

LANGUAGE AND THE CREATION OF CHARACTERS IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S THE
GOD OF SMALL THINGS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis will demonstrate how Arundhati Roy uses language psychologically, typographically, structurally, and culturally in her debut novel The God of Small Things. For the purposes of this thesis “language” should be understood to mean not only the spoken or written word but also the way cultural groups understand and communicate to one another through customs and traditions. Roy’s use of language throughout the novel helps the reader better understand her various complex characters, most importantly Esthappen and Rahel, the seven-year-old twins who are most affected by the events that take place within their family and community in 1969. Discussion will focus on the characters’ manipulation of the English language coupled with Malayalam (the twins’ native language) to bring meaning into the confusing context of their lives. In addition, this thesis will explore the power dynamics found in language as it relates to gender. Finally, the use of silence as a language will be discussed in both Velutha and Esthappen. These topics will be analyzed not only in linguistic terms but in post-colonial terms as well.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, William and Elayne Stockdale, for their unending support and prayers. Their constant encouragement and belief in my abilities have been the greatest blessing a daughter could ask for.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1997 Arundhati Roy's debut novel, The God of Small Things, was met with critical acclaim. The first Indian woman to receive the prestigious Booker Prize for Literature, Roy has been unafraid of risks, using a number of different strategies in language—psychological, typographical, structural, and cultural—to construct a powerful story. By examining these techniques the reader can see how Roy uses language to define her characters. The author's play of language is not merely a tool for communication in the novel, rather it is an aspect of each character's personality. Language play gives the reader a clear indication of who the character really is. Such use of language is particularly interesting given Roy's use of a language that is not natively her own.

Roy's novel (un-chronologically) recounts the undoing of the Ipe family of Ayemenem India in 1969 and the profound effects it has on the main characters—seven year old twins Esthappen and Rahel. Through an omniscient narrator the reader learns about the family dynamics of the Ipe household as the twins, their mother (Ammu), grandmother (Mammachi), great aunt (Baby Kochamma) and uncle (Chacko) prepare for the arrival of Chacko's ex-wife (Margaret Kochamma) and nine-year-old daughter (Sophie Mol) from England. As a result of this preparation family tension is running at a fevered pitch. Ammu and the twins, though always disliked, are constantly berated as the family expects Ammu and the children to be on their best behavior for Margaret and Sophie Mol's visit. During the visit Mammachi and Baby Kochamma learn that Ammu has been secretly sleeping with Velutha, an employee of the family and a member of the Untouchable class (an action which is strictly forbidden in Indian society). While the family attempts to hide the affair by calling it rape the three children run away from home by crossing the treacherous Meechenthal River. The tiny boat capsizes, and Estha and

Rahel swim ashore and see that Sophie Mol gone (her body is found a day later floating downriver). As the children sleep in the abandoned “History House” they awake to see Velutha beaten within an inch of his life because of the lies Baby Kochamma tells. Later, Estha is forced to say that Velutha hurt the twins while they were in the house. Velutha dies, and Ammu, heartbroken, is forced to send her son back to his father and is then banished from the family home. The novel picks up twenty-three years later when the now silent Estha returns to Ayemenem. Rahel, who has not seen her brother since they were separated, returns home to India, as well, where the two reconnect.

The God of Small Things, written in English, falls into the category of post-colonial literature, a term that has been variously defined. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will use Ismail S. Talib’s definition of post-colonial literature as “literature written by colonized and formerly colonized people [including] literatures written in various languages, not only the language of the colonizer” (Talib 11). It is important to note the point Talib makes about language. He argues, unlike a number of other scholars, that post-colonial literature may also include works written in the author’s native tongue. This assertion applies to Roy in particular since she wrote her novel predominately in English, requiring the reader to deduce the meaning of a number of words in her native language—spoken in Ayemenem, Kerala, India—Malayalam.

Post-colonial theory is a broad term that allows critics and theorists to tackle a number of different issues, a critical one of which involves the use of language. Roy’s novel is an excellent example of how post-colonial authors can blend two major influences on their lives—showing the reader connections Indians make between their native tongue and their adoptive one—to illustrate a cohesive blend of culture. The choices the author makes in terms of what language to use and how to use it influences how the book is received by the public, both locally and abroad.

For example, some critics argue that Indian authors who choose to use the English language are, to a degree, perpetuating the effects of British colonialism. Conversely, as Salman Rushdie states, “to conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free” (qtd. in Talib 102). Arundhati Roy wrote The God of Small Things predominately in English; however, she does include a number of words in Malayalam, thus making the reader work for some of the most pertinent information in the novel.

Interestingly, the history of the Malayalam language hints to the author’s use of two languages in the novel. Vipin Gopal asserts, “Malayalis have always welcomed other languages to coexist with their own and the interaction of these with Malayalam has helped its development in different respects” (Malayalam 1). Though Malayalam is mainly of Sanskrit origin, English is the second largest influence on the language spoken by Indians in Kerala in the southern region of the country. By using both English and Malayalam Roy exemplifies what her native tongue has been doing for thousands of years: coexisting with other languages without losing its own influence (Malayalam 1).

The effect of incorporating a smattering of Malayalam in the English text is something that even Roy cannot adequately characterize: “All I can say about that is language is the skin on my thought. My language is something that I find hard to analyze and dissect. It’s the way I think. I have no answers to questions about it” (qtd. in Abraham 91). Roy’s decision to leave her language choices unexplained requires the reader to dig deep into the characters. Since the author gives no explanation for her stylistic choices either in a preface to the novel or elsewhere, the reader must assume that each capitalized, misspelled, or italicized word carries meaning for the character. In other words, the use of language the reader sees on the page should be understood as the words the characters are thinking about and visualizing. Analyzing the words

as the characters use them, rather than as Roy or a narrator might use them, allows the reader to more fully understand the motives and feelings of the characters, especially the twins Estha and Rahel. Put another way, when reading the thoughts and words of the twins the reader should dismiss the idea that the words were created by Roy. Rather, as the reader makes meaning from the text, this meaning is filtered through the lenses of children with a unique view of the world.

Though Roy does not comment on specific linguistic choices, she does assert that there is a method to her writing:

It was really like designing a building...the use of time, the repetition of words and ideas and feelings. It was really a search for coherence—design coherence—in the way that every last detail of a building—its doors and windows, its structural components—have, or at least ought to have, an aesthetic, stylistic integrity, a clear indication that they belong to each other, as must a book. (qtd. in Abraham 90-91)

Indeed, the reader will see (as discussed in chapters one and three of this thesis) how words and patterns create compelling characters. We may even consider Roy's language to function as a bricolage (a piece created from diverse resources, of whatever materials are at hand). The twins, at age seven, play with words in ways other children may not, they make sense of words based on what knowledge they have at hand. They see the gravity of word choice—how people are affected by the words spoken to them. Similarly, in chapter three I will show how the lack of verbal language (the use of silence) in the novel is a recurring theme in The God of Small Things which serves to unify the novel.

Though the subject of Indian authors writing in English has been debated throughout the history of post-colonial studies, Roy argues that a writer simply writes what he or she believes. She suggests that an author's writing is not guided by cultural rules. Roy writes as she thinks:

since she is bilingual it is natural for her to think in both languages. Ismail S. Talib reports, “According to Roy, ‘being forced to identify with a conqueror, especially with a departed conqueror...is like being the child of a raped mother’” (11). For Roy, the act of defining her choices as a writer is as unnecessary as explaining who her parents are or the choices they made. Each of these explanations would be irrelevant to the work she publishes. Roy asserts that just because she writes and thinks in English does not mean that she is less an Indian than she was before her novel was published. The use of the English language is merely a tool for how she chooses to tell the story of a family that becomes undone. Roy is able to use her tools masterfully to create characters that may not have been as clearly defined as if she had written in solely Malayalam. The nuances that Roy uses in changing and playing with language are purposeful and thoughtful; it seems that the author’s choices with regard to the manipulation of the English language are based on the intended audience. Without a doubt, such manipulations would have a great effect on readers who have grown accustomed to the common uses of the English language.

In using both languages, Roy makes advances for the Indian people. Jawaharlal Nehru once said that India “must get rid of the exclusiveness in thought and social habit which has become like a prisoner to her, stunting her spirit and preventing growth” (Nehru 37). Roy highlights this belief in the actions of her characters. The reader sees how the older members of the Ipe family (Mammachi and Baby Kochamma in particular) adhere to caste laws and other discriminatory cultural traditions while other family members hope to break free. It is due to the powerful adherence to cultural traditions that one family (though loosely knit to begin with) falls apart and a number of lives are ruined. Like the family, words fall apart as they are communicated through the children. Throughout the novel the reader can see how the use of

language, both verbal and non-verbal, can affect how characters understand one another. The ability to understand the nuances of character, however, requires that the reader have a three-tiered understanding of the term “language.”

Much like the term “post-colonial” the term “language” has different meanings and functions. As each chapter will focus on a different aspect of language it is important to note that for the purposes of this paper *language* will mean not only the spoken and written word (both English and Malayalam) but also the thoughts, movements, and actions of the characters. This definition of language is specifically important in understanding the character of Velutha, who speaks infrequently, and Estha, whose language eventually becomes silent. Rather than speaking Estha uses his silence as a language—his silence conveys his inner struggle to cut himself off from the world in order to forget his past and ignore his pain. Roy allows the reader to see Velutha’s thoughts by way of his actions in order to comprehend the feelings of his complex, and often silent, character.

