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From national allegory to cosmopolitanism: Transformations in contemporary Anglo-Indian and Turkish novels

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Chapter Three

Subalterns Old and New

One winter night, on a hill where the huge refuse bins came daily and dumped the city's waste, eight shelters were set up by lantern-light near the garbage heaps. (Tekin 9)

Plastic bags and baskets provided roofs for the huts; homes were built part rubble, part moulds, part shards. In the morning, the wreckers kicked them to the ground. By night the hut people had erected mounds from all kind of materials they had salvaged during the day from the garbage: metal, stone, wood. But in the morning the wreckers returned and razed them all to the ground again ... The destruction went on for exactly thirty-seven endless days, and after each raid the huts became a little smaller and gradually lost all resemblance to houses. (Tekin 22)

Latife Tekin's *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills* (1996)⁸ opens with the struggle of squatters in Istanbul as they try to build their shanties in spite of the authorities. The fact that the story begins at a garbage hill where all the left-overs of the city are dumped is striking: it implies that the hut people settle at a place that marks the end of all things. One poignant aspect in this fragment is the analogy between humans and waste. Living inside garbage, surrounded by garbage and being treated like garbage, "the hut people seemed no longer human, smeared with dust, mud, garbage, their clothes in rags" (Tekin 22). Victimized by circumstances apparently beyond their control, they have been robbed, so to speak, of any remaining sense of decency and integrity as human beings. Living under dehumanising conditions, they have ceased to live like human beings and have become human waste instead. Their status as "waste material" has condemned them to the margins of society, away from the eyes of the elite who have no patience for such scenes of desolation.

This slum-dwelling, allegedly unproductive group of people in the urban system can be called the *lumpenproletariat*, a term coined by Marx. The conceptualisation of the

⁸ Hereinafter referred to as *Berji Kristin*.

lumpenproletariat is connected to the history of Western Europe, particularly to the contra-revolution in France of 1851. As defined in Marx's value-theory, the lumpenproletariat primarily consists of a transitional phenomenon related to the phase of primitive accumulation, the historical period in which the rural population are expelled from their land holdings and their means of production are expropriated by the capitalists. The uprooting of the peasants is intimately related to the emergence of the capitalist mode of production. The lumpenproletariat has a transitional character: in-between a peasant and a wage-labourer. The expelled peasants were, as Marx writes, "driven from their homes, turned into vagabonds, and then whipped, branded, tortured by laws grotesquely terrible, into the discipline necessary for the wage system" (365-366). The lumpenproletariat provides, on one side, as Marx puts it, a reserve army of labour for a rapidly expanding economy. On the other side, they are outside the productive processes in the sense that they have but a negative relation to the means of production.

Thus, the lumpenproletariat is crucial to industrialisation and development in Marx's analysis of modernisation. In many of the big urban centres in the Third World, however, the lumpenproletariat presents a break with Marxian theories of modernisation. Today, urbanisation is not only detached from economic growth but also from its supposedly *sine qua non* of rising agricultural productivity. The increasing unemployed slum population appears excessive in relation to the fact that most of the countries in the Third World are characterised by little, none or negative economic growth and low standards of living. In 2002, the CIA noted: "By the late 1990s a staggering one billion workers representing one-third of the world's labour force, most of them in the South, were either unemployed or underemployed" (quoted in Davis 1999). Moreover, "[t]here is no official scenario for the reincorporation of this vast mass of surplus labour into the mainstream of the world economy" (Davis 1999).

In the light of the velocity of urbanisation processes in the Third World, slumification is far from an unexpected consequence. Writing of India, Jan Breman contends, “A point of no return is reached when a reserve army waiting to be incorporated into the labour process becomes stigmatised as a permanently redundant mass, an excessive burden that cannot be included now or in the future in economy or in society” (13). This situation is related to the effect that global restructuring has on the semi-peripheral countries. Countries such as Turkey and India have been going through a double process of, on the one hand, integration and, on the other, social exclusion and marginalisation. According to Asef Bayat, this double process has given rise to the growth of marginalised and deinstitutionalised subalterns in the cities of developing countries(61).

Balram Halwai, the protagonist of Aravind Adiga’s 2008 Booker Award winning novel *The White Tiger* (2008), recounts

The rich of Delhi, to survive the winter, keep electrical heaters, or gas heaters, or even burn logs of wood in their fireplaces. When the homeless or servants like night watchmen and drivers who are forced to spend time outside in winter, want to keep warm, they burn whatever they find on the ground. One of the best things to put in the fire is cellophane, the kind used to wrap fruits, vegetables, and business books in: inside the flame, it changes its nature and melts into a clear fuel. The only problem is that while burning, it gives off a white smoke that makes your stomach churn. (Adiga 159)

How many thousands of such beautiful things there must be to see in Delhi. If you were just free to go wherever you wanted, and do whatever you wanted. (Adiga 161)

While the rich enjoy the cosy warmth of their house, the poor cannot feel warm without getting poisoned at the same time. The poor also have no real mobility, both literally and figuratively, since their lack of financial means and respectable class standing prevents them from pursuing their desires. They are, in other words, trapped in a society that is standing on the foundations of oppressive class structures. In the eyes of Balram, the city is separated into two worlds, highlighting the widening gap between the rich and the poor, as well as the economic system that allows a small minority to prosper at the expense of the majority. As he

drives through the city, he observes “the silhouettes of the slum dwellers close to one another inside the tents; you could make out one family—a husband, a wife, a child—all huddled around a stove inside one tent, lit up by a golden lamp (Adiga 188). What he witnesses is the squatter citizen, a figure central to –yet invisible from– the urban imaginary of the twenty first century’s global cities, Istanbul and Delhi among them.

Class distinctions become even sharper in India as they are mingled not only with global operations of the capital, but also with country-specific circumstances that impinge on ways of living. The caste system in India has been a part of class oppression for many centuries. Balram’s last name, Halwai, is significant in this respect: “That’s my caste – my destiny. Everyone in the Darkness who hears that name knows all about me at once” (Adiga 63). The name Halwai refers to the caste to which Balram belongs, revealing his status. A person’s past and future life is entwined with the act of naming, given to him even before he is born to that caste.⁹ What motivates the caste system in India is the desire to create a coherent society through hierarchy.

The significance of caste system in Indian daily life is a recurring theme in Arundhati Roy’s Booker Award winning novel of the year 1997, *The God of Small Things*.¹⁰ It begins with a historical sketch that takes the reader back to the pre-colonial era of India, when the laws of caste came into being:

Equally, it could be argued that it actually began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch Ascendancy, before Vasco de Gama arrived, before the Zamorin’s conquest of Calicut. Before the three purple-robed Syrian bishops murdered by the Portuguese were found floating in the sea, with coiled sea serpents riding on their chests and

⁹Caste is a system of social stratification with religious affiliations. It lies at the very root of social structure of most social groups in India. Sociologists have defined caste as a hereditary and endogamous group, which is usually localised. It has a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. The caste system is interlinked with the ‘Varna’ model, which divides the Hindu society into four orders, viz., Brahmana, (Brahman, traditionally, priest and scholar), Kshatriya (ruler and soldier), Vaishya (merchant) and Shudra (peasant, labourer and servant). Halwai means sweet-maker, his caste leaves him only useful as a tea server.

