

## Anthropocene Micro-narratives: Arundhati Roy and the Ecology of Small Things

*Today Corporate Globalization needs an international confederation of loyal, corrupt, preferably authoritarian governments in poorer countries to push through unpopular reforms and quell the mutinies. It needs a press that pretends to be free ... not the free movement of people, not a respect for human rights, not international treaties on racial discrimination or chemical and nuclear weapons, or greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, or god forbid, justice.*

—Arundhati Roy, “Come September” (2002)

Big dams and nuclear bombs: what do they share? According to Arundhati Roy in “The Greater Common Good”—her second literary outing after publishing the Man Booker-prize winning *God of Small Things*—both products of the modern state demarcate a historical moment in which scientific and industrial thought has outpaced the human instinct for survival. “They represent,” she suggests, “the severing of the link, not just the link—the *understanding*—between human beings and the planet they live on. They scramble the intelligence that connects eggs to hens, milk to cows, water to rivers, air to life, and the earth to human existence” (80-81). Here Roy attends to the most basic principle of what Timothy Morton terms “*the ecological thought*”: a belief that “everything is connected” (1). For her, neo-imperial capitalist regimes interrupt the complex web of mutual reliance evident in the natural world; they enact an organic violence which artificially, and detrimentally, imposes distinctions between human and non-human modes of existence. Numerous commentators have observed the way in which Roy’s writing seeks to re-trace these intimate connections between disparate species: Graham Huggan, for instance, locates her work within the nascent genre of postcolonial eco-criticism, alongside writers such as J.M. Coetzee and Barbara Gowdy who “offer insight into ecological issues and relationships” (701); more recently, Aarthi Vadde has analyzed the manner in which Roy’s “narratives of connection” are utilized as biological “weapons against the bedfellows of global

capitalism and state control” (523). Whether great or small, such writers suggest, in Roy’s literary corpus no organic life-form is an island, but rather an integrated—and indeed integral—part of the wider biosphere.

Despite widespread interest in her eco-critical perspective, little attention has, as yet, been devoted to Roy’s engagement with the problem of climate change. This is particularly significant, I will argue, insofar as her work parts ways with many—though not all—of the dominant critical attitudes toward the “Anthropocene”: a term coined by Nobel Prize winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer to describe the modern geological era of global warming. Pervasive among such theoretical responses has been the imperative to think big. In his influential essay “The Climate of History,” for instance, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that the current environmental crisis holds the potential to create a “negative universal history”: “a universal that arises from a shared sense of catastrophe ... [but] without the myth of a global identity” (222). Slavoj Žižek—while taking issue with many of Chakrabarty’s underlying assumptions—shares this commitment to theorizing the totality of ecological, political, and economic conditions. In *Living in the End Times* he argues: “One can solve the universal problem (of the survival of the human species) only by resolving the particular deadlock of the capitalist mode of production” (334). Perhaps most explicitly, Morton has rejected the limited scope of traditional environmentalism—with its slogans “small is beautiful,” “diet for a small planet,” and “the local is better than the global” (20)—in favor of a pharaonic and capacious understanding. While he emphasizes that thinking big doesn’t necessarily contradict a concern for particularity, Morton argues that the most important corrective to current ecological discussion involves expanding, rather than contracting, our analytic point of view. In the face of a global problem, it would seem, the dominant rejoinder has been to call for a global solution

However, contrary to these macro-level perspectives, Roy's writing draws attention to the political importance of what I will term environmental "micro-narratives." When confronting the intellectual challenges of transnational capitalism—and its consequent planetary degradation—she emphasizes precisely that which other observers often shun: the importance of small things. "We have to support our small heroes," Roy argues, "[w]e have to fight specific wars in specific ways": "Who knows, perhaps that's what the twenty-first century has in store for us. The dismantling of the big. Big bombs, big dams, big ideologies, big contradictions, big countries, big wars, big heroes, big mistakes. Perhaps it will be the Century of the Small. Perhaps right now, this very minute, there's a small god up in heaven readying herself for us" ("Greater" 12). On a structural level, this commitment to humble forms of existence entails turning away from the full length novel form, and towards the curtailed style of the essay, the interview, the newspaper article, and the short story. On a thematic level, Roy likewise shifts her focus toward those voices deemed unimportant or too insignificant to matter within the grand unfolding of history, capital, and global warming. Nevertheless, she does not depict particularity for its own sake. Her methodology, I suggest, instead resembles what Bruno Latour describes as the practice of "taking account," whereby members of a social collective "*speak for*" those entities—whether sentient or otherwise—that cannot represent themselves. It is a democratic process governed by the twin imperatives: "*Thou shalt not simplify the number of propositions to be taken into account in the discussion*" and "*Thou shalt ensure that the number of voices that participate in the articulation of propositions has not been arbitrarily short-circuited*" (104-106). Particularly in her later writing, Roy engages in this form of literary ecology, attempting to bring together those voices elided within prevailing Anthropocene cultural narratives. While each may be small