Interestingly, Roy uses Velutha in a subversive manner to call attention to Indian practices. By keeping Velutha a silent character (exposing the reader to his thoughts rather than seeing him converse with other characters) the author personifies one of the many aspects of colonialism; as Edward Said explains, colonized people “were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analysed not as citizens, not even as people, but as problems to be solved or confirmed” (qtd. in Suleri 18). By using Velutha as an example of an Indian who is forced into silence the reader can see how the Syrian Christians and other high-caste Indians perceive Untouchables. Much as the colonialists believed the natives of India to be a problem, Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, and Kochu Maria believe that Velutha is a problem that needs solving rather than regarding him as an employee or neighbor. In displaying the subversive tactics the

women employ to destroy Velutha, Roy points to a major problem in Indian culture without overtly commenting on the practice. The author, rather than simply stating cultural problems of inequality, invokes in the reader a feeling of disgust towards the practices of Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, and Kochu Maria.

One of the many reasons The God of Small Things has received such attention is the style in which it is written. Roy pays great attention to the words she uses and how she uses them. In the case of the twins, Rahel and Estahappen, Roy plays with capitalization, sentence fragments, and structure. Each manipulation allows the reader to understand how the minds of the children work:

When the twins asked what cuff-links were for—‘To link cuffs together,’ Ammu told them—they were thrilled by this morsel of logic in what has so far seemed an illogical language. *Cuff+link = cuff-link*. This, to them, rivaled the precision and logic of mathematics. *Cuff-links* gave them inordinate (if exaggerated) satisfaction, and a real affection for the English language. (Roy 50)

Throughout the novel the seven-year-old twins play with language to understand the world around them. They read things backwards (“*nataS ni rieht seye*”) as well as hear words incorrectly (“gnickers” rather than “knickers”) and believe their understanding to be correct; they also use logical reasoning to explain the events that take place around them (Roy 58, 149). Each of the language changes Roy makes allows the reader to get inside the minds of the twins to understand the effects of the catastrophic events of 1969 (specifically Velutha and Sophie Mol’s deaths).

How characters use language also serves to oppress a number of the characters in the novel. No character is more oppressed and victimized than Velutha. As an Untouchable, he

rarely gets the chance to speak to anyone on a personal level (outside of his family and the twins—who either do not know or do not care about his social position). Likewise he is unable to speak plainly and answer questions about the accusations against him. As a result he becomes a victim of his silence twice over. He is a victim by birth (by inheriting his Untouchable status) and circumstance (he is beaten to the point of death and not given a chance to articulate a defense). Much like Velutha, Ammu becomes a victim of language. Ammu, as a result of her divorce, is not allowed to voice her opinion—at times even when her own children are involved. She is therefore resigned to live under her mother’s roof with no independence—in essence she is like an Untouchable without the title.

While sanctions against speech serves to oppress two of the characters in the novel, it also allows a woman who would otherwise remain powerless to gain control over a number of different people. Baby Kochamma, who has given up everything for an unattainable love, uses her ability to lie and manipulate language into a believable story to condemn not only an Untouchable but her niece as well. As an obese ex-nun who has never been married, Indian society suggests that Baby Kochamma is a burden to her family. While Baby Kochamma believes she has nothing to live for she feels that she is somehow entitled to power over her family members (Ammu, Estha, and Rahel). When she feels that her status is threatened she knows what she has to do. She goes to the police station and concocts a story to implicate Velutha as a rapist and save herself (and her family) from shame: “By now Baby Kochamma sounded utterly convincing. Injured. Incredulous. Then her imagination took over completely” (Roy 246). The power of *her* words prove not only to condemn one man to death but also to ruin the lives of three innocent people. While Baby Kochamma’s carefully chosen words were not grounded in truth the language she uses proves to be disastrous for a number of people. Baby

Kochamma's actions described above are one of many examples of how the use of language has the power to affect people in profound ways. Roy's use of language allows the reader to understand the world in which the characters live and the beliefs that drive them to drastic action in order to remain in power.

Through the changes Roy allows her narrator and characters to make with the English language the reader better understands the cultural practices of the people of Ayemenem, India. The laws of the land (often unwritten) are still very clearly understood through cultural practices. The most prevalent example of such laws can be seen in the practice of the caste system (though technically outlawed) as well as what Roy's characters call the "Love Laws": "The laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much" (Roy 33). These laws, though unwritten and unspoken in the novel (and unknown to the twins), affect each of the characters in different ways and eventually lead to "the Terror" which Rahel recounts at the age of thirty-one.

While many of the characters show how language can affect the lives of individuals, it is through Estha's silence (which begins after 1969) that the reader can connect with one of the novel's most compelling characters. Silence functions as a language for Estha, and the best way for a reader to understand this is based in reader-response theory. Roy gives the reader nuggets of vital information to make her intentions with Estha clear. Theorist Wolfgang Iser states, "If communication between text and reader is to be successful, clearly the reader's activity must also be controlled in some way by the text [...] the guiding devices operative in the reading process have to initiate communication and control it" (1676). In chapter three I will explore how Roy gives such devices to the reader so that there is a controlled connection between Estha and the reader.

The power of language use, both written and unsaid, spoken or thought, drives the actions of the characters of The God of Small Things. With the potential to make life happy and full or ruined forever, language usage influences every aspect of the lives of the Ipe family. Additionally, the use of specific language throughout the novel is a subversive attempt to show readers the effects of colonialism on India today.

CHAPTER ONE: “We be of one blood, thou and I”: Esthappen and Rahel’s Use and Manipulation of Language

From the onset of the novel Arundhati Roy allows the reader to see the connection between the seven-year-old twins Esthappen (Estha) and Rahel:

They never did look much like each other, Estha and Rahel [...]. The confusion lay in a deeper, more secret place. In those early amorphous years when memory had only just begun, when life was full of Beginnings and no Ends, and Everything for Forever, Esthappen and Rahel thought of themselves together as Me, and separately, individually, as We or Us. As though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities. (Roy 4-5)

Throughout the course of the novel the reader can see how this connection, though felt and understood between the two without the use of verbal or written language, takes shape in the manipulation and formation of words in the English language. In the above quotation Roy uses the word “amorphous,” and while the author states that only the twin’s beginning years are amorphous, I would argue that through their use of language (spoken and unspoken) the two are constantly connected. When the twins are together their connection and understanding of one another is effortless and without boundaries. Their use and play with language serves only to emphasize their character and their relationship with one another.

Living in the formerly colonized Ayemenem, India, Estha, Rahel, and the other members of the Ipe household speak English as well Malayalam (the native language of Ayemenem, India). The children are asked to practice their spelling, pronunciation, and singing in English. Being surrounded by the English language opens their eyes to the interesting connections they can make in a language with so many different words and rules. Roy uses different stylistic

techniques to create awareness in the reader about when the children are speaking or hearing and how the twins understand the world around them. Focalization, the act of bringing a word or phrase into concentration, is used many times throughout Roy's novel. Dan Shen explains, "Changes in focalization are usually indicated by linguistic clues" (Shen 383). Roy uses the changes in capitalization, fragmentation, and manipulation of words and meanings to change the reader's focus on the twins. Such "clues" (as Shen terms them) are a signal to the reader to pay careful attention to how words are used and perceived and serve as the link between the children's understanding and the reader's. For example, in the discussion of how the children understand the English language, the narrator points to how the twins mishear the words "Barn owl." Instead of calling Ousa, the owl that lives in the pickle factory, by its correct name they call him a "Bar Nowl" (Roy 184). The twins cannot make sense of word boundaries (where words start and stop), rather the sounds they hear are merged together. In the same way the twins merge together their understanding of their world. The twins themselves break down the boundaries of words. This breakdown is mirrored in their own lives as they have no boundaries with one another. The reader too must break through these boundaries in order to have an understanding of the children's thought-process. The reader can then return to this understanding when similar instances of focalization occur.

One of the many ways in which the characters are revealed to the reader is the way the children hear words spoken to them. They hear and therefore spell words phonetically. How the twins understand these words is shown on the page, giving the reader the ability to see what the twins see in their mind's eye: "They had to form the words properly, and be particularly careful about their pronunciation. Prer *NUN* sea ayshun" (Roy 36). It is important that the author establishes the way the children perceive language at the beginning of the novel; throughout the

course of the novel the children will experience adult situations they do not understand. In using language to see into the minds of the children Roy establishes a way for the reader to gauge how the children would react to the complex and often horrific actions that surround their lives in 1969.

Though the narrator of the novel is omniscient, the merged voices of Estha and Rahel are adopted in the narration at various points throughout the novel to create a connection between the reader and the twins. The reader understands the connection based on the early indications of how the twins perceive language. The combination of words—which often run together to form a new word—is the clearest indication of who is doing the observing in a particular scene. Dirk Wiemann argues, “the Rushdiesque, ‘magical’ use of language in the child’s universe is correlated to the twin’s perspective” (qtd. in Vogt-Williams 397). Roy makes these changes in the text to create clear lines between the twins and other characters in the novel. The distinction indicates the differences in how the children understand their world and their two languages as opposed to how the adults understand what is being said and heard around them.

Curiously, Wiemann makes a deliberate attempt to define the children’s language by calling it “magical.” In so doing, he creates a framework for how readers might understand the twins’ minds. Not only do the children use their language changes to communicate to one another, there is a sense of power in their language. The children use language to create new worlds for themselves; these worlds are magical and powerful—the children can escape their confined Ayemenem world and go wherever they like. Also very deliberate is Wiemann’s characterization of the twins’ “universe.” In using the word “universe” the author suggests that Estha and Rahel are in no way confined by the language they use. Wiemann’s suggestion tells the readers that much like our universe, the children’s expanse or use of language is limitless.