¹⁰ Hereinafter referred to as *Small Things*

oysters knotted in their tangled beards. It could be argued that it began long before Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into Kerala like tea from a teabag. That it really began in the days when the Love Laws were made. The laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. (Roy 33)

The author underlines the impact of the caste system on every aspect of life in India, and suggests its metaphysical, eternal and hence unavoidable presence. Determining social and sexual interactions, caste laws are described by Doreen D'Cruz as being "older than the European colonization of India, older than the inter-rite conflicts between the Portuguese missionaries and the Syrian-Christian church, and older even than the Christianization of Kerala in the first century AD" (56). She also argues that, from the text's point of view, the caste system is portrayed as a structure of exploitation and marginalisation that precedes and even postdates the age of colonialism (71).

However, as this chapter argues, class distinction and oppression are historical facts, and hence attributable to concrete developments. Cruz's observation on the historicity of caste system in India is dubious given the fact that India has almost four hundred years of colonial history. Thus, the influence of colonisation in the structuring of the caste system is inevitable. Nicholas B. Dirks emphasizes the impact of colonialism on the caste system, and argues that until "the emergence of British colonial rule ... the political domain was not encompassed by the religious domain" and that "caste structure, ritual form, and political process were all dependent on relations of power" (*The Hollow Crown* 4-5). Dirks claims that the caste system as we know it today is the product of an historical encounter between India and Western colonial rule. According to Dirks, it "was under the British that 'caste' became a single term capable of expressing, organizing, and above all 'systematising' India's diverse forms of social identity, community, and organisation" (*Castes of Mind* 5).

Historically speaking, class distinctions in Turkey supply a different context. Turkey is dissimilar to India from a historical standpoint. It has no history of a caste system, and

moreover, has not been colonised by a Western power as India has. Furthermore, the fact that it has an imperial history of its own (the Ottoman legacy) makes for a precarious relationship with its past. However, as a developing country, its internal dynamics have continuously been moulded through practices and developments originating in the West. The modernisation project initiated in the 1920s has its roots in Enlightenment ideals such as rationalisation and secularisation, which are Western products. Pointing to the uncertain positioning of Turkey in relation to Europe, several scholars have depicted Turkey as a “torn country” (Huntington), as having “two souls” (Pamuk), or as “in-between” (Robbins).

Seen in its historical development, the state of the “hut people” as waste material, or as the lumpenproletariat in Marxian terms, can be productively compared to and contrasted with that of the oppressed classes in the Indian context. As Dipesh Chakrabarty claims, the “first in Europe, then elsewhere” paradigm implies that “different non-Western nationalisms would later produce local versions of the same narrative, replacing Europe by some locally constructed centre” (*Provincializing* 7). So the shared frame of Europe as the source, paradigm and catalyst of progress and history for variegated non-Western countries makes it possible to discuss similarities and differences between the two contexts.

At the same time, such an investment in the conception of Europe as the authentic location of advancement seems biased. It is what makes the process of modernisation in non-Western countries seem like mimicry to many European and non-Europeans. Hence, to avoid the pitfalls of this conception, I deploy this theory throughout the chapter in order to argue for historical differences. In the context of contemporary geo-economics, *Berji Kristin* becomes comparable to *The White Tiger* only in specific ways. The class distinctions that are apparent in the novels are diverse examples of the situation of the subaltern within the context of global neoliberal capital. Thus, the representation of the supposedly “old” colonial

untouchable in *Small Things* becomes relevant to the contemporary subaltern in *The White Tiger*.

The aim of this chapter, then, is to compare and contrast the subaltern experience of two countries, India and Turkey, through a comparative discussion of the three novels I have mentioned. The issue is not mutually exclusive but a matter of two overlapping contexts, sometimes contrasting, sometimes reinforcing each other. I first discuss the concept of the subaltern to try to supply terminological clarity. I trace the genealogy of the term in the writings of the Subaltern Studies group to reveal the ways in which subaltern studies has acquired a taxonomic position, opening itself up to other geographies and sites that can now interrogate Western domination from their respective perspectives. This theoretical perspective helps me to scrutinise subaltern experiences in *Berji Kristin*.

However, I first analyse *Small Things* as it covers the twentieth century, the colonial period, the immediate postcolonial years and the postmodern period of transnational capital and development. My analysis will try to demonstrate that the situation of the subaltern is not only shaped by the caste laws that existed in pre-colonial India, but also by the colonial efforts to know India well enough to rule it and profit from it. I subsequently move to *The White Tiger* to discuss kinds of exploitation within twenty-first century forms of imperialism and/or neoliberal globalism. Finally, I examine a different milieu in *Garbage Hills*, to identify the new subaltern within the context of Turkey.

Subaltern studies

For Gyan Prakash (who develops it with reference to Gramsci's writings), the term subaltern refers to subordination in terms of class, caste, gender, race, language, and culture ("Subaltern Studies" 1477). Ranajit Guha and other scholars first introduced it to academic

circles in the 1980s as an analytic category for Indian historiography. Those were generally dissatisfied with the interpretations of India's nationalist movement, which neglected "the politics of the people," or the subaltern classes, in the making of the Indian nation. Guha argues that the historiography of the Freedom Movement of the nineteenth and twentieth century is elitist because of scholars' commitment to a class outlook that privileged the ideas, activities and politics of the British colonisers and of the dominant groups in Indian society ("On Some Aspects" 4).

However, according to Vinayak Chaturvedi, Guha is not simply interested in examining questions of subordination in a classical Marxist framework defined by the logic of capital (9). Rather, he argues that caste, gender, age or other denominators including, but not limited to, class can be subjects of discussion under the heading of the subaltern condition (9). Furthermore, Guha is concerned with the interpretation of culture that informs subalternity, as well as with those factors of domination that are not merely determined by the class dynamics. He mentions that British colonialism had left an uneven impact on economic and social developments in India (10). Therefore, it is necessary to understand how different sections of society were affected from area to area.

Located in the southern part of India, with a coast facing the Arabian Sea, the state of Kerala should be mentioned at this point, as it is the region in which most of the events take place in *Small Things*. Kerala has a long history of colonialism that stretches to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, when Kerala, as well as the rest of India, became more intensely exploited by the British, as they imposed a profound economic and social restructuring. In her brief history of Kerala, Susan Comfort comments on the different modes of governance the British powers deployed:

In Malabar, which the British ruled directly, they conferred repressive powers on the high caste Hindu landlords over a peasant class that consisted of lower caste laborers and Muslims... In Travancore and Cochin, the British made changes in the law that

gave tenants proprietorship rights but demanded tax payments in cash, thus increasing sharecropper hardships... the British relied on collaborators within Kerala, prominently among them were the Nambudiri Brahmin class and also Syrian Christians, who benefited from close contact with British missionaries. ("The Hidden Life" 4)

Guha's point of rethinking the nature of class-based analysis in the making of Indian nation looms large, as modes of power operated differently in different areas at the time. The narrator of the novel points at this issue in the "protest march" during which Ammu's twins recognise Velutha in the crowd, yelling "Long Live the Revolution!" (Roy 63). The way in which the march is narrated involves other events as well, dating back to the history of communism in Kerala as well as that of familial relationships. Ammu's big brother Chacko is a "self-proclaimed Marxist," who cannot explain why "the Communist party was so much more successful in Kerala than it had been almost anywhere else in India, except perhaps in West Bengal" (Roy 63). Kerala is a state with a long Marxist tradition, one of the post-independence bastions of communist power. It is also unique in the sense that, for more than a thousand years, there have been three main religions: Islam, Christianity and Hinduism were established in Kerala as a result of trading networks with the Middle East.

