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**Being a Woman in a Man's World: an analysis of
Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things***

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

V Plzni dne

.....

Petra Sniegoňová

Poděkování

Na tomto místě bych chtěla poděkovat především vedoucí práce PhDr. Ivoně Mišterové, Ph.D. za trpělivost, cenné rady, připomínky a všeobecnou pomoc poskytnutou při psaní této bakalářské práce.

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1. Introduction

This Bachelor's thesis deals with a literary analysis of the novel *The God of Small Things*. The goal of this thesis is not only the analysis itself, but it also deals with the depiction of the situation of female characters in the novel.

The analysis will be based mainly on the Constance School of Reception Aesthetics, allowing for a projection of reader's own reception of the novel. It is based on the assumption that a final form of a work of art is created in the recipient's mind. Therefore in some cases, the author's personal reading experience is used.

In the first chapter, there will be introduced the author of the book, Arundhati Roy. Her brief biography will be presented and subsequently used in comparison to the life of the novel's protagonist Rahel. Arundhati Roy is an Indian born writer and a political activist. Her mother Mary, as well as her female protagonist Ammu, had divorced her Bengali tea-planter husband and lived with Arundhati in Ayemenem. After graduation from high school, Arundhati decided to study Architecture, as well as Rahel. Despite all similarities, Roy denounces that the novel is autobiographical and insists on it being a work of fiction.

Since the book is considered to be a post-colonial novel, attention will also be paid to the issue of Anglo-Indian relations. First, the issue will be discussed at a general level. Subsequently, it will be related to the novel and supported with the relevant examples from the book.

Probably the most significant marker of the novel is its unique way of using language. Therefore, another chapter will focus on Roy's use of language. Theoretical information will be combined with a relevant examples from the novel.

As mentioned above, part of the thesis will concentrate on the depiction of women's role in society. Heroines of the novel will be characterised and used as examples of injustice committed on women in India at that time.

Next chapter will include the analysis itself. In this chapter, the setting of the novel, its genre and themes will be described as well as the characterisation of the most important characters in the novel. It will also be dealt with its structure. At the same time, the plot of the story will be discussed.

This work draws upon a variety of secondary sources dealing with the subject matter. All sources will be quoted according to the given norm and afterwards mentioned in the bibliography at the end of this thesis.

2. Arundhati Roy

Arundhati Roy is an Indian writer and novelist writing in English. She is also a screenwriter and a political activist. Her most visible success was winning the Booker price in 1997 for her first novel *The God of Small Things*. (Procházka, Stříbrný, 2003; p. 631) This novel was for a long time the only novel that she has ever written. Her second novel *The ministry of utmost happiness* was published twenty years later in the June of 2017. After the enormous success of the first novel, the sudden end of her novelist career and a switch to political activism was somewhat surprising. Therefore, her comeback as a novelist has been well perceived and her second novel has already been nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction.

As an activist, she is agitating mostly against dam constructions and the nuclear war. She is also against globalisation, corporatisation or the empire. It is conceivable that she fights for protecting those small and defenceless things, which are at least as necessary as the big ones. That is also reflected in *The God of Small Things*. Despite the fact that she has been criticised for writing in English - the language of former conquerors - she has strong nationalistic opinions and feelings.

“We have less money, less food and smaller bombs. However, we have, or had, all kinds of other wealth. Delightful, unquantifiable.” (Roy, 2002; p. 25)

Evelyn Ch'ien in her *Weird English* says about her: *“Arundhati Roy, who uses language to design a political vision celebrating the virtues of the small - a term encompassing the powerless, children, nature, and other entities in the world that are under threat by the encroaching corporatisation of the world.” (Ch'ien, 2004; p. 22)*

Arundhati Roy was born on 24th November 1961 in Ayemenem, India. It is not only the same village where the story takes place, but, in addition, the date of her birth is also by the year when her literary protagonists, the twins,

were born. Therefore we can assume that signifies her being inspired by her own life while writing the novel *The God of Small Things*. The similarity does not end here. Her mother, as well as another literary character Ammu, got divorced a man she was not supposed to even marry in the first place, because of his Bengali origin. As well as Ammu, her mother took Arundhati back to Ayemenem after the divorce. There she lived with her grandmother, who was running a pickle factory similarly as Rahel's grandmother did. Likewise Rahel, Arundhati also studied architecture, and she also fell into an unhappy love that did not last long. (Prasad, 2004; pp. 1-8) Despite all of these things, Roy denies that the novel is autobiographical. Mostly because of the kind of person, that her literary character Ammu is and her mother Mary is, or rather, was not. However, she accepts that some of the experiences are her own. (Sanghvi, 1997)