and faint, together this re-assembled social unit offers the possibility, for her, of enacting social change in a world confronting structural climate devastation.

In her epigraph to *The God of Small Things*, Roy quotes novelist and art critic John Berger's defense of discursive plurality. "Never again," he writes in *G: A Novel*, "will a single story be told as though it's the only one" (133). This sentiment sets the scene, not only for Roy's fiction, but also much of her later, explicitly political writing. While engaged in multiple issues, Roy explains in "Come September" that her basic intellectual project is one of recovering displaced voices: "Stories cull writers from the world. Stories reveal themselves to us. The public narrative, the private narrative—they colonize us. They commission us. They insist on being told" (45). Tales, especially those seemingly unimportant, infiltrate our imagination and demand to be articulated within a wider political sphere. Throughout *The God of Small Things*, Roy attempts to draw together such "micro-narratives" culled from the realm of personal and extra-historical events. Though in a country such as India personal turmoil often pales beside "the vast, violent, circling, driving ridiculous, insane, unfeasible, public turmoil of the nation"—what she calls the domain of "Big God"—it remains crucial to also take account of the minute, elided, and often domestic events governed by "Small God" (19). Much of the novel performs exactly this function. Although Roy charts large scale events—such as Communist uprisings throughout the 1970s, and the transformation of her native Kerala from an agricultural landscape to commercial tourist hub—the drama is largely private. It centers on the drowning of Sophie Mol, Ammu's love affair with the "untouchable" Velutha, and the coming-of-age story surrounding twins Estha and Rahel. "Small God," she writes, still exists on the margins: "Like a rich boy in shorts. He whistled, kicked stones. The source of his brittle elation was the relative smallness of his misfortune. He climbed into people's eyes and became an exasperating

expression” (19). Under the gaze of Roy’s literary vision, delicate and intimate moments are accorded the same textual priority as epoch making historical processes.

In attending to such private passions, however, *The God of Small Things* does not simply stage a retreat from public politics. In both form and content, Roy explores the ecological interpenetration of human and animal life, unveiling hidden ties that link the diminutive with the mighty. In one short vignette—juxtaposed with a song Ammu hears in which a “fisherman, his wife, her lover, and a shark that has no part in the story” die at sea (219)—we see the cremation of an electrocuted elephant:

The engineers of the concerned municipality sawed off tusks and shared them unofficially. Unequally. Eighty tins of pure ghee were poured over the elephant to feed the fire. The smoke rose in dense fumes and arranged itself in complex patterns against the sky. People crowded round at a safe distance reading meanings into them.

There were lots of flies.

*Avaney kadalamma kondu poyi*

(So Mother Ocean rose up and took him away.)

Pariah kites dropped into nearby trees, to supervise the supervision of the last rites of the dead elephant. They hoped, not without reason, for pickings of giant innards. (219-220)

This complex passage accomplishes a number of functions. Firstly, by paratactically comparing musical number with burning, Roy establishes a textual network in which diverse scenes are

related through metonymic transference—what Elisha Cohn terms the text’s “ecology of style” (170). Likewise, in revealing a hierarchical inversion in the order of being—wherein a fly may have eat of a pachyderm, or a metaphorical hawk watch over a human handsaw—she similarly traces the biological mesh which comprises this circle of life. Finally, by observing the black market extraction of ivory in this tableau, Roy also reveals the degrading complicity of capital within such flows of organic matter: a point comparable to her earlier observation of the nearby river which “smelled of shit, and pesticides brought with World Bank loans” (13). Indeed, between imperial entomologist Pappachi’s efforts to pin down, and subsequently claim as his own, a new species of Lepidoptera, and the spectacle of Chacko attempting to modernize the family fruit preserve business—which he claims as “*my factory, my pineapples, my pickles*” (57)—the novel presents a trenchant critique of European modernity and its proprietary attitude toward the natural world. If Roy is fundamentally concerned with calling attention to the importance of Small God, she does so primarily in order to show how he is inextricably bound up in larger concerns.