In his extensive analysis of the Subaltern Studies collective, Chaturvedi identifies various approaches that are used to account for subalternity. He argues that, for David Hardiman, the middle-peasants constitute the subaltern classes (11). In contrast, Partha Chatterjee has worked on connecting Marxian social theory with Foucaultian notions of power to argue for "community" as the primary organising principle for political mobilisation (12). Dipesh Chakrabarty, furthermore, has hinted at the coexistence of multiple modes of power with capitalism in colonial India (14). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, finally, has emphasised the failure of Subalternist historiography to conceptualise the subjectivity of the subaltern woman (16).

Differences of opinion with regard to the scope of the group have resulted in resorting to the idea of subalternity as an “effect of discursive systems” (Prakash, “Subaltern Studies” 1480). It has been concluded that the subaltern is not so much a separate subject outside the domain of elites, as initially proposed at the start of the project, but is rather understood as constructed by dominant discourses produced by elites. So the articulation of Subaltern Studies as a postcolonial project has also involved the “re-thinking” of forms of knowledge linked to colonialism and western domination. What is at stake is the challenging and resisting of the meta-narratives that place Europe at the centre of history-making and history-writing. Prakash contends that “the persistence of colonialist knowledge” remains inscribed within nationalist and Marxist histories of India (“Postcolonial Criticism” 9).

Although nationalist and Marxist writings have contested colonialism from their respective standpoints, what matters is that the analyses have remained Eurocentric and they have been based on the pillars of Reason, Progress and History (“Postcolonial Criticism” 11). For Chakrabarty, for instance, the challenge for the Subalternists and other scholars of non-Western, histories is that their histories have reflected positions of subalternity in relation to the normative history of Europe (“Postcoloniality” 1). “History” has been produced as a discourse in which Europe has remained the essential starting point, assuming a dominant presence at the centre of possible historical knowledge.

Thus, within Subaltern Studies, a central problematic has been the question of how this knowledge is to be “provincialised”. The internal changes within the project have become pronounced in the shift from studying structures of peasant consciousness in the making of Indian history to the perception of Indian history as a discourse described as “subaltern” in relation to the dominant discourse of Europe’s history. What has remained possible for Subaltern Studies has been the opportunity provided by a postcolonial critique: a critique of discourses authorised by Western domination (Prakash, “Subaltern Studies”

1490). Marx's ideas have become a subject of inquiry within the framework of "Eurocentrism" because of his contention that India had no history until British modernisation brought India into "History."

The Subaltern Studies group believes that all histories can be known through the universal category of "capital." As Chakrabarty explains, "All past histories are now to be known from the vantage point of this category, that is in terms of their differences from it" ("Postcoloniality" 3). To the extent that India's introduction to the logic of capitalism is belated in relation to Europe, it would necessarily be inferior to the universalised definition of capitalism and European history. Moreover, to the extent that India's development would always remain incomplete in relation to the West, its history would essentially reflect the idea that only through colonialism India entered History and capital to begin with. Instead, Chakrabarty proposes that we "situate our thoughts about the multiple ways of being human and their relationship to the global logic of capital" (*Provincializing*, 67). For Chakrabarty, through arguing for historical differences in relation to the universal concept of capital, we might achieve an ability to rethink a past that factors in capital, while simultaneously searching for new possibilities that exemplify differences.

Chakrabarty's intervention, Prakash claims, does not aim to abandon Marxism altogether, but helps us "extricate class analysis from its nineteenth century heritage, acknowledging that its critique of capitalism was both enabled and disabled by its historicity as a European discourse" ("Postcolonial Criticism" 15). India's past is not simply a different kind of European past; in fact, India's past is not even an "Indian" past (Chaturvedi 19). It cannot be classified within an analytic that amounts to a form of "homogenisation of irreducible difference" (19) in opposition to the colonial efforts to standardise India's multiple forms of social identity.

At this point, Chakrabarty delineates two “types of history” (*Provincializing* 63-71), which he combines as intertwined modes of analysis and of interpretation. The first type, “history 1”, is predicated on the “translation of diverse life-worlds and conceptual horizons about being human into the categories of Enlightenment thought that inhere in the logic of capital” (*Provincializing* 71). This analytic tradition, exemplified by Marx, tends “to evacuate the local by assimilating it to some abstract universal while ‘demystifying’ ideology in order to produce a critique that looks toward a more just social order” (18). Crucially, the dynamic of disenchantment that operates through history 1 is indispensable for Chakrabarty’s framework insofar as it provides a means to overcome nativism while offering a wide-ranging logic for social activism.

In contrast to “history 1”, what Chakrabarty—informed by the hermeneutic tradition— calls “history 2” allows the power and meaning of local narratives to be recuperated by the historian. The substance of history 2 is elusive and refractory when scrutinised through the universalising protocols of history 1. Their meanings collapse and risk becoming mere vestiges, signs of incompleteness. By embracing the hermeneutic tradition, as exemplified by Heidegger, Chakrabarty restores the integrity of these local narratives, in which thought is intimately tied to a specific place.

Hence, in light of Chakrabarty’s observations, it is possible to reclaim the historical specificity of different life practices as in the stories of the subaltern in *Small Things*. Within the perspective provided by Chakrabarty, I try to demonstrate the ways in which *Small Things* exposes caste embeddedness as well as the impact the colonial experience has on the subaltern experience of modernity in India. To do so, I explore the subaltern’s position through a discussion of images from the novel.

Small things and history

The plot of *Small Things* focuses on a forbidden relationship between a Syrian Christian divorcee, Ammu, and a low caste carpenter, Velutha. The book's narrative alternates between two brief time periods in the life of the Ipe family (Ammu's family), the two weeks leading up to family catastrophes of death, love, murder and betrayal in December 1969, and a retrospective return to those events through the memory of Rahel, Ammu's daughter who goes home to see her twin brother in June 1992. Throughout the novel, History (with a capital H) is presented as a dominating force that affects all social realms, including familial, intimate and affective relationships. In her interview with David Barsamian, Roy says

Small Things is a book which connects the very smallest things to the very biggest. Whether it's the dent that a baby spider makes on the surface of water in a pond or the quality of moonlight on a river or how history and politics intrude into your life, your house, your bedroom, your bed, into the most intimate relationships between people. (Barsamian 11)

Read as a map of the novel, the quote signifies that *Small Things* not only underlines the subaltern positioning of India in terms of the logic of capital (history 1), but also shows local difference (caste system) as well as how it is moulded by the precepts of the capital. The "small things" of the title are at first "little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted." But they become "imbued with new meaning. Suddenly they become the bleached bones of a story" (Roy 32). Susan Comfort underlines this relationship between large forces and small events, and claims that "the novel is insisting on a re-examination [of this relation] between the universal and the particular, according to which in dominant logic the "small things" and particulars are all but subsumed, destroyed, or brutalised" (17).