When Arundhati left her home for education, she had trouble getting money. For her survival, she was selling empty beer bottles. Afterwards, because of her studies, she got a job as a project architect. This job made her feel so unsatisfied that she moved together with her then boyfriend, who is a successful architect nowadays, to Goa. There they decided to sell cakes on the beach. That all have helped her to build sturdy self-reliance.

"When I think back on all the things I have done I think from a very early age, I was determined to negotiate with the world on my own. There were no parents, no uncles, no aunts; I was completely responsible for myself."
(Sanghvi, 1997)

She was found by her future husband Pradip Krishen, the movie director when she was cycling on the wrong side of the road on her way to school. He was fascinated by her, and so he offered her a small role in his play. She accepted. This experience catalysed her interest in screenwriting, which is what she eventually was doing. However, Roy was not satisfied as the actors were not able to perform their roles in the way she intended and ended up writing a novel which does not need any actors to be enjoyed. This novel is *The God of Small Things*.

3. Anglo-Indian relations

India was almost a century a part of the British Empire, and its consequences are still significant. All its aspects, the bad and the good never left the consciousness of Indian people. Colonisation, and thus also the English language, is often linked with the oppression, labour exploitation or disgrace and scorn. On the other hand, it has to be said that especially English schooling and literature had helped India to keep connected with the rest of the world.

This situation of English schooling and anti-colonial nationalism in the same time is also commented in Ania Loomba's publication *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*: *"In the colonial situation, the development of "print capitalism" and the construction of national languages also took a different form. In India, for example, colonised intellectuals were schooled in the coloniser's language but also asserted their claim over their mother tongues, set up the instruments for their dissemination and modernised them. – Therefore, despite their schooling in the Western fashion, and despite their Anglicisation, Bengali intellectuals also fervently tried to create, through theatre, novels and art, an aesthetic sphere that would be distinctively Indian."* (Loomba, 1998; p. 193) In the same book she [Loomba] also presents reversed situation: *"For example, O. Chandu Menon's Indulekha (1889), one of the earliest novels written in Malayalam, was, its author claims, an attempt to fulfil his wife's 'oft-expressed desire to read in her own language a novel written after the English fashion' and to see if he could create a taste for that kind of writing among his Malayalam readers not conversant in English."* (Loomba, 1998; p. 75)

The population in India were therefore divided into two camps, either those who despise British culture or those who admire it. This admiration even led as far as the famous Macaulay's quote *"that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."* (Macaulay, 1835) Opinions like this one, even though not so exaggerated, are far from being unique in its time as well as they are nowadays.

That is the reason why post-colonial themes are frequently used in the English literature. Even though the novel *The God of Small Things* was written at the end of the 20th century, and it takes place 1969, it serves as an apt example of a post-colonial novel. The goal of this chapter is to examine the aspects of the English influence in this book.

3.1 Anglophilia

Anglophile is the word Chacko used to describe Pappachi's nature. He made the twins look this word up in a dictionary. Afterwards, he claimed that their whole family was Anglophilic. Yet it was more complicated.

"Pappachi would not believe her [Ammu's] story – not because he thought well of her husband, but simply because he didn't believe that an Englishman, any Englishman, would covet another man's wife." (Roy, 1997; p. 42)

"... And we cannot understand the whispering because our minds have been invaded by 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.'

'Marry our conquerors, is more like it,' Ammu said drily, referring to Margaret Kochamma." (Roy, 1997; p. 53)

The second extract illustrates the main difference between a genuinely Anglophilic Chacko who has an English education and his ex-wife Margaret Kochamma, and his sceptical sister Ammu, who never left India.

3.2 What will Sophie Mol think?

This phrase is frequently used in the novel as the nomination of the phase before Sophie's arrival. It was a week full of preparation. Baby Kochamma forced the twins to improve their English and practice a song for that opportunity. Mammachi was playing the violin, and their servant Kochu Maria made a welcome cake.