There are no boundaries in which the children must adhere in terms of language use. Their proficiency in both English and Malayalam gives the twins the freedom and the power to explore ideas in ways their family members would otherwise not allow.

As the children are on their way to Cochin to pick up Sophie Mol and Margaret Kochamma (the twin's cousin and aunt) from the airport, the reader is allowed to experience the trip as Estha and Rahel do. The Paradise Pickles & Preserves sign comes loose on the roof and makes "fallingoff noises" as opposed to "falling-off noises" (Roy 56). In allowing the words on the page to run together Roy displays to the reader the way the children hear and speak the foreign language. While the children's interpretations of the words make sense, the compound word does not exist in the English language as the children presume. Seeing "fallingoff noises" reminds the readers of the age of the young twins. In broader terms it is a reminder that children cannot comprehend words in the way adults can. This fact is established early in the novel and its importance will grow as the 1969 story line continues. Interestingly, the twins notice the "fallingoff noises" mere days before their family begins to fall apart. The connotation of the word points the reader to the impending catastrophe. Remarkably, it is not until twenty-four years later that Rahel understands the importance of the language used by her family when she was seven years old.

Not only are the twins able to speak fluent English (though often a manipulated or misunderstood language), they are also familiar with a number of English stories. Ammu (the twins' mother) reads out of Kipling's Jungle Book to the children each night before bed. This particular tale is read so often that the twins know parts of the story by heart and can recite it aloud as their mother reads to them. Additionally, the twins and Ammu have a special understanding of the characters and their dialogue; the family uses it as their personal dialogue,

one that makes sense only to them. When Ammu or the twins feel especially close to one another they quote Kipling: “We be of one blood, thou and I” (Roy 155). The use of this phrase serves to unite the three of them not only in love but also in language.

Both of the children are aware that their station within the family is fragile at best. They know that their mother has no “*Locust Stands I*” and by association they do not either. Though the children misinterpret the Latin term *locus standi* they understand its meaning. Their mother, a divorced woman who was once married to a man without her family’s approval, has no legal standing. In effect it is as if she does not exist: she cannot make decisions for herself and her children, cannot have a job, cannot live on her own. It is as if Ammu, Estha, and Rahel are merely acquaintances who happen to live with a family: ones who do not necessarily approve of their being tenants. The twins break down the Latin phrase so that “I” stands alone. This, too, is a hint of what is to come: Ammu, Estha, and Rahel will eventually stand alone, without social or legal standing. The impersonal phrase in Latin becomes an agonizing expression of alienation.

In their knowledge of English literature Rahel and Estha find a place to play, taking the words and phrases remembered from The Tempest, Julius Caesar and A Tale of Two Cities and using them to entertain themselves: falling on the bed, practicing faces in the mirror, and generally being dramatic. This use of language serves as a way to escape their lives. In remembering the characters from literature they can forget themselves and the people of the Ayemenem house. They can disregard their Anglophile uncle, their blind grandmother, their spiteful Baby grandaunt, and their condescending housekeeper.

As a result of their exposure to complex English literature, the twins are not attracted to children’s literature. Estha and Rahel know they are smart and wish to be treated as such. When the twins receive The Adventures of Susie Squirrel from a friend of Baby Kochamma (their great

aunt) they are deeply offended. Not only are they far more advanced in reading and comprehending the English language, they also feel that they've been treated like children (a fact they do not wish to acknowledge as truth). Rather than simply accept the gift politely, the children decide to read the entire book backwards, thus displaying their intelligence and creativity. Again, the children use their manipulation of language to demonstrate their desired place in the Ayemenem household. While the twins, along with their mother, have no "Locusts Stands I" they know it is through no fault of their own. Estha and Rahel use language to display their capabilities to their extended family members.

The twins' use of language not only suggests their intelligence and explains their understanding of their family situation; it could also suggest the two are aware of the effects of mimicry (although they would not be aware of the concept or the word). Homi Bhabha states, "Mimicry is, thus, the sign of double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (266). The twins know that by simulating the complexities of the English language they are able to gain power for themselves. While Miss Mitten may have considered the twins' use of language inappropriate (or at the very least out of the ordinary) for two seven-year-olds, she no doubt saw the children appropriating the English language for themselves. In so doing the twins subvert Miss Mitten's tactics. The children's use of English also suggests that they are aware of what situations necessitate the use of a more powerful language. Though they are quite young their ability to understand adult situations is rooted in their understanding of how and when two languages should be used.

Though Estha and Rahel begin to read backwards as a way of simultaneously aggravating Miss Mitten and displaying their intelligence, they decide to continue the game long after Miss Mitten leaves Ayemenem. Soon both Estha and Rahel read every word they see backwards:

street signs, book titles, jar labels. They even transpose the words they hear, beginning with, of course, Miss Mitten's '*nataS ni rieht seye*' (Roy 58). The games the children play with language continue to serve as an escape. The more words they read backwards the more obvious it becomes that they are (consciously or unconsciously) trying to ignore the actions around them.

What the children learn in terms of language is a way of understanding their personal and familial history. The language the children use indicates the language that is used in their presence. Janet Thormann argues, "These signifiers transmit family history and thereby mark the children with a fatality, transmitted like an inheritance" (Thormann 301). As Thormann explains, each time the children run their words together it indicates that they have listened to and picked up their mother's speech patterns. When Ammu is angry she tells the twins to "stoppit" rather than to "stop it" (301). The reader can see how the twins are connected to one another and their mother; they too combine words and phrases. Their language serves as a way to uniquely unify them; by no other characters are words transformed in this way. Even without signifiers (the manipulation of the words seen on the page) the reader should be able to identify who is speaking or thinking based on the merged voice of the twins.

Like most children, both Estha and Rahel are given to playfulness and repetition. If something is particularly funny to a child there is a good chance the child will want to see or say it over and over again. One of the recurring themes the children think about is a song. While the preceding lines change throughout the course of the novel, each song ends the same way: "Little Man. He lived in a caravan. Dum dum" (Roy 156). This song serves as a way to qualify the actions of people around the twins, specifically Esthappen. Each time a phrase or sentence is followed by "Dum dum" the readers are alerted to the forced trivialization of the situation. This is not to say that each of the instances is trivial, but rather that Estha wishes to contain them. The

sing-song aspect of the phrases suggests that while the matter is important, the characters wish that this was not the case. It also shows the juxtaposition between Estha's real age (seven) and the maturity he needs to confront the issues by which he is surrounded. Each version of the song shows Estha's forced maturity into a life he is not yet ready to live or understand. With each repetition of the song he moves a little closer to his eventual silence.

In their desire to use the English language in all the ways they see possible, Estha and Rahel often assign names, categories, and lists to the people around them. Such assignments allow them (perhaps subconsciously) to make sense of the attitudes they witness, what they are told to think and feel, and how they really feel about those around them. In naming/categorizing the people in their lives they simplify their feelings. Thus Roy reminds her readers that the children are just that—seven-year-old children—without a complex understanding of the world. As Rahel thinks about Sophie Mol after the funeral she is able to create a label for her, enveloping everything she remembers about her cousin that seems important to her character. Sophie Mol is remembered simply as “*Thimble-Drinker. Coffin-Cartwheeler*” (Roy 129). Sophie Mol constantly clutched her good luck thimble, often finding ways to utilize it in play. She often drank from the thimble while playing tea party. Rahel, in remembering Sophie Mol's playfulness, imagines her cousin cart-wheeling in her coffin on the day of her funeral. Rahel later thinks of her cousin only in these newly defined terms.

In boiling people down to a few specific terms, Rahel is able to simplify her life and the players in it. Likewise, she can equate events in her life into one word or phrase that will carry a deep meaning. The significance of a single word can clearly be seen the day Sophie Mol arrives in Ayemenem. For the Ipe family this day is one full of performance. It is mentioned several times in the week leading up to Sophie Mol's arrival that the family is preparing for her stay.

This preparation does not simply mean cleaning the linens and making space in the closet for her clothes. Rather, it means that the family must practice how they will interact with Sophie Mol and how they will change their behavior in order to impress the young girl and her mother.

When the day finally arrives, Rahel tells Velutha that she refuses to take part in the Play. In one simple word she sums up the attitudes and actions of everyone in the house:

Outside the Play, Rahel said to Velutha: “*We’re* not here, are we? We’re not even Playing.”

“That is Exactly Right.” Velutha said. “We’re not even Playing.” (Roy 173).

Velutha understands by the way Rahel discusses the party that it is, in a sense, unreal. However, since she is a child she likely cannot articulate this fact to Velutha. Instead, she says that she is *not* playing, to indicate that she knows what her family is doing is not genuine and she therefore will not participate in their Play.

Capitalization is the most striking change to language Estha and Rahel use. This typography allows the readers to see in what ways the children assign importance to the many aspects of their world. It also gives the reader a chance to hear what the twins are emphasizing in moments of dialogue. The capitalization adds emphasis to the word the child is saying. This emphasis signals the perceived importance of the word. Additionally, the children probably know that a proper noun is capitalized. When the children think, speak, and write with capitalization the reader can see that either Estha or Rahel considers the word or phrase not only of importance to their lives but also to their friends and family members. It is interesting to note that Roy chose to capitalize words rather than italicize them. The italics would suggest that the altered word is only important in that particular instance of usage—the italicized change indicates one specific reason for change. However, because the children capitalize specific words

repeatedly, the words hold a different meaning. Each time one capitalized word is used in the same context it indicates the word's assigned importance to the twins. For example the capitalization suggests that the word "Memories" always carries with it a heavy, painful connotation as seen when Estha says, "'It brings back Memories,' Estha, in his wisdom, explained to Chacko" (Roy 81).