Indeed, Roy has chosen among the lowest rung of society for her main character, a so-called Untouchable named Velutha.¹¹ I contend that the “small things” become exposed through the discrimination along caste lines, exemplified by Velutha’s invisibility in the novel. Velutha “left no footprints in sand, no ripples in water, no image in mirrors,” as the person people “never thought about,” or of whom people “have no memory at all” (Roy 250). Velutha’s situation overlaps with that of the subaltern subjects, who are deprived of the possibility of transformation, an emancipatory potential within the narrative of History. To demonstrate the connection of the intimate relationship between the smallest and the biggest (in other words, Velutha and history), we need to situate the utterly personal or the private vis-à-vis the historical in that History empowers itself at the expense of subaltern positions that have been deliberately marginalised. In the following fragment, Roy hints at the ways in which Eurocentric thinking of History dominates on local histories.

The real secret was that communism crept into Kerala insidiously. As a reformist movement that never overtly questioned the traditional values of a caste-ridden, extremely traditional community. The Marxists 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. (Roy 64)

Aijaz Ahmad criticises this passage from the novel, arguing it reflects “the anti-communism of the novel’s political ideology ... not only the unfavourable portrayal of the Kerala Marxists in the novel but also Roy’s portrayal of the erotic as the real zone of rebellion and Truth . . . her sense that the personal is the only arena of the political” (107). Ahmad criticises the novelist for confining the world within the limits of body politics while acknowledging

¹¹ Caste is an ascribed status since caste membership is acquired by birth. The hereditary caste groups are arranged into a social and ritual hierarchy, with Brahmans at the top, next the Kshatriyas, then Vaishyas followed by the Shudras. In the social hierarchy the lowest rung of the caste society is of the untouchables who are ritually the most impure. traditionally the castes considered to be untouchable were forbidden entry into the upper-caste houses. In South India, even till the British period, certain parts of the town and cities were inaccessible to the untouchable castes. According to a Hindu tradition that goes back to 1200 BC, Untouchables remain outside the caste system and are considered to be polluted, in a permanent state of impurity, and are therefore not to be touched by members of the caste system.

Roy's position as a "representative intellectual of this particular moment in India" (107). Anuradha Dingwaney Needham also claims that *Small Things* is embedded in the larger intellectual, theoretical, cultural, and political currents that have acquired prominence in the contemporary historical moment in as well as beyond India (370). These two criticisms pave the way for my analysis of the subaltern position in *Small Things*: the political subtext – marked by small events—of narration allows room for modification of History.

Read from this vantage point, the novel records diverse "small stories" with a particular stylistic difference: it represents the events of 1969 and 1992 in a non-linear structure of narration, that is, with flashbacks and the juxtaposition of different "small stories" within those events. The protest march is a good example of "circular narration" style (Benoit 98). It consists of different stories belonging to different temporalities. It starts with the approach of the marchers who belong to different strata of Kerala, including the Untouchables outside the caste system. The non-linear narration succeeds in revealing an underlying complexity and contradiction below the surface of things. When the twins Rahel and Estha recognize Velutha in the crowd, the narrative goes back to explain how communism infiltrated Kerala. The next story the reader faces is Chacko's memories about his father teasing him for being a Marxist. The family gets trapped in their car in the midst of the demonstration, accompanied by allusions to the election of Brahmin Namboodiripad's Communist Party, and the government's intention "to enforce land reforms, neutralise the police, and subvert the judiciary and Restrain the Hand of the Reactionary anti-People Congress Government at the Center" (Roy 65). In addition, a Syrian-Christian wedding party, Hindu pilgrimage buses, war veterans, and beggar fruit vendors are all mentioned. I read this condensing of different time frames with diverse small stories as the attempt to re-think the relationship between small things and the large forces of History.

Roy's grandiose attempt to cover the history of the caste system and that of the postcolonial present is also discernible in the roots of the Ipe family in *The God of Small Things*. The narrator portrays the Ipes as a Syrian Christian family who live in Ayemenem, a small village in Kerala. The family, we learn from the novel, derive their status from a prominent Syrian Christian descendent, Father E. John Ipe, who in 1876 at the age of seven received his blessings from the Patriarch of Antioch. The family prospered under the British Empire as landowners and government bureaucrats, yet ever since Independence, their fortunes have been weakening. Stressing the beneficiary position of the Ipes, the narrator immediately contrasts them with Velutha the Paravan and his ancestors. Even though the wealth of the family is generated by Velutha's father who labours to create it, in the eyes of Chacko's mother Mamachi, Velutha "owe[s] everything to [the] family" (Roy 247). He belongs to the lowest level of the Hindu caste system. Reminding the readers of the historical origins of Velutha's position, Mammachi recalls "a time, in her girlhood, when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint" (71). She continues, "[In her day], Paravans, like other Untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads" (71).

The Ipes have always been Anglophiles. The Great-grandparents Reverend E. John Ipe and his wife belong to the oldest generation of the family. Estha and Rahel are seven years old, and live with their divorced mother (Ammu) and her family. As befits an Anglophile family, the Ipes invest in Western culture and education as their source of collective reference: Estha's hero is Elvis Presley, the children speak English, uncle Chacko was sent to college, in England (Oxford), and the twins are taken to the movies to watch *The Sound of Music* (obviously, they already know its songs by heart).

As a family of Anglophiles, the Ipes are totally controlled by History. History dominates their social and cultural interactions. It is represented as a “sickening thud” and a pervasive smell “like old roses on the breeze” (Roy 54), and is characterised as a determinate, inevitable force that “collect[s] its dues from those who break its law” (Roy 54, 268). The transgressor is thus doomed to be revenged upon. History, as Chacko explains to Ammu’s twins Rahel and Estha, “was like an old house at night... with all the lamps lit ... and ancestors whispering inside” (51). The past Chacko refers to is India’s past, which is massively inflected by British colonialism. At this point Chacko adopts the critical voice of the text: in his words to the twins, he says that the Ipe family is “a family of Anglophiles who are trapped outside their own history” (51). They can neither get out, nor stay inside of it. This situation is a plain consequence of colonialism but as a family of Anglophiles, Chacko’s position prevents them from a full recognition of what it means to perceive the West as the norm of all modernity. As a result of earlier colonial ideologies, he has assumed an image of the Ipes as inferior, as living in a world apart on the margins.

In the novel, the sharpest anti-colonial critique of Anglophilia is offered by Ammu, whose experience as a woman, trapped by codes, rules and prejudice make her more cynical towards dominant ideologies. During the elaborate performance of receiving Sophie Mol (Chacko’s half-British daughter), she cannot help feeling exoticised by the remarks from Sophie’s mother and refuses to be a part of the event saying, “[m]ust we behave like some damn godforsaken tribe that’s just been discovered?” (Roy 171). Scholars have also argued that Ammu represents the position of the subaltern: one who has dared to divorce her husband, rejects Anglophilia, has had a love affair with an untouchable, and has never accepted her secondary status as a woman. All her life she has known what it feels like to be at the wrong end of hierarchies. The experience has made her impatient and rebellious: a “breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against” (Roy 189).