“Rahel and Estha had never met Sophie Mol. They’d heard a lot about her, though, that last week. From Baby Kochamma, from Kochu Maria, and even Mammachi. None of them had met her either, but they all behaved as though they already knew her. It had been the What will Sophie Mol think? week.” (Roy, 1997; p. 36)

During this week Sophie Mol was often used as a superior example for the twins Sophie Mol was presented to them as a perfect girl, who sets herself high goals that they could never meet.

Another example of the same idea, comparing the twins their perfect and white English cousin Sophie, can be seen in the cinema, after one of its employees molested Estha.

“Baron von Trapp had some questions of his own.

Are they clean white children?

No. (But Sophie Mol is.)

Do they blow spit-bubbles?

Yes. (But Sophie Mol doesn’t.)

Do they shiver their legs? Like clerks?

Yes. (But Sophie Mol doesn’t.)

Have they, either or both, ever held strangers’ soo-soos?

N ... Nyes. (But Sophie Mol hasn’t.)“ (Roy, 1997; p. 106)

This collection of children thoughts reflects the situation they were exposed to. They did not know the girl. Therefore, they had no reason to think that she was going to be flawless, but the constant reminders of her perfection by most of their family members gradually caused that they disliked her even before they met her. Moreover, they started to see themselves as inferior to those perfect white “littleangels”.

“Littleangels were beach-coloured and wore bellbottoms. Littledemons were mudbrown in Airport Fairy frocks with forehead bumps that might turn into horns. With Fountains in Love-in-Tokyo. And backwards-reading habits. And if you cared to look, you could see Satan in their eyes.” (Roy, 1997; p. 179)

3.3 Englishness as a lifestyle

English language in India functioned as Latin or afterwards French in Europe. It represented the high status of a speaker. It stood for education, knowledge and most importantly the power. Whoever spoke in English was automatically regarded as more intelligent than someone who did not.

“We must go,” she [Ammu] said. “Mustn’t risk a fever. Their cousin is coming tomorrow,” she explained to Uncle. And then, added casually, “From London.”

“From London?” A new respect gleamed in Uncle’s eyes. For a family with London connections.” (Roy, 1997; p. 110)

The overall hysteria before Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol’s arrival had not missed even Ammu, who was mostly making fun of her brother’s inclination to English. Even though she did not like Margaret, she somehow found the idea of well educated, cultivated English family fitting to be bragged about. From the man’s reaction, the reader can assume it worked out well.

On the other hand, the use of the English language can be understood as somewhat arrogant and self-praising. A brief utterance by the leader of the local communist party K.N.M. Pillai can be used as an example here.

“Comrade Pillai disliked being addressed as My Dear Fellow. It sounded like an insult couched in good English, which of course, made it a double-insult – the insult itself, and the fact that Chacko thought he wouldn’t understand it. It spoiled his mood completely.

“That may be,” he said caustically. “But Rome was not built in a day. Keep it in mind, comrade, that is not your Oxford College. For you what is nonsense, for Masses it is something different.” (Roy, 1997; p. 279)

Despite the fact that Pillai himself insisted on speaking in English with Chacko, he was well aware of Chacko’s better education and was convinced that he was going to use it against him. At the same time, he thought about it as an advantage for his political agenda. He meant to use Chacko’s higher social status to secretly distant him from his workers as someone who is closer to them.

3.4 Prejudice

Prejudices are part of any (not only) multicultural society and in the state like India – large and “diverse” (i. e. divided into twenty-nine states and seven union territories) and moreover influenced by the caste system – it is even more apparent. Besides many others, Chacko’s unfinished Oxford education, which was, in fact, worthless in Britain but highly valued in India, can serve as an example of such prejudice. For Chacko’s family, his English education and the knowledge of the English language was rather a symbol of higher social status than a real appreciation of English history and traditional English culture. On the other hand, Baby Kochamma’s English education, which she, however, received in India, is associated with her physical transformation from a beautiful and skinny girl into an obese young woman.

Another example of cultural prejudice, or merely a cultural ignorance, can be found in Margaret’s ignorant comment on Indian culture, following by Ammu’s ironic remark.

“How marvellous!” Margaret Kochamma said. “It’s sort of sniffing! Do the men and women do it to each other too?”

“Oh, all the time!” Ammu said, and it came out a little louder than the sarcastic mumble that she intended. “That’s how we make babies.” ...