Capitalization in the twins' dialogue is notable for more than one reason. Not only does it call attention to what the children consider important, the capitalization also signals to readers that a word carries negative connotations. The connotations suggest that not only are the words habitually used in the same way (or with the same understanding), but that they are not necessarily words the children like to think about or address. The capitalization shows the gravity of a word: a word has the power to bring back the past, or look forebodingly into the future.

Unfortunately for the children, a number of their capitalized words carry negative connotations. Sophie Mol's "Play," to which Rahel refers, undoubtedly has a negative connotation. She calls attention to the negativity of the word in her discussion with Velutha. Likewise, the negative connotation of "Play" appears in the narrative: "Rahel looked around her and saw that she was in a Play. But she only had a small part. She was just the landscape. A flower perhaps. Or a tree" (Roy 164). The magnitude of the "Play" is seen in juxtaposition to her role within it. By capitalizing "play" Roy allows the reader to see how large and important the concept is to Rahel and how insignificant she feels in comparison. In casting the "Play" in this light, Roy once again allows her readers to share Rahel's feelings and think about the situation the same way the seven-year-old girl does. Rahel's understanding of the events in this scene is particularly noteworthy because it establishes how important it is to the Ipe family to

keep up appearances. Though it is likely that Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol do not require such a display, the family finds it absolutely necessary to keep all of their skeletons in the closets. Rahel can see this and is unwilling to participate in the charade.

It is worth noting the irony in the term “Play.” Rahel refers to the word as a description of her family’s actions. Each person is taking on a role, just as an actor does in reciting a script. Rahel uses “Play” with the implied “imaginary” meaning: she can see that the actions of her family are a farce. However, the reality of the situation is that the family is putting on airs because they seriously think it is necessary. Though the word “Play” suggests a fun, light-hearted characterization of the family’s actions, more “scenes” in the “Play” are not being produced, in order for their lives to appear free of conflict and discontent. The characters in the “Play” skirt around issues that would make the action unpleasant or awkward. The word “Play,” like so many others, signals to the children that something in their world is not quite right.

Estha and Rahel are able to recognize the words used by other people in their family that point towards negative feelings or beliefs—especially those of their mother. The two are able to distinguish whether their punishments will be severe or not by hearing two simple words: “Jolly Well.” The narrator relates, in a voice similar to the twins’: “When Ammu was really angry, she said Jolly Well. Jolly Well was a deeply well with larfing dead people in it” (Roy 141). The only way the children could have identified this meaning was to hear the phrase time and time again. In each instance it is likely that the children remembered the last time they had heard the term and came to understand it. In explaining the meaning of the phrase Roy allows the reader to equate “Jolly Well” with the threat of punishment. When the reader and the twins hear the phrase again later in the book neither should be surprised by its implication.

Interestingly, the children's vocabulary contains a number of words with meanings that coincide. This similarity is seen as they discuss the ramifications of not "Jolly Well" behaving. "Where d'you think people are sent to Jolly Well Behave?' Estha asked Rahel in a whisper. 'To the government,' Rahel whispered back, because she knew" (Roy 143). In showing the connection from one phrase to another, we continue to see how the twins understand. In Rahel's assertion that they would go to the government to learn how to behave once and for all the reader learns about not only the world in which the twins live but also about the opinions of their family and, to a small degree, the opinions of those living in Ayemenem in 1969. In the first explanation of "Jolly Well" we see that the term is coupled with the words "larfing dead people." Without question the twins associate "Jolly Well" with fear and death, two strong images for children so young. That the two associate the meaning of "Jolly Well" with the government suggests that at some point they learned that the government was not there to protect the people of India, rather to hurt them. Again, it would only be through repetition that the words "Jolly Well" and "government" would come to have a negative connotation to the children; they could not have conjured up this understanding on their own.

Through the understanding of the children, Roy gives the reader hints about what is to happen in the plot. The children already see the government as a threat. This apprehension will come to fruition in two ways. First, the children will see Velutha violently beaten by the Ayemenem police. While police should provide protection and safety (especially to children) they instead perpetrate unnecessary violence. Secondly, the children see their mother sexually harassed while she is trying to convey Velutha's innocence to the police. Rather than treating her with respect, the police officer calls Ammu a *veshya* (whore) and taps her breasts lightly with his nightstick. While the children do not know what the word *veshya* means, they are aware of

the way their mother feels as a result of hearing that word. In creating these scenes Roy directs the reader's attention to the perceptiveness of the twins. The two seven-year-olds, though not completely aware of the magnitude of the police department's actions, are sensitive to the fact that their mother was hurt. Ammu's emotional pain is felt by the twins as well—the bond their small family shares is a tight one. The twins' reaction to the words they hear reveals not only the familial connection but also the power of language to destroy hearts and minds. By emphasizing connotation Roy helps the reader hear and understand language as the twins do, thus making the impact of the hurtful language even more powerful.

The technique that Roy uses in the above example is what linguists call “foregrounding.” In employing foregrounding techniques Roy shows the link between representation and the focalizer's (and the reader's) thoughts (Emmott 10). This attempt can work in a unique way. As one critic notes, “If we assume that the ultimate purpose of these passages is to highlight plot-crucial information for the reader, the fact that the linguistic devices can also be interpreted as showing the characters' thought process can add to the plausibility of the passages” (Emmott 10). Indeed showing the reader the context of *veshya* and describing the children's confused look creates in the reader a better understanding of the events taking place before the children. Keeping the children confused about the words around them allows the reader to see the adult themes surrounding the twins—it clarifies why the children are confused. Even if the English speaker is not familiar with the word *veshya*, it can be understood by the context Roy provides.

Since the twins understand the English language so well, they are apt to change words around, often altering their significance. Rahel and Estha assign new meanings to words based on one incident where the word is used in a particular way. The word “later” signifies having to wait—an action children are not especially keen on doing. Estha and Rahel are no exception.

The impatience of a child is easy to understand; however, Roy allows the reader to see how the children regard the word “later,” specifically after they have heard it multiple times in one day:

“And Ammu’s angry eyes on Estha said *All right. Later.*

And later became a horrible, menacing, goose-bumpy word.

Lay. Ter.

Like the deep-sounding bell in a mossy well. Shivery, and furred. Like moth’s feet.”

(Roy 139)

The narrator again takes the voice of one of the twins to better explain how the word “later” acquires new connotations. In the three other instances in the novel where “Lay. Ter.” is seen the reader can recall the feeling that is meant to be associated with this specific term. The new term is inherently different from the normal usage of “later.” This difference should be noted by the reader as he or she explores the meaning of the passage. Roy uses the spelling change to recall in the reader’s mind the feelings Estha associated with his first manipulation of the word.

Roy is quite intentional in her manipulation of words throughout the text. By breaking up “later” into syllables she calls attention to the weight of the meaning. Catherine Emmott and her colleagues suggest, “Text fragmentation is used for a piece of information which ultimately has key plot significance, but which might not appear important at the point of reading unless highlighted in some way” (Emmott 8). Roy uses fragmentation in “Lay. Ter.” to call attention to the importance of the word—the reader can see through the word change and the subsequent description of the change the significance the break has to Estha. In breaking up the word “later” Esthappen gives the word more weight, more importance. The sense of foreboding the word first carried has been magnified in the fragmentation.

Emmott goes on to say, “The fragment arguably puts more focus on the information than if the information had just been included in the previous sentence” (14). In the case of “Lay. Ter.” the fragmentation places extreme emphasis on the drawn out meaning the brokenness suggests. If Roy had placed “later” or even “lay-ter” in the middle of the sentence, the meaning of the word would not have been so significant. In reading the words as fragments the reader gets the sense that the word is long and drawn out, indicating a passage of time. It is as if Estha is over-enunciating the word for added emphasis: this allows the reader feel the length of the word as well as the length of time indicated by its use.

The feelings evoked by the added emphasis in “Lay. Ter.” should not go unnoticed. Linguist Peter Stockwell asserts, “It is clear that emotion is often figured spatially, and articulated in terms of the conceptualization of distance” (148). As Estha (and the narrator—through Estha’s voice) explains, the word “later” has taken on new meaning. The new form and meaning of “Lay. Ter.” carries with it a disappointment that is not necessarily associated with the original form of the word. Estha’s word creates a distance between himself and his mother. The fragmentation and the space it creates serves to embody the emotional distance between the two characters.

Not long after Estha’s molestation by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, words begin to lose their playful feel to the young boy. Instead, every thought and every word uttered carry underlying meanings; often these are meanings Estha either cannot understand or does not want to acknowledge. Rather than struggle with the words and the associated connotations Estha simply pulls himself away from the world of words. Though his change is characterized by a gradual removal from the spoken-word world, Estha eventually stops speaking altogether. When all of the words he both hears and speaks fail him, Estha feels he has no choice but to give

up completely. He releases himself from the constraints that words have placed on this life: his inability to express himself or help those he loves has plagued his young soul for far too long. Estha takes sanctuary in silence.

Interestingly, it is not through a number of misunderstood communications and fumbled phrases that Estha first sees how words can destroy. In one of his last days in Ayemenem, Esthappen is asked to identify Velutha for the police. The young boy understands that in identifying Velutha he will condemn the man he loves like a father. When Estha is brought into the holding cell to look at Velutha's beaten and maimed body, the police officer asks him if Velutha is the man who hurt the twins. Estha's one word, "Yes," seals the fate of not only Velutha's life (who would have died shortly after regardless of what Estha told the police) but also the fate of his entire family. "Yes" is a word that carried more power than the seven-year-old boy may have thought possible. The boy's admission gives the family another reason to separate Ammu from her children. Chacko now has a reason, once and for all, to stop taking care of his needy sister. The problems Ammu and her children cause (by Estha's admission) are the breaking point for the family. Not only is one man dead, but three lives are destroyed by a single utterance.