However, when she is interrogated by the policemen who find her and Velutha having sex in History House, the cynic and rebellious character in her gives way to powerlessness. After they find her, the policemen tease her and touch her breasts with a stick, calling her a veshya (the Malayalam word for *prostitute*). Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida argues that the objectification of Ammu's body, her being called a veshya, and her inability to argue verbally with the policeman all add to a web of power relations, in which the transgressive subaltern is ultimately devoid of individuality, corporeality and political voice. Ammu's and Velutha's bodies bear the brunt of the silenced subaltern (268).

Ammu and Velutha transgress caste boundaries in a place called the "History House," located in the colonial rubber estate that was formerly occupied by Kairu Saipu, "the Englishman who had "gone native"" (Roy 51). The house is described as the place where "History collects its dues," the place where "the sober, steady brutality, the economy of it all" is calculated (Roy 292). Originally the image is fabricated by Chacko to explain to the twins the situation of the Anglophiles in the context of British colonialism in India; however, it also happens to be the place where the "Love Laws" are violated, where Ammu and Velutha cross caste borders. The house also serves as the setting for the dire consequence of the infraction, the place where History catches up with Velutha, as he is beaten to death by "History's Henchmen" (292), a reference alluding to Ayemenem's police power. His death, like his footprints, is swept away, erased from hegemonic historical accounts.

The fact that Velutha is beaten to death in the History House reveals the relationship between oppression and the bitter reality of the caste system. Taking into account that the History House is located in a former colonial rubber estate, the murder assumes charged significance. Read through Chakrabarty's perception of History 2, the murder implicates the capitalisation of land within the specific history of imperialism in India. As Gail Omvedt notes, "The accumulation of the earth's resources for the increase of capital has imposed

many facets of a money economy and the logic of production for profit on regions throughout the world, but not primarily by turning people into wage labourers” but by “force and violence against nonwage labourers” (20). Even so, those forms are embedded within a system of dominance within, and not outside, a capitalist imperialist economy and history. Reading *The God of Small Things* in this framework allows us to notice the ideological dimensions hidden in this history as well as their enduring legacies in the postcolonial present.

In 1992, years after the murder of Velutha, Rahel returns to Ayemenem, and sees that the History House has been transformed into an international holiday resort which

could no longer be approached from the river. It had turned its back to Ayemenem. The hotel guests were ferried across the backwaters, straight from Cochin. They arrived by speedboat, opening up a V of foam on the water, leaving behind a rainbow film of gasoline... The view from the hotel was beautiful but here too the water was thick and toxic. No swimming signs had been put up in stylish calligraphy. They had built a tall wall to screen off the slum and prevent it from encroaching on Kari Saipu’s estate. There wasn’t much they could do about the smell. (Roy 119)

This passage aptly conveys how the playground of Rahel’s childhood has become a marketable commodity in step with the changing spirit of the times. Towards the end of the twentieth century, History House is useful because of its contribution to tourism. Robbed of its earlier emotional and cultural significance, which cannot be translated into financial gain, the House has “turned its back to Ayemenem,” which now belongs to an irretrievable past. On the other hand, the contamination of the environment by (the rainbow film of water left by the steamboat, the toxic water that makes it impossible for people to swim) is symptomatic of a larger problem: increasing environmental degradation in the era of advanced capitalism. Having lost its charisma, the House has been reduced to a touristic novelty, cut off from the surroundings that informed its once authentic identity. Its identity eroded, it now exists in a vacuum, behind a wall, separated artificially from “the slum.” The

new inhabitants of the site are to be recognized from the “smell” that also marks their garbage status similar to the “hut people” I have referred to in the beginning of the chapter. The presence of slum people neighbouring the Heritage House hints at a new reality: a new kind of subaltern has been born of neoliberal, postcolonial globalisation. Thus the house becomes the site where colonial, postcolonial and globalised forms of power intermingle. The facts that the area around the History House has been portrayed as “God’s Own Country” and that the House has been re-labelled “Heritage House” refer to the drastic transformation that has taken place in Kerala as well as India within twenty years.

In Roy’s *Small Things*, as I have tried to show, the state of the “old” colonial and postcolonial subaltern both marks and is marked by a historicity that brings us back to Chakrabarty’s conception of history as “both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experience of political modernity in non-Western nations” (*Provincializing* 16). Small narratives are vital parts of comprehending the class or culture specific circumstances when reflecting on History. Moreover, class oppression, whether rooted in colonial or country-specific circumstances, continues to exist, albeit in different forms, which I will further discuss in the next section in relation to Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*.

The new subaltern

Written a decade later than *The God of Small Things*, *The White Tiger* (2008) delineates class tensions within a more contemporary setting. It describes the current “caste system” in the following terms:

To sum up—in the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat—or get eaten up. (Adiga 64)

The passage indicates the dramatic turn in Indian economic policy in 1991, when, after a balance-of-payments crisis, it began to implement a neoliberal agenda aggressively. This agenda has included the typical range of policies associated with neoliberalism, such as broad liberalisation of trade and foreign investment; reduction of corporate tax rates; privatisation of state-run services; reduction of workers' rights; and cuts of public expenditures on health and education.

Despite years of robust economic growth since the 1990s, statistics show that poverty is on the rise in India: India ranks a lowly 66 out of 88 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2008. The report claims India has more hungry people – more than 200 million– than any other country in the world. One third of the world's poor live in India, according to the latest estimates from the World Bank. Based on its new threshold of poverty - \$ 1.25 a day – the number of poor people has gone up from 421 million in 1981 to 456 million in 2005. India ranks 128 out of 177 countries in the UN's Human Development Index (BBC). The protagonist of *The White Tiger*, Balram, refers to the rising inequality in India by referring to the decrease in the number of castes as only “two” (Adiga 64): he touches on the transformation of the caste system into one that is forged by contemporary forces of (neo)imperialism in the form of neoliberal globalisation.

In this supposedly new caste structure, the subalterns are even more marginalised, not less. *The White Tiger* focuses on this process that is exemplified by Balram's autobiography, which outlines a genesis of the new subaltern positions in India. It tells us that it is not the caste system that rigidifies the disparity between the rich and the poor per se; the consequences of the global operations of the capital have had unfortunate ramifications for India's subaltern as well. Balram is one of those subalterns who try to resist the oppression of the caste system but who cannot escape being marginalised by the present oppression.

