A Comparative Study of the Narrative Techniques in *Midnight’s Children* and *The God of Small Things*.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL APPROACH

1.1 Introduction

“Does India exist?” According to Ralph J. Crane India has no single true identity. (Imaginary Homelands: 27) This aspect can be said to be reflected in both novels that are to be discussed in this thesis. India has a multitude of languages, religions, cultures and traditions where many reach back into ancient times. In addition, there is no doubt that the colonization of the country had a strong impact on all facets of society, both during and after colonial rule. India has then been divided into three different countries after 1947, when it was split into India and Pakistan. In 1972 Bangladesh, earlier called East Pakistan, was recognized by the UN, after a devastating conflict with West Pakistan. In very brief terms it may be said that the conflicts that occurred due to the division of the country have had fiercely negative effects that have influenced the subcontinent ever since.

Although these facts, as such, are not issues in this thesis, they are important in the process of understanding how Midnight’s Children by Salman Rushdie and The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy could be written the way they were. The fragmented style of both novels thus reflects the diverse country they are set in. Hence, one can say that fragmentation is a key term in this thesis. Since it is an essential feature in postmodernism, the novels can be claimed to be postmodern novels. However, the concept of postmodernism is not as much in use today as it was at the time when Linda Hutcheon published her A Poetics of Postmodernism in 1988. The term is hardly used, for example, in Robert Dale Parker’s textbook How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies. (3rd edition, Oxford UP) That said, I find that the theory of postmodernist literature developed by Hutcheon and others to describe certain features of the literature written in the 80s and 90s still constitutes an important framework for discussing novels such as those by Rushdie and Roy.

Further, according to Frederic Jameson in his article Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, it is “essential to grasp postmodernism not as a style, but as a dominant cultural form indicative of late capitalism.” (Late Capitalism: 4) He further claimed that postmodernism is separated from other cultural forms by its stress on fragmentation, a form that is easily recognized in the two novels. Moreover, postmodernism is concerned with surface and no substance, hence there is a loss of the centre. Generally, postmodernism is a
phenomenon which has been subject to much discussion and has also been considered hard to define because postmodernism is said to resist borders and definition. The prominent French philosopher and sociologist, Jean Baudrillard, however, has said the following of postmodernism:

“the characteristic of a universe where no more definitions are possible. . . It all revolves around an impossible definition. One is no longer in a history of art or a history of forms. . . The extreme limits of these possibilities has been reached. . . All that remains. . . is to play with the pieces. Playing with the pieces – that is postmodern.” (Kennedy: 36)

His words seem to me rather pessimistic, and I believe that for many the postmodern era must seem confusing, at least partly due to its lack of definition and borders. It is then relevant to consider what Jean Francois Lyotard, another leading French 20th century philosopher, published in the final year of the 1970s. In the text The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, he analysed postmodernity and how it influenced society. Thus the kind of narrative closure that was distinctive of the 19th century was undermined by postmodern forms that resist closure. Lyotard argued in The Postmodern Condition that the most prominent feature of postmodernism was the belief that the grand narratives, such as the ardent belief in the Enlightenment period that society would move forward and constantly progress, had lost its legitimacy in a fragmented and increasingly complex world. (The Postmodern Condition: xxiv) They could no longer reflect the reality of contemporary society, as commercialised knowledge would lead to major changes in the development of society. Today it can thus not be wrong to say that Lyotard’s ideas have been proved right, especially when considering the development of the many aspects of globalization, particularly in technology.

In the two novels that are the subjects of this thesis the realities represented are indeed highly fragmentary and central aspects of post-colonial Indian society are questioned in diverse ways. As in all fiction, and some would claim in history writing as well, truth is a relative phenomenon as the narrators of Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children (1981) and Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things (1997) must be considered unreliable. In the now classic text from 1961, The Rhetoric of Fiction, Wayne C. Booth claimed that a narrator is “reliable when he or she speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author’s norms), unreliable when he does not.” (The Rhetoric of Fiction: 158) He
further observed that narrators perform three tasks that define their status, they report what is seen and what happens, they interpret what they know or understand, and finally, they evaluate. Further, according to Phelan and Rabinowitz in Narrative Theory, “When a narrator performs one of the three tasks and the author uses that restriction to communicate something that the narrator is unaware of, the implied author is using restricted narration.” (Narrative Theory, Core concepts and Critical debates: 34) Thus, narrators may be unreliable by reporting, interpreting and evaluating wrongly or inadequately, and hence the narration becomes unreliable. In this way, the seemingly failing and fragmentary memory of the protagonist Saleem Sinai in Midnight’s Children, and Estha and Rahel, children of seven as protagonists in The God of Small Things, makes the narration unreliable. Thus the expression “the feasibility of the chutnification of history; the grand hope of the pickling of time!” (MC: 642-43) is a metaphor for the preservation of history based on memory of the past. This is relevant to both novels, as the pickle factory is a key symbol in both novels. In The God of Small Things the pickle factory provides the livelihood of the well-off Ipe family. In Roy’s novel the pickling and classification problems are metaphors for the classification of people in castes. (GOST: 30) In Midnight’s Children it is relevant throughout the novel, but especially towards the end where Mary Pereira, Saleem’s ayah, has made a new livelihood for herself by building up a pickle factory after she left the Sinai family. This pickle factory is also where Saleem recounts his story to Padma, his naïve narratee.

Although unreliable narrators are far from unknown in earlier literature, it is also a characteristic feature of postmodern literature, as postmodern literature tends to play with and parody literary techniques of earlier periods. Thus, the narrative techniques and their consequences are among the key issues studied in this thesis. The novels are moreover highly non-chronological in the way they are narrated, analepsis and prolepsis are frequent to a degree that might confuse the reader.

Both novels are said to have elements of autobiography, since both authors use familiar places and elements from their respective family history in their narratives. However, these biographical elements do not necessarily make the novel autobiographical. Émilienne Baneth-Nouailhetas states, concerning Roy’s novel, that these “biographical elements are attached to the novel’s recognizable context and involved in its realist backrounding, but this does not make it autobiographical.” (B-N: 2) This could, in my view, be said of Midnight’s Children as
well, although Saleem insists on recounting his autobiography curiously linked to the history of India since 1947.

The novels may also be considered as highly political works, through the historical and political issues treated in them. The recounting of India’s history through large parts of the 20th century, although hardly accurate when it comes to official historical facts of India’s colonial- and post-colonial history, is conveyed through the literary tool of allegory. In my opinion the two authors, through their style, the extraordinary language and fascinating life stories of engaging fictional characters seem to convey their own experience of India’s post-colonial history. According to Linda Hutcheon, the presence of the past is common in postmodern literature. When used in fiction it describes that it “is at once both metafictional and historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past.” (Historiographic Metafiction, Parody and the Intertextuality of History: 1)

Both Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and Roy’s *The God of Small Things* won immediate international acclaim. Written in English, a controversial element in itself, since it is the language of the former colonizers, the novels were easily accessible to a large audience worldwide. Additionally, they were translated into numerous languages. The fact that both novels have won the Booker prize, and *Midnight’s Children* in addition won the Booker of Bookers prize in 1993, added to the overwhelming interest that had already been bestowed on them. The extensive novel, *Midnight’s Children*, covers about sixty years of history in both India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The variety of characters is overwhelming. The allusions to the mythology of the sub-continent, in addition to Shakespeare’s plays *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* and a variety of other literary works, are numerous and contribute to the idea that the novel has many features of what is considered to be postmodernist literature. The colloquial language of the Bombay film industry is also an interesting issue in Rushdie’s novel. In her book, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon claimed that “Historiographic metafiction self-consciously reminds us that, while events did occur in the real empirical past, we name and constitute those events as historical facts by selection and narrative positioning”. (A Poetics of Postmodernism: 97)

It has been said that Rushdie revolutionized the image of South Asian fiction when *Midnight’s Children* was published and contributed to the growth of a new generation of Indian writers. According to New York Times “Seventeen years after Salman Rushdie’s shot across the bow with “Midnight’s Children,” a new generation of Indian writers was “matching
India’s new vibrancy with their own.” (www.nytimes.com/2010/10/03/books/review/Chotiner-
) Arundhati Roy and a number of other Indian authors were by Chelva Kanaganayakam
baptized “Midnight’s Grandchildren”. (Kortenaar: 3)

When The God of Small Things was nominated for the Booker Prize one of the jury
members, literary journalist and critic Jason Cowley, said that it “had a radical difference, it
was unlike any other book that we read.” A question one might ask then is what the
revolutionary aspect of Midnight’s Children and the radical difference in The God of Small
Things in fact constitute. (K.V. Surendran: 1 in Epilogue) Why did these two novels evoke
such enormous interest all over the literary world? This thesis will set out to investigate
the narrative technique in the novels through a discussion and comparison of them. In addition,
the question whether the novels give marginalized groups a voice is interesting. Both novels
have been discussed by numerous scholars and from numerous angles. However, to my
knowledge, there has not been any sustained comparative study of the narrative techniques of
the two novels.

The two authors are important writers of the same sub-continent, but with different
backgrounds and development. Rushdie’s Muslim family stems from Kashmir, a valley of
conflict between India and Pakistan since Partition. In Midnight’s Children, he used the
northern valley of Kashmir and the southern city of Bombay, where he mainly grew up, as
settings for the protagonist, Saleem Sinai, and his family. In 1964, Rushdie’s family resettled
in Pakistan, where also members of the fictional Sinai family live in parts of the novel.
Although Rushdie today is famous for his novels and literary and philosophical essays, his
writing is still controversial. The most obvious and notorious example of his provoking style
we find in his novel The Satanic Verses (1988), which led to the fatwa, namely the decree
Ayatollah Khomeini called upon Muslims all over the globe to kill people involved in the
publication of the novel.

Roy has an unconventional family background, although less dramatic than Rushdie.
However, her political activism has made her a very controversial figure in her home country,
and her political activity has led to her being arrested when participating in illegal
demonstrations. Through her family she is connected to the southern region of Kerala, where
her novel also is set in the village of Ayemenem, in the well-off family Ipe belonging to the
minority of Syrian Christians. This is a religious tradition Roy has knowledge of, as her mother belonged to this minority.

The writer now lives in New Delhi, and apart from *The God of Small Things*, she has not published any fictional works. Her interest has since the publication of her novel been in more locally oriented political work, in the fight for those who have lost homes and livelihood in the battle against global capitalism. However, she has claimed that she does not separate between her one novel and her political work, as *The God of Small Things* is a decidedly political text where human rights issues, e.g. concerning caste, are significant through the unprivileged lives of the casteless in India. Additionally, Roy treated feminist themes through her female characters.

Roy has written several non-fictional works, the first one, *The Cost of Living*, was published in 1999. Her fight against the construction of the Narmada dams, a project where millions of people were deprived of basic rights, is one of her main political projects. In her factional work, global capitalism is mainly represented by the Indian government, which at times has been ruthless to their own citizens, depriving the poor of basic human rights. It may be claimed that it is from this ruthlessness that much of her political interest stems. Due to her activism she is a popular, but also very controversial, figure in the political map of India. Rushdie’s non-fictional writing is, in my opinion, not of the same intense character as Roy’s, but his writing still has a clear social and political angle. In *The God of Small Things* we see it in the so-called "love-laws", who can be loved and how. But also in the fates of the characters in the novel.

Despite the fact that this thesis is not setting out to discuss the political and social history of the sub-continent, it is important to mention that these facts cannot be ignored, as the history and the politics of India are central aspects of both novels. It can therefore not be surprising that one finds factual political elements in her novel, as Megan Feifer-McNair suggests in her thesis *The Politics of the God of Small Things* (Chan: 4). Roy is also controversial on other levels, as the content of *The God of Small Things* has been highly provocative for some. The incest scene and other sexual scenes in her novel have been under attack by the Kerala lawyer Sabu Thomas, who, in 1997, filed a lawsuit claiming that the scenes were obscene and wanted them removed from the book. As we now know, his lawsuit failed.

*Midnight’s Children* has been described as “a literary event with immense liberating potential which no other Indian English novel has ever had.” (Raj: 1). Edward Said found that the novel was a work that “opened up whole new worlds” (Raj: 2) in the sense that the novel represented a “particular hybrid experience into English.” (Raj: 2). In addition he claimed that it was a kind of work that “resist the hegemony of imperial version of history and “acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories.”” (Raj: 2) Roy’s novel, in my opinion, deals with the marginalized and suppressed histories, and it is in this way I find that both novels are political. Thus, the fictional narratives cannot be separated from historical events, although the histories represented in the novels hardly accords with official Indian history. Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, as well as Roy’s novel, can then be read as an allegory of India’s history during large parts of the 20th century. A relevant example of this is Indira Gandhi’s Emergency period, where democracy is set aside. This is one of the more central, of many real-life elements in the novel (MC: 592). The chapter that deals with the consequences of the Emergency is appropriately named Midnight, as it treats one of the darkest moments of newer Indian history. It is in this context that post-colonial theory and history are interesting for the analysis of the two novels. Both *Midnight’s Children* and *The God of Small Things* treat the themes of how colonialism has influenced the Indian society and people, both before and after Partition.

### 1.2 Thesis Statement and Theoretical Approach

A number of scholars has scrutinized the two novels, and many perspectives and different theories have been used in the study of them. Post-colonial theory where identity and hybridity are important issues has been discussed by scholars like Homi K. Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* and other works of his. Feminist theory, which in more than one way is connected to post-colonial theory through discussions of the subaltern, is another angle of interest. Both feminist and post-colonial theory are thus of relevance and interest in my study of the two novels, hence, these characteristics will be further discussed. However, it is postmodern analysis and theory that will be the main focus, as this is yet another field that is interesting to investigate in connection with these novels.

Additionally, in *The God of Small Things* and *Midnight’s Children* there is an array of people who have not had a “voice”. I would argue that the authors’ intention is to highlight these aspects in their novels, consequently Bowen’s argument that this way of rethinking: “…has
massive ethical implications for the way in which marginalized or powerless people or groups can be empowered by being given a historical “voice” …” (Bowen: 97)

Thus, this master thesis sets out to do a comparative analysis of how postmodern narrative technique in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* makes the two stories unfold, and in the end makes the reader reflect on the ethical implications, and possibly give marginalized groups a historical “voice” and enable them to “speak” back. How does this manifest itself in the two novels and what are the differences and similarities between them?

Consequently, it is appropriate to include Lyotard’s essay *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* as a basis for theory, although more recent research on the topic has been done. Lyotard’s essay, published in 1979, is vital in describing the postmodern, and he starts out by simplifying the term as incredulity toward metanarratives. He further claims, “The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements-narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, and so on.” (Lyotard: introduction, xxv)

Postmodernity is a problematic condition because a definition would, in itself, represent a breach with postmodern thinking, thus it is a highly differentiated condition and should not be defined as a fixed phenomenon. However, the postmodern condition is described by Lyotard to be a new situation in the history of mankind, as the technological development as it is seen in the second half of the 20th century has led to an extreme amount of information. However, this sense of “postmodernism” differs from the idea of postmodernist literature and postmodernist literary techniques such as fragmentation, which is limited to a much shorter period of time.

Nonetheless, in hindsight it is relevant to say that Lyotard was successful in his ideas on the development of information technology. The way we today communicate through smart phones, computers, etc. underlines this, and the use of the internet has changed the world. The globalization of capital, the development of consumerism and the international expansion of popular culture through film, DVD, streaming and so on, makes it impossible to maintain a complete picture of the world. In addition, multicultural conflicts and migration due to poverty and conflicts, the ending of the Cold War and changes in power structures are also central features. Humanity entered a new phase, namely the post-industrial age and in culture we entered the postmodern state, the general belief in progress and liberty are no longer valid
arguments. Positivistic ideas and objectivity have lost their validity. According to Linda Hutcheon, “The 19th century structures of narrative closure (death, marriage; neat conclusions) are undermined by those postmodern epilogues that foreground how, as writers and readers, we make closure;” (A Poetics of P: 59) Both novels in this thesis fall into this category, there is no closure.

Postmodernism is also often used synonymously with post-structuralism and deconstruction where Jacques Derrida is widely acknowledged to be a vital contributor. In countries like India and Pakistan, his theories have had great impact through the post-colonial discussion, which is reflected in Midnight’s Children and The God of Small Things. The language of the novels has then been an important issue. Raj claims in his article, Re-drawing the Postmodern Lines: Rushdie and Indian English Fiction in the Post-1980s that many authors felt that Rushdie in Midnight’s Children “made it possible to re-imagine and re-invent the way novels are written in English in India.” (Raj: 18) According to Raj, Anita Desai felt that Rushdie had made it possible to write English “the way it is spoken on the streets by Indian people”. In my opinion this is also the case in Roy’s novel, although I do not claim that she was copying the style of Rushdie, but his innovative style might have given her, and other Indian English writers of her generation, a freedom of choice that did not exist before Midnight’s Children was published.

Linda Hutcheon is an essential contributor to the discussion of postmodernism, she uses Midnight’s Children in her discussion in both A Poetics of Postmodernism and in The Politics of Postmodernism where she discusses the novel as a postmodernist text. And it is her discussion of the now well established term, historiographic metafiction, coined by Hutcheon herself in 1988 when A Poetics of Postmodernism was first published, that is particularly interesting in connection with the two novels. While it is true that Hutcheon has used only Midnight’s Children as an example and not The God of Small Things, scholars like Alex Tickell and Julie Mullaney have done critical readings of Roy’s novel and are concerned with the postmodernist aspect of return to history with a scepticism to the “master narratives of “History” and “Myth” of earlier periods. (Mullaney: 43) Tickell, on the other hand, quotes Peter Mortensen, who notes “Roy’s reflexive awareness of a self-promoting exotism but also suggests that, while juxtaposing high and low cultural forms, Roy’s novel actually “flies in the face of postmodern sensibilities, insofar as it recognizes the inseparability of nature and
culture“ (Mortensen) “ (Tickell: 97/98). Tickell thus argues that Roy’s novel contains many features of postmodernism both in style and in themes (Tickell: 56/57). These aspects are vital to the research question of this thesis, and will be discussed at a later stage, along with other aspects of narrative technique in a postmodern perspective. According to Linda Hutcheon, postmodern critical work has mainly focused on narrative in literature, history or theory. (A Poetics of P: 5) Further she claims that historiographic metafiction, in brief terms means “the pastime of past time” includes all of these elements. Both novels deal with the history of India, although from different perspectives. Thus, “its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historiographic metafiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past.” (A Poetics of P: 5)

Even though there has been divergence among scholars about when postmodernism arose and how it manifests itself, this thesis will mainly use Hutcheon’s work as a theoretical basis on postmodernism. The reason for my foregrounding of Hutcheon is primarily that postmodernism problematizes history and Hutcheon writes that this is the guiding principle of her entire book. (A Poetics of P: xii) However, works by other scholars, like Jameson and Kortenaar, will not be ignored.

As Midnight’s Children can be seen as an allegory of India’s history in the 20th century, and The God of Small Things is a novel with a political and historical perspective through post-colonialism and globalization, historiographic metafiction is an appropriate approach. Moreover, both novels have, to a certain extent touched the theme of long-term trauma, especially Roy’s novel. In addition, Hutcheon writes that Midnight’s Children falls into the category of postmodern literary work, as these novels are “intensely self-reflective and yet paradoxically also lay claim on historical events and personages.” (The Politics of P: 5) Midnight’s Children, through its unreliable first person narrator Saleem Sinai, the many stories related to historical events and also the personal lives of Saleem’s family from 1915, supports this statement.

Likewise in The God of Small Things the claim to real events, such as “Kerala was on the brink of civil war. Nehru dismissed the Communist Government and announced fresh elections.” (GOST: 68) are represented in Roy’s novel as well. Although there clearly is an omniscient narrator in the novel, much of the narrative is seen through the limited scope of the seven years old twins, Estha and Rahel. Themes concerning social and political issues, like the deep roots and unfairness of the caste system are highlighted through the narrative
technique. Even though the novel is partly narrated through the twins, one must bear in mind that the narrative technique is much more complex than a simple story seen through the eyes of young children. The stories are narrated in retrospective glimpses, and generally switch between a period in 1969 where the twin protagonists were seven years old, and present time in the novel, namely 1993. The picture never becomes complete, even at the end the reader is left with more questions than at the beginning of the novel. This is another method, which is essential in postmodern literature – leaving the ending open, thus avoiding a clear answer and maybe a didactic and moralistic ending much used in earlier literary periods.

According to Phelan and Rabinowitz in Narrative Theory: “We do not believe that there is a single, best definition of narrative.” (Narrative Theory, Core Concepts & Critical Debates: 5) Further, they claim that one definition would highlight some features and hide others. Elements such as time, process, and change are studied in order to detect what is distinctive of narratives, how they are structured and used, and what their effects are. In this thesis, it is then a suitable definition to say that narrative theorists study how stories are helpful in how human beings understand the world through the reading of literature. According to Brian Richardson in Narrative Theory, Core Concepts & Critical Debates most postmodern works of fiction are antimimetic narratives (Richardson: 20). “..., antimimetic or antirealist modes of narrative representation play with, exaggerate, or parody the conventions of mimetic representation; often, they foreground narrative elements and events that are wildly implausible or palpably impossible in the real world.” This is maybe more the case in Midnight’s Children than in The God of Small Things; nonetheless, it is an interesting perspective. Richardson’s primary example is Midnight’s Children.

