and the colonizers’ history as well (Roy, 1997: 53). Roy (1997) describes the disintegrating structure of the History House where “rotting beams supported on the once-white pillars had buckled at the center, leaving a yawning, gaping hole. A History hole. A History-shaped hole in the Universe” (307). The eradication of indigenous history leads to misrepresentation and loss of identity and eventually to constructing the Other. This displacement of history allows the colonial history to take center stage since it intentionally “pays attention to events unfolding in time alone [it] might be called imperial history” (Carter, 1995: 375).

Roy’s repeated reference to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in the novel reasserts the importance of place to the Empire as a distant sovereign where it creates “its cultural contestant” and delineates its power and knowledge (Said, 2003: 9, 13). Displacement in *The God of Small Things* occurs on the cultural level, where the indigenous culture is replaced with a postcolonial state of identity loss, asserting that “tragedy begins when things leave their accustomed place, like Europe leaving its safe stronghold...to like [sic] a peep into the heart of darkness” (Achebe, 1977: 3). In addition, Jay (2010) argues that *The God of Small Things* is—among other things—about “the transgression of boundaries” of society and culture. Roy (1997) manifests this violation of borders, set by the culture and British colonialism, in the History House (98). The History House, vacated by a British colonialist, is where colonial history and its effects on the everyday life “small things” are evident. It sets in motion the downfall of a whole family that is “trapped outside their own history” because of their transgression of boundaries of social place and culture in disregarding class segregations (Roy, 1997: 53). The postcolonial city has a history of imposed dominance to create physical, social, economic, and cultural borders. These borders or “divisions of margin and center” represent the postcolonial ideology of Otherness and Representation (Chambers & Huggan, 2015: 784). The significance of this displacement is its imposed violence, which is a way of asserting space.

According to Lefebvre (1991), “the violence of power is answered by the violence of subversion” where “state-imposed normality makes permanent transgression inevitable”, and since violence and tragedy are inescapable they emerge from time to time “fighting ferociously to reassert themselves and transform themselves through struggle” (23). The connection between power and place dominance is evident in the narrative. The colonial legacy held by the History House is manifested in the powerful, violent presence of a “posse of Touchable Policemen...Servants of the State. Politeness. Obedience. Loyalty. Intelligence. Courtesy. Efficiency. The Kottayam Police. A cartoon platoon. Dark of Heart. Deadly purposed” (Roy, 1997: 304). Barnett (2006) states that “the invocation of ‘authentic’ traditions has, in fact, been one of the most problematic ways in which postcolonial elites have continued to wield political power over their citizens” (148). The police as a reconstruct of the colonial hegemony represents India’s oppressive colonial history. Anuradha Dingwaney Needham (2005) argues that *The God of Small Things* illustrates history as

a dominating, oppressive force that saturates virtually all social and cultural space, including familial, intimate, and affective relationships. The novel’s sense of history

as an overwhelming, impersonal force, whose imprint is most starkly visible through its effects -its obliteration of those who do not live in accordance with its values and dictates- receives its most sustained treatment...(372)

History in the novel, introduced as the police, reinvents the well established colonial legacy residing in the Indian culture. In addition to the fact that such history does not allow for real hybridity or indigenous authenticity, it also eradicates any opposing cultural representations and demotes the indigenous culture and its citizens. An example is Velutha's lifelong suffering and ultimately unexcused brutal death.

The police carry out Velutha's death sentence without taking into consideration a trial or the gravity of the charge committed, which indicates the forceful inflection of law into the culture. The postcolonial cultural politics is a combination of hegemonic colonialism and indigenous caste system that manifest in extreme solutions. It only allows premises to expand the colonial representation, which helps familiarize it even more to the postcolonial culture. The police as representation of hegemonic colonial power expands its spatial control over the History House, and is seen as a cultural image rather than an imperial symbol of the nation's loss, rewriting, and misleading appropriation of indigenous history.

To conclude, the History House in *The God of Small Things* is a reconstruct of colonial culture—represented by the Kottayam police—that does not allow for postcolonial hybridity or pre-colonial authenticity to transfigure and expand, thus reinventing the colonial ways. Velutha's subalternity and subsequent death at the hands of the police is a result of such colonial control and administration. In addition, the History House as a representation of the colonial legacy enforces colonial hegemony and prevents any attempt at historical restoration through hybridity.

5. Coda: Velutha and Colonial Ideology

Velutha, an Untouchable Paravan in the caste system, is placeless in the indigenous, colonial, and postcolonial cultures since “[he] left no footprints in the sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirrors” (Roy, 1997: 265). Velutha represents the Other in the Ayemenem House and the History House as well. He is a reconstruct of the hybridity that both cultures reject. He is the displaced outlaw inhabiting the space of social and political hegemony. His marginalization and displacement from both places is symbolic of his marginalization from both the indigenous and colonial cultures. Velutha's accomplishments in and around the factory and Ayemenem House (repairing broken furniture, building new screen doors, making small toys) inspires spite in all the Touchable workers, for he was promoted to their Touchable status, although his treatment and payment are not affected by such promotion. Velutha represents the displacement of the hybrid culture in favor of the colonial one. K.A. Geetha (2011) contends that presenting marginalized characters as proficient people “subverts” the cultural structures of power and gives way to true representation (320). However, Velutha's place in the Indian culture, whether indigenous or colonial, exists only to serve those who are more entitled. Velutha's attempts to place himself in the hybrid culture, and his death as a result, only expose the failures of hybridity in the face of colonial ideology.