Following the best-selling success of *The God of Small Things*, Roy’s most recent work shifts to the realm of explicitly political engagement. Asked about this stylistic change in an interview with Howard Zinn, she suggests that “Fiction and nonfiction are only different techniques of story telling”: “For reasons that I don’t fully understand, fiction dances out of me, and nonfiction is wrenched out by the aching, broken world I wake up to every morning” (1). Critical responses to Roy’s polemical turn, however, have been split. On the one hand, Cohn argues that while her earlier novel had “consistently divide[d] the aesthetic and the political as the public from the private, her essays belie this division” by indissolubly conjoining the two spheres (176). On the other, however, several observers have objected to precisely this

chimerical literary project. Anne Maxwell, for one, argues that writers like Roy often value Indigenous cultures “purely for what they can contribute to contemporary environmental debates and practices” (18). She suggests that Roy is more concerned with what India’s rural poor can do for her, rather than what she can do for them. Yet Zinn himself rightly points out that Roy turned down numerous lucrative book and film offers to pursue activism, gave almost all of her proceeds from *The God of Small Things* to the “Narmada Bachao Andolan” hydroelectric protest movement, and even spent a short stint in prison all in “the service of people” (1). If this is self-interest, it is of a less than obvious variety. More influentially, Graham Huggan takes issue with two particular points in Roy’s non-fiction: her tendency to mix “hard headed investigative report” with “sentimental political fable,” and her predilection for blurring the “boundaries between the underclass victims of ecological disaster and their privileged supporters” (707-708). Especially in her anti-dam treatise “The Greater Common Good,” he contends, Roy oversimplifies a complex eco-political problem by merely opposing “good guys,” such as the people, with “bad guys,” like the state.

While such objections certainly cannot be dismissed out of hand, it is important to also situate them within Roy’s wider effort to assemble an ecology of small things. However much “The Greater Common Good” often fails to differentiate between middle-class liberal environmentalists and the dispossessed “Adivasi”—driven from their ancestral land to make way for government power projects along the Narmada River—it does so to demonstrate the interconnection of each. Roy is, in fact, acutely aware of the pitfalls surrounding “irrational, emotional ‘Anti-development’ resistance, fueled by an arcadian, pre-industrial dream”; what she seeks instead is to explore “*specific* facts about *specific* issues in this *specific* valley,” yet in a way that will make them legible—and hence actionable—to an international, cosmopolitan

audience (10). Thus although her appeal to the personal plight of individual figures such as “Bhaiji Bhai” may appear affected or saccharine, Roy is conscious that sentiment not only sells, but may catalyze wide reaching political action. Similarly, her use of aestheticized rhetoric alongside factual description also attempts to enact a form of interconnection. In one moment, Roy chastises herself for confusing these distinct modes of writing: “Anyone who has loved a river can tell you that the loss of a river is a terrible, aching thing. But I’ll be rapped on the knuckles if I continue in this vein. When we’re discussing the Greater Common Good there’s no place for sentiment. One must stick to facts. Forgive me for letting my heart wander” (50). However, even this renunciation enacts a literary trope of religious self-confession; by interspersing the categories of “reason” and “emotion,” her work simultaneously enters both discursive fields, a gesture which seeks to draw the two together. In fact, like Latour, Roy rejects the rigid distinction between fact and value altogether. It is “Fascist math,” she argues, which allows a state to resettle “200,000 people in order to take ... drinking water to 40 million”: “It strangles stories. Bludgeons details. And manages to blind perfectly reasonable people with its spurious, shining vision” (58). Ecological truth, for her, is not something entirely captured by either fiction or non-fiction, but rather emerges through the dialogic interplay of each with the other.

This textual praxis becomes crucial when encountering the cultural emergency of climate change. Central to the difficulty of adequately imagining the Anthropocene, as Chakrabarty points out, is the phenomenological fact that “we experience specific effects of the crisis but not the whole” problem in its entirety (221). Individual weather events—such as severe tropical cyclones in New York, or rising sea levels in Tuvalu—may be personally felt, but the real disaster can only be comprehended through the scientific mediation of statistical analysis.