The narrator has a key purpose. According to Rimmon-Kenan, he is “the agent which at the very least narrates or engages in some activity serving the needs of narration.” (Rimmon-Kenan: 90) The term unreliable narrator is a useful term when it comes to studying both Rushdie’s and Roy’s narrative techniques. Traditionally unreliable narrators are often rather simpleminded persons who understand less than the reader does. As this thesis will show, that is not necessarily the case in Midnight’s Children and The God of Small Things. The narrator in Midnight’s Children must be considered a fairly well educated and intelligent person whose analytic perspective on his country’s problems exceeds most people, in this perspective it is probable that he reflects Rushdie’s views on the political problems of the country, as we may read in Rushdie’s collection of essays Imaginary Homelands.
“If only the political scene were as healthy! But, alas, the damage done to Indian life by “the Emergency”, Mrs Gandhi’s period of authoritarian rule between 1974 and 1977, is now all too plain. The reason why so many of us were outraged by the Emergency went beyond the dictatorial atmosphere of those days, beyond the jailing of opponents and the forcible sterilizations. The reason was (as I first suggested six years ago in the essay here entitled “Dynasty”) that it was during the Emergency that the lid flew off Pandora’s box of communal discord.” (IH: 3)

According to Jacob Lothe the narrator is generally considered reliable “Unless the text happens to provide indications to the contrary, the narrator is characterized by narrative authority.” (Lothe: 26) Although unreliable narrators are not uncommon in literature, the reader usually starts out by trusting the information given. However, there are techniques that will undermine the narrator’s reliability. The author, as the creator of the text, builds up the narrative in order to highlight what he considers important in the text. In Midnight’s Children we see that Saleem, as a first person narrator, is strongly involved on a personal level, since the story revolves around his family and him as an individual. Through Saleem’s multiple and more or less minor stories, which constitute the complex structure of the novel, the reader receives massive information, and some of it turns out to be wrong. One reason may be Saleem’s failing memory when he remembers the wrong date of Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination (MC: 196 and 230). On the other hand, unreliability in narration may be constituted through the narrator’s age, as we see in The God of Small Things. The seven years old twins and protagonists of the novel, Estha and Rahel, cannot be expected to understand all aspects of the tragedy that unfolded itself, especially because of their ignorance of their mother’s love affair with Velutha, the Paravan.

Both novels depict the colonial and post-colonial history of the sub-continent in a highly fragmented fashion. In Midnight’s Children the parallel between the country’s history, and Saleem’s personal life, runs through the whole novel. His abundant and fragmented stories illustrate his feelings of having a broken life, as they are told through his passionate self-reflection and his capacity to see the thoughts of others. In The God of Small Things the fragmented style, the many beginnings and diversity of stories are found to be striking to a high degree. The intense self-reflection is very much the case, as well as the claim to real events, as texts used intertextually in the novel are seen through numerous allusions to ancient texts or oral stories in Indian mythology. Literary and more recent texts like Heart of
"Darkness" are represented, e.g. when referring to the metaphor of the History House and its previous owner, Kari Saipu, Ayemenem’s own Kurtz, "Ayemenem his private Heart of Darkness" (GOST: 52). Apart from the texts from India and the adventures of Schehezarade in *A Thousand and one Nights*, the texts represented are from the Western Canon, Shakespeare and Kipling are two of the more central. It is, however, typical of postmodern technique to use low culture texts as well as high culture, as is seen in the Bollywood productions and the use of filmatic devices and language in *Midnight’s Children*. In *The God of Small Things*, films from popular Western culture, such as *The Sound of Music* have consequence, but also Bollywood productions like *Chemmeen* are present and have significance in the novel.

The shift between 1969 when the traumatic events that changed the lives of the protagonists took place, and 1993 when Rahel, as a grown woman returns to Ayemenem, are many and sometimes hard to follow. The narrative also shifts between Ayemenem, the main setting, and other places in India and the USA. This repeated change of space is also known characteristics of postmodern literature.

Even though the novel is partly narrated through the twins, one must bear in mind that the narrative technique is much more complex than a simple story told by children. The story is, for a large part, revealed through retrospective glimpses, a feature clearly seen also in *Midnight’s Children*. As I have mentioned before, the picture never becomes complete, the ending of the novel with the two words “Tomorrow” and “Naaley”, which also means tomorrow in the local language Malayalam, leaves the reader with more questions. This is another recurrently used feature in postmodern literature – leaving the ending open, thus avoiding a clear answer and maybe a didactic and moralistic closing of the text. As Lyotard claims, the grand narratives of total truth or understanding are not possible in a postmodern narrative; the world has become too complex and thus fragmented.

In postmodern literature parody, intertextuality or rethinking, and the playfulness of the language are frequently used devices. However, we are not talking about the parody or high burlesque style of the 18th century poet Alexander Pope and his likes, but a reusing of elements of earlier genres or styles as in Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* and Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* in new and playful ways. Hutcheon argues that postmodernism is a fundamentally contradictory enterprise: “its art forms (and its theory) at once use and abuse, install and then destabilize convention in parodic ways, self-consciously pointing both to their own inherent
paradoxes and provisionality, and, of course, to their critical or ironic re-reading of the art of the past.” (Hutcheon: 23) Moreover, playfulness is an attribute found in postmodern contemporary literature, mainly from the 1960s, where themes concerning gender, sexuality, and different types of oppression are discussed.

One could then argue that the intention of both authors is to awaken the country from its amnesia, portrayed through Saleem who is hit by the flying spittoon and suffers from amnesia. (MC: 481) Another applicable example is seen when Saleem suffers when the people of India suffer. This is noticeable in the chapter Midnight, where the Emergency period is the dominant theme. Saleem here resists telling about the atrocities that take place in the slums, “But the horror of it, I can’t won’t mustn’t won’t can’t no! – Stop this; begin. – No! – Yes!” (MC: 589) India, officially considered the world’s most populous democracy, has multiple challenges, among others the extreme poverty the great majority suffer under, even though it is claimed that a growing middle class now live under much better conditions. The West has also become aware of the brutal rapes that are and have been all too common, reflecting a dismal view on women and lower caste members. The caste system, although forbidden, permeates society and is deeply embedded in the Indian mentality. There seems to be a grave lack of human rights and it is my argument that the intention of the writers of both The God of Small Things and Midnight’s Children is to bring forward some of these problems, both on a political and a more personal level. Roy’s intense political engagement, her political essays and the fact that The God of Small Things is the only extensive fictional work she has chosen to write, give indications in this direction.

The language of both novels is challenged in varied ways, as the playfulness of language in postmodern literature is also seen in these two novels. In Midnight’s Children, it is apparent through the colloquial film language used in the novel and by the use of Indian local words. The connection to the film genre is also realized through the close attachment to the “Bollywood” film milieu, which Saleem’s uncle Hanif and Aunt Pia, and also the producer of films and neighbor to the Sinai family, Homi Catrack, represent. The melodramatic and escapist tone of many “Bollywood” films may be recognized in the novel, as corrupt politicians, exchange at birth, star-crossed lovers and dramatic reversals of fortune are quite common. In addition, rather convenient coincidences are typical of Bollywood movies and may constitute comical effects or simply bring the narrative forward. On the other hand
“Bollywood” is known to shun the type of political issues that we see represented in both Rushdie’s and Roy’s novels.

In contrast to the popular genre of Bollywood films stands Jean-Francois Lyotard’s argument that it was a mark of postmodernism that known values become topics of debate and those who win and are able to make their viewpoints legitimate are those who manage to detain power. *The God of Small Things* is a novel about values that are challenged in the southern state of Kerala in India, and a family where these values are tested in different ways by some of the family members. The postmodern perspective is seen in the way that these members’ actions generate reactions when challenging the “laws” of society. There are other postmodern elements, like the narrators’ reliability, that also make the novel interesting to investigate in the chosen context. The way Roy conveys her story, mainly through the innocent eyes of young children, makes the idea of looking at the narrative technique in the novel relevant for me. However, there are more aspects of Roy’s way of narration that are intriguing. Her jumps in space and time, the challenging of local traditions and laws, her untraditional language and her use of intertextuality are other elements that make this novel interesting to investigate.

Linda Hutcheon and several other scholars have concentrated on the postmodern aspects of *Midnight’s Children*. However, this does not exclude the post-colonial experience in India, but rather on the contrary if you see it in a historiographic metafictional perspective. An essential feature in both novels is that they are post-colonial Indian English literature. This has bearing on themes and narrative style, as they deal with topics like history and traditions in a sub-continent that has been colonized by Britain. According to Hutcheon

“Historiographic metafiction asks the reader to recall that history and fiction are themselves historical terms and that their definitions and interrelations are historically determined and vary with time.” (*A Poetics of P*: 105, quoting: Seamon 1983, 212-16). In addition to the historiographic metafiction, postmodern narrative theory includes a number of other components to study; fragmentation, parody and pastiche, the use of irony and intertextuality, narration and types of narrators to mention some. The language of both novels is considered to be innovative, Surendran writes about *The God of Small Things*: “Language which embellishes, communicates and strives for visionary effects usually complements to content of a writer who is attempting more than the ordinary.” (Surendran: 192) However, it is my contention that this is also very much the case in *Midnight’s Children*, a novel that through
more than three decades, has been claimed to renew the Indian English novel. According to Kortenaar, it is by many considered to be one of the 100 best novels of the 20th century. (Kortenaar: 3) It has also been a model for Roy’s generation of Indian writers.
Chapter 2.0 Narrative technique in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*.

2.1 Novel Structure

When *Midnight’s Children* was published it brought Rushdie extensive literary approval, and has later come to be understood as an example of the “theoretical preoccupations of postcolonial studies - not only manifesting high postmodernism’s aesthetic difficulty, experimentation, and play but also verifying the poststructuralist emphasis on writing and textuality.” (Anker: 79) In his work on *Midnight’s Children* Neil Ten Kortenaar claims that national history writing is a “well-defined narrative form: established origins, turning points and climaxes, and an agreed chronology of significant events.” (Kortenaar: 31) Rushdie’s novel is in Kortenaar’s work discussed from different angles, subjects such as hybridity and magic realism are treated. However, through Kortenaar’s chapter, The Allegory of History, national allegory in the novel is a fundamental topic. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* allegory is a story with a second distinct meaning, the principal technique of allegory is personification whereby abstract qualities are given a human shape. It involves a continuous parallel between different levels of meaning in a text. Thus, “the persons and events correspond to their equivalents in a system of ideas or a chain of events external to the tale: each character and episode in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), for example, embodies an idea within a pre-existing Puritan doctrine of salvation.” (ODLT: 361) “Saleem was originally conceived as an allegorical figure with what he himself calls “a metaphorical” relation to the nation.” (Kortenaar: 31) Further, according to Kortenaar, Saleem contends, “national allegory is as often an allegory of his life as his life is an allegory of national history.” (Kortenaar: 31) An appropriate example is seen when Saleem is convinced that “the purpose of that entire war had been to re-unite me with an old life, to bring me back together with my old friends.” (MC: 520/1) The novel thus needs a structure, which resembles the genre of history writing. According to David Lipscomb, Rushdie had a copy of *A New History of India*, which is an official history book written by Stanley Wolpert, besides him when he wrote *Midnight’s Children*. (Kortenaar: 31) Thus, this well-defined narrative form of history writing may be the reason for the neat division of *Midnight’s Children* into three books. The first book is about history, both of India and of the fictional Aziz family, seemingly functioning as a countdown for Saleem’s birth in chapter eight, Tick Tock, as well as the birth of the new nation. In my opinion the allegory of history is an essential feature of the structure of the novel, as Saleem is born on the exact moment when the bells of freedom toll, he
becomes one of a thousand midnight’s children that obtain extraordinary and magical abilities, the closer to the moment of independence they are born, the more fantastic their capacities.

However, the preceding chapters to Tick Tock are told in retrospect and Saleem’s abundance of stories make it difficult, not only for the reader, but also for the naïve narratee Padma, to follow his jumps in time and space, as well as his many other digressions. After journeys that have brought Saleem to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Delhi, he retires when he has rediscovered his ayah Mary Pereira in his childhood city, Bombay. She now owns a pickle factory and is able to provide him with whatever he needs, and he has the time and opportunity to pickle his memory and write down the story of his life. The setting in the pickle factory where Saleem recounts his stories is said to be a parallel to the frame story of Arabian Nights. This is evidently an intertextual element used to make suspense both in Arabian Nights, also famous as One Thousand and One Nights, and in Midnight’s Children. This is where Scheherazade staves off her execution by telling her ruler and husband Prince Shahryar stories that are “hanging in mid-air … night after night” (MC: 24/25) thus leaving him eaten up by curiosity.

The neat ordering of this extensive novel of almost 650 pages does not necessarily correspond with the idea of postmodernism. Nonetheless, Midnight’s Children belongs to a group of novels that Linda Hutcheon defines as historiographic metafiction, these are novels that are “both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages”. (Hutcheon: 5) This kind of novel includes “self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historiographic metafiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past.” (Hutcheon: 5) The structure of the narrative is formed around important phases of Saleem’s life. He is born when India becomes independent, “Think of this: history, in my version, entered a new phase on August 15th, 1947.” (MC: 269)

Additionally, we know that Lyotard has discussed postmodernism and has produced the following understanding of it, “Simplifying to the extreme, I define the postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives.” (Lyotard: 1) Ideology is no longer transparent, but contingent and constructed, according to Lyotard. Thus, the grand narratives that regarded history, the question of identity and constant progress as the natural development could no longer depict reality, ethnic and national identities are no longer foundations for a united society. Thus, a distrust and denial of the grand narratives is seen, and through his epic
narrative Rushdie seems to play with the idea of the grand narrative that postmodernism is said to react against. Additionally, postmodern literature tends to reuse former literary styles or genres and, generally said, has a playful attitude in the use of former genres. It is therefore my contention that Rushdie does just this in his novel, but twists it as values like ethnic identity and constant progress etc. do not represent the India of the 1980s. Rather the contrary, it is doubtful that these values ever did represent the fragmented and diverse sub-continent of India.

Already in the first chapter, The Perforated Sheet, the reader is introduced to one of the main metaphors of the novel. It is through a hole in this sheet Doctor Aadam Aziz is forced to examine his future wife, consequently, he never sees her as a whole individual until they are married and he experiences that her different body parts do not constitute a whole, although all these “things which had filled up the hole inside him.” (MC: 28) make him fall in love. The fragmented narrative style is in this way stressed from an early stage of the novel. Additionally, the hybrid identity of Aziz is also emphasized in this part of the narrative, as “he saw the valley through travelled eyes” (MC: 5). Since he is educated in the West and returns to his Kashmir with Western thoughts, he stands as a contrast to the boatman Tai, who represents the ancient values of Kashmir. “To the ferryman the bag represents Abroad; it is the alien thing, the invader, progress.” (MC: 19). The doctor’s bag has thus “made the earlier friends antagonists.” (MC: 19). Hence, there is a sense of fragmentation and a self, which is decentered, with the conflicting identities that we see in Aziz from the start of the novel.

Saleem, the fallible first person narrator in Midnight’s Children, claims that “national history is as often an allegory of his life as his life is an allegory of national history.” (Kortenaar: 31) He is born on the exact point of India’s independence, thus we hear of the development of the country from its infant state, corresponding with Saleem’s infancy. This is just the beginning of his documentation of the parallel between his life and India. One of several relevant examples is when he, on his tenth birthday, experienced “freak weather – storms, floods, hailstones from a cloudless sky – which had succeeded the intolerable heat of 1956, had managed to wreck the second Five Year Plan.” (MC: 285) Hence, the reader is told that there is a downbeat in the progress of the country presented by official sources: “illiteracy survived unscathed; the population continued to mushroom.” (MC: 285) In this ironic statement, he makes it clear that the government does not care too much about the people of India. I find it probable that Rushdie tries to highlight these issues in order to give the masses of India a
voice, as this is just one example out of many where the official India neglects or harasses the poor.

*Midnight’s Children* is then an epic story covering the history of India from 1915 to the 1970s. Furthermore, the most essential part, in my view, must be said to be the first thirty years of independence. Throughout the novel the reader is offered a strange and alternative family structure where family is not family after all, as Saleem from birth has three mothers. One who gave birth to him, one who believes she is his true mother and Mary Pereira who made the switch at birth, and thus gave the poor child a possibility to a better life and vice versa for the other child, Shiva, who was thrown motherless into poverty. This fact bears much of the conflict between Saleem and Shiva in it, as Shiva is the unfortunate child who grows up unprivileged in all ways. However, he is also one of the midnight’s children, thus Shiva and Saleem are the eternal enemies and represent much of the conflict portrayed in the novel. The disagreement starts already at the first Midnight Children Conference and culminates after the Emergency when Shiva dies, or does not die, according to the unreliable narrator “To tell the truth, I lied about Shiva’s death.” (MC: 619) The Midnight Children Conference is obviously a parody of the All India Conferences and the Five Year Plans that were a part of the child nation’s efforts to grow up. In 1956, the Indian businessmen were thriving due to “the first Five year Plan, which had concentrated on building up commerce … businessmen who had become or were becoming very, very pale indeed!” (MC: 248) Thus, the economy of the nation was turning white. It is then my argument that this is an allusion to the continued economic influence of the earlier British colonizers in the child-nation.

According to Kortenaar Rushdie’s exuberant style does not represent a “clash of meaning systems” (Kortenaar: 19). Rather on the contrary, the mixed genres, history, ancient stories, rumours and old tales, film language etc. contribute to a special kind of magic realism that is considered to be a postmodern attribute. The mixing of old myth and present day events produces a combination of “two noncommensurable logics of power, both modern,” (Kortenaar: 19) as one represents the secular logic of the state institutions constructed by British rule, and the other represents “a system of hierarchical subordination that “continually brings gods and spirits into the domain of the political” (Chakrabarty 2000 14)” (Kortenaar: 20). In Saleem’s narrative, the reader is told about real events that are imaginable, “…saw things that weren’t-couldn’t-have-been-true: soldiers entering women’s hostels without knocking; women dragged into the street, were also entered, and again nobody troubled to
knock.” (MC: 497). On the other hand, when this war had been won and Indian troops enter Dacca, Saleem is discovered in the streets by his friend Parvati the Witch from the Midnight Children Conference and he becomes “the willing captive of the Indian magicians,” (MC: 530). She helps him to go back to India, in a way that is not realistically imaginable “Then Parvati whispered some other words, and, inside the basket of invisibility, I, Saleem Sinai, complete with my loose anonymous garment, vanished instantly into thin air.” (MC: 531).

2.2 Historiographic metafiction and Allegory

“Guided only by the memory of a large white bedsheet with a roughly circular hole some seven inches in diameter cut into the centre …” (MC: ) Saleem tells the reader that he will reconstruct history, based on his memory, from where his grandfather’s story begins about thirty-two years before his own birth. “I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory, as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks” (MC: 44) The symmetry becomes obvious when we understand that the novel will conclude about thirty-one years after his birth, thus placing the Partition in 1947 as a centre and a source of events, both concerning family and history.

According to Hutcheon Lukács believed that the historical novel is defined by “the relative unimportance of its use of detail, which he saw as “only a means of achieving historical faithfulness, for making concretely clear the historical necessity of a concrete situation.” (1962: 59) Therefore accuracy or even truth of detail is irrelevant.” (Hutcheon: 114) Hutcheon continues by stating that there are those who disagree with this statement, as historiographic metafiction plays upon both truth and lie in historic record. Other scholars, like Frederic Jameson, have claimed that, “historical representation is as surely in crisis as is the linear novel.” (Hutcheon: 112). There is no doubt that the representation of history and linearity in Midnight’s Children is very different from any novel from periods where more realistic and chronological novels were the norm, as the novel seems to question, at the very least, the official version of Indian reality. It is then probable that the types portrayed in historiographic metafiction are “anything but proper types: they are the ex-centricics, the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history – “ (Hutcheon: 114) It is then my contention that this fits the protagonist of Rushdie’s novel very well.

Postmodernism does not break its ties to history as it reuses earlier genres and styles; on the contrary, it problematizes “the entire notion of historical knowledge.” (Hutcheon: 89) Literary work that deals with history in a postmodern mode combines history with self-reflexive
narration, its self-awareness as a piece of fiction, thus reconsidering and reworking the past, acknowledging that historicity can only be genuine today if it is aware of its own provisional conditional identity (Hutcheon: 87-114). According to Hutcheon, this type of postmodern literary work lays claim to historical events, and where the process of writing about history is as much in focus as history itself. (Hutcheon: 5) Historiographic metafiction, as a product of postmodernism, confronts the question of history differently than earlier historical novels. Where novels of earlier periods traditionally would favour “objectivity, neutrality, impersonality and transparency of representation.” (Hutcheon: 92), the postmodern version refutes the natural or common sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. This happens numerous times in *Midnight’s Children*. The story is told through the first person narrator Saleem’s intense self-reflection and his telepathic abilities that are enabling him to see the thoughts of others. Thus, he turned into an omniscient narrator. *Midnight’s Children* can then be read as an allegory of India’s history throughout large parts of the twentieth century. It is a harsh critique of India’s political history, and the term historiographic metafiction, coined by Linda Hutcheon, is an appropriate definition of the novel’s narrative technique.

