Arundhati Roy’s “Return to the Things Themselves”
Elizabeth S. Anker

in Fictions of Dignity: Embodying Human Rights in World Literature

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This chapter offers a reading of Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, which tackles specific lineages of oppression as well as the nature and genesis of human brutality using layered metaphors of touch and embodiment. The God of Small Things indicts what it perceives as a widespread contempt for human rights in Indian juridical and political culture. Roy suggests that globalization has contributed to both human and ecological suffering around the world, and through her novel critiques the tourist industry, environmental neglect, and numerous other symptoms of both late capitalism and popular culture. She also censures neoimperialism for the ongoing exploitation of the global South and shows how injustice is spawned by routine gender discrimination, local class resentments, and even family life.

Responsibility Unveiled
Dean J. Franco

in Race, Rights, and Recognition: Jewish American Literature since 1969

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This chapter explains how Tony Kushner's play Homebody/Kabul is a dramatic exploration of the ethics of cross-cultural recognition and responsibility. The play notably broaches an ethics about Western responsibility for globalization's reach and the difficulty of recognition across cultural and religious barriers. In addition, the chapter analyzes Homebody/Kabul, a play about an upper-class London housewife who disappears into Kabul, in conjunction with National Geographic's
discovery and unveiling of their famous Afghan girl, Sharbat Gula. Kushner's play is thus mapped across the very same terrain as the celebrated National Geographic feature, but the chapter reveals how the play is also a complication of National Geographic's teleology of loss and recovery, not to mention liberal feminism. The chapter argues that though the play is laced with points of cultural incommensurability and misapprehension, it nonetheless models a vision of ethical responsibility for the other particularly suggestive for a post-9/11 comprehension of the world.