Velutha tried to create his own place as an indispensable entity in the Indian culture. As the “God of Small Things”, he occupies the place of everyday life that holds the society and culture together. By contrast, the overwhelming problems of the nation, politics, and religion disregard the individual in favor of executing imperial and postcolonial agendas. Velutha's place is so crucial and substantial that with his unjustified death the lives of everyone around him are dissolved. Ammu dies (Roy, 1997: 159), Rahel despairs because “in some places... various kinds of despair competed for primacy. And personal despair could never be

desperate enough” (Roy, 1997: 19), and Estha subsides to muteness turning into in “[a]n Estha-shaped hole in the Universe” (Roy, 1997: 156).

Roy (1997) describes how 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 (Bonnor, 2013: 54). The displacement of the Paravan Castes did not only exclude them from participating in their future nation, but also removed them from their past. This is an instance of “mimicry” or a restoration of the imperial process of demoting the indigenous history to sever any ties between history and place, making their exile not only more prominent but irreversible as well. According to Lefebvre (1991), “Any space implies, contains, and dissimulates social relationships...has begun visibly to dominate.” keeping in account that space is “a set of relations between things (objects and products)” (83). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002) emphasize the oppression of indigenous culture through place construction, which elaborates their alienation from their own culture as well as the colonial and postcolonial ones (*Empire Writes Back*, 9). As Lefebvre (1991) contends, “Representational space is alive: it speaks...[its] intervention occurs by way of construction...as a project embedded in a spatial context and a texture which calls for ‘representations’ that will not vanish into the symbolic or imaginary realms” (42). Roy (1997) verifies this notion in Velutha’s death at the hands of the Ayemenem police as they execute a “clinical demonstration in controlled conditions of human nature’s pursuit of ascendancy. It was human history, masquerading as God’s Purpose” (Roy, 1997: 309). It is crucial to state that history is almost always linked to Velutha in the narrative, whether to Velutha as a person representing true indigenous history and trying to make a future in a country plagued with political upheaval, or as a victim being punished for presenting the real history of his culture.

Roy (1997) shows how history takes place in exacting Velutha’s punishment for his indiscretion, functioning for the specific purpose of reconstructing the spatial history of the postcolonial culture: “History in live performance...They [the Kottayam police] were not arresting a man, they were exorcising fear. They had no instrument to calibrate how much punishment he could take. No means of gauging how much or how permanently they had damaged him.” (Roy, 1997: 309). This reconstruction of history and culture takes place in the History House, a colonial residence with a subsequent ideology and dogma further implementing hegemonic representations and alienating the postcolonial hybrid culture. However, history here meant Velutha’s own caste system subversion, where his father waited for him with an axe to achieve the alleged justice. Velutha is displaced from his own national culture, for not fitting into his Paravan status, and displaced from the colonial and postcolonial cultures for political and religious reasons. Velutha is “A Paravan...hounded by history—he knew there weren’t many places for him to hide” (Roy, 1997: 262). The novel, therefore, uses places to underground the failures of post-independence and the dangers of neo-colonialism. Postcolonial places emerge as reconstructs of colonial culture.

Colonial structures get replicated in class boundaries, subjugation of women, and imitating the colonizer. Our understanding of the domination of places should be considered in this light. According to Nazari and Pirnajmuddin (2013), “despite Roy’s attempt to reformulate and re-define the colonial discourse, the novel shows that colonial patterns are inculcated in the unconscious of the characters, both the ex-colonized and the ex-colonizers” (208). Against cultural, racial, and sexual negotiation, i.e. against models of hybridity, Roy might be suggesting that a heavy colonial legacy overcomes hybridity. Place is employed in this novel to achieve that end by way of showing a heavy colonial legacy. In the end, Velutha is lead towards his gloomy fate by his own indigenous culture and the colonial ideology rooted in it, like “History walking the dog” (Roy, 1997: 288). He had no authority over the society and its colonialism nor its protection, “Velutha did not have the patronage or the protection of the Communist Party...he was on his own” (Roy, 1997: 262, 263). This further implements the

disintegration of hybridity in the postcolonial culture and enforces the colonial ideology that never departed from the culture in the first place. The result is the failure of hybridity in a culture ruled by the colonial ideology. Such a failure is not only carried through physical hegemony but also through a spatial control of everyday life places, which indicates the deep-rooted influence of colonialism in post-independence India.

In brief, the failure of postcolonial hybridity and pre-colonial authenticity at reconstructing the culture is reflected in the citizens of postcolonial India. The struggle these citizens go through is a result of colonial space hegemony. Velutha's attempts at ascending from his place as a Paravan into a fair political representation are faced with colonial and indigenous opposition. This opposition concerns space as "the ultimate medium of struggle" (Elden, 2004: 183). The effects the three postcolonial domestic places studied in the article have on Velutha are inevitable. The Ayemenem House and the Ipe family brought Velutha continuous labor that is underappreciated and underpaid. And while the History House became Velutha's hiding place from the world, it brought the colonial world to him, as eventually manifested in the Kottayam police. The deep-rooted foreign colonial residue in the indigenous culture rejects both pre-colonial history and postcolonial hybridity. Postcolonial places as reconstructs of colonial and neocolonial hegemony can only represent and empower characters embracing a hegemonic culture such as Baby Kochamma. On the other hand, such places destroy and alienate characters that seek independence from colonial representation and its subtle ways.

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