Without Roy's intentional use of the characters' unique language, it is likely that the characters would be lost within the story. Roy asserted in an interview that The God of Small Things "is not really about what happened, but about how what happened affected the people it happened to" (Abraham 90). Without a clear understanding of how the characters were affected by the events of 1969 the novel may not have been so touching, so troubling to readers. With each manipulation of the English language, each word capitalized, each fragment on the page,

the reader connects with Esthappen and Rahel. The reader, through language, is invited into the Ipe household to become not only an observer but a confidant to the children.

CHAPTER TWO: “No Locusts Stands I”: Language as an Oppressor

As Christina Vogt-Williams suggests, the power of language lies in its striking ability to change and manipulate lives. “Language is often used as an instrument of power—it can hurt, exclude and even deprive a person of their rights—the right to speak, the right to be heard and the right to be one’s self and to have that self acknowledged by one’s surroundings” (Vogt-Williams 394). In this chapter I will show the ways in which Arundhati Roy creates a language for three of the central characters in The God of Small Things. The particular choices Roy makes in regard to language usage display the ways in which characters have been oppressed or manipulated.

Examining the language each character uses leads to better understanding on the part of the reader: the character’s thoughts, feelings, and actions all take root in language. Estha and Rahel are the two characters in The God of Small Things that readers identify by seeing their words and thoughts on the page. In contrast to Estha and Rahel, other characters in the book are understood either because they have no verbal language with which to distinguish themselves or because the language used in their presence serves to oppress them. Ammu is oppressed by language due to her social standing. Velutha is not given a chance to use the language he does have because of his status as an Untouchable. While these two characters are oppressed by the use of language in their world, Baby Kochamma, in contrast, uses language to exert what little power she does have in the world over innocent characters that are undeserving of the actions taken against them.

Ammu’s personal history is explained early in the novel to establish her inability to take care of herself. It is not that she is physically incapable of taking care of her children or herself; rather the rules of society keep her from acting on choices of her own volition. As a young

woman Ammu felt she had no choices for a future. She could either stay with her parents and remain unmarried or find a suitable husband on her own, without the help or blessing of her parents. Choosing what she believed to be the lesser of two evils, Ammu agreed to marry a man she would later learn was an alcoholic. After giving birth to twins she decided she had enough of her husband's damaging actions and decided to come home, though not into the open arms of her family. The Ipe family allowed Ammu and her children to live with them out of obligation, not because they particularly loved or cared for them.

The displaced family of three (who do not have a last name—Ammu being unable to decide which would be worse: her father's name or her ex-husband's) have no social standing. They are constantly reminded of their outsider status in the actions of their family members. Roy uses language to illustrate Ammu's feeling of containment caused by her family. For example, Ammu knows that she will always be dependent on her family for financial support. In retrospect Ammu understands the gravity of the choices she made as a young woman: "She was twenty-seven that year, and in the pit of her stomach she carried the cold knowledge that, for her, life had been lived. She had one chance. She made a mistake. She married the wrong man" (Roy 38). In making this one mistake, Ammu is forever dependent on her family. She is not forgiven for disobeying her family and making her own choice; Ammu is instead constantly reminded of her failure. In contrast to Ammu's condemnation for choosing the man she married, her brother Chacko not only is permitted to have lovers, he is silently encouraged to do so. Mammachi installs a door in his room which leads outside of the house, allowing visitors to come and go as they please. The contrast is clear: Ammu is not allowed to make decisions for herself because she is a woman, but Chacko can because he is a man and is therefore his own master.

Baby Kochamma's hatred of Ammu is clearly seen in her language. Throughout the novel Baby Kochamma tries to control Ammu, Estha, and Rahel. As the children's tutor Baby Kochamma silences Ammu even more because she is in charge of the twins' education. Since Baby Kochamma has a degree (although a useless, "Ornamental Gardening" degree) she deems herself their educator. In losing the right to educate her children, Ammu loses the ability to speak for herself on many occasions. Because Baby Kochamma is Ammu's elder Ammu is incapable of taking back the power that has been stolen from her.

Baby Kochamma's language as well as the language that describes her attitude gives the impression that she is extremely power-hungry: she craves power over her family members. The power that Baby Kochamma craves, however, is not simply due to her hatred for Ammu. Rather, Baby Kochamma's hatred is a result of her fear. The consequences of denouncing her faith to briefly take the vows of a nun cause Baby Kochamma to lose a great deal of social standing. She never marries and therefore is rarely spoken to with the respect she feels she deserves. Her fear is summed up by the narrator: "Hers too, was an ancient, age-old fear. The fear of being dispossessed" (Roy 67). The little power Baby Kochamma does have is only held within the confines of the Ayemenem house. When her power is threatened, Baby Kochamma feels as if she has to defend herself by being harsh with the few people who are socially lower than her, especially Ammu.

Baby Kochamma dislikes Ammu because she feels both she and Ammu are in the same position: both without a husband and therefore useless, a burden to the family. Yet Ammu seems to find a way out of her despair through her relationship with Velutha. Ammu manages (yet again) to find someone to love her despite the fact that such a relationship is not socially acceptable. When Baby Kochamma learns of her niece's affair, she recognizes the opportunity

to make Ammu suffer. She hopes to relegate Ammu to the lowly position Baby Kochamma found herself in many years ago: “Baby Kochamma recognized at once the immense potential of the situation, but immediately anointed her thoughts with unctuous oils. She bloomed. She saw it as God’s Way of punishing Ammu for her sins and simultaneously avenging her (Baby Kochamma’s) humiliation” (Roy 243). After Baby Kochamma recounts the (imaginary) rape, she will realize that she is the one who sent her niece spiraling downward (eventually to her death) and she could not be more pleased. The narrator expresses Baby’s power through language. The use of powerful language is indeed liberating for the aunt who believes she has finally been vindicated. Roy’s words “she bloomed” suggests that Baby Kochamma saw herself rising to power through her idea of how to put Ammu and Velutha in their rightful places. Though Baby Kochamma lacked social standing, her actions made her feel as if she had some power over another being. As Roy puts it, she “anointed her thoughts with unctuous oils.” Baby Kochamma truly relishes her plan to bring down two of her enemies.

The lack of social standing is also perpetuated by other characters in the novel, most notably by Inspector Thomas Mathew, a policeman who hides behind the guise of “helpful keeper of peace” but who uses language (both verbal and physical) to remind Ammu of her low station in life. Inspector Mathew serves to illustrate a larger social injustice present in Indian society: the Caste System. Though outlawed in the Indian Constitution, the Caste System remains an important factor in daily life and decision making. Those who continue to adhere to the Caste System use language to belittle the people who allow themselves to love despite what cultural custom deems (in)appropriate. Inspector Mathew clearly believes in the value of the Caste System and his belief affects the decisions he makes in his professional life: “He spoke the coarse Kottayam dialect of Malayalam. He stared at Ammu’s breasts as he spoke. He said the

police knew all they needed to know and that the Kottayam Police didn't take statements from *veshyas* or their illegitimate children" (Roy 9-10). Inspector Mathew knows he is in the position to comment on Ammu's personal business and chooses to let her know where she stands in the social hierarchy. As a woman without a husband, who voluntarily slept with an Untouchable, Ammu is basically invisible. According to the caste system, when Ammu began sleeping with Velutha she defiled not only herself but her family as well. Because it would have been inappropriate (and unlawful) to throw her in jail or banish her, Inspector Mathew carefully uses language to abuse Ammu, thus reminding her who holds the power in India.

Inspector Mathew uses his social position as a weapon. His status as a member of a high caste and as a police officer gives him power that he uses at his discretion. Not only does he exert this power over Ammu (a woman society deems an acceptable victim of damaging language) he also uses his power to influence Baby Kochamma. When Baby Kochamma goes to the police station with her story concocted to "save the family" she weaves a tangled web describing how Velutha raped Ammu, who is consequently too scared to say anything about it. As Inspector Mathew catches Baby Kochamma in her lie he uses it to his advantage. Having already deduced that the police beat Velutha for no reason, he forces Baby Kochamma to give him the information he needs to save face. He explains:

"The matter is very simple. Either the rape-victim must file a complaint. Or the children must identify the Paravan as their abductor in the presence of a police witness. Or." He waited for Baby Kochamma to look at him. "Or I must charge you with lodging a false F.I.R. Criminal offense." (Roy 299)

By using threatening language Inspector Mathew gets what he wants: a chance to reposition himself in the place of authority. He needs to feel as if he is in control of others and can do so

only by using language to manipulate Baby Kochamma. Baby Kochamma is very aware of what Inspector Mathew is doing to her but also knows that his words are more powerful than hers. It may, after all, take a manipulator to know when she is being manipulated.

Because of her lower social standing as an unmarried woman and converted Catholic, Baby Kochamma continually looks for ways to assert power over others. Roy's powerful language reveals the evil in Baby Kochamma's character. For example, Roy's clever descriptions of Baby Kochamma illustrate the desperation the old woman harbors in her heart. In order to exact revenge on the world Baby Kochamma will use any candidate she considers worthy. Velutha is the perfect outlet for her rage: he is already an Untouchable and therefore hated by most people simply for living in their town. His mere presence carries with it the connotation of defilement. Baby Kochamma uses Velutha as a scapegoat for all of the ways she feels wronged in her life. She allows her hatred for her personal life circumstances, the presence of Ammu and the twins, and her loneliness to be combined into one evil act: lying to Inspector Mathew.