*“Must we behave like some godforsaken tribe that’s just been discovered?”
Ammu asked” (Roy, 1997; pp. 179-180)*

This short extract shows both Margaret’s insufficient knowledge of India and familiarity with its traditions and Ammu’s apparent distaste for the whole situation. With respect to Margaret’s previous marriage to Chacko, her remark seems rather surprising, or at least, inappropriate and impolite.

4. Used language

The God of Small Things is originally written in English. Besides English, Roy uses expressions from Malayalam, the native language of Kerala region, and also sporadic Latin and Hindu phrases.

4.1 Foreign expressions

Using a language that the reader may not understand in literature is usually followed by an explanation. In *The God of Small Things*, explanations also appear, but more frequently it is up to the reader to figure out the meaning of the words and sentences from the context. Multilingualism in the novel is also commented by Ch'ien's *Weird English* – “At times, Roy prods her readers to the comprehension of her India words, like the idea that “kutty” signifies “small,” but often she allows her Indian words to provide the reader merely with the sounds of Malayalam. Sometimes this results in misinterpretation by critics. For instance, Alice Truax committed an obvious gaffe when she referred, in the *New York Times Book Review*, to the “withering” of the “Kochamma family” – mistaking “Kochamma” for a surname. This kind of slip is a reminder that words have different arrangements in various languages, and that even in work written mostly in English we cannot trust our English-derived linguistic instincts to give us meaning.” (Ch'ien, 2004; p. 318)

A similar misunderstanding caused by unknown language can also be seen when the servant Kochu Maria gets offended by Estha playing to be the Caesar.

“Et tu? Kochu Maria? – Then fall Estha!” (Roy, 1997; p. 83)

In this case, Kochu Maria does not understand Latin and her suspicious nature tells her it has to be an insult in English.

4.2 Capital letters

Seemingly random capital letters are, in fact, used throughout the whole novel, and it can be considered as another aspect that takes the reader to

the perspective of a child. As Prasad observes: *“The grammatical distortion of words and sentences has been deliberately done in order to conform to the childhood sentiments and the abnormal situation of the mind of some neurotic characters.”* (Prasad, 2004; p. 262) For example, the reader knows Mammachi and Pappachi are not proper names because their names are Soshamma and Benaan John Ipe. On the other hand, the reader does not know the name of Bapa and only knows it is the word for father. None of these words should be written with capital letters, but it illustrates that the twins rarely use proper names referring to their close family members. Moreover, in this case, the nouns are treated as names and therefore capitalised.

The use of capital letters does not end with family members and name-like expressions. Concerning common nouns, capital letters are also used to stress out the importance of the particular word or when they accompany words that the children are not familiar enough with.

4.3 Language games

The most visible aspect of the text, besides the use of foreign words, is the employment of different language games and almost song-like expressions. A language game is a term explained in Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *The Blue and Brown Books* in the following way: *“Language games are the forms of language with which a child begins to make use of words. The study of language games is the study of primitive forms of language or primitive languages. If we want to study the problems of truth and falsehood, of the agreement and disagreement of propositions with reality, of the nature of assertion, assumption, and question, we shall with great advantage look at primitive forms of language in which these forms of thinking appear without the confusing background of highly complicated processes of thought. When we look at such simple forms of language, the mental mist which seems to enshroud our ordinary use of language disappears. We see activities, reactions, which are clear-cut and transparent. On the other hand, we recognise in these simple processes*

forms of language not separated by a break from our more complicated ones. We see that we can build up complicated forms from the primitive ones by gradually adding new forms.” (Wittgenstein, 1986; p. 17)

Because the protagonists of *The God of Small Things* are children, Roy is using language games quite often to emphasise their innocence and to differ them from the adults.

“Bluegrayblue eyes snapped open.