In the opening chapter, the reader is introduced to the entrepreneur Ashok Sharma through his first letter to Wen Jiabao, the President of China. Ashok has already climbed the ladder of success by murdering his employer, and stealing his bag full of money. His true identity is revealed to the reader in the subsequent pages, as he recounts his life story in his letters. He is Balram Halwai, the son of a rickshaw puller, belonging to the caste of sweet-makers, the Halwai. Balram claims that the story of his life provides a much better description of the country than Jiabao is likely to receive from India's leaders. His life story opens at his first day in school when he finds out that he is lacking both a name and a date of birth:

See, my first day in school, the teacher made all the boys line up and come to his desk so he could put our names down in his register. When I told him what my name was, he gaped at me:
“Munna? That's not a real name.”
He was right: it just means “boy.”
“That’s all I’ve got, sir,” I said.
It was true. I’d never been given a name.
.... “Well, it’s up to me, then, isn’t it?” He passed his hand through his hair and said, “We’ll call you...Ram. Wait—don’t we have a Ram in this class? I don’t want any confusion. It’ll be Balram.” (Adiga 13)

Balram's name is given by his school teacher, an agent of interpellation; his surname is pre-given by the caste system. The act of naming is part of a political or ideological constitution of social power. The caste system has the power to homogenise Balram's individuality and limits his social mobility. Balram's deliberate effort to craft a new identity (Ashok Sharma) and a business venture comprises a counter-attempt of climbing the social ladder. Yet, his effort to rename himself is also an exercise in commodification as this endeavour is marked by the commodity structure that underlies capitalist society. He describes the motto of his company as “We Drive Technology Forward” and markets his business to the customers saying, “If you want your call-centre boys and girls driven home in style, just click where it says CONTACT ASHOK SHARMA NOW” (301). This engagement with commodification

reveals that commodity production is at the root of the structures of oppression at the centre of capitalist imperialism. As Balram describes the details of his new wealth, he underlines the contrast between his present and past: “All of them belong to me—Munna, whose destiny was to be a sweet-maker!” (302).

Balram becomes a successful entrepreneur who ends up at the top, as a proof of the miracle story of the urban subaltern. In this respect, a measure of socio-economic liberation and self-determination is possible thanks to neoliberalism. Yet, upward social mobility comes with a burden: it requires the endorsement of an “end justifies the means” ethos given that Balram only becomes a successful businessman through illegal acts such as theft and homicide. He says, “Yes, it’s true: a few thousand rupees of someone else’s money, and a lot of hard work, can make magic happen in this country” (301). In that sense, the coexistence of success and lack of morality can be explained as the drawback of capitalism: the contemporary dynamics of capital and the distorted conceptions of neoliberal reforms result in further oppression of the subaltern. Owing to political corruption, the rich benefit more and more from the flow of the capital while the underprivileged are further deprived of basic human needs. This stark contrast forms the basis for committing crimes against humanity and a subsequent feeling of guilt. As Balram states, “It has darkened my soul. All the skin-whitening creams sold in the markets of India won’t clean my hands again” (Adiga 318).

The omnipresence of capitalism gives way to, in Balram’s words, “an India of Light, and an India of Darkness” (Adiga 14). The circumstances that make Balram’s upward mobility from the “dark” to the “light” possible are not solely related to Balram’s entrepreneurial ability; they are the sum of what Balram has personally endured as the representative of the underprivileged in India. He is from Laxmangarh, a small, impoverished village in Bihar, a polarised world, unequally shared by the landowning class and the peasantry. Like all the other rural children, he inhabits the Darkness. Balram’s family

members become victims of their landlord's exploitation. Balram excels at school and wins encomiums from the school inspector, who, impressed with his intelligence, praises him as The White Tiger, "the rarest of animals—the creature that comes along only once in a generation" (Adiga 35). The inspector gives Balram a book entitled *Lessons for Young Boys from the Life of Mahatma Gandhi* and promises he will be given a scholarship to attend a school in the city so that he can fulfil his potential. Unfortunately, the White Tiger is pulled out of school and made to work in a tea stall to pay off his father's debt to their landlord.

Balram calls his landlord Wild Boar, who

owned all the good agricultural land around Laxmangarh. If you wanted to work on those lands, you had to bow down to his feet, and touch the dust under his slippers, and agree to swallow his day wages. When he passed by women, his car would stop; the windows would roll down to reveal his grin; two of his teeth, on either side of his nose, were long and curved, like little tusks (Adiga 25).

If the peasants want to graze animals, use the roads for their carts, to fish or use the water for ferrying, they must pay their feudal landlords. They have no choice but to fall prey to the greed of their rapacious landlords. That is why, along with the landlord Wild Boar, the Buffalo, Stork and Raven are all named after animals. The de-personifications help the narrator to loath the enormities of these landlords who "fed on the village, and everything that grew in it, until there was nothing left for anyone else to feed on" (Adiga 26).

Moreover, the divide between the peasants and the landlords results from the disparities of the caste system as well as the later introduction of capitalism. Historically speaking, landlordism is based on caste relations that developed before the era of British colonialism. The main source of government revenue used to be land tax, and the ways of collecting it varied across the country. There were three types of land tenure systems:

Zamindari or landlordism¹², Raiyatwari, and Mahalwari (Banerjee 1192-1193). As I have explained in my introduction, what British colonialism did was reorganise and systematise the caste system for its own colonial agenda. However, after colonisation the situation has further degenerated. Adiga observes: “The past fifty years have seen tumultuous changes in India’s society, and these changes have overturned the traditional hierarchies, and the old securities of life. A lot of poorer Indians are left confused and perplexed by the new India that is being formed around them” (“Excerpted Interview with Aravind Adiga”). The narrator of *The White Tiger* underlines the aftermath of two hundred years of British colonial rule through animal imagery once more:

Thanks to all those politicians in Delhi, on the fifteenth of August, 1947—the day the British left—the cages had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law. Those that were the most ferocious, the hungriest, had eaten everyone else up and grown big bellies. That was all that counted now, the size of your belly. It did not matter whether you were a woman or a Muslim, or an untouchable: anyone with a belly could rise up (64).

As the quote shows, the once much more intricate caste system has been replaced by the current polarisation, as the big divide between men with big bellies and men without bellies. All marginal positions are subsumed into the section of the “small bellied” ones against the “big bellied” landowners, politicians and other wealth owners. Balram gets his break when he is hired as a driver for a rich village landlord’s son, daughter-in-law, and the couple’s two Pomeranian dogs, Cuddles and Puddles. He is taken to the prosperous suburb of Gurgaon, a satellite city of Delhi. He senses that Delhi is the place of light. In the midst of the slums, the

¹²In areas with Zamindari tax collection, the liability for the revenue collection of the village was vested in one landlord. This person, the Zamindar, had free reign and was able to set the terms for all of his peasants. He was also able to expel any peasants who did not pay their taxes. The Zamindar held all of the property rights because of his ability to buy and sell the rights to collecting revenue (Banerjee 2005). Under this system, most of the land was owned by a small number of people. Land had become a commodity that could be bought and sold, and if an individual could not pay their taxes, their land was taken away. This set the stage for social disparity as those who could not afford land were stripped of their ownership rights (Das 1999). This type of system was prevalent mainly in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, modern-day Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh (Banerjee 2005).

cockroaches and call centres, the 36,000,004 gods, the shopping malls, and the crippling traffic jams, he becomes increasingly aware of the immense wealth and opportunity around him. Trapped between his instinct to be a loyal son to his family, his obligations as an indentured servant, and his desire to better himself, he learns of a new “morality,” that is to say, materialism and self-indulgence, at the heart of Delhi.