Allegory is traditionally understood as a kind of extended metaphor where the characters, objects and actions in a narrative lies on another level. There is a hidden meaning, which often has political, religious or moralistic implications. According to M.H. Abrams (Abrams: 5) the allegory is a narrative that is “contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the “literal”, or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of signification.” It seems clear that the author uses his narrator, Saleem, to make coherent sense on the literal or primary level of signification, at the same time a second level is signified, in this case the image of the nation of India. This is obviously the case in *Midnight’s Children* as it has one personal and one social meaning, a literal and a symbolic interpretation. However, Walter Benjamin’s conception of allegory “as a form of non-mimetic rupture provides a theory for reading the fragmentary structure of *Midnight’s Children* as both a critique and a revision of the historical context framing the novel’s composition.” (Kuchta: 205) Rushdie’s narrative is non- or anti-mimetic and it generally disparages the conventions of a more realistic narrative.
Although the West tended to consider, at least parts of, *Midnight’s Children* as a fantasy within the tradition of Magical Realism, the people of India largely considered the novel as quite realistic, according to Rushdie. (MC: xv)

“Dear baby Saleem, My belated congratulations on the happy accident of your moment of birth! You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own.” (MC: 167)

The above lines are a quotation from the letter that Saleem’s parents received on his birth from Prime Minister Nehru, as the moment of his birth was so special to the paralleled and new-born nation. These lines foreshadow that Saleem’s life will mirror that of the new nation, and that the allegory of India is envisioned in Saleem’s body. In *Midnight’s Children*, events are allegorized through the narrator, whose physical body represents the Indian nation, as he is born on the stroke of midnight, when the new-born nation entered the world as a joint product of British and Indian politics. Major incidents in the life of the nation coincides with major incidents in Saleem’s life, there are a multitude of stories and episodes to underline this fact. A relevant, but brutal example of this allegorization is when Saleem recounts the episode when his half-crazy teacher of geography and gymnastics, Mr. Emil Zagallo, mutilates him in an effort to show the class what human geography is. Zagallo turns on Saleem and leads him by his hair to the front of the classroom in order to show the class. (MC: 318-22)

The novel’s fragmented structure is shown through the so-called chutnification of language and history, the magical realism, the multiple stories, the fragmented objects like the perforated sheet, the fragmented characters like Aadam Aziz that has a visible hole in him and a hybrid identity due to his years in Germany. Additionally, the protagonist Saleem has a rather confused family background, as he is claimed to have three mothers and Saleem himself is full of cracks and fissures, hence representing a metaphorical parallel of India. It is my argument that the fragmented structure symbolizes India, as she is a highly fragmented and diverse country, both before and after independence. One of the important features of the novel is the fact that it is post-colonial and the impact post-colonial reality has on content, the narrative technique and general style. Rushdie has in an interview claimed that the “Empire writes back to the imperial centre” (*The Empire Writes Back*: 32), and in doing so he “challenges the world view that can polarize centre and periphery in the first place.” (*The
In my opinion, Rushdie challenges the West’s perception of “periphery”. However, there are some, e.g. Timothy Brennan that claim he has lost credibility since he is living in the West, hence he lacks knowledge of the country at the time the novel was written. Rushdie himself says that his relation to India is “an unrequited, unbearable love.” (Kortenaar: 253) According to Timothy Brennan in his study; *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation*. Rushdie is a cosmopolitan intellectual “transcending all nations and identities with the universal, but whose position is easily located as itself particular and privileged.” (Brennan: xiv)

Further, according to Hutcheon:

“In most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative – be it in literature, history or theory – that has usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (*historiographic metafiction*) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past.” (Hutcheon, p. 5)

The autobiographical memoir also has a long history in fiction; Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* is one of several examples. According to Hutcheon, Saleem begins to write with the assumption that autobiography, like fiction, allows for a “natural unfolding” (Hutcheon: 163) of a tale. It is my interpretation that the natural unfolding of a tale should give a consistent and whole impression. However, Saleem’s autobiography seems to do the opposite. Hutcheon continues by claiming that Saleem’s “attempts to suggest multiplicity and simultaneity through syntax (“While” this was happening, so was …), combined with the numerous intertextual echoes provoked by each page of the narration, allow no coherence; no unity is permitted her or us.” (Hutcheon: 163) The “her” referred to in the quote is Padma, Saleem’s narratee, and “us” are the readers of the novel.

*Midnight’s Children* has long been claimed to belong to the postmodern tradition of historiographic metafiction, as Rushdie is “rewriting” the history of India and Pakistan in his very own way. Rushdie kept close contact with his origins and was angry when Mrs. Gandhi in 1975 brought India into the most serious internal crisis after independence, namely the so-called Emergency. “The book was conceived and begun during the Emergency,” “and I was very angry about that. The stain of it is on the book.” (Interview by J. Haffenden, in *Novelists in Interview*: 250). According to Aruna Srivastava (TEWB: 77) “Rushdie’s novels are
intensely political.” Hence, there is little doubt that this narrative is political, and that an extensive part of it points, through symbols and metaphors, to the Emergency, the two-year period where Prime Minister Indira Gandhi set aside democratic rule in the country. During this period, elections were suspended and civil liberties curbed. For much of the Emergency period, political opponents were imprisoned and killed, and the press was censored. One of the most criticized atrocities from the time was a forced mass-sterilisation campaign to reduce the growth of the population. This is a very controversial period in recent history and is “rewritten” by Saleem in the Midnight chapter, as Saleem says, ”When the constitution was altered to give the Prime Minister well-nigh-absolute powers, I smelled the ghosts of ancient empires in the air…, I inhaled once again the sharp aroma of despotism. It smelled like burning oily rags.” (MC: 592) Mrs. Gandhi was here recreating an image of herself as the mother of India, “Indira is India and India is Indira”, which used to be a slogan of her followers.

Through his unreliable narrator the novel is made to fit the description “intensely self-reflective and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages.” (Hutcheon, 1988:5). It is thus my argument that the novel represents the political landscape of the subcontinent during the bulk of the 20th century, seen through the eyes of a writer who has left his country of origin. Thus, Rushdie represents a certain kind of post-colonial writer, those who have spent all or parts of their lives away from their roots, a distance that influences their writing in different ways. There is no doubt that one of the more important aspects of Midnight’s Children is how Saleem tries to come to terms with his personal story and the national history of India, both as a country with a short history of independence and democracy, and as a country that has been colonized for a long time. In addition, the country was after Partition divided and split up on several levels, as is Saleem himself when he finally disintegrates. “…, cracking now, fission of Saleem, I am the bomb in Bombay, watch me explode, bones splitting breaking …” Thus the novel can be seen as an allegory of India’s history from 1915 to the late seventies, where Saleem entered the world exactly in the middle, namely in 1947, claiming to be handcuffed to history. The allegorical frame of the novel is not difficult to detect, Saleem is a symbol of India and what happens to India happens to Saleem.
2.3 Fragmentation

“And there are so many stories to tell, too many, such as an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a commingling of the improbable and mundane! I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you’ll have to swallow the lot as well.” (MC: 4)

This quote gives a preview of what is to be expected when it comes to the complex narrative technique of the novel, as there is no neat tying up of stories. From a Western standpoint, the content may at times appear strange and, as critics like Timothy Brennan claims, orientalist. The playful and unorthodox use of language is typical, in her article An Invitation to Indian Postmodernity: Rushdie’s English Vernacular as Situated Cultural Hybridity, Bishnupriya Ghosh claims it is postmodern, “Rushdie’s use of language has been consistently postmodern – a situated hybrid English that escapes all “purity” or universality.” (Booker: Critical Essays on Rushdie, Ghosh: 147)

There are multiple aspects that might be analyzed in the novel, one imperative issue is the fact that it is post-colonial and the impact it has on content, the narrative technique and general style. As mentioned earlier, Rushdie has said that the Empire writes back to the imperial centre, and thus contests the worldview that opposes centre and periphery. Further, when Rushdie in his novel uses a range of local expressions, they “may be held to have the power and presence of the culture they signify – to be metaphoric in their “inference of identity and totality”.” (EWB: 51) Thus, a word may represent the culture it stems from, although it is hard to decide whether changing a few English words into local ones is relevant enough to be a valid argument. On the other hand, the local words do incise difference as they indicate another cultural experience, and as such, they are important and contribute to a hybrid impression of the text.

Postmodern literature is characterized by narrative techniques such as fragmentation, parody and pastiche through the reusing of earlier narrative styles by challenging and playing with them. Similar to modernist literature, postmodern literature is part of historical and socio-cultural development and may be understood as an explicit way of interpreting postmodern life and culture in a complex and globalized world. Thus, the fragmented narrative technique is one of the more central features of this novel, as Saleem’s digressions and jumps in time and space make it difficult, not only for the reader, but also for the naïve Padma, to follow. Throughout the novel, we are told multiple stories with numerous themes and characters. The
stories are told in retrospective, but in between the stories and sometimes within the stories, Saleem’s intrusions are recurrent, “I may as well finish my grandfather’s story here and now; I’ve gone this far…” (MC: 384) He also hints to future events and stories that will be related later in the narrative. “Because I’ve spent too long on Aadam Aziz; perhaps I’m afraid of what must be told next; but the revelation will not be denied.” (MC: 387) It seems as if the narrative structure of Midnight’s Children is intentionally designed to violate temporal progression and it presents itself as fragmented and postmodern.

Rushdie is “rewriting” large parts of 20th century Indian history by the use of his first person and unreliable narrator. The novel is thus made to fit the description “intensely self-reflective and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages.” (A Poetics of Postmodernism: 5) The novel is then a highly political document. It is the political landscape of the Indian subcontinent mainly since 1947, seen through the eyes of a writer who has left his country of origin to live in the West. Therefore, Rushdie represents a certain kind of post-colonial writers, those who have spent all or parts of their lives away from their roots, a distance that influences their writing in different ways.

In his essays Imaginary Homelands Rushdie tells of his visit to Bombay, “his lost city” (IH: 9) after half a lifetime away from the city. He asks himself if writers in his position, meaning those who are exiles or have emigrated “are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back…” (Imaginary Homelands: 10) He himself imagines that the idea of Midnight’s Children was born after this visit to his childhood city. Rushdie continues that his absence from India means “we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.” (Imaginary Homelands: 10) In this connection, the post-colonial aspect of hybridity is essential; this is why his narrator Saleem Sinai’s vision is a fragmentary one. His failing memory makes him fight to tell his story to Padma, we get bits and pieces of the history of India mixed with Saleem’s memories of more private character. Rushdie, as an author writing from outside India, thus reflects only pieces of the country he left, and some of “the fragments are irretrievably lost.” (Imaginary Homelands: 11) Before he started to write the novel he spent months trying to recall the different stories and places of his childhood, and it became clear that “it was precisely the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me.” (Imaginary Homelands: 12) The memories became symbols of a lost time instead of being the fragments.
of insignificant episodes of the past, and he compares it to archeology where the broken parts of ancient pots that are dug out of the earth may help us understand our past. On the other hand, memory is not only a useful tool in order to remember the past, but it has meaning for understanding the present as well, as “human beings do not perceive things whole; we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable of only fractured perceptions.” (IH: 12) His views are clearly compatible with modernist and postmodernist ideas in theory and literature; with the growth of an increasingly complex world, it is impossible to perceive the whole, if there indeed is a whole.

Rushdie’s family chose to leave Bombay and move to Pakistan, a very plausible country to move to for a Muslim family considering the atrocities before and after Partition, and other ongoing conflicts between the mainly Hindu and Muslim people of post-colonial India. However, the relocation of his family seemingly alienated Rushdie from his own sub-continent. Although he went back and for a while lived with his family in Pakistan, he did not stay but returned to England. I would argue that it is the voice of the author that we hear when Saleem says; “I won’t deny it: I never forgave Karachi for not being Bombay.” (MC: 427) Thus, Rushdie’s transfer from the international and bustling city of Bombay to Pakistan is likely to be one of the main reasons why he chose to live in the West. This distance in time and space from his origins contributes to the broken vision, and his India is then seen in a fragmented and retrospect puzzle of childhood memories, where the whole picture cannot be revealed because it is forgotten and hidden in the past. Midnight’s Children reflects this retrospect puzzle of memories, consequently the novel establishes the narrator’s personal version of the history of India, which is not in agreement with the official versions of Indian history. The Emergency period and the wars between Pakistan and India are portrayed in a subjective way through the eyes of Saleem, as he happens to be present in many of the instances of political significance in both India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, so truth becomes relative. Rushdie further explains that this is exactly why he chose to make his narrator “suspect in his narration; his mistakes are the mistakes of a fallible memory compounded by quirks of character and of circumstance, and his vision is fragmentary.” (IH: 10)

As we read, it becomes clear that Saleem tells the many stories in retrospective to Padma in Mary Pereira’s pickle factory. The novel is made to look like an autobiography and thus recreates real incidents and stories. Rushdie is using a traditional narrative technique rather than a postmodern, as “I” narratives were quite common in the 18th and 19th centuries,
together with diaries, journals, letter writing etc. Saleem is thus the one who conveys the
events of his life, which astonishingly frequently coincide with 20\textsuperscript{th} century major events of
India, e.g. his birth at the exact moment of India’s independence (chapter 8, Tick Tock) or his
presence at his uncle, General Zulfikar’s house in Pakistan, when a coup against the
government is planned. (MC: 403)

The narrative of Saleem’s life, where the discovery that he was not his parents' son leaves him
metaphorically shattered is another episode where fragmentation is emphasized. (MC: 327).
According to the protagonist himself, the novel is an autobiography, “because in autobiography,
as in all literature, what actually happened is less important than what the author can manage
to persuade his audience to believe . . .” (MC: 376) It is my argument that the author lets his
voice be heard here. However, Saleem cannot be considered as a traditional first person
narrator. Through his telepathic abilities he is able to hear “…: the inner monologues of all the
so-called teeming millions, of masses and classes alike, jostled for space within my head.” At
the age of nine, he discovers his telepathic capacity, and although the voices in his head are
confusing at the beginning, it did not take long until he was able to

““tune” my inner ear to those voices which I could understand; nor was it long before
I picked out, from the throng, the voices of my own family; and of Mary Pereira; and of
friends, class mates, teachers. In the street I learned how to identify the mind-stream of
passing strangers – the laws of Doppler shift continued to operate in these paranormal
realms, and the voices grew and diminished as the strangers passed.” (MC: 233)

This ability widens the scope of the narrator; Saleem becomes an omniscient narrator as well.
A narrator who, seemingly, “immersed in my autobiographical enterprise.” (MC: 165) has full
knowledge of all aspects of the narrative. Saleem thus makes India’s post-colonial history his
own, as he is “mysteriously handcuffed to history” (MC: 3) and blames himself for the many
misfortunes the country is overtaken by. Throughout the novel, he connects historical events
to himself and when India suffers, he suffers as well, physically as well as mentally. He
becomes India herself, like Indira Gandhi, in \textit{Midnight’s Children} named the Widow, tried to
create an image of her being mother India when she was prime minister. On a symbolic level,
the 1001 children represent the hope of the new nation. However, a number of the children do
not survive their infant years, only 581 survived, thus the new nation is not able to fulfill their
obligation to their own people.
Rushdie’s affluent family was, at the time, a representative of the hybrid class of Indians, where many families felt neither Indian nor British, as they had lost contact with their own culture. The question of hybridity is, in my opinion, one of the major questions in postcolonial theory. Rushdie’s protagonist is himself belonging to this hybrid category, on his seventh birthday, “I permitted myself to be dressed up like the boys in the fisherman picture; hot and constricted in the outlandish garb; I smiled and smiled.” (MC: 215-6) The Sinai family has earlier bought a part of the Methwold estate in Bombay where the bulk of the novel is set. The fact that Saleem grows up here is an ironic fact, and contributes to the fragmentation and hybridity of the novel. He is born into a home designed and formed by a representative of the colonial power; it is parodic that his home is named the Buckingham Villa, a reminiscent of times that should be gone. Ahmed Sinai must promise not to change the estate, thus hinting that the English owner preferred things to be as they were during colonial times. Consequently, the anglophile upper class of India is highlighted through Ahmed Sinai, who in his dealings with Methwold is: “– apeing Oxford drawl.” (MC: 147) Thus, the fragmented identity and hybridity of this class is emphasized. They had for generations been considered as the class that stood between the masses of the sub-continent and the colonizers. They were educated and brought up to speak English and they received a British education.

According to Ghosh, Rushdie uses a culturally specific hybrid English, transforming “the language of global capital into a new kind of Indian vernacular.” (Ghosh: 129) She further argues that Rushdie’s use of vernacular English gives a new vision of India, “a global-local postmodern nation whose set of cultural references no longer constitutes a stable and homogenous national register.” (Ghosh: 130) Further, Kortenaar argues how Rushdie imagines “the nation-state and its history in a world of transnational migration and markets; how to locate oneself in a world of intersecting languages and cultures; how to be postmodern and write from the periphery; and how to make the English language express the needs of Indians.” (Kortenaar: 4) Even though Rushdie, in my opinion, writes for an international public who will not understand many of his local allusions in language and culture, there is an urban and well educated Indian audience that will understand and use it. Saleem, the English-language writer and bi-lingual narrator that reads his narrative aloud to Padma, his illiterate female companion who connects him “with that world of ancient learning and sorcerers’ lore so despised by most of us nowadays.” (Kortenaar: 18) is thus not writing for the illiterate Padma.
The emptiness, or altered vision, Saleem’s grandfather, Aadam Aziz, feels when he, after studying medicine in Germany, returns to his childhood Kashmir may symbolize the same kind of feelings that Rushdie expresses in *Imaginary Homelands*. After returning, Aziz sees the valley with travelled eyes, the beauty of an almost untouched valley that had been the same since the Mughal’s empire. “Instead of the beauty of the tiny valley circled by giant teeth, he noticed the narrowness, the proximity of the horizon; and felt sad, to be at home and so utterly enclosed.” (MC: 5) This may also be the main reason for abandoning his religion, as he “hit his nose against a frost-hardened tussock of earth when attempting to pray.” (MC: 4) There and then he decides, “never to kiss earth for any god or man.” (MC: 4) Maybe because his Heidelberg friends, the anarchists, Ingrid, Oskar and Ilse, had mocked his prayers “with their anti-ideologies.” (MC: 6) Nevertheless, for a Muslim of his background this is a significant decision, he decides to reject an important part of his culture, religion and identity. It seems clear that without his European experience this would never have happened. In addition, Aziz has difficulties understanding the ethnocentric view of his friends in Heidelberg, as “he learned that India – like radium - had been “discovered” by the Europeans; even Oskar was filled with admiration of Vasco Da Gama, and this was what finally separated Aadam Aziz from his friends, this belief of theirs that he was somehow the invention of their ancestors –“ If Aziz had chosen to pursue his life and education in India, he would, most likely, have been a whole individual, but having been in contact with European culture for five years makes a hole in him, and he becomes vulnerable to women and history. (MC: 4) The hole in him is a symbol of his, and I believe also Rushdie’s, loss of identity as they both have been in touch with and are strongly influenced by European culture. Both have become atheists, they both have lost an understanding of their original cultures. Aziz has become a doctor of medicine, a symbol of the Western world’s triumph over superstition and ignorance, able to heal and help. Additionally, Aziz represents a contrast to his wife, who embodies tradition and thus has taken over Tai’s functions. Aziz’s attempts to modernize his wife “was a battle my grandfather never won.” (MC: 38)

At the same time, this distances him from his origins. Hence, Tai, the boatman who represents the old Indian culture, despises him for abandoning his origins. Tai, who seems to have lived forever and can tell stories of times long gone, had been a friend in childhood, as Aziz sat and listened to his ancient tales. Tai now rejects his friendship due to Aziz’ loss of identity. It is my understanding that the boatman therefore may be a metaphor for Charon. He is the ferryman in Hades who takes the dead across the river Styx, the river being what separates the
living from the dead, as he is the boatman when Aziz’s German friend Ilse Lubin commits suicide by quietly slipping off his boat when he turns away from her. Tai thus represents the ancient culture of India, the times before foreigners took over the country and exploited its land and people. Here the lake represents the separation between those who stay true to their origins and those leaving, only to return with a hole inside them. A hole so visible that it at times may be spotted by his daughter, a hole which we will later see also Saleem has, “Please believe I am falling apart.” (MC: 6/43) The lives lived between two cultures may make the individual suffer as personal identity is lost, and the consequences of colonization may create a people who strives for generations to find its true identity, the result is a fragmented existence. Rushdie is one of these individuals, and *Midnight’s Children* is a narrative depicting this fragmented reality.

The post-colonial aspect of hybridity thus has great significance in the narrative; this is partly why Saleem Sinai’s vision is a fragmentary one. Through his failing memory he fights to tell his story to Padma, we get bits and pieces of the history of India mixed with Saleem’s memories of more private character. According to Kortenaar, the amnesia that Saleem suffers makes him lose his self altogether, he calls himself Buddha and speaks of himself in the third person singular. “I insist: not I. He. He, the buddha.” (MC: 502) The Sundarbans is a jungle area in the Ganges delta, which is hard to penetrate due to the blurred distinction between water and land. The borders between India and Bangladesh in this area are therefore indistinct. “The culmination of the amnesia is the journey to the Sundarbans, a figurative descent into Hell.” (Kortenaar: 220) In this context the area functions as a parallel world which represents the subconscious, the torments the boys suffered in the Sundarbans have a humbling effect which finally leads them “… towards a new adulthood.” (MC: 508). When bitten by a snake, Saleem regains his memory and himself, and he flees the jungle: “he was reclaiming everything, all of it, all lost histories, all the myriad complex processes that go to make a man.” (MC:

Rushdie, as an author writing from outside India, thus reflects only pieces of the country he left, and some of the fragments are naturally lost. This is also an aspect that he has been criticized for, critics as Harish Trivedi has pointed out that the novel is written for “unilingual English-language readers for whom translations of Hindu-Urdu words are always embedded in the text.” (Kortenaar: 4) Thus, according to Trivedi *Midnight’s Children* is not the multilingual work that it has been claimed to be. Richard Cronin claims that Rushdie is
ignorant of India and is proved to be an outsider who thinks in English, “inevitably closer to Kipling than to writers living in India.” (Kortenaar: 4) Yet another scholar, Timothy Brennan, insists that his popularity among Western readers lies in his critique of nationalist ideology. “Rushdie, according to Brennan, is a cosmopolitan intellectual who relies for his authority on his national origins but regards those origins with a detached, even cynical eye (Brennan 1989) This is an aspect that many of his Indian readers most likely will disagree with, as there is no doubt that the novel has many readers within India as well as outside. Rushdie himself does not seem to disagree with the notion that he writes from the outside, as referred to in Imaginary Homelands that parts of his childhood memories are irretrievably lost.

“Understand what I am saying: during the first hour of August 15th, 1947 – between midnight and one a.m. – no less than one thousand and one children were born within the frontiers of the infant sovereign state of India.” (MC: 271) The narrative is wholly communicated by Saleem, in retrospect, to Padma, the narratee who is impatient for more stories and thus contributes to the progress of the narrative, “…And now, driven by Padma and ticktock, I move on,” (MC: 143). However, Saleem is in a hurry as well, he needs to tell his story before he disintegrates into “six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous, and necessarily oblivious dust” (MC: 43), the exact amount of citizens in India in late the 1970’s when the novel is coming towards its end, thus contributing to the fragmented style.