Catherine Gallagher argues that, historically, the novel have been the literary form best able to grapple with this variety of “truth conceived as mimetic simulation,” rather than veridical accuracy (341). Yet by exploring the generic possibilities inherent in lyrical and polemic “Gonzo” journalism, Roy also offers the possibility that an alternative, “micro-narrative” mode of writing may be a more adequate vehicle for depicting global warming. By integrating mathematical fact with experiential fiction, she seeks to provide a form of textual practice which mediates between intimate knowledge and scientific abstraction.

This epistemic bridging effort lies at the heart of her short essay “The Ladies Have Feelings, So ... Shall We Leave It to the Experts?”—Roy’s first explicit engagement with the politics surrounding climate change. In answer to her titular question, concerning the role of artists in addressing environmental concerns, she argues: “Painters, writers, actors, dancers, filmmakers, musicians are meant to fly, to push at the frontiers, to worry the edges of the human imagination, to conjure beauty from the most unexpected things” (5). In other words, such public intellectuals have the ability—if not necessarily the responsibility—to uncover mundane, every-day atrocities; they are able to animate the violence within “boring things like jobs, money, water supply, electricity, irrigation” (13). Roy’s text does just this: she describes, for instance, the factory pollution produced by transnational corporations as “our in-house version of first world bullying in the global warming debate: i.e., We pollute, you pay” (23); further, and in a gesture indicative of her commitment to unveiling the interconnected logic behind ecological deterioration, she compares the euphemistic terminology of a “good investment climate”—describing rampant third-world labor exploitation—to the geological conditions it produces in the form of actual climate change (17). Although in these instances global warming is of tangential concern within her overall argument, they nonetheless show how such issues grow

from the same fertile political soil as ecological debasement: unrestrained capitalist consumption. Indeed, even Roy's meta-textual methodology attests to the importance of representing such connective tissues. Both "The Greater Common Good" and "The Ladies Have Feelings" appear in multiple edited collections—including *The Cost of Living* (1999), *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2002), *Power Politics* (2002), and *The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* (2004)—as well as numerous magazines, public readings, and online forums. Hence while each article lacks the popular reach of her earlier novel, through the very breadth and dispersal of their physical presence, such "micro-narrative" forms have the potential to touch, and therefore influence, a considerably wider audience.

In her most recent writing, Roy has become increasingly interested in exploring the specific challenges presented by the Anthropocene. Perhaps the clearest example of this is her 2009 essay compilation *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*. From its opening, the book foregrounds Roy's concern with an impending global—rather than simply local or geographical—environmental collapse. In the epigraph, she cites a passage taken from Palestinian author Mahmoud Darwish's poem "The Earth is Closing on Us": "Where should we go after the last frontier? / Where should the birds fly after the last sky? / Where should the plants sleep after the last breath of air?" (V). Neo-imperial Israeli occupation of the West Bank, here, is interwoven with ecological concerns over the future of planet earth. In fact, much of the collection is concerned with *unearthing*, as it were, exactly this sordid relationship between expansive nationalism, free-market capitalism, liberal democracy, and climate change. In her "Introduction," for example, Roy meticulously deconstructs the rationale behind India's border dispute with Pakistan in Kashmir. Particularly ironic is the deployment of troops atop Siachen glacier—"the highest battlefield in the world":

While the Indian and Pakistani governments spend billions of dollars on weapons and the logistics of high altitude warfare, the battlefield has begun to melt. Right now, it has shrunk to about half its size. The melting has less to do with the military standoff than with people far away, on the other side of the world, living the good life. They're good people who believe in peace, free speech and human rights. They live in thriving democracies whose governments sit on the UN Security Council and whose economies depend heavily on the export of war and the sale of weapons to countries like India and Pakistan.... The glacial melt will cause severe floods in the subcontinent, and eventually severe droughts that will affect the lives of millions of people. That will give us even more reason to fight. We'll need more weapons. (XXXVI)

Clearly the logic here is circular: in order to enlarge their national borders, both countries require state-of-the-art military equipment. Yet the existence of such weaponry is predicated upon CO<sub>2</sub>-producing economies in the global north; these nations contribute—paradoxically—to the *decrease* of sustainable world-wide landmass, largely via climate change related weather events, leading to a still greater need for territorial expansion. Money, guns, environmental collapse: all are linked for Roy. Effectively, the more we as a species consume, the more *we need* to consume.