The language used to describe the conception of her plan calls attention to Baby Kochamma's sinister ways. "'That man will be our Nemesis,' Baby Kochamma said. Not because she was clairvoyant and had had a sudden flash of prophetic vision. Just to get him in trouble. Nobody paid her any attention. 'Mark my words,' she said bitterly" (Roy 175). Roy intentionally surrounds Baby Kochamma's statement with a sense of foreboding. The reader is to understand the decision Baby Kochamma makes in the minutes after she learns that Ammu and Velutha have been sleeping together. Baby Kochamma says that Velutha will be the family's nemesis. The certainty with which she makes the statement indicates her determination. After years and years of waiting for a form of retribution, Baby Kochamma finds it in an

innocent man who simply had the misfortune of falling in love with woman of a higher caste. Baby Kochamma's recognition of her heightened status is more than a light bulb going off in her head: it seems this realization is the answer she has been waiting for. Roy also highlights Baby Kochamma's evil desire by pointing to the fact that she is *not* a clairvoyant. It is not that Baby *sees* the future or is somehow predicting the future but that she knows what she can do to bring an end to Velutha.

The power that Baby Kochamma usurps when she devises her plan is taken seriously—in the eyes of Baby Kochamma if no one else. Roy describes Baby Kochamma's statement as "bitter." The word "bitter" displays Baby Kochamma's demeanor and her determination. She says "Mark my words" *bitterly* [emphasis mine] suggesting that she is harboring anger in her heart (Roy 175). This anger will only manifest itself in one way: implicating Velutha in a crime which will lead to his death. Though Baby Kochamma does not plan on killing the Untouchable, she certainly wants to see his demise—the more profound the fall, the better.

Baby Kochamma's (lack of) social status is clearly displayed in the above quotation. The narrator notes that "Nobody paid her any attention" (Roy 175). The fact that no one took her comment seriously indicates that those in Baby Kochamma's social circle habitually dismiss her comments as unimportant or unnecessarily dramatic. Her statement is of no consequence to the people who hear it; after all, she is merely a woman making a remark about a situation over which everyone believes she has no control. However, her statement leads to action. The power behind her words, the resolute bitterness behind the meaning comes to fruition hours after she first remarks on Velutha's fate.

One of the reasons Baby Kochamma's language is so striking is that her status as a woman suggests that she not speak in such confident, threatening terms. Mary McEdwards

argues, “Women have a language of their own, different from and inferior to the language of men [...] women’s language is symbolic of women’s lack of power” (McEdwards 40). Though Baby Kochamma has been able to use her language to exercise power over the children, she has yet to exert any power over other adults. Her statement and subsequent language as she condemns Velutha are strikingly different from the language one would expect from an Indian woman of Baby Kochamma’s standing. Baby Kochamma’s language, as a woman, should have been thoughtful, quiet, and perhaps even hesitant. That she speaks with such force during this scene calls attention to her desire to destroy Velutha.

While Baby Kochamma intends to ignore the rules of women’s language in her society, Ammu feels continually bound to societal and familial rules. Very few times in the novel is Ammu able to assert herself without arousing a negative reaction. Each of the times Ammu speaks with unquestioned authority she is addressing her children. With her children as the only exception, Ammu is bound by the language Indian society deems appropriate. Unlike Baby Kochamma, Ammu has a great deal more to lose in ignoring the rules of society—she knows she could lose her children if she is not careful. Baby Kochamma, on the other hand, has nothing to lose in using the power of language. While Baby Kochamma is dependant on her family, she knows that nothing she can do will be as bad as Ammu’s actions so she uses this knowledge to her advantage.

Regarding the female characters of The God of Small Things, Mohini Khot argues, “There is no such thing [...] as an independent woman” (215). This applies most clearly to Ammu based on her lack of language. Ammu is bound by the decisions of her mother and brother. Though she often jokes with Chacko on the subject, it is understood that he is the decision-maker of the family. Her opinions, regardless of how intelligent they may be, are

nothing compared to the opinions of the head of the family. Ammu truly has no agency, no “locusts stands I” (Roy 56). When Ammu points out the injustices of society and lack of social standing, Chacko merely laughs. His laugh serves to acknowledge the truth of his sister’s statement while at the same time silently admitting the fact that nothing will be done to relieve Ammu of her position in life.

Chacko, like all other Indian men, knows that maintaining the caste system—and the language behind it—is particularly important for men. It is not only what allows the higher caste Indians to be separated from the Untouchables, but also what allows the men to be separated from the women. Purnima Dineo asserts that it “becomes crucial, in a society where the maintenance of endogamous caste units is paramount, that the female body be heavily regulated” (Dineo 111). By regulating the female body and all that it does (especially who a female speaks to and interacts with) the social hierarchy remains intact. Chacko knows that his sister has a lower social status than he, which is why he simply laughs when she points out the truth of the situation. He dismisses her, not using language at all, because he does not deem her worthy of language.

Because Ammu’s inferior social position is based on her personal decisions, her circumstances are not so dire as those of her lover, Velutha. Velutha is a Paravan: an Untouchable with no social status. Like all Untouchables, Velutha must work for those of higher castes and stay out of the way as much as possible. However, because of his talent for mechanics and wood-working, Velutha is able to make an impression on the Ipe family. He is allowed to work as no other Untouchable would—he even gets an actual wage for the duties he performs. While he is able to work for the Ipe family business, he is not often afforded the

opportunity to speak with the adult members of the family. For this reason, much of Velutha's "language" is seen in body movements, gestures, and glances.

Ammu recalls that what she remembers most about her childhood is the gestures Velutha made toward her. "It was his smile that reminded Ammu of Velutha as a little boy [...] Holding out little gifts he made for her, flat on the palm of his hand so that she could take them without touching him" (Roy 167). Though the two of them never could have predicted their future, in childhood Ammu and Velutha were gentle with one another. Crossing the lines of appropriateness at a young age, Ammu and Velutha created a connection through which they could communicate without many words. Velutha simply offered little toys to Ammu and smiled as she took them. The small gestures indicate a great deal. The two children knew they had to abide by the rules of the Caste System, though they did not feel that these rules were truly important. Velutha offered the presents in such a manner that Ammu would not have to touch him (though she likely would not have recoiled from his touch). Despite social rules forbidding a friendship, Ammu and Velutha make a silent agreement to be companions. Their agreement sets in place an understanding the two will resume when they become lovers.

It is through gestures and movements, not language, that Ammu and Velutha make a silent agreement to become lovers. Coming upon one another near the river lit by moonlight, the two silently undress and explore each other's bodies. A few laughs are the only sounds uttered as the two make love. This relationship is continued for many nights, each time coupled with only a few words. Due to their social standing they know that to talk to one another about anything important or permanent is futile. The two recognize that they will never have a future, so there is no point in talking about one. They stick to the small things—naming the spider who visits them each night and making a promise understood with one word: "tomorrow" (Roy 321).

While Velutha says very little throughout the course of the novel, his silence does not mean that he is a language-less character. What is interesting about the language Velutha does use is that it is not at all indicative of the way any other Untouchables would speak. Christine Vogt-Williams argues:

Velutha, an Untouchable, would not have had access to the kind of English Roy uses in his speech. Yet Roy reports his thought patterns and lends his speech a certain dignity by using a more or less standard variety of English. This of course contributes to the reader's perception of Velutha not as just an Untouchable, but rather as a person with rights. (396)

Roy's use of proper English suggests that Velutha should be treated as any other human being would be treated. Velutha's English displays his intelligence and elicits sympathy. Moreover, while the reader is aware of Velutha's social standing, he or she should not be influenced by it. The reader should feel as outraged as Ammu does when Velutha's false accusations and beating are reported. Cleverly, Roy uses the elevated language to emotionally appeal to the audience. Not only should the reader comprehend how Velutha feels, he or she should be moved by the atrocities enacted against an individual whose only crime is being born into the wrong caste.

Vogt-Williams states that Roy "reports" Velutha's "thought patterns" allowing her to show the reader how an Untouchable thinks (Vogt-Williams 396). Roy not only gives Velutha a voice, she also gives him a brain capable of complex thought. Contrary to what members of a higher caste may suppose, Untouchables are able to think like human beings. Untouchables have the ability to think and feel, an attribute that Roy highlights in her portrayal of Velutha. Though few characters can understand this about the disrespected Paravan, Velutha's thoughtfulness is what makes him an appealing character. The qualities Velutha possesses, unlike many other

characters, do not require a vast number of words in order to be understood. Rather, it is through the simple and often silent actions of his character that readers can appreciate his value.

Roy uses a set of unwritten, unspoken rules that serve to govern the people of Ayemenem, India. Like the adherence to the caste system, other conventions that Indian people accept do not require formal discussion. Rather, Indians understand these laws as enacted through their elders. The “Love Laws” to which Roy often alludes are one example. These “Laws” affect how Indians live their lives and with whom they may interact. As the narrator explains them, such customs are “Laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much” (Roy 33).

Though not clearly defined, the weight behind the laws is undeniable. Janet Thormann argues, “The novel’s ‘Love Laws’ are the grammar structuring the interpretation of global and local power, the regulations governing capitalist distribution, caste, and women” (300). Thormann’s use of the word “grammar” to describe the “Love Laws” calls attention to the complex structure that governs the characters in the novel. Much like the grammar of language, once the rules are learned they are not discussed. Just as speakers of the English language know that a sentence must include a verb, the characters in The God of Small Things know that there are social lines that are not to be crossed. As young children learn to speak, they do so by observing, not by first learning the parts of speech and how they function. The same can be said for the “Love Laws.” The characters in the novel do not discuss the reasons for the social regulations because they have been observing the “Laws” in action since birth.