In a parallel process of pickling both his brain and fruits for his chutneys, he writes chapter by chapter at the same time as he fills jar by jar of chutney with different flavours. He chooses to give the chapters and the jars of chutney the same names. The technique underlines the pickling process, both of fruit and brain. Saleem is picking memories the same way he is picking the best fruits for the chutney. Consequently, the first chapter is named The Perforated Sheet, a sheet that is of great symbolic importance for the family story and thus the post-colonial experience of India, as Saleem feels “condemned by a perforated sheet to a life of fragments.” (MC: 165). It is pointed out that this is a fragmented narrative and that more holes are discovered in the sheet, as time itself gnaws on it, “a stained and perforated sheet, and discovered that the hole had grown; that there were other, smaller holes in the surrounding fabric;” (MC: 149) Saleem tells the reader that he will reconstruct history, based on his memory, from where his grandfather’s story begins about thirty-two years before his own birth. The circular narrative becomes obvious when we understand that the novel will
conclude when Saleem is thirty-one years old, in his birth city, thus placing the Partition in 1947 as a centre and a source of events, both concerning family and concerning history. The novel’s first page indicates clearly who the narrator is as he is telling about how and when he entered this world. The significance of the date and exact time of his birth is underlined, as “Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came” (MC: 3). Saleem is announcing his coming almost like a Christ figure. Without the perforated sheet he would not exist, an ironic fact due to the exchange at birth.

“Now, however, time (having no further use for me) is running out. I will soon be thirty-one years old.” (MC: 3) It is thus indicated that his time will be over at the age of thirty-one, hence the novel covers the history of his family and that of India from 1915, through Partition and up to the late seventies. A period in Indian history of great significance and consequence for the Indian people. The narrative is divided in two parts of close to equal length, thirty-one years before and after Partition, and the same amount of time before and after the birth of the midnight’s child, as Times of India (Bombay edition) wrote on his birth. In my opinion, this division has symbolic meaning, as it represents the fight for freedom before Partition and the deep conflicts that yet again arose when the country was divided. Conflicts between Sikhs, Muslims, Christians and Hindus had been ongoing in certain parts of the country for a long time, so the division into Pakistan and India, and later also Bangladesh, might have seemed like a good project in 1947. However, when it became clear that the country would be split up, deep cracks evolved, although the cracks and conflicts had been there for many years already.

There were, however, parts of the population that would have no part in the conflicts. To a degree religious tolerance was prevalent among large groups of the people, this is visualized through the actions of Amina, Saleem’s mother, when she saves the Hindu street musician Lifafa Das from being beaten in their Muslim neighborhood, “surrounded by voices filled with blood ... Amina opens the door and lets him in, to protect him towards the mob she cries out: “Listen well. I am with child. I am a mother who will have a child, and I am giving this man my shelter. Come on now, if you want to kill, kill a mother also and show the world what men you are!”” (MC: 99-100) This is the moment we are told of Saleem’s existence, although he says in retrospect: “…, she was also wrong. This is why: the baby she was carrying did not turn out to be her son.” (MC: 99-100) Thus, the background for Saleem’s
feeling of emptiness is the crime of exchanging two baby boys that Mary Pereira commits as a nurse in Dr. Narlikar’s nursing home.

The parallel between the country’s history and the narrator’s personal life runs through the whole novel. As a midnight child the telepathic capacities Saleem was born with gives him the gift of hearing everything, and a chaotic array of fragments of voices is displayed inside his head. He is, however, able to control the voices in only a few hours – “I was a radio receiver, and could turn the volume down or up; I could select individual voices, I could even, by an effort of will, switch off my newly-discovered inner ear. It was astonishing how soon fear left me; by morning, I was thinking, “man, this is better than All-India Radio, man; better than Radio Ceylon!”” (MC: 226) These two incidents are crucial to the plot of the novel, underlined by the fact that the chapter is named Accident in a Washing-Chest, as it was when he is hiding in the chest that he received the blow that unleashed his telepathic capacity, thus the next chapter has been given the name All-India Radio. The closer to the stroke of midnight the midnight children were born, the stronger their telepathic faculties. Moreover, as Saleem was born at the exact moment of midnight, his faculties are stronger than all the others of the midnight children are. In order to be able to tell all the fragmented stories in *Midnight’s Children*, this is a necessary faculty for him to have. In some stories, he enters the heads of people around him, and discovers their secrets, among others his mother’s “affair” with her former husband. This incident underlines the diversity of the stories that Saleem relates to us throughout the novel. Saleem’s fragmented stories illustrates his feelings of having a broken life, partly because he was exchanged at birth. In addition, he is the child of a mixed culture as it is hinted that his mother had an affair with the British owner of Methwold Estate.

Another element that stresses the fragmented style is the relationship of Saleem’s parents. When Amina and Ahmed were married, her earlier husband Nadir Khan, was still on her mind, so she had problems loving her husband like a good wife should, accordingly she set out to overcome this.

“And so, bringing her gift of assiduity to bear, she began to train herself to love him. To do this she divided him, mentally, into every single one of his component parts, physical as well as behavioral, compartmentalizing him into lips and verbal tics and prejudices and likes … in short, she fell under the spell of the perforated sheet of her own parents, because she resolved to fall in love with her husband bit by bit.” (MC: 87)
The parallel to the state of the nation is clear, it is to be divided into one state, which becomes secular, and another state, which becomes religious and religious fanaticism will grow here. Amina’s father, Aadam Aziz also “made the mistake of loving in fragments,” (MC: 47) when he examines his future wife. Aziz idea of a whole and secular country is then shattered. Thus, the perforated sheet is a symbol that follows the Aziz and Sinai families through three generations. After the Sinai family moved to Pakistan, the Brass Monkey or Jamila, who is a true child of Ahmed and Amina Sinai, and thus Saleem’s sister, becomes a famous singer. The demand for public performance is becoming stronger by the day, and a way for her to sing in public without revealing her face. “…; it was Major (retired) Latif who devised her famous all-concealing, white silk chadar, the curtain or veil, heavily embroidered in gold brocade-work and religious calligraphy, behind which she sat demurely whenever she performed in public.” (MC: 435) Thus, Pakistan fell in love with a girl who performed behind a gold- and white perforated sheet. Moreover, according to Saleem, that was how the history of his family once again became the fate of a nation. In Midnight’s Children, the parallel between the country’s history and the narrator and protagonist’s personal life runs through the whole novel.

As mentioned, the incident in the washing-chest has given Saleem the dubious gift of hearing everything, and a chaotic array of fragments of voices is displayed inside his head. He is, however, able to control the voices after only a few hours, as he now is a radio receiver through his telepathic capacity. Therefore, this incident underlines the diversity of the fragmented and numerous stories that Saleem relates throughout the novel. Saleem’s fragmented stories illustrates his feelings of having a broken life, partly because he was exchanged at birth, and since his biological mother died when giving birth to him he will never get the possibility to feel whole and belong to his real family. Saleem indicates that there are so many stories to tell (MC: 4), that there is “such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane!” In this way, we are informed quite straightforward that we may expect more or less realistic stories. More important though, is that he very early in the novel indicates that this will not be one forthright and reliable story, but a multitude of different stories and fragments of stories. It is thus pointed out that this is a fragmented narrative, “Guided only by the memory of a large white bedsheet with a roughly circular hole some seven inches in diameter cut into the centre …” This is where Saleem tells the reader that he will reconstruct history, based on his memory, from where his grandfather’s story begins about thirty-two
years before his own birth. Historiographic metafiction asks the reader to recall that history and fiction are themselves historical terms and that their definitions and interrelations are historically determined and vary with time. (Hutcheon, page 105 quoting: Seamon 1983, 212-16). Then once again, we are reminded of the symmetry of the novel when we understand that it will have its end when Saleem turns thirty-one, in this way the Partition of India becomes the centre and a cradle of events, in the family as well as in India’s history.

According to Hutcheon, the term intertextuality is useful as a theoretical framework “when dealing with historiographic metafiction that demands of the reader not only the recognition of textualized traces of the literary and historical past but also the awareness of what has been done-through irony-to those traces.” (A Poetics of P: 127) Umberto Eco has said when writing about his novel The Name of the Rose: “I discovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.” (Eco: 20)

In general, it is contained that intertextuality is a common aspect of postmodern literature, and it constitutes an essential element in Midnight’s Children. Love in Bombay is the title of the thirteenth chapter in the novel, and the chapter deals with different types of love, the metaphors of the Bollywood film world are frequent in this part of the novel. Saleem reminds the reader “nobody from Bombay should be without a basic film vocabulary.” (MC: 299), thus showing his love for the film world. He lets the reader understand that in Midnight’s Children the influence from the Bombay mainly escapist and romantic film industry is significant. This is seen through characters like Saleem’s uncle Hanif and aunt Pia who both belong to the sphere of the Bombay film industry. She is a film star in decline at the time Saleem comes to stay with them at the age of ten. His uncle is an unsuccessful writer of film scripts, as he is despising the myth-life of India and has started to write a realistic manuscript about a pickle factory. It is my argument that this is a metaphor of the old and ancient ridden India that through independence has a chance of entering a modern age. Additionally, their neighbour at the Methwold Estate, the Catrack family, was also part of the film industry. Their love for the movies is also expressed through the visits to The Bombay Talkies, where he describes the thrill of going to see the latest movies. “Next Attraction” and “Coming soon” (MC: 249) A known landmark in Bombay at the time was the Pioneer Café, “a real rutputty joint” (MC: 299) with its “filmi playback music” (MC: 299) where the film people used to spend time off, “the Pioneer Café was a repository of many dreams.” (MC: 299) This is where
Amina and her former husband chose to meet and where Saleem spies on his mother, “…. Through the dirty, square, glassy cinema-screen of the Pioneer Café’s window, I watched Amina Sinai and the no-longer Nadir play out their love scene; they performed with the ineptitude of genuine amateurs.” (MC: 300)

Intertexts in Midnight’s Children are novels like García Marquez’s One Hundred Years of Solitude, which through its magical realism may be said to have parallels. Gunther Grass’s The Tin Drum is another example, where Saleem has certain similarities with the protagonist Oskar. However, also other European classical works from Shakespeare and Kipling are mirrored in Midnight’s Children. Linda Hutcheon provides an explanation for the use of Intertexts in postmodern literature. The use of canonical classics from Europe is a “mode of appropriating and reformulating – with significant change – the dominant white, male, middle-class, heterosexual, Eurocentric culture.” (A Poetics of P: 130) Postmodernism ironically abuses these classics. Thus, according to Hutcheon, “there is relation of mutual interdependence of the histories of the dominated and the dominators. (A Poetics of P: 130) Hence, it is my argument that this supports the idea that Rushdie wishes to make the reader reflect on the ethical implications and possibly give marginalized groups a “historical” voice and make them able to “speak” back. According to Hutcheon the governing role of irony in postmodernism lies in the fact that “it is always a critical reworking, never a nostalgic “return””. (A Poetics of P: 4) It is then my argument that the preceding quote sums up the impression that Midnight’s Children gives when studying the postmodernist features of the novel. Rushdie’s great novel has used and abused the parody, not only to restore history and memory, but to speak back to both the West and India’s leaders.
Chapter 3: Narrative Technique in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997)

3.1 Introduction to the novel’s fictional universe and background.

By early June the countryside changes dramatically into an “immodest green” (GOST: 1) in Ayemenem. However, it is not known at this stage how powerful this change will be and how dire the consequences. This is when nature transforms and the rain arrives and life explodes and the overgrown garden of the family house is full of “the whisper and scurry of small lives.” (GOST: 1) According to Biman Basu in *Postcolonial World Literature* “This outrageous growth of the rhizome is of course part the ethology that includes those who were the “worst transgressors”, “those who broke all the rules”, those who “crossed into forbidden territory”, “those who tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much.” (GOST: 31). (PWL, Forster-Roy-Morrison: 179)

Thus, external forces has made the garden grow out of control, a garden that has been groomed by Baby Kochamma for many years. However, her control is long gone when Rahel returns to Ayemenem to meet her brother Estha after many years apart. One could then argue that this loss of control is a symbol of the events that are to be narrated, uncontrollable and incomprehensible, as they seem through large parts of the non-linear and fragmented novel. The events that occurred during a couple of weeks in 1969 eventually broke the family apart and had consequences for the future lives of those experiencing the “Terror” (GOST: 127/190). The events that made Estha and Rahel learn how “history negotiates its terms and collects its dues from those who break its laws. (GOST: 55)

Hence, it is indicated both in the title and on the first page that small lives are significant elements in Roy’s novel. The reason becoming obvious in Velutha and Ammu’s relationship, he a low caste Paravan, she belonging to a high caste Syrian Christian family. They know that they are breaking the Love Laws, thus “..., instinctively they stuck to the Small Things. The Big Things ever lurked inside. They knew there was nowhere for them to go. They had nothing. No Future. So they stick to the small things.” (GOST: 338) The fact that Rahel returns to her home town at this time of the year, when change is in the air, might also indicate that change was about to happen in the fictional village of Ayemenem.

Roy’s only novel tells a compelling story of the family Ipe through five generations. Even though it is the two latest generations that are in focus, the former generations have great
impact through traditions and rules. The narrative tells about a more or less dysfunctional family, set in the southern region of Kerala in 1969. The characters are all members either of the family Ipe or in various ways connected to members of the family. The siblings Chacko and Ammu, and Ammu’s twins Estha and Rahel, all have their lives torn apart due to the tragic events that are taking place during a few days in early summer 1969. Social barriers, local politics and religious aspects have devastating consequences for members of the family. A central theme is then forbidden love and how tragedy strikes because of Ammu and Velutha’s breaking of the social rules, the so-called Love Laws which decide who is allowed to love whom. In Sara Upstone’s, article The History House: The Magic of contained Space in Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things, Roy defines her book as “a story that examines things very closely but also from a very, very distant point, almost from geological time and you look at it and see a pattern there. A pattern […] of how in these small events and in these small lives the world intrudes” (Globalizing Dissent: Essays on Arundhati Roy: 71) Hence, Roy is in numerous instances accentuating her focus on details, her style is easily perceived, often in her description of nature, in the minute portrayal of insects, as “The ants made a faint crunchy sound as life left them.” (GOST: 185) It is a rare focus on the “small things” when one is able to detect the sound of ants being crushed. However, the ants must be understood as a symbol of how easily the weak in society, mainly portrayed through Ammu and Velutha, the twins and Sophie Mol, are crushed. One may therefore argue that one of the more central themes deals with the rigid class structure of India and the consequences for those affected. The extreme social differences between the higher castes and the so-called “untouchables” are visible through several generations of the family Ipe. This theme is central in triggering the story through Velutha and Ammu’s forbidden love affair. Within this theme lies another, namely what Surendran in her book, The God of Small Things. A Saga of Lost Dreams (Surendran: 4) calls shattered dreams and how this affected the members of the family. A mutual condition in all characters seems to be the failure of living fulfilled lives. However, the village of Ayemenem is not only a fictional universe invented by the author to serve her purpose in her novel. Ayemenem is also the name of a real village as it is the name of the village Roy’s Syrian Christian mother came from and was forced to return to when she divorced her Bengali Hindu husband (Tickell: 12), the father of Arundhati Roy and her brother. Ayemenem is thus where Arundhati Roy grew up and according to Tickell she ascribes “a deep sense of place to her childhood surroundings: “The kind of landscape that you [grow] up in, it lives in you […] if you spent your very early childhood catching fish and
just learning to be quiet, the landscape just seeps into you.” “ (Tickell: 12) Although some of the novel’s critics have labelled the novel semi auto-biographical Roy does not in any way hint at this anywhere in the novel or elsewhere. However, she does say, “My mother says that some of the incidents in the book are based on things that happened when I was two years old. I have no recollection of them. But obviously, they were trapped in some part of my brain.” (www.languageinindia.com/april2012/madhumitarealism.pdf)

According to Baneth-Nouailhetas, implying that the text is autobiographical will “divert attention from the intrinsic qualities of the work as fiction.” (B-N: 2) Nevertheless, the text has features that show local knowledge of landscape and people, as the text refers to Keralan local history and historical persons, such as the dominance of communist and socialist political parties in the 1960s.

The process of memory is essential in the novel, as Baneth-Nouailhetas claims, “is tightly bound to the narrative structure as it is in itself a process of narration…” (B-N: 50) It is likely that the narrative’s fragmentation reflects the way we remember, in glimpses. As the title suggests, the narrative established its form through the “small things”, “Little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted. Imbued with new meaning. Suddenly they become the bleached bones of a story.” (GOST: 32/33) The “small things”, namely the daily lives of the children, the everyday experiences and daily, seemingly insignificant episodes, minutely described in the novel stand as a contrast to the “big things” in life, such as the treatment of the untouchables and also the political turmoil in Kerala and in India as a whole.

In this chapter, it is my project to present what I consider to be the most central aspects concerning Roy’s use of postmodern narrative technique, but also the themes she forwards and the background for them. The playfulness of her form undoubtedly falls within the postmodern tradition, where narrative technique like fragmentation of meaning and form, contrasting, intertextuality and parodying of the language are widely used by Roy in order to communicate her views.

3.2 Setting and background

Other Indian authors writing in English have used similar descriptions in their openings. It is as if the author deemed it necessary to introduce the reader to an unknown setting and culture, as the expression Indo-English is a “deliberate inversion of Anglo-Indian, that is still used to qualify English Literature on India, born of the colonial context” (B-N: 2). A relevant comparison may, in my opinion, be seen in Anita Desai’s novel, Clear Light of Day, where
the reader in a comparable way is introduced to the setting and characters of the novel. The same minute concentration on small animals and details of nature is seen. It may therefore be suggested that Roy celebrates this style in order to emphasize the “Indianness” of it, although the style to my eyes seems slightly exaggerated in its detailed description when “Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air.” However, pastiche is a common device in postmodern literature, and even though it is not the most central postmodern device in this novel, it adds to the impression together with a variety of postmodern elements like intertextuality and allegory. As Linda Hutcheon claims “postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts that it challenges –“ (A Poetics of P: 3) It is my claim that this is exactly what Roy does in her novel, she challenges the language in order to show how the protagonists are traumatized through the “Terror” (GOST: 127), namely the rigid and ancient class and gender division, visualized through the Ipe family. However, this is not all, she uses the language to display political and historical issues of her nation, and this is where the historiographic aspect comes in. ”Historiographic metafiction self-consciously reminds us that, while events did occur in the real empirical past, we name and constitute those events as historical fact by narrative positioning.” (A Poetics of P: 97) Through her extraordinary and playful language Roy fictionalized Kerala’s ancient and more recent history, and was thus able to recreate the past and present of her home region in her own image through the portrayal of the dysfunctional and Anglophile Ipe family.

According to Hutcheon, “It is part of the postmodernist stand to confront the paradoxes of fictive/historical representation, the particular/the general, and the present/the past.” One can therefore argue that the novel has postmodernist qualities through Roy’s treatment of history. Further, Fredric Jameson claimed in his article Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism, all so called third world texts are to be read as national allegories (T-W Literature: 69) and he adds that this was particularly the case when “their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel.” Hence, it may be claimed that the characters of The God of Small Things represent the national allegory of India. In addition, a large number of allusions to both British and Indian history, literature and culture is found throughout the novel.

The shifts in time and space are also clear characteristics of this novel. Magic realism and the use of memory are also common devices in postmodern literature, e.g. when Rahel in
retrospection can feel the molestation of her twin brother. (GOST: 2) Nonetheless, there is no
doubt that the main setting in the novel was Ayemenem, this was where the main events took
place and where the central characters, primarily the members of the Ipe family spent their
lives.

3.3 Characters and themes

In the first chapter, the reader is not only introduced to the climate of Kerala, but also to the
characters of the novel. Before Ammu dies, the police unjustly kill Velutha, her untouchable
lover. An event that together with the drowning of Sophie Mol, which it coincided with, is
predicted in numerous instances throughout the novel. These two events constitute the main
parts of the narrative, as seen through the dizygotic twins, Rahel and Estha, in addition to the
omniscient narrator. The complex story is written in an unusually fragmented style and jumps
frequently between events taking place in 1969 and 1993. The chapters are highly non-
chronological and it is not until the last chapter is read that the story is fully revealed, “It took
the twins years to understand their mother Ammu’s part in what had happened.” (GOST: 324)
Rahel and Estha are seven years old in 1969, due to the tragic events they are partly blamed
for, they are separated when Estha is sent back to his father and Rahel is kept at the estate in
the village of Ayemenem. These events and the molesting of Estha, in addition to the
uncertainty whether they are loved by their mother or not and her later death, traumatize both
Estha and his sister Rahel to such a degree that he stops speaking and she has problems
connecting to other people. After the death of Ammu, “Rahel drifted. From school to school.”
(GOST: 15) and when she has married she still is unable to connect, “But when they made
love he was offended by her eyes. They behaved as if they belonged to someone else.
Someone watching. Looking out of the window at the sea. At a boat in the river. Or a passer-
by in the mist in a hat.” (GOST: 19) Her American husband did not know that “in some
places, like the country Rahel came from, various kinds of despair competed for primacy.”
(GOST: 19). In my interpretation this sentence describes the personal trauma the siblings’
experience, but also alludes to the suffering of India as a colonized country.

In 1993, the two meet again for the first time since Estha was sent back to his father, Baba.
Rahel’s return to her maternal home village is significant in order to launch the story, and
through the fragmented and non-chronological narrative, the events are gradually conveyed
through a multitude of smaller narratives.
The novel starts when she returned to Ayemenem. A long time had passed, the few weeks in 1969 when the “Terror” (GOST: 127/190) happens, a clear allusion to the novel *Heart of Darkness*, and the consequences these events have on the protagonists seem a distant memory when Rahel returns from Washington DC. Her great aunt Baby Kochamma has notified her that her twin brother Estha has been re-returned to the family estate in Ayemenem.