Throughout *Listening to Grasshoppers*, many of Roy's articles turn away from explicitly Anthropocenic concerns and toward issues of politics, economics, and caste. However, in doing so, she is careful to reiterate—often at a symbolic level—the tissular connectivity which ties such issues back to the trauma of environmental implosion. Each chapter, for instance, begins

and ends with a pictographic grasshopper, turning the codex itself into a kind of proliferating literary swarm which warns of impending eco-political destruction. “Grasshoppers,” as Roy puts it, are “a bad omen” (134). Numerous other sections contain references, albeit less overt, to the biological embeddedness of political life. George Bush’s March 2006 New Delhi public speech, for instance, is set amidst a zoo—replete with “*Hoolock Gibbon*[s],” “*clouded leopard*[s],” and a surprised looking “*Slow Loris*” (108). Here the president’s buffoonery—and also his famous simian appearance—suggest that human politics are not fundamentally divorced from non-human concerns. Her discussion of the December 13 2001 terrorist attack on India’s parliament, moreover, is labeled “And His Life Should Become Extinct”—a title which seems to link individual death to impending species eradication. Indeed, Roy’s entire collection is book-ended by direct explorations of climate change politics: just as she opens with the eroding Kashmiri glacier in her introduction, so too does Roy conclude with a vision of melting ice—this time in her short story “The Briefing.”

Originally written for Italian art magazine *Manifesta*, “The Briefing” ostensibly depicts a guerrilla leader addressing his troops as they prepare to assault the supposedly impenetrable—yet never previously attacked—Hapsburg fortress in Franzenfeste. However, most of the narrative is, in fact, concerned with the immanent disappearance of snow from the surrounding mountainside, and its consequences for local ski resorts. Werner Voltron, president of the Ski Instructors Association, puts it thusly: “‘The future, I think, is black’ .... By black he meant ominous, ruinous, hopeless, catastrophic, and bleak ... every one degree Celsius increase in winter temperatures spells doom for almost one hundred ski-resorts. That, as you can imagine, is a lot of money” (205-206). Despite his apparent concern, Roy makes it clear that Werner and his ilk are responsible for precisely the conditions he so bemoans. Such facilities must utilize fresh

water—sourced from already overstretched local drinking supplies—to produce artificial powder that will make up for the dissolving snow: ““You can bottle our ski slopes and drink them!” Guenther Holzhausen is known to have once boasted. [Some restless angry murmuring on the soundtrack.] I understand ... But calm your anger. It will only blur your anger and your purpose” (206). By ventriloquizing the narrator’s speech to his comrades—and their clear disgust at this tale—Roy not only condemns such environmentally destructive actions, but also presents a call-to-arms against the violence. In the final lines she appears to address the reader directly: “Go well, comrades, leave no footprints. Until we meet again, godspeed, *khuda hafiz* and keep your powder dry” (210). We are, here, not simply passive observers, but rather co-implicated in the fictional struggle. In support of this narrative strategy, Roy also intertextually invokes *Macbeth*. Specifically, the march of trees from “*Great Burnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill*” is compared to pine foliage migrating up the hills in search of cooler climes (208). By calling on such a widely familiar cultural referent in this manner, Roy again creates a form of textual ecology, one which draws the reader in to her own concerns. If we can understand how nature might shift out of joint through the murder of a king in Shakespeare, then it is possible—though not certain—we might conceive the scope of climate change.

Within *Listening to Grasshoppers*, then, global warming serves as a kind of event horizon. By beginning and ending with dissolving ice formations, Roy presents the Anthropocene as the largest and most all-consuming problem imaginable: the totality of other political concerns—on both a literal and textual level—are subsumed within it. In fact, the modern climate crisis is so vast, for her, that even long-held egalitarian dreams of real and universal democracy are unseated through its agency. She writes in her introduction: “What we need today, for the sake of the survival of this planet, is long-term vision. Can governments

whose very survival depends on immediate, extractive, short-term gain provide this? Could it be that democracy, the sacred answer to our short term hopes and prayers ... will turn out to be the endgame for the human race?" (X). In presenting this anti-liberal politico-economic outlook, Roy is in accord with Chakrabarty's own observation that "the mansion of modern freedoms stands on an ever-expanding base of fossil-fuel use" (208). Anthropogenic weather disruption, for both, requires a fundamental rethinking of our entire way of life. Not only must we shift because free-trade fundamentally undermines carbon neutrality—at least in our current, petroleum-heavy level of technological advance—but also insofar as pluralistic value systems themselves are no longer sustainable in ecological terms. Where the burning of fossils fuels is concerned, what one's neighbor does in his or her backyard suddenly *is* very much our concern. There can no longer be a prevailing logic of live and let live.