A Wake

A Live

A Lert.” (Roy, 1997; p. 238)

“Later in light of all that happened, “twinkle” seemed completely the wrong word to describe the expression in the Earth Woman’s eye. Twinkle was a word with crinkled, happy edges.”(Roy, 1997; p.54)

“Estha sat up and watched. His Stomach heaved. He had a green-wavy, thick-watery, lumpy, seaweedy, floaty, bottomless-bottomful feeling.” (Roy, 1997; p. 107)

Roy proposes language games through the eyes of the twins. The reader observes their pure happiness when they find out what are cuff-links. Roy distinguishes that childish way of learning English from that of adults because they are immune to the political influence that adults usually connect with English. In the words of Ch’ien: *“Despite being born into a post-colonialist practice of language, the children in the novel are able to use language without being entrenched in the post-colonialist psyche.” (Ch’ien, 2004; p. 178)*

The novel besides appealing on visual experience by its incredible descriptive passages also appeals to sounds and the sense of hearing. Some words are written in the way the children hears them. Therefore, the words are often fused together like *bluegrayblue*, *sourmetalsmell*,

sariflapping, or on the other hand, they have broken apart like *A Lert, A Nowl, Lay Ter or Locust Stand I*. Roy also inflect principal characters for stress in spoken form.

“RejOice in the lo-Ord Or-Orlways

And again I say re-jOice.

Their Prer NUN sea ayshun was perfect.” (Roy, 1997; p. 154)

5. Depiction of women

For a woman living in the 21st century in the centre of Europe, it is almost unimaginable that the rights women have are not always considered as natural as they should be. There are many things to blame for that cause, such as intense religion conflicts, historical habits, prejudices, and unwillingness to trust the outside world or a considerable distance from different cultures. In case of India, all these factors are combined together.

Nowadays there is a high number of publications concerning women in India, e. g. *Changing Status and Role of Women in Indian Society* (1994) by S. Vijaya Kumar and C. Chakrapani, *Women of India: Their Status since the Vedic Times* (2009) by Arun R. Kumbhare, and others. Besides other things, they also deal with violence against women. As Arun R. Kumbhare (Kumbhare, 2009; p. 134) observes, *“domestic violence is a very common thing and serious problem in India. Women in India have been subjected to violence, both physical and mental, for a long time.”* According to Kumbhare, the roots of violence are poverty, lack of freedom, bad mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationships, etc. Domestic violence is also one of the motifs developed in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*.

5.1 Ammu, Rahel and Mammachi as major female characters

The social injustice is the central theme infusing the whole novel. This chapter thus focuses on violence and injustice that Roy's female protagonists suffer from.

Each one of the mentioned heroines is in her own way strong and unique. Every single one possesses a somewhat different story, full of hopeless dreams, naivety, and bitterness. They are far from being flawless, which makes them even more appealing to the reader. They are fitting examples for the issue, as they do represent different generations from the very same bloodline.

5.1.1 Mammachi

Mammachi is the oldest woman mentioned in this chapter. The word Mammachi means grandmother in English. She is a grandmother of the twins, Ammu's mother.

Even though she does not appear in the story as often as other mentioned women, she leaves a strong impression right at the beginning of the novel. She is the one who started her own little business when she realised her jams and pickles were demanded. Because of that, she faces the violence of her jealous husband who cannot bear that he is growing old, while his wife is still vital and, moreover, prosperous. Her husband has been violent before, but Mammachi's success provoked him to beat her even more regularly.

The reader may admire her courage and kindness when he/she discovers how many troubles she suffered because of Velutha and his father. She paid for the artificial eye of Velutha's father, even though she knew that he would never pay it back. She did not care about other people's opinion when she employed Velutha thanks to his skills and abilities despite the fact that he belonged to the so-called caste of the untouchables.

On the other hand, the reader can notice that despite her experience, she is another source of injustice. Both of her children got divorced, but the way she treats them is entirely different. In the case of Ammu, she considered her being divorced with children as something to be ashamed of. At the same time, Chacko's divorce made her happy.

"Of course Mammachi would have despised Margaret Kochamma even if she had been heir to the throne of England. It wasn't just her working-class background Mammachi resented. She hated Margaret Kochamma for being Chacko's wife. She hated her for leaving him. But would have hated her, even more, had she stayed." (Roy, 1997; p. 168)

Whereas Chacko's relationships with other women are seen as usual and ordinary, Ammu is supposed to take care of her children and not to start

affairs with other men. It is not without interest that Mammachi even built another door for Chacko's room in order to allow his female guests enter the house and leave it unobserved.