Seemingly, life has stagnated in the family estate as the old Plymouth still is parked outside, the ornament garden once created by a young Baby Kochamma is overgrown and the house seems empty. The decay of the estate and of the members of the household still alive is overwhelming. (GOST: 2) Since the “Terror” happened, Mammachi, the twins’ maternal grandmother has died, Chacko, their uncle and the father of half-English Sophie Mol has moved to Canada. Mammachi’s pickle factory, Paradise Pickles & Preserves, is out of business years ago. The History house, around which an essential part of the main action revolved in 1969, has become a five star hotel, with the ironic name Heritage, now a symbol of globalized economy represented by tourism. Above all, the twins’ mother Ammu, died at the age of thirty-one, “a viable, die-able age” (GOST: 3), the same age the twins have at present time, at their reunion. The expression “viable”, understood here as capable of living, is thus an ironic comment on how Ammu is betrayed by society and family, indicating the central themes of caste, women’s discrimination, transgression and betrayal on several levels.

“In those early amorphous years when memory had only just begun, when life was full of Beginnings and no Ends, and everything was For Ever, Esthappen and Rahel thought of themselves together as Me, and separately, individually, as We or Us.” (GOST: 2) Through the carefully designed twenty-one chapters the omniscient narrator brings the reader back in time, to a period of innocence, before the events that in the end broke the family apart took place. This is reflected in frequent flash-forwards “Things can change in a day.” (GOST: 164). However, the expression “time of innocence” must be seen as highly ironic as the family history is full of violence, jealousy and frustration, long before the birth of the twins, as Pappachi, the twins’ maternal grandfather, regularly beat his wife Mammachi and considered it his right in a patriarch society. In a postcolonial light, his brutal actions reflect the British colonizers’ regime in India, as he is a representative of those Indians that entirely took on the colonizers’ culture and must be considered as Anglophiles. He worked for the British as an Imperial Entomologist (GOST: 48) and after independence had his title changed to Joint Director and later rose to the title of Director. According to Baneth-Nouailhetas his
behaviour is a “symbolic colonial leftover” (B-N: 11), which is displayed when he does not believe his daughter's account when she returned home after leaving her husband. In his eyes, it is unheard of that an English man “would covet another man’s wife.” (GOST: 42) This is a highly ironic element as colonial history is full of accounts of children of mixed heritage.

A vital part of the novel includes the discovery of a new species of moth by Pappachi. This incident intensifies his feeling of injustice, and he takes it out on his surroundings. (GOST: 49) This is one of the small things in the story that acquires meaning in a wider scope. His disappointment because he is not given the credit of having discovered this species of moth, makes him a bitter and hateful man. The moth with “its unusually dense dorsal tufts” (GOST: 49) becomes a symbol of the fear Rahel has of not being loved by her mother, and is used in various instances throughout the novel. Especially when she has done something she is not supposed to say or do, or when Ammu shows her “unsafe edge” (GOST: 44) and in her anger screams out that the twins are millstones around her neck, which triggered the twins’ running away. These were instances where “A cold moth with unusually dense dorsal tufts landed lightly on Rahel’s heart. Where the icy legs touched her, she got goosebumps. Six goose bumps on her careless heart.” (GOST: 112)

Moreover, it is relevant to mention little people, as the main characters are small, in body and mind because they are children. They do not understand the impact of their actions and statements in the tragedies that unfold themselves, as they are manipulated by adults, primarily Baby Kochamma and the local chief of police, inspector Thomas Mathew, who have their own agenda. Their grandaunt Baby Kochamma may be considered as the most central antagonist, together with her long dead brother, Pappachi. Through the character of Baby Kochamma, it is possible to see Roy’s feminist side; Baby Kochamma is a central character especially in the aftermath of Velutha’s death. She represents power through her family name. On the other hand, her life has been that of lost love as she chooses to follow the strict rules of society laid heavily on women. Her unfulfilled love for the Catholic Irish priest, father Mulligan, has made her a hateful and jealous person. She strongly contributes to the tragic end of the love affair between Velutha and Ammu. She symbolizes women’s situation in India, their lack of control over their lives, across class and family ties.

Mammachi must also be seen as an antagonist, especially in relation to Ammu’s love affair with Velutha. Through her and Baby Kochamma’s treatment of Ammu the dissimilar standards for men and women is portrayed through the different treatment her two children
receives. She accepts her son’s multiple affairs with the female employees of the factory. In order to keep it private, she has a special entrance built for him, “(…for Chacko to pursue his “Men’s Needs” discretely)…” (GOST: 238). Further, she fully accepts his right as a man to take over the business she has built. Thus, it is my claim that feminist issues are a central theme in the novel. In addition, the fact that Ammu’s relationship with an untouchable is so devastating and incomprehensible to her mother shows how deeply embedded the prejudices towards the untouchables are. Mammachi is consequently also a victim of women’s conditions in India, not only through her actions towards Ammu, but also through her husband’s beatings. In this way, feminist and caste issues are emphasized through Mammachi’s attitude and inability to see some of the most central problems that India has to come to terms with.

Despite the family’s attempts at preservation, the expression “things can change in a day” (GOST: 32) is one of the novel’s most frequent refrains. The novel deals with a number of themes of universal interest, such as trauma, globalization and post-colonial hybridity. The two intertwined major events that constitute the narrative and which the novel revolves around both in present time and the time when the events actually took place; include basic human feelings of love, hate, envy and betrayal, transgression, social injustice seen through the obvious criticism of the tradition of caste. According to the author herself, “The God of Small Things is a novel that connects the very smallest things to the very biggest.” (Tickle: 11) Some of the themes of this novel are well known from other Indo-English literature. Many authors belonging to the so-called Indo-English tradition have described both the colonial and the post-colonial realities.

In the development of tourism in Kerala the negative aspects of globalization, or neo-colonization, on culture, economy and the pollution of the land is a theme. Roy is in addition harshly critical to Western and globalized culture, as is seen in her mocking treatment of it, especially in the connection with the so-called History house. The novel also deals with the short- and long consequences of trauma, as it is represented in the twin protagonists Estha and Rahel, and their mother Ammu. It is my claim that their suffering has a parallel in the suffering of the Indian people during colonization. Additionally, it is my belief that betrayal also is a vital feature.

The house on the other side of the river represents the metaphor of the History House. The house once owned by the Englishman who had “gone native”, “Ayemenem’s own Kurtz.”
The use of *Heart of Darkness* draws attention to the events that Estha and Rahel had witnessed there twenty-three years ago. The river represents the difference between then and now, then a powerful and sound waterway, able to take life and give life, as fishermen could live off the fish they caught. In 1993, it is polluted and stinking of pesticides. As a result, one of the central themes is the globalized industry that had no consideration for local environment. Other essential themes like preservation of status quo in a conservative society is seen in Mammachi’s reaction to Ammu’s relationship. Moreover, the trauma and consequences of breaking the Love Laws, abuse and misuse of power, are also relevant themes.

The caste system was originally an ancient Hindu class division, but it has gradually been entwined with the English class system during colonization and the system lives on even today due to its ancient roots (B-N: 4-5). Accordingly, it is deeply rooted in the local culture and is what triggers the main events. “They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much.” (GOST: 31) More than anything else, the love laws, the laws that decided who can love who in a society where the social division through thousands of years had been taken to the extreme, forebodes the tragic killing of Velutha and thus the early death of Ammu. Velutha and Ammu’s relationship is the most central violation of the love laws, thus breaking the strict social laws of the conservative Keralan society.

Connected to the theme of caste is also the theme of racism, portrayed by the twins as half breed because their father is a Bengali Hindu. He is not even mentioned by his proper name in the novel, only as Baba by the twins. In addition, their parents were divorced, another vital element in the degradation of Ammu and her children, and part of the theme of conservation of status quo. The theme of feminism, portrayed by several of the female characters, is central when looking at Ammu’s situation. Unlike her brother, she has no education and has divorced her husband; hence, “For herself she knew that there would be no more chances. There was only Ayemenem now.” (GOST: 43) On the other hand, Anglophilia becomes evident when it is emphasized that their cousin Sophie Mol also is of mixed heritage as her mother, Margaret, is English. In this case, the half-breed is a positive element; Sophie Mol’s beach sandy skin colour represents the Western culture and is therefore attractive, while the darker skin of the twins represents the opposite. The Indian “Anglophile class” is then indoctrinated by the earlier imperialists to the degree that they loathe their own skin colour. Another instance of
pure racism is seen when Margaret’s father denounces the marriage of his daughter by refusing to come to hers and Chacko’s wedding. When they are divorced because Margaret meets Joe, who “was everything that Chacko wasn’t. Steady. Solvent. Thin.” (GOST: 248) Chacko tells his mother that “She traded me in for a better man …” He thus belittles himself and looks upon the white man as better, another example of the Anglophile condition.

*The God of Small Things* consists of twenty-one chapters of different length, where chapter eleven, bearing the same name as the novel is placed in the middle, as a result underlining the importance of this chapter. Here it becomes clear to the reader who the God of Small Things is, namely Velutha, the untouchable carpenter who Ammu grows up together with whom she has an intense love affair. Velutha’s father has been an employee at the Ipe estate since Pappachi’s, the twins’ maternal grandfather, days. Even though the system of untouchables was officially abolished in the early 1950s, it is very much alive in Indian society today. As untouchables, they are not supposed to have any physical contact with touchables, and the love affair between the two is therefore a social catastrophe in the conventional society.

As the title suggests, the narrative established its form through the small things, “Little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted. Imbued with new meaning. Suddenly they become the bleached bones of a story.” (GOST: 32/33) The small things, specifically the daily lives of the children, the everyday experiences and daily, seemingly insignificant episodes minutely described in the novel, stand as a contrast to the big things in life, such as the treatment of the untouchables through an ancient system of castes and the political turmoil in Kerala and in India as a whole. The unequal society, generally seen through the Ipe family, where sons have all rights and daughters none, was also a major problem in India at the time. It is perceived through Chacko’s rights to get a solid education at a prestigious university in England, through his possibilities to thereafter secure a good position in his homeland. Moreover, when his father dies he chooses to return home to take over Paradise Pickles, the successful factory his mother had built up. His mother asks no questions, as she is also a victim of a patriarchal society. The novel is then a contradictory blend of small things – the little moments and objects that Roy uses to mould her story, and the style implies a childish vision of an inhuman world. In spite of the Ipe family’s efforts to preserve status quo in the conservative society, the children’s experience is that “things can change in a day” (GOST: 32). This is one of the most frequent refrains in the novel, and forebodes and highlights the
traumatic experiences that are to happen, together with a number of others, like “Like familiar lovers’ bodies” (GOST: 20).

Similarly, the tiny insects and the meticulous descriptions of nature and the characters in general emphasize the focus on small things. However, the events that trigger the story, namely the drowning of Sophie Mol and the shocking killing of Velutha may hardly be called small things. Nevertheless, as essential events these parts are also treated in detail. In general, Roy uses her characters as national allegories in order to criticize the Indian elite and government because the powerless citizens of the country are unprotected and abused in all kinds of ways. (Singh: 2/3) Roy’s political involvement, as is seen in her later essays and actions, then makes it easier to understand when she claims that the novel is about everything, everything that means something to her. In this interview with David Barsamian in the-south-asian.com (September 2001) Roy also claimed: “As I keep saying, fiction is truth. I think fiction is the truest thing there ever was. My whole effort now is to remove that distinction. The writer is the midwife of understanding. It’s very important for me to tell politics like a story, to make it real,” This statement underlines her interest to protect the underprivileged through her political activism. We see Roy’s intense interest in the society she lives in, we also know that The God of Small Things is the only fictional book she has written, but she has produced a number of political essays concerning different aspects of globalization, as environmental questions and how the underprivileged are treated in India. It is therefore not strange that her novel covers fundamental political issues of Indian society.

3.4  **Point of view and narrators**

The Booker panel who evaluated the novel when Roy was awarded the Booker Prize was amazed at the way Roy manages to “funnels the history of South India through the eyes of seven-year-old twins.” (Dodiya, Chakravarty: 8) Consequently, the twins are joint protagonists at the time the events that prompt the story unfold themselves. However, their mother, high caste Ammu, and her untouchable lover, Velutha, may be considered to be the tragic heroine and hero of the novel, as it is their violation of the “love laws” that, together with Sophie Mol’s untimely death at the age of nine, sets the story off. Nevertheless, the story is mainly told with the limited scope of seven-year-old children, hence the unreliability of the narrators. The narration of the story is not only conveyed through the twins, even though their point of view, and more Rahel’s than Estha’s voice is heard, occupy large portions of the novel. However, an omniscient narrator points the reader in the direction of the deeper, more
sinister events that in 1969 were impossible for Estha and Rahel to comprehend as seven years old children.

According to Mani the point of view in the novel has been “commended for its ‘distinct narrative voice’ which is thought to be that of the girl twin Rahel.” (Dodiya, Chakravarty: 9) The scope of the novel is therefore not only that of Estha and Rahel as children, there is an omniscient narrator, who is clearly present throughout the novel, like in “It had been quiet in Estha’s head until Rahel came.” (GOST: 14) It is my argument that the omniscient narrator represents the author herself.

The God of Small Things is a post-colonial novel, this is represented through the many examples of admiration for British culture and literature, visualized by the Anglophilia of the Ipe family, e.g. in the admiration of Sophie Mol, Chacko’s daughter who is half-English. Postcolonial literature may be defined in a number of ways, however, in The Empire Writes Back the following understanding is found: “… they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre.” (EWB: 2)

As the reader will experience, India is a country still suffering from the traumas of the colonial era and its consequences in the postcolonial era. The nation has now been independent for almost seven decades, thus post-colonialism today may have taken different forms than the first decades after independence. Therefore, today and even in the 1990s, it may be more correct to talk of the effects of globalization or neocolonialism, themes Roy has written non-fictional essays on. However, these themes are also treated in her novel. It is thus my claim that some of the negative effects of globalization are essential elements in this novel. Additionally, the question whether this novel gave marginalized groups a “voice” is a vital issue in postcolonial studies, and will also be treated in this chapter. Moreover, along with globalization and its various consequences, feminist issues, abuse and the caste concerns are some of the themes that will be discussed here.

Thus, it is my belief that Roy has written a novel about the history and society of India, both recent and ancient, such as the description of the ancient Kathakali dance in chapter 12, in 1993 reduced to a tourist attraction at the Heritage Hotel. This is evident in the text through the many references to India’s own culture and literature, as well as famous works by Shakespeare and other principal British literature. In general terms, it can be said that several
of these aspects are portrayed through the Paravan Velutha’s relation to the different members of the high caste family Ipe. Negative effects of globalization and its local consequences in the Ayemenem village are also playing a vital role in order to portray the development from 1969, when the traumatic main events took place, to 1993, when the protagonist twins Rahel and Estha returned to the village.

*The God of Small Things* is thus a post-colonial novel, published fifty years after the independence of India and the turmoil that occurred both before and after 1947. In my opinion, Roy has chosen her specific style of narration and language in order to forward issues concerning India’s history and society. She also deals with the severe issue of how trauma affects individuals who have been victims of it. Hence, both long- and short term consequences of trauma are forwarded in the novel, as seen in the protagonist twins Estha and Rahel, and also in the life and death of their mother, Ammu. She dies an untimely death due to the repercussions of her breaking the “Love Laws” (GOST: 338) The reasons for their trauma are mainly found in the family tragedy that unfolds during a couple of weeks in 1969 and the consequences of these events. It is then possible to suggest that India’s past as a colonized country and its society structure are matters individualized through the members of the Ipe family. Hence, the novel may be read both as an allegory of Indian history and society and as a narrative concerned with trauma, but the two aspects are intertwined.

### 3.5 Postmodern narrative technique

Memory, memories and remembering are essential features in the novel, as they are closely connected to the narrative structure of the novel, which is “in itself a process of narration, which strives towards the organization of the past as meaning” (B-N: 50). Many of the central events and themes are revealed already in chapter one, as forebodings of what is to come. Repetition, both as a structural element and as part of the language itself, contributes to the style of narration, as it “brings the past to bear on the future, and the present to reconstruct the past.” (B-N: 50) Further, according to Baneth-Nouailhetas the novel “develops around a highly complex and sophisticated narrative structure, based on the combination of digression and anachrony.” B-N: 49) These digressions make the narrative sidetrack from the main story multiple times, seen in the reminiscences and contemplations of any of the central characters. These minor stories lead the reader in different directions before they eventually are led back to the main story. The opening chapter of the novel is, in my opinion, typical of this side tracking. The chapter is mainly set in present time, which is 1993, when Estha and Rahel met
again for the first time after he was re.returned to the family house. However, the flashbacks to the twins’ childhood and the traumatic events that took place during a short period in 1969, recent historical events and ancient culture and myth of India are so frequent that the reader has a superficial overview of the content and characters already in this chapter. Thus, Rahel’s reminiscing is picked up by the narrative, “and in doing so, stretches back into the past events that have led to the shattering of the twins’ family, before reverting to a fragmentary diegetic present.” (B-N: 49) Roy’s use of time and space is then one of the most interesting features in the novel; this temporal distortion is known to be a typical element in postmodern fiction. In order to communicate her story the author used an abundance of narrative threads, flashbacks and flash-forwards. Thus, when studying the postmodern narrative techniques in The God of Small Things the anachrony becomes very clear at an early stage. The disruption of linearity creates a fragmentary style and at times, the reader gets the impression that the many smaller stories are overwhelming in their multitude and it is only when the whole novel is read that one is able to grasp the whole picture of the complex structure and the diverse themes.

However, talking about the whole picture in this novel may seem futile because the narrative time and space are disrupted to such a high degree. Apparently, Roy did not intend to give a concise answer to the many questions and themes raised in the novel. The single word “Tomorrow” that stands alone on the last line of the novel indicates an open ending, a common literary device in postmodern literature.

In this novel memory is an essential part of the structure. As is mentioned already, the narrative moves on two levels, it brings the reader back in time to the past before the “Terror” (GOST: 127) that broke the family apart happened in 1969. “…those early amorphous years when memory had only just begun, when life was full of Beginnings and no Ends, and Everything was For Ever.” (GOST: 2) Throughout the novel the reader encounters the stories of the members of the Ipe family, traumatized through generations of abuse, portrayed mainly by the female members of the family, but also Estha who was physically and mentally molested in more than one way. On another level, Chacko is also traumatized, obviously by the loss of his daughter, but also due to his hybridity through the family’s Anglophilia.

According to Baneth-Nouailhetas, the novel’s structure through these “small things” relies on mnemonic triggers, objects or places. She claims that the narrative structure is not linear, but circular, “constructing meaning by going over and over the same field, collecting different elements and points of view at each revolution;”. (B-N: 49/50) In this way, it is not only the
past that is clarified, but also the present and maybe the future. This is seen when Rahel and Estha, alone or together, are investigating the past by walking around Ayemenem, or when Rahel dives into her grandfather’s bookshelf in order to rediscover small items hid there many years ago.

“Some days he walked along the banks of the river that smelled of shit and pesticides bought with World Bank loans.” (GOST: 13) Thus indicating that life in Ayemenem has changed not only the river, but also society. The British colonizers are gone, but there are other colonizers now, the globalized world has entered Kerala through World Bank loans and international corporations. Politics has changed as is stated in the ironic comment, “The red had bled away.” (GOST: 13) from Pillai’s flag, Marxism is no longer a part of the political landscape of Kerala. The once potent river, Menachel, which had the power to take Sophie Mol’s life twenty-three years ago, is now reduced to a poisonous pit. She also mentions “Gulf-money houses … worked hard and unhappily in faraway places.” (GOST: 13) In the above-mentioned sentences Roy’s resentment of globalization is clearly shown, a standpoint she also verifies in her non-fictional essays.

One could argue that the novel’s structure is fragmented in order to enlighten the hybrid identity of the family. Their close connection to the culture of the earlier colonizers is made clear in different ways. In Chacko’s words, “We’re prisoners of war, Chacko said. Our dreams have been doctored. We belong nowhere.” (GOST: 53) Thus, their identities are also fragmented. Linda Hutcheon has coined the expression historiographic metafiction, it is a self-reflexive and historically connected concept and she argues that it is a form that is essentially postmodern. It is a complex concept, but the following quote explains how it in my opinion has been used in this novel. “Postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write and to represent the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological.” (P of P: 110) Historiographic metafiction rewrites history in literature, and according to Hutcheon, this is useful in parody and when one want to renew old or forgotten concepts. In post-colonial fiction, this may be a useful tool, as the imperialists have suppressed a colonized country’s culture in many cases. Post-colonial literature may then be a tool to recreate their own ancient culture, and it is one of the reasons why memory is such an important issue in The God of Small Things. Postcolonial literature then has the double advantage of this technique in dethroning the history constructed by the colonial power, thus empowering its own forgotten histories. The focus on,
especially the Kathakali dance, but also ancient texts like the Mahabharata, may indicate this. Another use of the postmodern element historiographic metafiction is a relevant feature when Roy challenged the understanding of local history in Kerala. Even though one must be careful to place historical persons into the fictional universe, it may be argued that the Marxist doyen E.M.S. Nambuthiripad is the model for the local union leader K.N.M. Pillai.

The postmodern narrative technique is closely connected to the themes of the novel and how Roy has chosen to convey them to her readers. It is then my claim that this novel is an obvious example of postmodern literature. In terms of postmodernism, it is a daunting assignment to define the term, as it is a loose word. However, covered in the term are issues like use of irony, intertextuality and playfulness of language, elements that clearly are found in the novel. Moreover, fragmentation is here represented by the many small stories that constitute the novel. Additionally the language, fragmented in itself, is central in postmodern fiction, as it is in this novel.

Traditionally the imperial education in the colonies made sure that their own language became the standard one. Then, according to Ashcroft in *The Empire Writes back*, “Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of “truth”, “order” and “reality” become established.” (EWB: 7) The local languages were thus treated as variants or impurities. This is, in my opinion, why Roy had elements of local language in the novel, namely in order to “write back”, emphasizing the consequences of imperialism 50 years after India became independent. Hence, Roy’s intention is to give new significance to her text, and to make a point when it comes to post-colonialism’s consequences and the development of the Indian society after independence. Additionally, she also wants to underline what effects neo-colonialism or globalization has on poor countries.