Responding to such challenges, Roy's most recent work *Walking with the Comrades* (2012) turns to an alternative social model, found in the Maoist Naxalite rebels encamped throughout India's many forest systems. Often fighting against exploitative mining companies—such as those operating on Bauxite deposits in Orissa—her book pictures them as a more eco-friendly method of being in the world. "I cannot believe this army," she writes: "As far as consumption goes, it's more Gandhian than any Gandhian, and has a lighter carbon footprint than any climate change evangelist" (67). By drawing our attention to these people, Roy seeks a form of thought which exists untainted by either modern capitalism or liberal democracy. While she is careful not to diminish the often horrific crimes of such militants—ranging from rape and murder to beheadings—she does try to assemble their oft-elided voices together into a unit capable of speaking at the level of international environmental issues. She acerbically enquires: "Will someone who's going to the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen later this year

[2009] please ask the only question worth asking: Can we leave the bauxite in the mountain?"

(35). Roy's implicit objective here, as in much of her non-fiction, is to gather together disparate and often silent voices in order to let them speak on the international stage.

Yet in attempting to connect the local with the global in this manner, Roy often ignores crucial differences between the two. While there are legitimate difficulties surrounding the politics of speaking for another—how can we best avoid misrepresentation? whose struggles can justifiably be tied to whose?—her writing often disregards such delicate issues of diplomacy. In “The Greater Common Good,” for instance, Roy compares Indians who ignore the repressive actions of big dam builders to “Old Nazis,” who she thinks “soothe themselves in similar ways” (42). Though well intentioned, her attempts to articulate ecological destruction at the level of genocide ignore numerous historical, racial, and political realities. Rhetorical flourish, here, entirely displaces any semblance of considered ethical response. Even more importantly, however, Roy's elevation of provincial environmental battles to the level of global warming fails to account for the qualitative—rather than simply quantitative—dissimilarities between these problems. Whereas one can stand atop a hill and survey the wasted, mine-pocked landscape below, such a vantage point is impossible in the case of climate change: mediation of some kind, whether scientific or aesthetic, is needed to “see” or “feel” the Anthropocene and its manifold effects. Further, finding solutions to global warming requires a radically different scale and kind of environmental thinking. Undermining traditional villains, like corrupt governments and international trade, while necessary, is not sufficient when confronting such issues. In Chakrabarty's terms: “these critiques do not given us an adequate hold on human history once we accept that the crisis of climate change is here with us and may exist as part of this planet for much longer than capitalism” (212). While bauxite extraction and accelerating carbon emissions

may have similar causes, the necessary solutions are not the same. Shifts in national politics or public opinion may resolve the former, but the latter clearly requires a trans-national, species oriented mode of thought.

Still, it is a testament to the importance and penetration of Roy's writing that her vision brings to the surface such crucial debates. Through her effort to imagine global warming via a set of proliferating micro-narratives, rather than the feature length book or film, she offers a new and viable strategy for engaging world-wide climate issues. In fact, Roy's basic eco-political project, which seeks—*qua* Latour—to build imaginative collectivities across different spatial and temporal boundaries, is both productive and fundamentally thought provoking—so long as it includes a self-reflexive attention to recognizing crucial differences. By drawing together disparate strands, her work seeks to construct a mosaic capable of representing the distributed, transnational experience of modern subjectivity and its interconnected ecology. She asks, in “The Briefing,” perhaps the most basic question within climate change debates: “What is the real world? Are things we cannot imagine, measure, analyze, represent and reproduce real? Do they exist? Do they live in the recesses of our minds in a Fort that has never been attacked? When our imaginations fail will the world fail too?” (204). Hence while recognizing the ever-present difficulty in imagining global warming, Roy reiterates the importance of such an effort nonetheless. In order to do so, she suggests, we must start by thinking small.

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## Biography

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