Balram’s desire for upward social mobility is best understood in terms of the motif of the Rooster Coop Syndrome from which he wishes to escape:

The greatest thing to come out of this country in the ten thousand years of its history is the Rooster Coop... Go to Old Delhi ...and look at the way they keep chickens there in the market. Hundreds of pale hens and brightly coloured roosters, stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages...They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they’re next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human beings in this country (Adiga 173)

The passage appropriately communicates Balram’s observation of subalternity. As he dwells among a society of people, he likens them to roosters guarding the coop; aware they are waiting for the axe, yet unwilling to escape. The caste system makes it impossible to move beyond existing hierarchies, which are further solidified by the advent of capitalism as there are really only two casts: big belly or none. What is different in the new system is that someone who used to be an untouchable can now become a big belly: “anyone with a belly could rise up” (64). Balram asserts at the same time his right of being an individual and of breaking away from the Rooster Coop. During his brief visit to the National Zoo in Delhi, he sees a white tiger in a cage. The white tiger’s eyes meet his own, like Balram’s master’s eyes meeting his in the rear-view mirror of the car. Once called by the school inspector a white tiger because he saw in Balram a rare talent for intellectual work, Balram suddenly realises that he must release himself from the trap of perpetual servitude. At this point, the image of the white tiger changes and suggests violence. He wants liberty, but that liberty is not the

liberty that democracy advocates. To break out of the Coop, he decides to spill a little blood on his way to independence. He steals his master's money and kills him in order to liberate himself. In the face of global capitalism, Balram's narrative suggests that what the caste system imposed on him once has changed into a new form of domination, which, against all its dehumanising aspects, renders upward mobility for the subaltern possible. In this sense, the new subaltern is now granted a voice to speak of his own history.

As the analyses of *Small Things* and *The White Tiger* show, small narratives are integral parts of History as they inform us about class issues or culture specific circumstances. Furthermore, they also demonstrate that class inequalities cannot solely be explained by the current operation of caste in Indian society. To be sure, the historical legacy of caste should not be ignored but similar class inequalities can probably be found in other countries that lack the caste system but are at similar stages of economic development. As a developing country that has no history of colonialism or caste of its own, but is nevertheless under the influence of modernity as a political and economic project, I propose that Turkey can be cited as an example which might help to specify the new subaltern who emerges in the context of global neoliberal capital. With regard to Turkey, discussions of subalternity should consider its positioning in terms of the West, its historical background of the modernity project and its link with present modalities. In the light of this observation, in the next section I discuss Latife Tekin's *Berji Kristin*.

The urban subaltern in Turkey

Berji Kristin marks a specific stage in Turkey's transformation. Economic transformations in Turkey, which have picked up pace in the 1950s with accelerating industrialisation, have resulted in internal migration. Among the factors of internal migration, one can cite a high

population growth rate, industrialisation, the mechanisation of agricultural production, shifts in land ownership, inadequate educational and health services, a desire to break away from traditional social pressures and feuds in rural areas, as well as increased transportation and communication facilities (Kahraman, et al., 2002). The characters in the novel represent migrants coming to Istanbul and Western Turkey from the rural areas of Turkey in the 1970s, when inflation reached triple-digit levels, unemployment rose to about 15 percent, industry used only half its capacity, and the government was unable to pay even the interest on foreign loans. People needed jobs, and to find them they migrated to the country's city centres.

One remarkable aspect of internal migration is related to the question as to why these villages remained in poverty in the first place. This has to do with the failure of Turkish modernisation to penetrate into villages and annihilate the feudal structures that reigned there. Furthermore, aside from the central governments, the global socio-economical and political dynamics of the post 1950s have rendered Turkey underdeveloped as well as dependent on the First World countries. The Marshall Plan can be cited as an external factor that stimulated migration to the cities at that time.

Internal migration in Turkey has produced communities of displaced subalterns of various backgrounds, ethnically heterogeneous but socio-economically homogenous, inhabiting the margins of the city. Forms of subalternity in Turkey are different from those in India because of the absence of caste system. However, economically speaking, both Indian and Turkish subaltern positions are marked by global operations of capital. For instance, the Flower Hill people in *Berji Kristin* earn their livings by collecting garbage and by working at chemical factories nearby. As I have mentioned in the introduction, they are the hut people who feed on others' waste, and who are treated like waste. In *The White Tiger*, one can spot the same urban subalterns as in Old Delhi, such as men "selling small fish trapped in green bottles full of brine" (251-52). The inhumane consequences of accelerated industrialisation

and free market policies become especially evident in the fourth chapter of *Berji Kristin*, in which “[s]howers of pure white from this factory began to pour over Flower Hill” (Tekin 27). The showers affect all forms of life, including the children that “turned dark purple as drugged and fell into a deep sleep. One of the sleeping children never woke up” (28).

As I have mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, *Berji Kristin* narrates the struggles of the urban subalterns, who, after battling with the wreckers for thirty-seven endless days, name the area Battle Hill. After two months, two “official-looking” men rename it “Flower Hill”. The scene marks the modern/traditional dichotomy in Turkey’s modernisation process. Situated within the global neoliberal era, Turkey enjoys a complex relationship with the West. The hut people of Garbage Hills have come from Central Anatolia, the Black Sea region and especially the East. According to Cihan Tugal, the Westernised elite continue to see them as uncivilized and backward, the true cause of Turkey’s slow modernisation (23). Nonetheless, I take the hut people as representing the failure of nation-wide dissemination of modernisation. The gap between the officials and the hut people in naming the area suggests that the hut people are pre-modern: they have their own habits, rituals and customs that do not comply with the pace of modern Turkey.

On the other hand, as Turkey resituates its position in world politics and economy, the hut people are articulated into global capital as a cheap source of labour while they are the subaltern of the country culturally and socio-economically. The situation is evident from the following fragment:

At the time the men of Flower Hill were struggling to find work, a shiny blue sign – ‘Nato Avenue’ – was hung on the wall of one of the chocolate factories up Rubbish Road. United by curiosity they marched with their sideways walk until they arrived under the street sign, but as they could not figure out what the writing on it stood for or why it had been put up, they turned back... they decided that this road could not be an ‘avenue’. Discussions went on, and they finished up by speculating on the meaning of ‘Nato’. Some said that once upon a time the papers had written about Nato, and others that the radio played folk songs from Nato. One said it meant

‘Armed Force’, another, ‘bombing’. The hut people were upset by this talk and did not warm to the name. (Tekin 37)

“Nato Avenue” symbolises the start of Turkey’s integration into global politics. Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952. The Cold War provided Turkey with a historic opportunity to be accepted as a European state. The Hut people do not warm to the name because they do not recognise it. The Hut people are those who cannot become diasporic or international migrants. They are the ones who bear the consequences of neo-colonial globalisation yet are not in the circuit of transnational mobility. Nor do they have access to the basic benefits that stem from being members of a nation-state. Thus the slum dwellers in the marginalised neighbourhoods of Istanbul are inserted into the processes of globalisation while remaining excluded from the nation’s narrative.

The form of *Berji Kristin* also sustains the gap between the subaltern experience and (Chakrabarty’s understanding of) History as the global logic of capital. The novel consists of twenty-one chapters, only indicated by capital letters. Each chapter and the central event it describes are linked to the others as part of a frame story without plot or climax. This absence can be explained through the idea that the personal stories, with their ups and downs, are less important than the horrendous collective experience of slum dwellers. Sibel Irzik argues that even when the narratives in these twenty-one chapters “contain individual life stories, they prevent them from exerting any real pressure on the impersonal rhythms of habit, ritual, tradition, rumour, and survival” (160). This becomes evident in the continuous Simple Past Tense usage which, according to Nurdan Gurbilek, implies that things have already passed, ended, and elapsed into an inaccessible past (39). Seen from this perspective, Roy’s *Small Things* stresses a similar tension between the “small” and “big” narratives. Moreover, the lack of plot and climax in *Berji Kristin* urges the reader to pay attention to the content of each chapter separately as the chapters independently recount distinctive issues.