Moreover, the opening pages include episodes from their childhood that were not possible to understand from a realistic perspective. Rahel remembers, although she was not present, “what the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man did to Estha in Abhilash Talkies. She remembers the taste of the tomato sandwiches – *Estha’s* sandwiches that *Estha* ate – on the Madras Mail to Madras.” (GOST: 2/3) Their closeness, as they thought of themselves as a unity, referring to themselves as “Me”, “We” or “Us” (GOST: 2) makes Rahel able to sense the feelings of the molested Estha at the Abhilash movie theatre where they were to see *The Sound of Music*. Rahel also remembers the taste of Estha’s tomato sandwiches when he is on the Madras Mail.
returning to his father. In Sophie Mol’s funeral, Rahel also notices that Sophie is awake for her own funeral. (GOST: 5) Consequently this closeness may be interpreted as magic realism, however, the two first episodes may also be interpreted as an emphasis of the close affinity between them and how wrong it was to separate them. The episode in the funeral may well be a description of Rahel’s confused state of mind and exasperation at the time considering the load of the traumatic events piling up in her mind.

Nevertheless, magic realism is considered to be a postmodern device, especially used in South American literature, where one, to my knowledge, believe in supernatural elements to a higher degree than in Western countries. In the same way, the gods and mystical elements in Indian culture may indicate that this is the case in India as well, and that it thus is natural for an Indian author to use elements that may be interpreted as magic realism.

3.6 Fragmentation and irony in Roy’s language

The style of the language, the images and the symbolism in The God of Small Things have been criticized by more than one scholar. Tom Deveson wrote in his work, Much ado about Small Things (Tickell: 7) that the novel had a “facetious whimsicality” and was “inescapably and fatally compromised by the self-indulgence of her style.” Deveson may be right about his observations; opinions differ when it comes to these aspects. However, in my opinion it is important to remember that Roy used the language in order to point to political and cultural aspects that are connected to the themes, e.g. trauma and betrayal. It must be clear that as well as being a political activist on the left side of the Indian political landscape, Roy is also a feminist; this is articulately expressed via her female characters in the novel. Like when Ammu sarcastically referred to India as a “wonderful male chauvinist society,” (GOST: 57) In Chacko’s words it is expressed eloquently, although the sentence is seething of irony: “What’s yours is mine and what’s mine is also mine.” Roy’s criticism of the Indian society and the treatment of women both legally and in general became obvious in these short lines.

In postmodernism, the use of language has a playfulness that we have not seen in modernism and earlier periods. Originality and authenticity is normally parodied, it does not pretend to be new and original, but uses former literary forms and genres. Thus, in The God of Small Things a number of linguistic deviations from what is considered normal use is found, the use of local Malayalam words is one example, italicization and capitalization of central words in mid-sentence is another. Reading words backwards is a game much used by the twins.
It is my argument that Roy dared to play with the language, originally not her own, like no other Indian woman writer has dared before her. Earlier women writers were far more cautious, and had a formal stiffness in their use of the English language, very conscious of the fact that the language was not their own. It was too audacious to play with the colonizer’s language. According to Kunhi in *ROMAN Critical Contexts, Arundhati Roy*, “The vernacular of Roy is the vernacular of self-assertion. She asserts her artistic independence shattering all linguistic orthodoxies at the level of phonology, morphology and syntax.” (RCC: 39) Roy’s motivation for her unusual language must thus lie in her need to promote her intense interest in those who are somehow deprived of human rights, including the women of India. In this novel, women represent one of those groups through the marginalized position they have in Indian society at the time the story takes place. The underprivileged lives of women, even though they in *The God of Small Things* belong to the upper echelons of society, is a principal theme in the novel. Representing this theme more than any other in the novel is the protagonist Ammu, her suffering when breaking the “Love Laws” in the traditional patriarchal society of the 1960s goes beyond any of the other female characters in the novel, although they are also victims of the society they live in. When Ammu dies at the age of thirty-one Roy wrote that she is at a “viable Die-able age”. (GOST: 3) This is one of the many puns in the novel that together with a number of other features constitute Roy’s style, which in my opinion is highly ironic.

Roy’s style is also seen in a variety of ways not necessarily connected to the children’s point of view, as the omniscient narrator also has a strong presence in the text. It is a highly personal style and it is clear that through her innovative style, she wanted to communicate controversial issues, and for this, she needed a language and a style that stood out. The playfulness of her form undoubtedly falls within the postmodern tradition, where narrative techniques like fragmentation of meaning and form; contrasting, intertextuality and parodying of the language are widely used in order to communicate one’s views. The panel that awarded Roy the Booker Prize had the following to say about her language: “With extraordinary linguistic inventiveness Roy funnels the history of South India through the eyes of seven-year old twins. The story is fundamental, as it is local: it is about love and death and yet tells its tale quite clearly. We were all engrossed by the novel” (Weber: 354). Hence, Roy represented something very new in Indian literature, as she was “the only woman writer who dared to bend and modulate the rhythms and structure of the English language to the needs and
nuances of Indian experience.” (RCC: 39) One can say that she is de-colonizing the English language.

The playfulness of the language is cleverly filtered through the children protagonists, who enjoyed the idea of playing with the language, by developing their own versions through talking backwards and creating their own varieties of common expressions. When Baby Kochamma’s missionary friend, Miss Mitten, gave the twins a baby book, they were deeply offended, as they were acquainted with Shakespeare and other Western writers at the age of seven. They therefore irritated her by reading the book backwards. (GOST: 59-60) Roy’s sense of humour then becomes evident when Miss Mitten, who saw Satan in the eyes of the twins, some months later, was killed by a milk van, and the twins found hidden justice in the fact that it was reversing.

Roy’s language is highly idiosyncratic, and it seems clear that through her innovative style, she wants to communicate controversial issues, and for this she needs a language and a style that stands out. One of the most prominent and innovative features in The God of Small Things is thus the groundbreaking use of language, closely tied to the themes. The techniques Roy used may seem insignificant when studied one by one, e.g., first letters of words in mid-sentence that are capitalized. “Without admitting it to each other or themselves, they linked their fates, their futures (their Love, their Madness, their Hope, their Infminate Joy) to his.” (GOST: 339). This feature is found in multiple instances throughout the novel and the intention is to underline the prominence of these words in connection with the different themes.

Another example of this practice can be seen when Rahel and Lenin, the son of the politically pragmatic Marxist and local union leader, Pillai, met at the local doctor’s office. “Both Rahel and Lenin had the same complaint – Foreign Objects Lodged up their Noses.” (GOST: 132) This is, in my opinion, a highly humoristic and ironic scene. This little story has a lot to say about the lives of the less privileged in the region, the general hygiene is indicated by “A rat with bristly shoulders made several busy journeys between the doctor’s room and the bottom of the cupboard in the waiting room”, seemingly ignored by the staff. The ironic sentence “Doctor Verghese Verghese (Kottayam’s leading Paediatrician and Feeler-up of Mothers).” (GOST: 131) indicates another instance of discrimination and abuse of women. However, it is mediated in a casual way next to the doctor’s official title and with the same capitalized letters. When reading the next sentences the irony becomes even more visible, “It was curious
how politics lurked even in what children chose to stuff up their noses.” Rahel had a glass bead and Lenin a green gram. This scene is, in my opinion, a clear reference to the colonizing forces and the heritage they have left behind through the English language, which was forced upon the twins by their grand aunt Baby Kochamma in particular and their family background as a high caste Anglophile family in general. In addition, it may be a kick in the direction of the sly politician, Pillai.

In Pillai’s family, they also take pride in knowing English, as is seen when Pillai insists to speak English with Chacko. (GOST: 273) The use of English is here a way to show your superiority, to indicate that Chacko and Pillai were on equal terms. In the scene where Chacko paid Pillai a visit and Mrs. Pillai boasted to her niece that Chacko had studied at Oxford it becomes even more obvious. The girl is also asked to recite the poem *Lochinvar* by Sir Walter Scott, she does so at a remarkable speed as the poem is unmistakably learned by heart and means nothing to her. (GOST: 271) At Chacko’s request the six years old Lenin recites Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, act 3, scene 2 where Antony speaks:

“I cometobery Ceasar, not to praise him.

Theevil that mendoo lives after them,

The goodisoft interred with their bones;” (GOST: 275)

Of course, Lenin does not understand the words, but his father smiles proudly. “There was a lot of ambition packed into that little hot room.” (GOST: 275) This is, in my opinion, an example of how Roy mocks and parodies Anglophilia and the consequences of it. In order to underline the child’s ill understanding of the quote and promote the speed at which the quote is delivered Roy breaks the rules of Standard English. This technique is used in several instances throughout the novel, as it is common in postmodern fiction to use and abuse the language. Linda Hutcheon claims in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* that “postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges” (A Poetics of P: 3) Further, according to Hutcheon “postmodernism is fundamentally contradictory, resolute historical, and inescapable political.” (A Poetics of P: 4)

In other words the postmodernists wished to destabilize the conventional use of language. In my opinion, their reasons for this are to enhance the themes, e.g. the feminist issues that Roy discussed in this novel or, as in this instance, enhance how the English language has influenced India and then write back in a mocking or ironic way. On the other hand, the destabilization of standard syntax could also indicate playfulness and a way to challenge the
establishment. My claim is therefore that the purpose in this novel is to emphasize distance to the English language and culture that have been enforced on the people of India. Furthermore, it may be an attempt to recreate English in the Indian image, reuse and change to fit their needs. As Ashcroft et al indicate in *The Empire Writes Back*, “that some societies are not yet post-colonial” (EWB: 194) even though they officially are. However, the process of becoming free is a long one and it takes different forms. One form may be to write back to the empire, like Roy, in my opinion, does in her novel.

The fictional Pillai is portrayed as a cunning politician that knew his way in the local corridors of power, thus representing a universal image of the sly politician. In his union dealings, when Velutha needed his help, Pillai’s answer was “But Comrade, you should know that Party was not constituted to support workers’ indiscipline in their private life.” (GOST: 287) In his dealings with police inspector Thomas Mathew in connection with the brutal killing of Velutha, “The two men had a conversation. Brief, cryptic, to the point. [   ] They were not friends, Comrade Pillai and Inspector Thomas Mathew, and they didn’t trust each other. But they understood each other perfectly.” (GOST: 262) To reinstate order it was necessary to do some minor damage, the irony is clear, “Cracking an egg to make an omelette.” (GOST: 308) It was touchable police officers against one untouchable man.

Roy’s unusual language is found throughout the novel, her short sentences, fresh idioms and enjoyable turns of the phrase. She writes masterly in a language that is not her mother tongue, her style is also seen in the use of local expressions that are not always translated into English, at least not at once. A relevant example is the word *Veshya* (GOST: 8), which only later is translated, another example is found when Baby Kochamma is humiliated by the Naxalite crowd when the family is on their way to the airport to pick up Sophie Mol. She is forced to say, “*Inquilab Zindabad*” (GOST: 80), an expression that may be deemed unnecessary to translate, but still is not fully understandable for someone who does not know the local language. This appears to be a deliberate choice, as if she wanted to emphasize the fact that even though this language was imposed upon the Indians once, they are now making practical use of it and mixing it, as they prefer with local languages.

According to Dodiya: “She has created a new style of her own which is a blending of English as well as Indian vocabulary and idioms and this blending hypnotizes the reader, Indian or foreign so much that he or she would never like to lay the book down without completing its reading. (Dodiya, Chakravarty: 7) A relevant example of this use of language is the meeting
between Ammu and the police inspector. This is a scene that not only displays Roy’s interest in feminist issues, but also how a person who has no “Locust Stand I” (GOST: 159) is treated by the police. “Locusts stand I” is a Latin expression, “locus standi” that means you have no legal standing. Here Rahel’s innocent interpretation of the expression reveals her childish innocence, but also her growing consciousness about women’s standing in society. Ammu has no surname at the time because she has problems choosing between her abusive father’s name and a husband who is a full-blown alcoholic. As a divorcee with two children, she is in a very vulnerable situation. Rahel’s play with the word “divorced”, transforming it into “Die-vorced” (GOST: 43) underlines this fact. In my view we here see an analepsis, meaning the recreation of “a story–event at a point in the text where later events have already been related …” (Lothe: 54) The transformation of the word represents an essential question in the novel, namely the betrayal of Ammu and thus alludes to the larger canvas of India’s problems. At this point in the text the death of Ammu is already known to the reader, (GOST: 3) hence this has negative consequences in Ayemenem. In the conservative Keralan society Ammu, although she belongs to a high caste family, is no longer under the protection of the family. Due to her relationship with Velutha, the accident where Sophie Mol drowned and her children were partly blamed by the family, the police officer felt free to treat her with disrespect. Thus, in order to protect his own interests, he made clear that she would understand. When Ammu went to the local police station to inquire about Velutha, Inspector Thomas Mathew, in his coarse Kottayam dialect, informed her that the Kottayam Police did not take statements from veshyas, a local word the foreign reader does not understand. Only later in the novel, the reader is made aware of the meaning, prostitute. Further, he inappropriately tapped her breasts with his baton, and in the text this is outlined in italics “Tap, tap.” (GOST: 8) This is to indicate how the police is both corrupt and sexist. Moreover, this is also a conspicuous way of showing to which degree women are powerless. When reading the board behind the officer, the irony, another widely practised literary device in the novel, is striking:

Politeness
Obedience
Loyalty
Intelligence
Courtesy
Efficiency

60
An Indian police officer, with a typical English name well after the Partition in 1947 is also an ironic element to be noticed. Roy’s intention is, in my opinion, to connect the police’s connection to the earlier British rulers. Thus, society’s power structures are still the same as in colonial times.

In the fragmentation of the word “Nictitating” (GOST: 189), Rahel starts to play with the scientific expression, “Nictitating membrane” (GOST: 188/89). This seems to be a meaningless exercise.

Nictitating
ictitating
titating
tating
tating
ating
ting
ing

However, according to Kuhni (RCC: 37) “the word’s dissipation into fragments also constitutes the devolution of the current linguistic and social structure that inhibit the creative forces of women and hopes for a fresh and just social order.” This kind of creative language becomes more flexible and expresses multiple meanings, thus Roy manages to enhance her intention. By filtering the story through the eyes of the children makes it easier to have a playful approach. Language like this is more flexible and helps advocate multiple meanings (Kuhni: 37). Roy’s feminist and anti-establishment attitudes are dispatched through her variety of unorthodox syntax.

In chapter 18, The History House, this is underlined yet again through the beating of Velutha. The house once belonged to an English man, Kari Saipu, who had “gone native”, a clear intertextual reference to Conrad’s novel The Heart of Darkness. The cardboard text from the police headquarter is repeated, (GOST: 304) in order to underline the irony and contrast to what is to come, in two short sentences:

Dark of Heart.
Deadlypurposed.
In the first sentence, Roy inverts the title *Heart of Darkness*, another intertextual reference to Conrad’s novel. Roy here makes a contrast to the cardboard poster and underlines the dark intentions of the posse of touchable police officers out to catch an untouchable rapist and kidnapper, according to the antagonist Baby Kochamma’s statement at the police station.

*For Men of Action*

*SatisfAction* (GOST: 302)

Through these short sentences and the repetition of the highly ironic police poster, the reader very efficiently is made aware of the intentions of the police. In this way, the structures of the corrupt institutions of society are reinforced.

In this dramatic chapter, we not only see frequent use of short sentences, but also more inversions, as when the police reach the house: “Dark of Heartness tiptoed into the House of Darkness.” (GOST: 306) The use of short sentences and local language may be a device to raise temperature in the text. In addition, words that are not separated “Surpriseswoop” (GOST: 308) and “hotfoam”, in addition to sentences in italics (GOST: 307):

   *Quick piss.*

   *Hotfoam on warm stone. Police-piss.*

   *Drowned ants in yellow bubbly.*

   *Deep breaths.*

3.7 **Intertextuality in the novel**

Mullaney claims in her analysis of language and intertextual elements in Roy’s novel that “Roy’s intertextuality continues to illustrate the ways in which texts travel across cultures implicated in and part of a wider political economy and system of exchange.” (Mullaney: 67). It is not difficult to agree with Mullaney, through the multitude of texts from the Western Canon as well as from the Indian, both high and low culture, Roy manages to show just that. Since Kristeva coined the expression intertextuality in the 1960, based on studies on Bakhtin’s writing, the phenomenon has been widely explored in academic circles. Although the expression is fairly new, the use of intertextuality in texts and tales is as old as humanity. Through the Kathakali dance, the ills of globalized travel and globalization in general are expressed. Roy refers to the “truncated swimming pool performances. Their turning to
tourism to stave off starvation.” (GOST: 229) The metaphor of Heart of Darkness, earlier the mystical History House, now a five star hotel, represents here the degradation of local traditions in order to please tourists. When leaving the hotel the proud dancers went by the temple to ask pardon of their gods. “To apologize for corrupting their stories. For encasing their identities. Misappropriating their lives.” (GOST: 229) In my view, these aspects are mirrored in Roy’s non-fictional work, as she is known as an activist and writer against globalized interests, e.g. her fight against the building of the Narmada dams. In this perspective, it is my belief that Roy is culturally loyal, maybe because she is a home grown Indian. In the novel, the twins seem to represent those true to their own culture, as they are fluent in local languages as well as in English, and are able to switch between the two effortlessly. As members of the Anglophile family Ipe the English language is a vital part of their background. However, they do not abandon their local identity. Even though they leave Ayemenem, they both return in the end.

Through her use of Western texts, the themes of cultural hybridity and trauma become significant. The multitude of texts, both classical literature and the popular culture we see in films and other aspects of Western culture that we see personified in the admiration for Sophie Mol when she arrives in Cochin Airport, “She walked down the runway, the smell of London in her hair.” (GOST: 141) infuses the novel. However, also popular cultural phenomenon originating in India, such as the Bollywood movies, although they are also inspired by Western popular culture, through e.g. the Bollywood production Chemmeen and finally the ancient tales of India are highly present in the text. Nonetheless, Roy does not flaunt Intertexts to show off, there is significance behind every one of the texts she chose. It is then relevant to ask how Roy expresses her Indian reality as a post-colonial writer and how imperialism is resisted by her use of the Western Canon. In my opinion, this is one of the central questions of this novel. As a fully homegrown author, lacking the elite education of the majority of former Indian authors, in which ways was she able to achieve and reconstruct Indian reality? In her text, she uses the twins, as children, to play with the language. As they are fluent in both Malayalam and English, they thus have the ability to switch effortlessly between the two languages. The twins’ extensive reading of the Western Canon supplies them with a vocabulary and knowledge of literature that is far beyond most seven years old children. Since they are fluent in two languages, they have acquired a playful attitude towards language in general. According to Mullaney, Roy “draws on this idea of language as a powerful and subversive tool for the colonized as well as the colonizer…” (Mullaney: 63) In
her novel, she has used the Western Canon to fight the burden of canonical language and to write back mockingly. Estha and Rahel are the main victims in the novel, thus it is their playful use of texts they are familiar with that in most cases are reflected in the novel. Even though all family members, in some way or another, are made to suffer, the twins are those that suffered the most and lost their possibility to live full lives, efficiently shown through the traumatic events that eventually make Estha stop speaking. “Estha had always been a quiet child, so no one could pinpoint with any degree of accuracy exactly when (the year, if not the month or day) he had stopped talking.” (GOST: 10)

According to Mullaney “Caste, and the various histories of complicity and transgression that mark it as a wider system of classification and belonging, are important themes in the novel.” (Mullaney: 9) Thus, Velutha was through his social background unable to pursue love and talent in life. The Love Laws and the ancient caste laws burdened him down. I would therefore argue that these laws might be an intertextual reflection from The Jungle Book, where the laws of the jungle were set in verse and ended with the word “Obey.” This is the opposite of what Velutha and Ammu did, they were the worst transgressors when it came to the Love Laws, and the consequences in the conservative village were dire, as is portrayed in the killing of Velutha and the betrayal of Ammu by her own family.

The protagonist family belongs to Indian elite that through generations during colonization functions as a bridge between the colonizers and the colonized. Their connection to the earlier rulers is shown in a number of instances throughout the novel. An applicable example is the maternal grandfather of the twins, Pappachi, an Imperialist Entomologist (GOST: 48) before 1947 had a title which indicated his connection with the British Imperialists. In Thomas Macaulay’s view, a dominant British historian and politician in the 19th century, local languages ought to be exchanged with English. Further, not surprisingly, he considered Britain to be the peak of civilization, it was thus important to educate an elite class of Indians to be the translators between the Indian masses and the British ruling class. (Minute on Education, point 8-15: www.columbia.edu/itc/.../macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html)

This class of Indians had challenges when it came to self-image, and their identity was split between their Indian background and that of the earlier colonizers. It was considered essential that they learned the British language and culture through authors like Rudyard Kipling and Shakespeare. In this context, the wide use of intertextuality becomes interesting. In Chacko’s lesson of what Anglophilia was, he told the twins to look up Anglophile in the Reader’s
There is an element of paradox in using the dictionaries of the British in order to learn about the family’s state of mind. According to Chacko, Pappachi had been brought into a state, which made him like the English. (GOST: 52) Chacko, educated in England, thus has a clear understanding of the family’s Anglophilia, even though he married one of his conquerors, as Ammu mockingly calls his British ex-wife. Nevertheless, he understood the consequences, “We’re prisoners of War,” with their dreams doctored and belonging nowhere. (GOST: 53) The poetic language says it all, their identities are lost, but there might be some kind of hope for future generations of Indians, as the twins are reunited and the novel ends with the word “Tomorrow” – in both English and Malayalam “Naaley”. In this perspective, in spite of my impression of the novel as sinister, the open ending reflects hope.

The most disturbing intertextual element in the novel is the reference to *Heart of Darkness*. An apt example is how the expression “Terror” (GOST: 127/190) is used, even though the words are different, they both evoke similar feelings. It is clearly an intertextual echo to “The horror! The horror!” the end of Joseph Conrad’s novel. His novel was published in 1902 and treats the evils of colonialism in Congo, colonized by Belgium. It criticizes how the colonized were treated by all colonizing powers, and the novel ends with the dying Kurtz uttering the famous words: “The horror! The horror!” Elsewhere the terror Velutha’s father felt when he discovered that his untouchable son has a love relation to high caste Ammu, may have a similar effect, thus underlining the unsurmountable differences between castes in India.