Within the context of these “Laws” the reader can see how characters are restricted in their movements, their actions towards one another, and most notably in how they use language with one other in terms of such constrictions. The “Love Laws” demand that each Indian adhere

to a set of rules in order to keep one another safe. The “Laws” imply that it is unsafe to love a person from a different caste, to deny power to someone of a high caste, or to act as if women and men are equal. If people do not obey these “Laws” chaos will presumably ensue. In the case of the Velutha and the members of the Ipe family, the belief in impending chaos is justified—as Ammu and Velutha use their body language they disobey the “Laws” and the lives of their families are forever changed.

The “Love Laws” are discussed in the first chapter and resurface throughout the novel with an eerie tone. This tone suggests the influence the laws have over the Indian people. Repeated in the same manner throughout the novel, the specifics of Roy’s word choice and sentence structure call attention to the magnitude of the influence harbored in so few words. The sentence fragments point to the severity of the laws; within the laws there is no wiggle-room. The laws then suggest that only certain people are worthy of love. Each person should be loved a specific amount, in other words, not freely but rather with restraint. Additionally, this love is qualified. One can not love another any way he or she pleases but rather under specific parameters based on their social position.

While most Indians in Ayemenem (Baby Kochamma included) believe in the importance of adhering to the “Love Laws,” Roy points to the failure of the system in displaying the aftermath of Baby Kochamma’s reports of her niece’s transgressions. It is not the breaking of the “Love Laws” that leads to Velutha’s death, rather it is the sincere belief that both Ammu and Velutha must pay for their actions—and the only way for the family to punish them is to use the power of their language. Baby Kochamma’s accusations are used as an example to show the damaging effects that disobedience to the “Love Laws” can bring.

In placing Baby Kochamma in a position to allow love to flourish or watch it die, Arundhati Roy makes a comment about Indian society. Through her characters the author argues that obeying the “Love Laws” does more damage than good. At the time of Ammu and Velutha’s transgressions India had technically outlawed the caste system, no longer allowing discrimination based on a person’s birth. Despite this amendment to the Indian constitution, a large number of Indians continue to distinguish themselves along caste lines. Roy shows the readers, through Baby Kochamma, that following the “Love Laws” means thinking about and making decisions based solely on oneself, with absolutely no regard for others. Baby Kochamma is more concerned with how her family will look in the eyes of other Indians. Mohini Khot articulates the Ipe family reaction: “When faced with the revelation of the Ammu-Velutha relationship, they cannot think beyond the caste prejudice they have inherited” (Khot 216). Baby Kochamma simply cannot not live with the idea of the Ipe family appearing “soft.” Her family would be disgraced if they were to allow Ammu and Velutha to love one another without regard for the “Love Laws.”

The nature of the “Love Laws” does not merely dictate “who should be loved. And How. And how much” (Roy 33). Rather, the “Laws” serve as a prison for all people who do not have a high social position. Especially for women, the “Love Laws” deny a person the right to explore desire. Denied the right to explore desire, those affected by the “Love Laws” begin to feel as if they are unlike other Indians. Ammu tries to fight this feeling as she continues her relationship with Velutha. Indeed Roy causes the reader to feel sympathy for the couple, to truly believe there is nothing wrong with a love that crosses caste boundaries, a love that explores desire. Ammu wants to break free of the “Laws” (and consequently the language that binds them)

because she finds that she cannot be a whole person if she adheres to such rules. Janet

Thormann argues:

What plays out in Ammu is the conflict between woman as mother, regulated by social law, and woman as subject of desire following her own jouissance [...]. The intolerable split between mother and desiring, sexual subject is the effect of patriarchal power imposing a forced choice on woman: If Ammu chooses to be only a mother, she faces an empty future of abject stagnation. (Thormann 305)

Though the “Love Laws” are not referred to directly by the characters, its dictates are clearly understood. Ammu is caught within the “Law’s” powerful message and the language which accompanies it. Ammu knows that if she does not submit to the “Love Laws” she will likely suffer; however, it is in the silent language of Velutha that she finds comfort, and therefore her gamble is one she feels she must take.

Roy uses language to create sympathy and loathing for different characters in the book. Language allows certain characters to exert power over others while the most lovable characters are forced to suffer. Arundhati Roy skillfully chooses her words in a way that allows readers to know characters on a personal level. Even without language, as we will see in the next chapter, Roy has the ability to familiarize the reader with the emotions of a character.

CHAPTER THREE: “Silence gathered its skirts and slid”: Esthappen’s Silence as a Language

The power of language to develop characters in The God of Small Things is undeniable. However, Esthappen is one of the most compelling characters Roy creates, and he is without language for nearly half of the novel. Estha’s lack of language serves as a way to show the profound effects of the actions, and most notably the language, used when he was seven years old. As “the Terror” unfurls before him, Estha speaks less and less. He continues to listen to others and observe the world around him but he slowly pulls himself out of all interactions. Rather than again be the reason for someone’s death, Estha chooses to disengage from the world.

Acknowledged as a gradual change, Estha’s silence is regarded not merely as a state of being but rather something that dwells inside of him, like an affliction he must live with every day:

Once the quietness arrived, it stayed and spread in Estha. It reached out of his head and enfolded him in its swampy arms[...]. It sent its stealthy, suckered tentacles inching along the insides of his skull, hovering the knolls and dells of his memory, dislodging old sentences, whisking them off the tip of his tongue. It stripped his thoughts of the words that described them and left them pared and naked. Unspeakable. Numb [...] He grew accustomed to the uneasy octopus that lived inside him and squirted its inky tranquilizer on his past. Gradually the reason for his silence was hidden away, entombed somewhere deep in the soothing folds of the fact of it. (Roy 13)

The power of Estha’s silence is evident in this description. The silence, like a parasite, has made a home in the core of Estha’s existence; the silence is lodged onto Estha very tightly. As the silence continues to harbor itself in Estha’s soul Estha accepts it as something that should be a

part of his being. He allows it to live within him and continually numb him. By allowing the silence to stay, Estha keeps his feelings at bay.

One way to think about the function of Estha's silence as a language is to consider what Wolfgang Iser calls "blanks" in a text. In reader-response theory it is said that blanks "Leave open the connection between textual perspectives and so spur the reader into coordinating these perspectives and patterns" (1677). Estha's silence can then create a connection between himself and the reader. Roy's description of how Estha's silence takes shape within him offers the reader the perspective he or she needs to understand the character. The reader, in analyzing the function of Estha's silence can make a connection with him, to recognize his need for silence as a way to deal with his pain. Iser goes on to say that blanks "prompt acts of ideation on the reader's part" (1677). In terms of what Roy gives the reader, the "acts of ideation" the reader would have serve as a connection between the speaking and silent world. We see the potential for "acts of ideation" most clearly when Estha is in the presence of other characters. His soundless actions give clues to the reader about how he is feeling and what he is struggling with. For instance, though the narrator never explains Estha's obsessive-compulsive cleanliness the reader can understand Estha's need to clean may be linked to the filth he felt as a small child after being sexually abused and witnessing incredible violence. His actions act as a language expressing his continued distress. Roy's techniques serve to create a clear understanding of a complex character.

Just as the reader gets comfortable with silence, Estha does as well. He learns that if he embraces the silence within him he will no longer have to think about the reason he stopped speaking in the first place. Though he slowly stops talking because he sees the aftermath of his one word, "yes," Estha eventually forgets his reasons for silence. Because he is sent away from

everyone he knows and loves, there are very few reminders of the reason he was hurt in the first place. Though he initially stops talking to avoid ruining the lives of others, over his twenty-four-year separation from his sister, Estha completely loses the desire to speak at all. Estha allows the silence to wrap up his pain and “entomb” his past. Not until he sees his sister again does the entombed pain become unwrapped.

Because Estha’s silence is gradual, it is especially hard for people to understand why he does not speak. Even though it is confusing to those around him, the silence is not something that weighs heavily on the minds of those who come into contact with Estha. “Yet Estha’s silence was never awkward. Never intrusive. Never noisy” (Roy 12). Just as the narrator describes how the silence comes to find a place in Estha, those who interact with Estha come to accept his silence as well. It seems as though Estha’s silence is something that is expected, as natural as his growing height or his dark brown hair.

The reader, however, has the advantage of knowing what events in Estha’s life may have led to his silence. In allowing the reader to know the events that led to Estha’s silence, Roy instills a feeling of pity for Estha in the readers. Iser’s argument concerning a reader’s response explains Roy’s techniques: “Communication in literature, then, is a process set in motion and regulated not by a given code, but by a mutually restrictive and magnifying interaction between the explicit and implicit, between revelation and concealment” (1676). Given the clues Roy leaves concerning Estha’s silence, the reader can easily understand Estha’s desire not to speak—indeed no normal child would want to speak after realizing the last words his friend heard were ones confirming that Velutha was a liar. The magnitude of Estha’s speaking one word leads to his understanding of the magnitude of silence. By giving the reader one clear example Roy serves to magnify the importance of the word for Estha. This magnification also serves to imply

the reasons for Estha's silence. He recognizes that it is safer to say nothing than to run the risk of hurting another person he loves. Instead of choosing his words wisely, Estha chooses not to speak at all.