Chapter nine covers the story of Mr. Izak, a factory owner. Special attention is given to the way his factory looks. The way it is built and maintained resonates with of the huts of Flower Hill. He first treats his workers with respect and convinces them that they are a team. He even works with them, but as production accelerates he relaxes his discipline and starts to show up late (Tekin 90). He also starts to treat the workers brutally. Those who talk about insurance, unions or compensation packages are beaten up. As a result, the workers start to join the union. In order to discourage them from doing so, Mr. Izak hires a factory manager who applies a wage-rate system, which means that the workers will be rated according to skill and job commitment. This will determine whether they will be regular workers with a monthly salary or not. In the meantime new entrepreneurs open sham factories that produce fake detergents, soaps and bleachers “that don’t bleach” (Tekin 105). Other hut-factories are “conjured up to circumvent the strikes” (106). In time, the site is given the name Flower Hill Industries. This chapter underlines the process of joining the modes of production while remaining radically excluded from the rights of a *de facto* citizen. At the same time, it hints at the possibility of upward mobility for those entrepreneur-spirited subalterns who, similar to Balram, are ready to exploit others.

Chapter eleven focuses on Kurd Cemal of the Flower Hill, who decides to found a political party and spreads the word that he will find job for everyone who signs up for his party. The Garbage Grocer’s authority among the people has been undermined ever since the day it was made public that he accepted a bribe from Cemal for the construction of new worker huts. In order to recover his popularity he builds a primary school and appoints a teacher to work with the students (102). On the day of election for the headman of Flower Hill, Nylon Mustafa and Garbage Grocer announce their candidacy. The grocer writes down the reasons why he thinks he should be elected while Nylon Mustafa tries to educate the people of Flower Hill. In order to guarantee the position of headman, Garbage Grocer

promises to distribute title deeds for the huts. The Flower Hill people sell their votes in exchange for title deeds. Thus corruption coupled with nepotism develops into a new form of survival and morality for the subalterns. This way of living is underlined in Davis's words: "Squatters very often are coerced to pay considerable bribes to politicians, gangsters, or police to gain access to sites, and they may continue to pay such informal rents in money and/or votes for years" (38).

Chapter twenty starts with the reception of a letter from the government warning the hut people about the demolition of their huts, which will take place in thirty days. While the hut people appoint scouts to explore new spots to build huts, the government is informed about this situation and sends out a document informing everyone that the area is the property of something called a Foundation, calling upon them to pay a settlement fee of seventy thousand liras each (Tekin 153). In reality, this situation is called "legalisation," which is considered by the Turkish government as the best way to deal with the issue of slum and squatter settlements. Assuming that most squatters would gradually improve their living conditions when they have secured tenure, government officials initiated the legalisation process in the 1980s. Additionally, local taxes would be collected by registering occupied lands, boundary conflicts could be eliminated, and the housing sector would be encouraged. However, the inefficiencies of the local authorities resulted in the adoption of illegal solutions by immigrants and slums to meet their housing needs. Indeed, the end of the chapter emphasises government corruption: "Four people claiming that they are officers of the Foundation collect the fee and give the people false receipts" (Tekin 153). The squatters later find out that the four men dressed in suits are actually con men. These developments are part of the unfair and skewed integration to history 1, the logic of global capitalism.

Coffee houses, gamblers and gangs all appear towards the end of the novel as Turkey's economy articulates with global markets and the local bourgeoisie. Capitalism's

infiltration into Flower Hill is revealed not only through entrepreneurs opening hut-factories, but also banks opening up their branches. Consequently, Flower Hill acquires one more avenue and a gleaming sign reading “Bank Avenue” is hung over the street (Tekin 141). This process shows that the subalterns are getting engaged with the forces of contemporary globalisation as the manifestation of late capitalism’s power to penetrate all levels of everyday life.

As I have tried to demonstrate, *Berji Kristin* narrates the story of the genesis of Turkish urbanisation with its peculiar dynamics. It tells us about the subaltern experience in a new context, the local implications of what Chakrabarty’s terms the “first in Europe, then elsewhere” paradigm and its ramifications. Turkish subaltern experience both contrasts and compares with India. Turkey shows similarities in terms of its neoliberal adjustment program, as it can be observed in *Berji Kristin*.

Conclusion

Within the framework of Chakrabarty’s conception of history, I have tried to discuss the significance of subaltern positions through a comparative study of *Small Things*, *The White Tiger* and *Berji Kristin*. I have specifically discussed the dynamics related to the concept of subalternity, with an emphasis on its transformation. I have examined the ways in which the reality of colonialism and caste structure are connected and how this connection affects India’s subaltern groups. With global capitalism added to the picture, a different form of subalternity can be observed, showing both the marginalisation and the possibility for upward social mobility which is obtained at the expense of moral values.

Similar economic developments are discernible in Turkey, a country that is influenced by the project of political modernity. As I have stated, subalterns in Turkey are historically

different from those in India, because of the absence of caste structure and colonial background. However, Turkey's subaltern groups also show similarities: similar to Balram's forced migration to the big city Delhi in *The White Tiger*, the displaced subalterns of diverse backgrounds – such as the hut people who end up in Flower Hill in *Berji Kristin* – can be located in Turkey's industrial cities. The subalterns in *Berji Kristin* are not only marginalised as a result of Turkey's modernisation process, which has failed to instil its principles on a nation-wide scale. They are also connected to the global operations of capitalism as they offer cheap source of labour. Thus the three narratives in this chapter have shown how the small, everyday stories of people become imbued with importance and play a crucial role in understanding the global logic and history of capital.

In this chapter, my argument has been twofold: to draw a distinction between and to find common grounds about the subaltern experience of India and Turkey through a comparative discussion of the three novels. The second part of my argument has been to nuance and update the theory of the subaltern and its linkage to the caste system. With *Small Things*, I have tried to show that the present circumstances surrounding the subaltern are not only informed by the caste laws that had been in place in pre-colonial India, but also by British colonialism and its efforts to be acquainted with India well enough to rule it and benefit from it. I then moved to *The White Tiger* to consider that exploitation or marginalisation of the subaltern is still on the agenda, this time within the twenty-first century forms of imperialism and/or neoliberal globalism. Finally, I have examined a different context in *Berji Kristin* to discuss the new subaltern within Turkey. Specifically, I have hinted at the idea that the boundaries of the nation states are relatively irrelevant to contemporary forces of globalisation, and that the stories of subaltern classes in the novels testify to this argument. Nevertheless, the respective Turkish and Indian novels show diverse modes of social and economic situations. For instance, the caste system in India has sustained

its significance in a set of transformations that were brought about by processes of colonisation. The urban subaltern class has emerged as a result of Turkey's integration into world markets. Considering the pursuit of profit and cheap labour power as key components of neoliberal globalisation, globalisation has provided the urban subaltern a relatively more advantageous life compared to the past, although it has not obliterated inequalities and manifest exploitation.