Further, Chacko explains to the twins “history was like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside.” (GOST: 52) Still, according to Chacko, they are locked out of their own history and what they see are the shadows and hear the whispering of what could have been. “And we cannot understand the whispering, because our minds have been invaded by a war. A war that we have won and lost. The very worst sort of war. A war that captures dreams and re-dreams them. A war that has made us adore our conquerors and despise ourselves.” In the novel, the male characters Pappachi and Chacko, but also Baby Kochamma, embody those who have learned to love their conquerors. Pappachi’s pride of his title and close connection to the British is ironically made clear through Ammu’s words: “an incurable British CCP, which was short for *chhi-chhi poach* and in Hindu meant shit-wiper.” (GOST: 51) His belief in the culture of their conquerors represents the generation for which there is no hope. His abuse against the family members mirrors the violent history of the
British in India. Baby Kochamma’s intense relation to the Western Canon when teaching the twins may also be a symbol of their love of the English. The next generation, represented by Chacko has a more dual relation to the British, as is shown above, he is able to see the negative sides. On the other hand, he is very proud of his Balliol years, his English ex-wife and his beach-coloured daughter, thus showing the duality that he could not or would not rid himself of.

Moreover, *The Jungle Book* is central in the theme of identity, as the twins are surrounded by references to Western literature and other cultural expressions, e.g. Estha is an ardent fan of Elvis. Rahel expresses her love for her mother by quoting *The Jungle Book* “We be of one blood, ye and I” (GOST: 329). The twins’ grandmother is very impressed by her native English granddaughter’s ability to speak English fluently. In order to be sure the twins speak English she listens in on them and punishes them if she hears them speak Malayalam. In my eyes, this inferiority complex has almost a comic effect, but nonetheless it is a sign of generations of suppression. Further, the ideas of the colonizers and the references to *Heart of Darkness* and the History House with its dark background, which ironically has transformed into a five-star hotel at the time Rahel returned, are also supporting the theme of problematic identity. The proud tradition of the Kathakali dance that could go on for hours telling stories of ancient gods had been turned into “… truncated swimming pool performances. Their turning to tourism to stave off starvation.” Moreover, in the temple in Ayemenem “they danced to jettison their humiliation in the Heart of Darkness.” (GOST: 229) On their way back from the hotel performance the dancers went to the temple, “and dance to ask pardon of the gods.” (GOST: 231) In the temple, they perform the story of Kunti and Karna, a story of death and betrayal, as Kunti had invoked the Love Laws, like Ammu and Velutha. In this part of the novel the text turns into a more passionate mode, one can feel the sorrow, the humiliation through Roy’s short and staccato language. According to Mullaney, the description of the Kathakali dancers is “a metafictional moment, where she offers a commentary on her own story.” (Mullaney: 57) Like the dance, the novel can fly the reader “across whole worlds in minutes” or “stop for hours to examine a wilting leaf.” In this way, Mullaney claims that Roy confronted linearity and manipulated chronology and finally escaped the boundaries of time. The non-linear and non-chronological aspects of the novel are typical elements in postmodern fiction, as are the boundaries of time.
As the twins are taught the Western Canon, another of the texts that they know well is *The Tempest* from *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb. These tales were especially adapted to children from Shakespeare’s plays and were popular reading from the early 19th century. In *The Tempest*, one of the primary conflicts is between the ruler, *Prospero*, and those who are ruled, *Caliban*. According to Mullaney, ”The latter articulates concisely the dilemma of the colonized induced to take on a new language: You taught me language; and my profit on’t/ Is, I know how to curse.” (Mullaney: 63) In the novel this is emphasised rather ironically in the episode where they are at the airport to receive Sophie Mol. Baby Kochamma had been the twins’ teacher and the one who had taught them the classic texts. In her first conversation with Sophie Mol she tried to show off by referring to *The Tempest*, the British child had no knowledge of the content, while the two Indian children had extensive knowledge of it. (GOST: 144) This gives an impression of the Indians becoming more British than the British do, a paradox more than indicating the hybridity of their identities, which goes through several generations and never seems to end.

Another essential theme concerns betrayal which is also seen go through generations, as we see it when Velutha is betrayed. Appropriate, as an example is the instance where Baby Kochamma, in order to save herself, told the twins that they are murderers, “Childhood tiptoed out.”, and when Estha’s mouth says yes to the police. (GOST: 316/17/20)

Additionally, Ammu is betrayed by her family, both she as an individual and by the separation of the twins and the neglect because they are of mixed heritage as half Hindu and of a broken marriage is another. Closely connected to the theme of betrayal is the theme of suffering and trauma, as is shown in multiple instances in this rather dark novel.

Shakespeare’s play *Julius Caesar* intertextually echoes this when Ammu tells the children of how Brutus stabbed his best friend Julius Caesar. This is a flash-forward of what to come, “It just goes to show,” Ammu said, “that you can’t trust anybody. Mother, father, brother, husband, bestfriend. Nobody.” (GOST: 83) Roy then uses the themes of betrayal, suffering and trauma, as well as identity as social structures maintained by disproportionate relations of power. Symbolically Estha leaves his voice behind (GOST: 326) when he is returned to his father, thus indicating that the repressed has no voice in society.

Roy’s feminism is illustrated throughout the novel when she is describing the patriarchal, abusive society. Mammachi is beaten and denied the right to pursue her interests and talents as a musician by her jealous husband, Pappachi. His younger sister, Baby Kochamma,
becomes hateful by the unfulfilled love to Father Mulligan. Representing the theme of repression more than any other in the novel is the protagonist Ammu, her suffering when breaking the “Love Laws” in the traditional patriarchal society of the 1960s goes beyond any of the other female characters in the novel, although they are also victims of the society they live in. When Ammu dies at the age of thirty-one Roy wrote that she was at a “viable Die-able age”. Her unusual use of rhyme and words that do not fit together when it comes to the meaning of them, must thus lie in her need to promote her intense interest in those who are somehow deprived of human rights. In this novel, women, represent one of those groups through the marginalized position they have in Indian society at the time the story takes place. The underprivileged life of women, even though they in The God of Small things belong to the upper echelons of society, is a central theme in the novel.

The trauma of seeing Velutha battered by the police is the beginning of a number of traumatic events for the twins, although Estha had already been molested by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man. The twins are taught a lesson here:

Lesson number one:

*Blood barely shows on a Black Man.* (DUM dum)

And

Lesson number two:

*It smells, though.*

*Sicksweet.*

*Like old roses on a breeze.* (Dum dum) (GOST: 310)

In the aftermath of this event, the twins are brought to the police station to tell their story. Roy now repeats the reading of the cardboard poster on the wall, but in contrast to the two other instances, it is now read backwards by Estha and Rahel, and the word “Politeness” is repeated. (GOST: 313) The twins have since early childhood amused themselves by reading backwards; however, it is now more an illustration of the trauma they have experienced in the History house, and maybe a flash-forward of what more to come. On the other side the use of such fragmented syntax and wordplay can be representative of feminist and “subaltern” writing.

In spite of the title that seems to indicate small things, like the internal affairs of the Ipe family, the themes of the novel, in my opinion, are not minor but rather the contrary, involving the local politics of Kerala in the 1960s, and also Indian politics and history as such. The novel may thus be read as an allegory. The theme of the caste system and its cruel
implications is treated on several levels, however, especially connected to the love laws. This is portrayed through Ammu’s love affair with the Paravan, the lowest of the untouchable castes, Velutha. Her relation to her children and how the conservative Syrian Christian high caste society looks upon her as a divorcee, is another aspect that is central in the novel. This, together with other feminist aspects of gender questions, is portrayed through the difference in male and female rights in Indian society. In 1969, the conservative local community of Ayemenem has very different ways of treating Ammu compared to her brother, Chacko. This is displayed by the different standards Mammachi has for her two children, “He can’t help having a Man’s Needs,” (GOST: 168) His double standards become obvious in the following ironic statement “Chacko was a self-proclaimed Marxist. He would call pretty women who worked in the factory to his room, and on the pretext of lecturing them on labour rights and trade union law, flirt with them outrageously.” (GOST: 65) This habit, well knowing that they are not in a position to say no, stands in sharp contrast to Ammu’s limited rights as a daughter and a divorcee with two children. In addition, she marries out of the Syrian Christian society, as does Chacko when he marries Margaret, his ex-wife and the mother of Sophie Mol, his half-English daughter. Ammu receives little education and when “…Ammu left her husband and returned, unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenem. To everything she had fled from only a few years ago. Except that she now had two young children. And no more dreams.” (GOST: 42) she has no way of supporting herself. Chacko, on the other hand, has been sent to Oxford to study, and in spite of the fact that it is his mother who built the factory from scratch he talks about “My pickles, my jam, my curry powders,” (GOST: 122) The contrast between the rights of male and female in India becomes even clearer through the episode where Velutha’s father tells Mammachi about the affair between Velutha and Ammu. (GOST: 255) The local community shows the same disrespect, and the treatment she receives from the Police Inspector (GOST: 8) is a relevant example.

In addition, as a postcolonial novel the heritage from colonial times is seen through the way Roy uses the language, where she mixes the local Malayalam with Standard English and the literary traditions of the colonizers, breaks the grammar rules, she uses capital letters where they are usually not used and Standard English becomes strange and unfamiliar. Prominent Western works used intertextually in the novel are The Jungle Book by Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness but also Shakespeare’s The Tempest, Romeo and Juliet and Julio Caesar in addition to Macbeth.
The film *The Sound of Music* is a representation of the modern Western culture of the late 1960s, where “The clean white children, …” (GOST: 105-6) are perfect. Since the twins were not clean white children, they could not be loved neither by their mother and additional family nor Captain von Trapp, the father of the white, clean children in the film. The twins represent a contrast to Sophie Mol who was a clean white child, and therefore could be loved.

“Oh, Captain von Trapp, Captain von Trapp, could you love the little fellow with the orange in the smelly auditorium?

He’s just held the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man’s soo-soo in his hand, but could you love him still? (GOST: 106)

As the quote shows, the cinema Abhilash Talkies is the arena of the crime committed against Estha, as he is sexually abused when he is by himself in the cinema lobby. This crucial event, which Estha forever kept to himself, puts its mark on the language in this chapter, both in the molesting scenes and when Ammu chats with Estha’s perpetrator when Estha became sick and once again has to leave the cinema theatre. Even though the unusual use of language mostly refers to the episode where Estha is molested and its consequences, it also deals with *The Sound of Music* and its antiseptic atmosphere. The language is tested, for instance by using italics, capital letters, as in “Shutup or Getout. Getout or Shutup” (GOST: 100), local language which is not explained to the reader (GOST: 94-123).

A clear instance of foreshadowing is seen in “Sssss for the sound of Soo-soo. Mmmmm for the sound of Myooozick” (GOST: 95). Throughout the chapter, there is extended use of non-standard language, which underlines the molesting of Estha and his feelings, as he, as the child he was, blamed himself and was full of fear of the man who knew where to find him. The incident is seen through the innocent eyes of the twins, mainly Rahel’s. As such, they were unreliable narrators since they were not able to understand what went on. However, there is an omniscient narrator who points the reader in the direction of the deeper, more sinister events that in 1969 were impossible for Estha and Rahel to comprehend as seven years old children.

*The God of Small Things* is clearly a post-colonial novel, represented through the many examples of admiration for British culture and literature, visualized by the Anglophilia of the Ipe family, e.g. in the admiration of beach coloured Sophie Mol, Chacko’s daughter who is half English. As the reader will experience, India was a country still suffering from the traumas of the colonial era and its consequences in the postcolonial era.
In my view, Roy has written a novel about the history and society of India, reconstructed through the Ipe family and told as an allegory. India’s ancient history is included, as seen in the Kathakali dance in chapter 12, in 1993 reduced to a tourist attraction at the hotel. Through the many intertextual references to India’s own culture and literature, as well as famous works by Shakespeare and other significant British literature, the themes become evident. In general terms, it can be said that several of these aspects are portrayed through the Paravan Velutha’s relation to the different members of the high caste family Ipe. Negative effects of globalization and its local consequences in Ayemenem also play a vital role in order to portray the development from 1969, when the traumatic main events took place, to 1993, when the protagonist twins Rahel and Estha returned to the village. *The God of Small Things* is thus a post-colonial novel, published fifty years after the independence of India and the turmoil that occurred both before and after 1947.

It is then relevant to claim that Roy chose her specific style of narration and language in order to forward issues concerning India’s history and society. She also touches upon how trauma and betrayal affect individuals who have been victims of it, and hence both long- and short term consequences, as seen in Estha and Rahel, and in the life and death of their mother, Ammu, who died due to the repercussions of her breaking the Love Laws. The reasons for their trauma are mainly found in the family tragedy that unfolded during a couple of weeks in 1969 and the consequences of these events. It is then possible to suggest that India’s past as a colonized country and its society structure are matters individualized through the members of the Ipe family. Hence, the novel may be read both as an allegory of Indian history and society and as a narrative concerned with trauma, but the two aspects are, in my opinion, intertwined.

Linda Hutcheon claimed, “there is a return to the idea of a common discursive “property” in the embedding of both literary and historical texts in fiction…” (*A Poetics of P*: 124) In *The God of Small Things* one can say that this is a phenomenon that goes through the narrative like a red thread, as it is used frequently and in many different situations, the intention being to reproduce the Anglophilia or traumatic situations. Roy expressed this through children’s rhymes and sentences that in some way were non-standard English. The use of them had various functions; one may be merely to play with the language. However, the rhymes usually had a deeper meaning e.g., where Mammachi harassed Velutha when she found out that he had an affair with her daughter. “His mind, desperately craving some kind of mooring, clung
Velutha’s first lesson was in Malayalam and is not translated, thus telling that he has no hybrid identity. His problems are to be found on another level, namely in the caste system of his country.

The Abhilash Talkies was in the 1960’s an advanced cinema with its 70 mm Cinema Scope screen. The name is spelled out both in English and Malayalam, and the toilets are called HIS and HERS (GOST: 94). In this novel, the cinema represents popular culture as opposed to the many high-culture texts from the Western Canon. This mix of low and high culture is a typical element in postmodern literature, low culture represented mostly by Western popular culture, the movies, Estha’s love for Elvis (GOST: 37) and e.g. Shakespeare’s plays, The Great Gatsby and Heart of Darkness as representatives of the high culture.

Roy includes film and filmatic language in her novel. The Sound of Music, a Hollywood production from the late 1960’s that obtained immense popularity worldwide is intertextually referred to, especially in the chapter where the family travel to Cochin to pick up Chacko’s ex-wife, Margaret and their daughter, Sophie Mol. The Sound of Music, and the cinema itself mirrors two central themes, the most disturbing is the abuse of Estha, which may allude to abuse of India. On the other hand, it may allude to the theme of betrayal, as Roy seems more interested in the individual and consequences for him or her than the politics of the country and the region. The theme of betrayal may also be relevant in how the Anglophile look upon themselves, as not quite good enough. One could argue that the novel’s structure is fragmented in order to highlight the hybrid identity of the family. Their close connection to the culture of the earlier colonizers is made clear in different ways. In Chacko’s words, “We’re prisoners of war, Chacko said. Our dreams have been doctored. We belong nowhere.” (GOST: 53) Thus, their identities are also fragmented. The style in this section mainly where Estha is molested is very fragmented, parts are set in italics, sentences are short and have capitalization in mid-sentence etc. Intertextual elements like children’s rhymes and parts of
the lyrics from the film, creates a contrast to the crime performed by the Orangedrink Lemondrink man.

The film *The Sound of Music* echoes the Ipe family Anglophilia, through the twin’s yearning to be like the von Trapp children, all blue eyes and white skin. Although *The Sound of Music* is the most significant film used intertextually, other films, such as the Bollywood production, *Chemmeen*, may be mentioned. *Chemmeen* also has intertextual resonance in the novel, as the story has a resemblance to Ammu and Velutha’s love story, thus reflecting the theme of cross-caste and forced marriage.

To conclude this chapter it is my view that Roy, not only is an eminent storyteller, but also has managed to convey a deeper understanding of Indian post-colonial history through her innovative and postmodern style.
Chapter 4.0 Comparison of the two Novels and Conclusion

4.1 Comparison

In the article *Arundhati Roy’s and Salman Rushdie’s Postmodern India* (Dhawan: 151-60), Viktor J. Ramraj quotes Rushdie’s essay, *India at Five-0*, (*Time*, Aug. 11, 1997) on India’s fiftieth year of freedom from British rule. Rushdie here claims that “Another age is ending: the first age one might say, of postcolonial India.” (Dhawan: 151) Rushdie furthermore suggests that this new India is not defined by the issues inherited from colonial times, but by “complex communal negotiations, by religious, communal, economic, and political multiplicities, Rushdie suggests that it can only be apprehended in terms of postmodernism.” (Dhawan: 151). He compares postmodernism with the concept of contemporary individual and contemporary India. Rushdie is thus convinced that the idea of postcolonial India has been replaced with “postmodern valorization of multiple and antithetical identities and narratives.” (Dhawan: 152).

The worldwide celebration of *Midnight’s Children* is in this perspective understandable and just, considering the innovative style. This may be illustrated by reference to Anita Desai’s reaction to the then unknown Rushdie reading aloud from *Midnight’s Children*, “A voice that everyone present recognized instantly as being the voice of a new age: strong, original and demanding of attention.” (Kortenaar: 3) It has furthermore been said that “the novel has had an inescapable influence on the succeeding literary generation” (Kortenaar: 3)

Among the writers in the succeeding generation, we find Arundhati Roy. She is then another Indian author who has gained success outside of India, and her extraordinary linguistic inventiveness has been especially praised. Maybe it is not a coincidence that Roy’s novel was published the same year as India could celebrate its first fifty years of independence. As a young and female author, the reception of her novel was claimed to be part of a “New Orientalism” (Wiemann: 259) and in the advertising of the novel it has been said that she “carried the “aura”, […] in this case, not so much her artistic production.” (Wiemann: 259) Nonetheless, she represented a new and fresh voice in Indian-English literature, and like Rushdie, she treats the post-colonial reality.

French literary theorist and philosopher, Jean-Francois Lyotard considered that it was a mark of postmodernism that known values become topics of debate and those who win and are able to make their viewpoints legitimate are those who manage to detain power. *The God of Small
*Things* is a novel about values that are challenged in the southern state of Kerala in India, and a family where some of the family members test these values in different ways. The postmodern perspective is seen in the way that these members’ actions generate reactions when challenging the “laws” of society.

Although Rushdie’s novel was published sixteen years before Roy’s, they are both writers that are considered to write in the postmodern tradition. According to Julie Mullaney, critics have stressed the importance of Roy’s debt to Rushdie, especially the epic novel *Midnight’s Children*. One example is Michael Gorra who sees Roy’s style as “overly influenced by Rushdie’s.” (Mullaney: 84) Viktor Ramraj is another critic who concludes, “Roy like Rushdie is interested in examining India through the lens of the postmodern.” (Mullaney: 84) In this connection, it is my contention that there is little doubt that Roy speaks in favour of a new and more modern India in her novel, as it represents a harsh critique of old and useless traditions and the trauma of which these traditions might lead. Roy has an inventive and playful approach to her themes through her new words and fragmentation of language. After fifty years of post-colonial reality, it was time to move on, even when it came to the use of the English language. Thus, there is a sense of urgency in the way she handles her key themes. Moreover, it is my understanding that the author is in a hurry to move forward in her discussion of important issues, such as the ancient caste system, the Anglophilia, and how the lack of human rights for women and other unprivileged groups were cast aside in order to create a modern and democratic India.

Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy are writers of different generations, there is, however, no doubt that both novels treated in this thesis are post-colonial as the context mainly is post-colonial India. Kortenaar claims that the international interest in Rushdie derives from his extra-literary notoriety caused by the fatwa on him in connection with the publishing of *The Satanic Verses*. In addition, he was an immigrant to the Western world, his education and background made him belong to an elite in India, and it is probable that this fact made it less problematic for him to enter the international elite of intellectuals, which he today is claimed to be a part of. Further Kortenaar writes that the interest in him also stems from:

“his condensation of the anxieties and concerns identified as postcolonial: how to imagine the nation-state and its history in a world of transnational migration and markets; how to locate oneself in a world of intersecting languages and cultures; how
to be postmodern and write from the periphery; and how to make the English language express the needs of Indians.” (Kortenaar: 4)

For many critics and readers, but not all, it is probable that the above quote is true and relevant. Harish Trivedi is one scholar who has been critical of Rushdie’s work, as he resents that “Western critics and academics treat Rushdie as if he invented India or gave the continent a voice.” (Kortenaar: 4) Trivedi may be right in this and it is not my intention to deny it, because in many ways Rushdie is an outsider since he chose to live his life in the West. It is most probable that he is ignorant of many facets of Indian society, art and history because he lives abroad. According to Timothy Brennan, Rushdie’s novel became popular in the West due to “his Orientalist depiction of India”, this may also be true, as Rushdie wrote the following in Midnight’s Children:

“- Heidelberg, in which, along with medicine and politics, he learned that India – like radium – had been “discovered” by the Europeans; even Oskar was filled with admiration for Vasco Da Gama, and this was what finally separated Aadam Aziz from his friends, this belief of theirs that he was somehow the invention of their ancestors” (MC: 6)

However, it is my contention that Rushdie may have written this to make readers aware of the ethnocentrism that lies in this manner of thought. The West needs to acknowledge that what has been considered to be less developed parts of the world have their own culture and literature with their own values, different from Western ideas. Even though the concept of World Literature has existed for more than two centuries, it was not until the 1990s that “a marked increase in interest in world literature from the part of comparative literature scholars.” (D’haen, Domínguez, Thomsen: x) could be detected.