"Mammachi had a separate entrance built for Chacko's room, which was at the eastern end of the house so that the objects of Chacko's 'Needs' wouldn't have to go traipsing through the house." (Roy, 1997; p. 169)

She also let herself to be too much influenced by her sister-in-law. Bitter and hateful Baby Kochamma found pleasure in stirring up conflicts. Because of her Mammachi was so angry at her own daughter. However, ironically, she herself supported the same "behaviour" in case of Chacko.

"Like animals, Mammachi thought and nearly vomited. Like a dog with a bitch on heat. Her tolerance of 'Men's Needs' as far as her son was concerned, became the fuel for her unmanageable fury at her daughter." (Roy, 1997; p. 258)

5.1.2 Ammu

Ammu is one of the most complex characters in the novel. More importantly, she can be considered as a model figure in the context of injustice against women inside the Indian society.

As a child, Ammu together with her mother Mammachi had to face the rage of her psychotic and violent father. In this respect, the author describes the scene when he hushed them out of the house and destroyed Ammu's favourite boots.

In contrast to her older brother, who as a cherished son becomes a scholar and goes to Oxford University in England, Ammu has no possibility of university education. As her father explained to the rest of the family, it was an unnecessary expense for a girl. In the view of Prasad (2009; p. 51), *"this shows the truthful portrayal of women of the society who find nothing but a step-motherly treatment in a male-dominated family. Even her fundamental right – the right to take education is deprived."*

All she could do was waiting for a husband in Ayemenem. Moreover, as her parents did not have enough money for a decent dowry, no possible husband for Ammu appeared.

She was desperate to leave, so she grasped the opportunity when her father consented with the idea of visiting her distant aunt in Calcutta. In Calcutta on someone else's wedding, she met her future husband. He proposed to her after five days. She never loved him, but she thought that everything had to be better than her return to Ayemenem, so they got married. Her husband eventually turned out to be a heavy drinker and a liar with a tendency to violence. In the morning, he always felt sorry for hurting her, but then he got drunk, and everything repeated. When he started to threaten her children, Ammu decided to divorce him and return home to Ayemenem.

Interestingly enough, Ammu did not give her children any surname. It was mainly due to her ex-husband's and father's violent behaviour and character. Being a divorced woman with children was considered as something to feel ashamed of. Yet, it was not Ammu's case, the only thing she regretted was wasting her best years with a wrong man. The only exception when she cared about what people thought were her children.

Ammu turned back to Estha and Rahel, and her eyes were blurred jewels.

"Everybody says that children need a Baba. And I say no. Not my children. D'you know why?"

Two heads nodded.

"Why. Tell me," Ammu said.

And not together, but almost, Esthappen and Rahel said: "Because you're our Ammu and our Baba and you love us Double."

“More than Double,” Ammu said. “So remember what I told you. People’s feelings are precious. And when you disobey me in Public, everybody gets the wrong impression.” (Roy, 1997; p. 149)

Towards her children, she was the most kind and loving mother, but she was also able to be strict when needed.

The reader admires her rebellious spirit from her little chats with Chacko to her emotional outburst after Margaret’s ignorant comment about Indian culture. She even wishes that the man Rahel saw in the Communist march was Velutha because she likes the idea that they share the collective disdain for the current society. However, she does not accept the Communist ideology, and she often mocks Chacko for being a member of the party. Ammu’s independent way of thinking is best illustrated with her brief but intense relationship with Velutha.

The actual romance with Velutha lasted for thirteen nights when they were secretly meeting each other and were making love. It took thirteen nights until Velutha’s father discovered their secret, Ammu was locked in her room, Velutha fell asleep on the other bank of the river, and Ammu’s children disappeared. According to Prasad (2009; p. 151), *“through the character of Ammu, Arundhati Roy, a great champion of the cause of the women, here raises a number of question marks on our age long myths and traditions history and legends. She shows that women have been the subject of many insults and abuses.”*

5.1.3 Rahel

Rahel is the main protagonist of the novel. She is rebellious, inventive and intelligent. As a child, Rahel loves to wear plastic sunglasses, false wristwatch and her hair bound in a shape of a palm by Love-in-Tokyo. She is dependant on her brother. They think about themselves as one soul inside two different bodies.

Rahel is the one who is more childlike in comparison to her brother. She has an incredible imagination, which can be seen, for example, during Sophie Mol's funeral.

