

## **WOMAN BEYOND PHALLUS? ANALYZING THE SYMPTOMATIC MADNESS IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS***

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Arundhati Roy's expedition through the Syrian Christian family in *The God of Small Things* highlights more than what is perceived, especially in relation to the 'madness' that is often forgotten in general literary criticism, which restricts discourse to obvious social realisms. As Roy states, there is an 'unsafe edge', an 'unmixable mix' in Ammu, and the proposition extends to Chacko, spouses of the family, twins and to Baby Kochamma and Mammachi.

Though individual circumstances differ, the behavior is possibly the inherent result of psychological insecurity tinged with a family 'madness' that eventually leads to failure. In Slavoj Zizekian analysis, this 'madness' can be an inherent inability to 'externalize the fantasy'- a self-denial of the radicalization of existence. Woman's 'fate' (Ammu's) is in a backward patriarchal setting, where according to Zizek, the empty 'paternal metaphor'<sup>1</sup> or the 'Name-of-the-Father' functions as a Master Signifier (S1) with which a community is held together in a rallying point of collectivity. For Habermas, moralizing human nature for a better tomorrow through social modernization requires de-traditionalization of worldly life. Yet, Ammu who radically desires 'freedom' from existing constrictions regulated by history and tradition breaks the father's phallic authority and confronts nothing but a pre-symbolic Real; a destiny that annihilates existence.

This paper investigates the plausibility of identifying the family's 'madness' as derived from its survival technique to 'internalize the fantasy', according to the Lacanian *object-desire* within the Syrian Christian community. Hence, woman's position, destiny and freedom are brought to a problematic level. The depiction of woman in Roy's Syrian Christian household proves that she cannot go beyond Phallus, or as Zizek states, if she ever tries to 'go beyond her official position' is an inevitable (symbolic) death. As a result, the denial of woman's freedom of choice due to in-group biases, fundamentalist motives, racial preservation, feelings of insecurity and fear of radical change, makes the post-colonial masculine world further regressed. Taking the novel as a semi-empirical, fictional narrative that proves this central Lacanian/Zizekian point, this paper, by means of content analysis and relevant secondary reading material, explores the possible articulations of the 'madness' in *The God of Small Things*, arguing on its position as a human symptom.

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<sup>1</sup> In this part of the world, the paternal signifier is mostly constructed on values borrowed from an imaginary tradition or pre-history.