In the course introduction to a class in South Asian Anglophone literature held in the autumn of 2013 featuring both Midnight’s Children and The God of Small Things, Dr. Nandini Dhar, Assistant Professor at the International University of Florida in Miami, wrote the following:

“…, we will examine how aesthetic issues for both authors are inextricably interlinked to their socio-historical contexts: the tumultuous decolonization of India, the complicated social movements of the postcolonial era, the so-called ideological bankruptcy of post-colonial elites, gender and caste violence, the social changes
brought about by the globalizing forces.”

(https://rushdieandroy.wordpress.com/about/)

The above quote seems to cover the bulk of the themes and matters of these two novels. It represents what the two authors have in common, the post-colonial era of India. Although they have different perspectives, as Rushdie’s elite upbringing and international fame through more than three decades is very different from that of Roy’s more alternative life both as a child and a grown woman, at least before she became famous through her novel. Both are writers with great impact when it comes to their factional writing as well, but Roy is more of a fierce activist as she personally has participated in demonstrations and been imprisoned. Their families belong to different religions, as Rushdie was born into a Muslim family and Roy into a Syrian-Christian one. Additionally, there are certain elements of lesser significance to be noticed in the comparison of the novels. The family relations are complicated in both novels, as the Ipe family represents degrees of Anglophilia and in certain aspects extreme traditionalism, while the Sinai family is a depiction of the development of Indian sub-continent. Ammu and Saleem’s lives are similar in the way that they die early, although the death of Saleem is questionable. Ammu dies at the age of thirty-one, as a woman no longer protected by the family “She died alone. […] Not old, not young, but a viable, die-able age.” (GOST: 161) She is betrayed by her church that refuses to bury her “On several counts.” (GOST: 162) Saleem insists that his time is running out and that he needs to hurry to tell his stories before the age of thirty-one, as he believes his life will be over then, “only a broken creature spilling pieces of itself into the street, because I have been so-many too-many persons, life unlike syntax allows one more than three, and at last somewhere the striking of a clock, twelve chimes, release.” (MC: 647)

In addition, the caste system, although forbidden, permeates society and is deeply embedded in the Indian mentality. In The God of Small Things and Midnight’s Children the writers’ intention is to highlight some of these problems, both on a political and a more personal level. It may be problematic to claim what the writers’ intentions are. Nonetheless, Roy’s intense political engagement, her political essays and the fact that The God of Small Things is the only longer fictional work she has chosen to write, hints in this direction. Rushdie’s non-fictional writing is not of the same intense political character, but his writing still has a clear social and political angle. A relevant example is when we in Midnight’s Children see that
Saleem is hurt when India is hurt. In *The God of Small Things* we see it in the so-called "love-laws", who can be loved and how.

The connection between the siblings Saleem and Jamila is also a feature that has similarities to Estha and Rahel’s relationship. Jamila and Saleem have been close since Jamila was born, however, Saleem discovers “within myself the ultimate impurity of sister-love;” (MC: 427) However, Saleem never acted on his teenage love for Jamila, who was not his biological sister. However, in Roy’s text the twins were “*We be of one blood, ye and I.*” (GOST: 329) Thus the love scene between them is an incest scene, “Only that what they shared that night was not happiness, but hideous grief.” (GOST: 328) In this quote the trauma theme, which in my opinion is central in *The God of Small Things*, is emphasized. In Rushdie’s novel, the theme of trauma is also perceived through Saleem’s events in the 1971 war. Visualized mainly through the loss of his family, the experiences in the Sundarbans and the Emergency.

### 4.1.1 Writing style

The main purpose of this thesis has been to examine the postmodern narrative techniques in both novels. One of the more common elements of postmodernism is that there is no linearity of time and space, which is probably the most striking feature of the two novels. As both are dealing with a vast sub-continent, the novels are, like India herself, multilayered, patchy and diverse. Further,” narrative continuity is threatened, as it is both used and abused, inscribed and subverted.” (*A Poetics of P*: 59) The open endings of the modernist era are also challenged, according to Hutcheon, as in postmodernism we find multiple endings, again used and abused by “postmodern self-consciously multiple endings, or resolutely arbitrary endings” (*A Poetics of P*: 59), like the endings found in *Midnight’s Children* and *The God of Small Things*.

According to Craig Owens, it is "precisely at the legislative frontier between what can be represented and what cannot that the postmodernist operation is being staged" (Owens: 168). “Where modernism sought a kind of formal autonomy from the realm of things, postmodernism actively seeks to break down the barriers between art and life, thereby undermining the distinction between the work of art and its referent.” (Owens: 168)

Another vital feature in postmodern narrative technique is magical realism. Britannica Encyclopaedia has the following definition:
“… chiefly Latin-American narrative strategy that is characterized by the matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction. Although this strategy is known in the literature of many cultures in many ages, the term magic realism is a relatively recent designation, first applied in the 1940s by Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier, who recognized this characteristic in much Latin-American literature. Some scholars have posited that magic realism is a natural outcome of postcolonial writing, which must make sense of at least two separate realities—the reality of the conquerors as well as that of the conquered.

Magical realist narratives may include fantasy visions such as one may have in ordinary life situations; deceased characters returning; the use of myths and fairy tales in the narrative; as well as the above mentioned shifts in time and space. Rushdie combines elements of magic and fantasy; he uses the standard opening phrase of the classic fairytale. “Once upon a time…” (MC: 296) Saleem would not have been able to flee from Dacca back to India without the magical help of Parvati the Witch, “I climbed into the basket of invisibility.” (MC: 531) The tough realism is seen in multiple instances, e.g. the Emergency period (MC: 589-618), but the brutal massacre on demonstrators in the holy city of Amritsar in chapter two stands out. Mercurochrome (MC: 24-42) is the name of the chapter, and it is my argument that the name has a double meaning. It is both a metaphor for the human blood shed in this incident and the name of a bright red medical disinfectant used by the doctor. “Brigadier Dyer’s fifty men put down their machine-guns and go away. They have fired a total of one thousand six hundred and fifty rounds into the unarmed crowd.” (MC: 41) Excessive farce and multifaceted analogy, especially through Saleem’s belief that his life is a parallel to the country, functions together with a strong symbolic structure. Thus Rushdie has “captured the astonishing energy of the novel unprecedented in scope, manner and achievement in the hundred and fifty-year-old tradition of the Indian novel in English.” (Walsh: 258)

Roy’s novel also has elements that are on the side of everyday reality. The following examples may illustrate my claim. The deceased Kari Saipu, former owner of the History house haunts certain characters, and the Kathakali dancers dance to please the gods after their truncated tourist performances. (GOST: 229) However, when Rahel is able to remember certain episodes concerning her brother, it appears to be clear that these incidents must be features of magical realism. It is impossible for her to know about them in any other way, as Estha, the only person who could have told her, has not conveyed them. However, whereas
both novels have elements of magical realism, it is obvious to me that *Midnight’s Children* use it to a much higher degree than *The God of Small Things*. The close connection the twins between theme

Experimenting with narrative techniques in Indian literature has not been uncommon; R.K. Narayan’s *The Guide* (1958) is a relevant example as the whole novel unfolds through flashbacks. On the other hand, there is, to my knowledge, no previous authors in this tradition that have gone as far as Rushdie at the time of the publication of his novel. The suspense-creating narrative technique is found in Saleem’s urgency to tell his story, “…, five empty jars tinkle urgently, reminding me of my uncompleted task. But now I cannot linger over my empty pickle-jars; the night is for words, and green chutney must wait its turn.” (MC: 536/7)

Padma also rushes the story forward by her questions, “But here is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of the linear narrative, the universe of what-happened-next:” (MC: 44) According to Nancy E. Batty, Saleem narrates because he fears absurdity, and Padma’s demands form the shape of his narration, even though the objective for his narration has little to do with her. (Batty: 9) Rushdie’s novel is not necessarily moving forward at a fixed rate, the chapters and books seem to be put together in pockets of time, only separated by interruptions from the narrator when he looks back on his former life, as for example in book two where Saleem is in Pakistan.

As is known already, the unstable narrator is not always to be trusted, which is another common postmodern device. However, it is not uncommon in earlier literature, e.g. in Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Saleem is narrating the story of his life, thus producing a fictional autobiography; and what he must accomplish is a circular journey from himself to himself, as his idea is to link his own life to the life of India. In any narration, suspense is essential, and in *Midnight’s Children*, one may say that the style of narration, when Saleem recounts his stories to Padma, has been inspired by Scheherazade from *1001 Nights*. “…, ready and willing to put out of its misery a narrative which I left yesterday hanging in midair – just as Scheherazade, depending on her very survival on leaving Prince Shahryar eaten by curiosity, used to do night after night!” (MC: 24) Thus, like the perforated sheet, some parts of the narrative are revealed and the rest is concealed, as Saleem himself says: “But I mustn’t reveal all my secrets at once.” (MC: 10) Thus, “Saleem’s narration self-consciously employs deferment of disclosure.” (Batty: 52) Rushdie has then written an allegory of Indian history through large parts of the 20th century; In order to
illustrate how this works, the present thesis has employed Linda Hutcheon’s concept of historiographic metafiction. According to Michel Foucault in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Saleem’s body is exposed as “totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body” (Foucault: 148) Hutcheon argues that one of the ways in which postmodernism is “literally incorporating the textualized past into the text of the present is that of parody.” (*A Poetics of P*: 118) Parody here understood as “a form of rupture with the past.” (*A Poetics of P*: 125) Thus, it may be claimed that “Postmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context.” (*A poetics of P*: 118) Additionally, both novels are full of the same kind of persistent foreshadowing as is seen throughout *Midnight’s Children*.

The narrators’ reliability, or lack of it, makes Roy’s novel interesting to investigate, mainly because the author manages to convey the story through the innocent eyes of young children. The manipulation they experience at the police station by their grand aunt Baby Kochamma and the police officer, after they have seen Velutha be beaten, lays the grounds for their future trauma. In contrast to Saleem’s very audible first person voice in Rushdie’s novel, Roy’s narrators appear more withdrawn. Parts of the narrative is revealed through the eyes of the twins, and then mainly through Rahel, which is natural considering the fact that Estha stops talking altogether due to the traumatic events he has experienced. “Estha occupied very little space in the world.” (GOST: 11) However, there is an omniscient narrator who is present in the novel, and who is able to reveal that:

“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 that falls on you if you have a window seat. The world, locked out for years, suddenly flooded in, and now Estha couldn’t hear himself for the noise.”

The novel starts with Rahel’s return to Ayemenem after a number of years, and then using her power of recollection in order to tell the story. From its starting point, the novel thus travels back in time to the twins’ childhood years. Simultaneously the story moves forward in time where the consequences of the past are explained. The novel ends with what should have been the beginning, if the novel had been chronological, namely the first love scene between Ammu and Velutha. They both knew that they had no future together and that they were breaking the Love Laws. At this late stage of the novel, the reader knows about the brutal
killing of Velutha, who justly feared the consequences of his acts: “He folded his fear into a perfect rose. He held it out in the palm of his hand. She took it from him and put it in her hair.” (GOST: 338) The old traditions the Paravans had to adhere are reflected as a flashback in this sentence, “He would bring them for Ammu, holding them out on his palm (as he had been taught) so she wouldn’t have to touch him to take them.” (GOST: 74) I would argue that Roy in this way sums up one of her central themes, the lack of human rights for the underprivileged, thus making the reader understand what had to be done to make India move forward as a democratic and modern nation.

4.1.2 Pickling

In both novels, pickling is important, and the following may be a coincidence, but it is my understanding that Roy alludes to Rushdie’s novel when she mentions “Padma Pickles in Bombay” (GOST: 167). In Roy’s novel, we have the Ipe family, where Mammachi builds up a livelihood by starting a pickle factory, and in Rushdie, there is the Sinai family through Saleem’s nanny, Mary Pereira who has her own pickle factory where Saleem tells his stories to Padma.

According to Anker in her book *Fictions of Dignity, Embodying Human Rights in World Literature*, “The novel’s premise is that we encounter Saleem in the midst of transcribing his autobiography from within the confines of a pickle factory, a metafictional device that tropes the many valences of constitutionalism.” (Anker: 82) Throughout the novel, Saleem experienced a number of human rights violations, and at the age of nearly thirty-one, when the story of his life nears its end, he writes it down, “I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory, as well as the fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks.” (MC: 44) Further, according to Anker, preserving is the novel’s central metaphor; the novel consists of thirty chapters that each represent a flavor of chutney and a phase in Saleem’s life. Moreover, she claims that Rushdie has made Indian English as a particular version of English more acceptable in the West. In addition he made the Indian English novel celebrated all over the world, thus contributing to the globalization that Roy disapproves of, both in her one novel and in her political publications.

According to Dodiya, Roy’s style is new as she blends English as well as Indian vocabulary and idioms. (Dodiya, Chakravarty: 7) It is this mix that is so appealing to many of her readers, both Indian and foreign. Therefore, it has been important to look at the language of both novels. In her article on Arundhati Roy, Namrata Chaturvedi writes that the language that Roy
has explored in *The God of Small Things* has often been said to be the result of “the chutnification of English” (RCC: 17), a style and a term that Rushdie is claimed to be the originator of. Consequently, it is relevant to ask how the expression may be defined. In her article *The Chutnification of English*, Sarala Krishnamurthy has defined it as follows:

> “Chutney” is an Indian dish, which is a side dish and tangy, adding flavour to the main course of any meal. “Chutney” is a noun form and is understood as such in English. By adding “-fication”, Rushdie changes an Indian word into an English one to stand for transformation. Therefore “Chutnification” in the novel means transformation of English having an additional connotation of making the language used in the novel tangy and more flavoursome and exciting.” (*Chutnification of English*: abstract)

In this case, the above definition suits our requirements as it stands for transformation. It is then probable that Roy may have been influenced by Rushdie’s language. When reading her work I have found that, in many ways, she has actually dared to bring the so-called chutnification of the language even further than Rushdie himself did in his novel that was published half a generation before Roy’s novel. The transformation in her language can mainly be observed in the way she creates new and deeper layers of meaning to a word or combination of words, for instance after the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man abused Estha at the cinema Estha has to leave once more to vomit. This is when the molester asks with a smile, “Out again so Soon?” (GOST: 108) It is my observation that this is a wordplay with soo-soo, which means penis, in children’s language. The playfulness of the expression stands in harsh contrast to the abuse that has taken place. Another wordplay is found in the rewriting of “divorced” to “die-vorced” (GOST: 130) “He even pronounced the word as though it were a form of death.” (GOST: 130) It seems clear to me that this version of the word alludes to the life of Ammu: she is a divorcee and had to suffer the grim consequences of breaking the Love Laws. Hence, my interpretation is that Roy alludes to the underprivileged life of Indian women. In order to support this argument, I choose to mention yet another example. Ammu’s mother, Mammachi, lets it be understood that being divorced is worse than the inbreeding that the Syrian-Christian minority is said to have cultivated for generations in order to keep themselves in the higher echelons of society. (GOST: 61) Yet another allusion is seen in the recreation of the word “pronunciation” into “Prer NUN sea ayshun” (GOST: 154). The fragmentation of the expression makes more sense when seen in context: the family is at this
point in the Plymouth on their way home from Cochin after having picked Margaret and Sophie Mol up when Baby Kochamma suggested a car song.

RejOice in the Lo-Ord Or-Orlways

And again I say re-jOice

On the other hand, Roy also seems to adapt her language to the twin protagonists, “In the God of Small Things, Roy has celebrated the phonetic aspects of the English language in order to correspond with the imagination of children as they experience life in all its light and dark shades.” (RCC: 17) Consequently, it is my argument that Roy, yet again, parodies and mocks the Anglophilia of the family, especially Baby Kochamma’s eagerness to show off their “Englishness”, as she belongs to the generation that was completely controlled by the admiration for the British. Her brother, Pappachi, wearing his “well-pressed three-piece suit and his gold pocket watch” (GOST: 49), represents the colonial power through his brutal behaviour towards Mammachi and his daughter Ammu, e.g. when he rips her boots apart. (GOST: 181) The correct pronunciation, and I will add intonation, of the English language was important for this class of Indians. We also see the same mockery in Midnight’s Children as Saleem’s father is copying the Oxford drawl when dealing with the English owner of Methwold Estate. (MC: 147). As a contrast, there was no pride in Margaret’s family, as her father refused to attend the wedding as she married an Indian. “He disliked Indians, he thought of them as sly, dishonest people.” (GOST: 240)

Some of the same allusions to the chutnification of the language are found in Roy’s usage of both Malayalam, Standard English and the invention of new words by separating or putting them together in new ways. Relevant examples are “For her Afternoon Gnap” (GOST: 198) In this short sentence one finds capital letters where it normally is not found, and a G is added to the word nap. Roy also uses “Bar Nowl” (GOST: 198) instead of the correct Barn owl. Her tendency to make lists is seen in several instances, e.g. the word Past is repeated thirteen times and the article A is also repeated a number of times.

A crow with a crushed wing.

A clenched chicken’s claw.

A Nowl (Not Ousa) mired in sickly jam.

A sadly swirl.
And nobody to help. (GOST: 193/4)

The last sentence is a clear reference to Estha’s fear of the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man who knows where he lives. Additionally, chutnification is referred to on another level, as in Mammachi’s recipe of Banana Jam. (GOST: 195/6) This product is neither classified as jam nor pickles as it does not have the right consistence. It is my reading that Roy here, once again, underlines the question of Anglophilia, as the Ipe family cannot be classified neither as an English nor as a purely Indian family. (GOST: 195)

4.2 Conclusion

In chapter 4 of this thesis, I have compared different narrative aspects of the novels. Both here and in the two preceding chapters, my goal has been to see how the postmodern narrative techniques manifest themselves in the novels. The novels are both post-colonial and postmodern. They are post-colonial due to the simple fact that they are written during India’s first fifty years of independence by two Indian novelists. Moreover, postmodernism may be defined as a specific style of thought. It emerged together with new structures and types of social life and economy, which we recognize as the growth of the consumer era, globalisation and multinational companies are also features of this new type of society. General growth and development of technology have led to changes and the world is fundamentally different from the past. The world has changed to a degree where we are not anymore able to control the amount of alternatives. In general, postmodern authors build meaning on the use of old and new forms and genres, such as allusions and other intertexts, kitsch, fabricated or invented quotations from other literary and non-literary texts. Postmodern literature comes across as playful and creative in the way that they are re-contextualized of earlier texts by imitation; parody and pastiche are two commonly used techniques. Linearity is often disrupted and jumps in time and space are all too common.

Postmodernism represented, especially in the 1980s, a mixture of old and new forms. As we know, it was in this landscape that Midnight’s Children was written and published as a reconstruction of the Indian history between 1915 and late the 1970s. Through its first person and fallible narrator, Rushdie’s novel falls within the category of metafiction. Throughout this thesis I have also discussed his novel as magic realist, where real events and places are introduced, but in a non-realist or poetically cast form. Some social realist issues have also been pointed out.
Roy’s novel belongs to a younger generation of Indian English literature. As Rushdie’s novel was so groundbreaking, several of the younger generation have been accused of imitating him. As I have tried to document this is not necessarily the case, as we know that in all literature there are traces of previous texts. According to Ian Ward in Law and Literature: Possibilities and Perspectives, Barthes wrote “Texts are all about being used, [...] In Barthes final analysis the only constraints on a text are previous texts.” (Ward: 28) However, there is no doubt that Roy has read and made use of elements that are also found in Rushdie’s novel. According to Peter Mortensen in his article Civilization’s Fear of Nature: Postmodernity, Culture and Environment in The God of Small Things the postmodern, “has a strong tendency to subsume nature within culture and to see the natural world as a cultural construct. Roy, on the other hand, subversively yokes nature and culture together in TGST, where various forms of patriarchal and governmental power are reflected, in multiple ways, in “civilization’s fear of nature”. (Mortensen: 188) Thus, postmodernist writers break the rules and pursue other principles than modernist and even earlier writers. They try to capture life and use a form, which can adjust human life to their purpose. In this way, they are able to show the empty, pointless and absurd human existence. This is achieved through various devices like fragmentation as is seen in both novels discussed here. Random and contradictory elements seen in the use of magical realism, fallible narrators etc. In contrast to the modernists, they are not searching for meaning but shuns it. These aspects are present in both novels discussed here.

As mentioned, the novels won acclaim in large parts of the world, they sold very well in the West as well as in India, although Roy’s novel sold more in the USA than in India, the reception was very good for a novel written in English. The reasons may be that the publication of the novel coincided with India’s fifty years of independence, but also a growing interest in the 1990s of so-called World Literature. Other reasons may be that the novel has greater emotional appeal through the protagonists’ traumatic experiences, lost love and tragic childhood. Additionally, the many references and intertextual elements from the Western Canon may have made the novel more recognizable for the Western reader and thus made the text easier to read. One might spot a slight irony in the fact that the worldwide marketing of her book has brought her fame and wealth, seen in the perspective of the globalization that Roy so resents, as seen both in her fictional and factional texts. However, with fame comes advantages that have made it possible for her to forward her views as a political activist in support of the marginalized groups of which she writes. Rushdie’s novel
has been claimed to be one of the 20th century’s best novels, and has won several prestigious prizes since its publication. Purely by its length, his extensive novel may be less accessible to the public. On the other hand, his fame after the fatwa has brought Rushdie attention that far exceeds most writers.

The two novels are not flawless. *Midnight’s Children* is considered Rushdie’s unsurmounted masterpiece, although by many considered hard to penetrate. In Roy’s novel, her style and use of capitalization and other stylistic elements may seem exaggerated at times. This may hide the message that she so urgently tries to get through to her readers.

This thesis set out to study how the postmodern narrative techniques make the narratives of *Midnight’s Children* and *The God of Small Things* unfold. Further, it has been important for me to investigate whether these techniques have made the reader reflect on the ethical implications and possibly give marginalized groups a historical “voice”, and thus make them able to “speak” back. As a reader of these two novels, I can only speak for myself. However, it is my conclusion that the novels give marginalized groups a possibility to speak back, by making the reader reflect on outdated and unfair societal systems, warfare and lack of human rights treated in the novels, and in this way, they may possibly create change. My view may be naïve, nonetheless, the novels touch upon themes that are of general interest in all parts of the globe, and I believe that this is a vital reason for their great acclaim.
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