In his efforts to remain silent, not only does Estha refuse to speak, it is as if his whole mind has been turned off. He does not have thoughts constantly pouring into his conscious brain. From his actions it appears that he is at peace. He seems very calm and collected; nothing can detain Estha from his silence. However, Rahel's return changes Estha's demeanor—if not outwardly then at least in his heart. The only person that can penetrate Estha's silence is Rahel: "It had been quiet in Estha's head until Rahel came. But with her she had brought the sound of passing trains, and the light and shade and light that falls on you if you have the window seat. The world, locked out for years, suddenly flooded in, and now Estha couldn't take the noise" (Roy 16). Rahel brings with her not only a silent understanding of everything Estha had been through; she also brings the memory of what happened all those years ago. While the silence allows Estha's memories to lie dormant, Rahel's presence awakens Estha's memories and his mind cannot contain the silence any longer. Such memories may indeed be termed "Memories"—with a capital letter—as Estha referred to them earlier in the novel. Since childhood Estha carried a negative connotation with the term "memories" because of the pain he saw in his mother's eyes. Likewise, Estha does not want to remember his past.

Though Rahel is the one person Estha knew he needed in all those years apart, their reunion is not a flawless one. The twins had been separated for twenty-four years, forced to live apart from one another. Before Estha and Rahel could reconnect as they once had, the two have to refamiliarize themselves with one another. Unlike most people who have to tell stories in

order to catch up on lost years, the twins do not need words. Estha and Rahel simply need to remain in one another's presence. Slowly the two become comfortable with one another again.

The silent language Estha and Rahel share is unlike any other language used in the book. While their silent language sometimes relies on glances or movements, the majority of their communication is simply *felt*. The twins naturally know what the other is feeling. Their connection runs so deep that even when they were apart from one another there was a sense of emptiness within them, they could physically and emotionally feel as if they were missing an aspect of themselves. In order to feel complete one twin must be aware of what the other is feeling.

Though the twins are unable to use verbal language to explain their connection, they are aware of its presence. Likewise, other people notice the (lack of) connection while the two are apart: "What Larry McCaslin saw in Rahel's eyes was not despair at all, but a sort of enforced optimism. And a hollow where Estha's words had been. He couldn't be expected to understand that. That the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other" (Roy 21). The recognition by other people that one twin is somehow incomplete speaks to the value of the twin's silent language. The silence is a language, similar to a physical language that can be understood only in the presence of another being. Because their language is not verbal or written, the absence of one twin means they are both unable to feel whole. The power of this silence is so moving that when Rahel finally does have the chance to see her twin after twenty-three years, she drops everything and returns to Ayemenem.

The narrator tells the reader that each time Rahel is in the same room as Estha she can feel his presence. She does not have to see him or talk to him to know that he is near her. This connection is felt as soon as she arrives in India. Almost instantly a part of their connection has

returned to them, almost instantly the twins feel better about themselves—perhaps a little less broken than they had felt before. And even though the first few days of their reunion are spent in observation—merely getting used to one another again—the two hold the knowledge deep inside of themselves that they can begin to heal now that they are together again.

Rahel can feel Estha's presence and know what he is thinking. Many times it seems the two are thinking the same things. Rahel is able to understand her brother in a way no one else can. Estha feels the same for his sister; he knows that they will reconnect mentally and emotionally. He knows he does not need to explain his life to Rahel because she inherently understands his thought process, whether it is verbalized or not. After a couple days of being reacquainted with one another's presence, the two become closer. They watch a Kathakali performance and walk home together, jointly and silently ignoring Comrade K.N.M. Pillai, who is entering the temple as the twins leave. "The twins, not rude, not polite, said nothing. They walked home together. He and She. We and Us" (Roy 225). It is during their walk home that things change for the twins. In their walk past Comrade K.N.M. Pillai, the twins silently acknowledge that they again are of the same opinion. The twins know they are thinking the same things and remember their history in Ayemenem.

The connection the two make after twenty-four years of separation is one that does not require words. The twins know that they spent those years apart desperately in need one another. As they walk home, they silently go over their family history, the events that took place when they were seven years old. Now that they are reunited, there is only one way to express all of their repressed emotions; the twins need only silence because words would not do justice to their feelings:

But what was there to say? Only that there were tears. Only that Quietness and Emptiness fitted together like stacked spoons. Only that there was a snuffling in the hollows at the base of a lovely throat. Only that a hard honey-colored shoulder had a semicircle of teethmarks on it. Only that they held each other close, long after it was over. Only that what they shared that night was not happiness, but hideous grief. (Roy 311)

In their silent language the twins find comfort in their mutual grief, a grief they could not allow themselves to fully explore without one another. They do not need words to express their grief and their rage. They need only each other. The ability to be in the same place and to express that they have the same feelings is all the twins need—words would only serve to complicate the expression of emotions.

In the final, incestuous scene with the twins, their silence allows them to break the “Love Laws” which condemned their mother nearly a quarter-century ago. Brinda Bose argues, “The fact that the Rahel-Estha incest is conducted in the (social) invisibility of a family home, and indeed involves a partner who has ceased to speak and to be noticed in/by society at large [...] may evade the punishment it apparently would deserve” (Bose 67). Thus the twins, in their silent acceptance of each other, are at last able to redeem the actions of their mother. In their union they acknowledge that what their mother did was no different than their own actions: she was driven by love, desire, and the need to be close to someone. Like their mother’s relationship with Velutha, the twin’s union does not require the use of words. The silence that once imprisoned their emotions has finally allowed them to be set free.

The power of the silence which unites Estha and Rahel makes more sense as the novel progresses. While the reader initially learns of the silence before the reasons behind it, by the

end of the novel Roy has come full circle with the power of silence and how it serves to connect the family. The silence which eventually grabs hold of Estha sets into each member of the family after Velutha's death. With his death comes a realization to the children and Ammu that nothing will be the same. Their lives will be completely different as a result of Velutha and Sophie Mol's death. "And for the little family curled up and asleep on a blue cross-stitch counterpane? What came for them? Not Death. Just the end of living" (Roy 304). Though none of the characters speak of the change that comes over them, their silence speaks volumes. The grief that Ammu, Rahel, and Estha harbor is physically silent yet seems to scream within them. This grief will never leave the characters; though it does lie dormant in Rahel, all three members of the "little family" carry a silent grief with them for the rest of their lives.

By the end of the novel, as the twins reunite within their silent understanding the reader can see the cycle of silence come full circle. The death of Velutha brought with it a silence which will find a niche in each of the family members. For Estha, the silence is most notable; it has taken over every aspect of his being. For Rahel, while her husband could see the effects of the silence in her eyes, she is still able to speak. Her silence, the language that reminded her of what she needed most, was lost but not forgotten. Rahel could not articulate her silent language, knowing that only Estha would understand. The silence could only make sense when combined with its other half.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the course of the novel each of the characters shies away from addressing life's larger issues, the "Big Things," as Roy cleverly puts it. The use of language allows the characters to mask their true feelings, scratching only the surface of the thoughts and feelings which govern their actions. Even in terms of Ammu and Velutha's relationship the heart of the matter is never addressed: "Instinctively they stuck to the Small Things. The Big Things ever lurked inside. They knew that there was nowhere for them to go. They had nothing. No future. So they stuck to the Small Things" (Roy 320). As a result of both the "Love Laws" and the use of language Ammu and Velutha are rendered powerless. They cannot choose to love one another openly, and even expressed in near silence, their secret is eventually exposed. Though the readers and characters know exactly what the "Big Things" are no one is able to speak about them. Rather, Roy uses a number of stylistic choices to convey the characters thoughts and intentions.

Roy uses language psychologically, typographically, structurally, and culturally to create a powerful story. In each stylistic choice the author makes the characters (most notably Estha, Rahel, and Ammu) connect with the readers. By allowing the reader to see and understand as the twins do, the reader is drawn into the events of the novel in 1969. Likewise, the use of different types of language—both verbal and silent—create dynamic relationships between the characters and the world in which they live.

While Roy constructs a compelling story for her readers she does so with the expectation that the reader will have to work to understand her words and her characters. The combination of standard English, manipulated English words and Malayalam words serves to create a deeper understanding of the characters and the Indian culture. Roy exhibits how the influence of

English culture has infiltrated the Indian culture, bringing both positive and negative effects.

Roy is nondiscriminatory in her analysis of contemporary Indian culture. She uses her characters to point to flaws in both the English and Indian world.

Roy's deliberate use of English and Malayalam suggests that she is giving the reader vital information, information she hopes her reader will interpret in a specific way. Anne Cluysenaar argues, "The individual's knowledge of, and selection from, his language is so vital a matter. His perceptual and inner world is, it seems, largely articulated even to himself within the confines of his linguistic awareness, and is certainly expressed to the reader solely through the forms he has chosen from amongst those available to him" (25). Indeed Roy's "linguistic awareness" as Cluysenaar puts it, is vast. She gives her reader the novel as a sort of structure to explore. By using fragmentation, capitalization, and focalization the reader can understand what Roy deems important as well as why. In providing such challenges, Roy engages the reader with the text and characters, often exposing the reader to cultural practices different from their own.

Without a doubt, the novel The God of Small Things is a masterpiece which contains an innovative blend of language. Roy's characters are clearly understood not only by their actions but by their use of different types of language: verbal and silent, as well as body language. Each of these linguistic aspects combine to create a compelling story deeply rooted in culture. The author's use of both English and Malayalam explicates the culture of both Roy and her characters. The novel may have only been successful due to the combination of the languages for, as John McLeod insists, "To dismiss a language is to dismiss a whole culture" (126).

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