"She [Rahel] noticed that Sophie Mol was awake for her funeral. - Only Rahel noticed Sophie Mol's secret cartwheel in her coffin." (Roy; pp. 5-6)

She also finds pleasure in morbid and somewhat disgusting actions, like vomiting or murdering stinking ants. In contrast to her twin brother, who is always rational and calm, she is wild and preoccupied with almost everything.

After the separation from her brother, she is lost. She is expelled from multiple schools, and everything she did afterwards including her marriage and life in America seems to be just like an accident. As is she was trying to come to terms with life without her brother.

As she is getting older, she represents a faithful image of her mother, Ammu.

When her mother died, no one was searching for a husband for Rahel, which she decided to use as an advantage. She studied architecture at the college in Delhi. She never finished her education, but she met there her future husband, with whom she left for America. He loved her at first sight, but he never understood her while they were making love. They got divorced.

"But when they made love he was offended by her eyes. They behaved as though they belonged to someone else. Someone watching. – He didn't know that in some places, like the country that Rahel came from, various kind of despair competed for primacy. And that personal despair could never be desperate enough." (Roy, 1997; p. 19)

Obviously, Rahel was not able to get involved in a proper relationship because she had never coped with separation from her twin brother Estha.

“That the emptiness in one twin was only a version of quietness in the other. That the two things fitted together. Like stacked spoons. Like familiar lovers’ bodies.”(Roy, 1997; p. 20)

It should be noted that the life of Rahel as depicted in the novel conforms to the life of Arundhati Roy.

5.2 Main issues

In this part of the bachelor’s thesis, the different approaches to the most important issues concerning the above mentioned female characters are shown.

5.2.1 Education

The fact that education is not always desirable when it comes to women is not a surprise. Women are supposed to be mothers and keepers of their families. The novel illustrates slight progress in this issue.

It is not mentioned as to whether Mammachi received any education. However, her sister-in-law, who can be considered of similar age, was sent to her gardening study. Of course, her studies were associated with her unmarried status: *“Since she couldn’t have a husband, there is no harm in her having an education.”* (Roy, 1997; p. 26) Marriage thus seems to be the most important thing for a young girl.

The situation of Ammu has already been mentioned above that *“it [education] was an unnecessary expense for a girl.”* (Roy, 1997; p. 38) The difference is that her family did not care about her marriage either. Moreover, in contrast to her brother who was sent to Oxford to be educated there, Ammu was neglected by her parents and left to her own fate.

A similar lack of interest allows Rahel to do whatever she wants. Therefore she can study architecture at Architecture College in Delhi, despite the fact, that she, in fact, has no intention of becoming an architect. That is why she eventually leaves without obtaining her diploma.

“She spent eight years in college without finishing the five-year undergraduate course and taking her degree. The fees were low, and it wasn’t hard to scratch out a living, staying in a hostel, eating in the subsidised student mess, rarely going to class...” (Roy, 1997; p. 17)

5.2.2 Marriage and divorce

Since the institution of marriage shall be, according to public perception, the primary objective of any girl, divorce in this context equals a failure. Both, Ammu and Rahel are divorced. None of them regrets it, but in Ammu’s case it obviously symbolizes the failure of a woman who thus was not able to play “her role of wife” properly.

Ammu married a man she had known only for five days. She did it just because she wanted to leave Ayemenem, where she was not happy. Sadly her husband turned out to be a violent drinker. When he started to threaten her children, Ammu decided to divorce him and return, though unwelcomed, back to her parent’s house.

After that unfortunate experience, she found her wedding photographs ridiculous. She even compared “the jewelled bride” to the “*polished firewood*”.

“Ammu knew that weddings were not something that could be avoided altogether. At least not practically speaking. But for the rest of her life, she advocated small weddings in ordinary clothes. It made them less ghoulish, she thought.”(Roy, 1997; p. 44)

After her divorce, when Ammu returned with her children to her parent’s house, not only her family but most of the local society resented her as a failure. In this respect, it is important to mention that even at the very beginning of the novel, Ammu is called a veshya [a prostitute] by a police officer: “...*the Kottayam police didn’t take statements from veshyas or their illegitimate children.*” (Roy, 1997; 19). The use of the word thus underlines Ammu’s unacceptable status in the society. Moreover, it anticipates the upcoming tragic events.

Ammu's divorce is also mentioned in *Muses India*, *"While their [Mammachi and Pappachi] marriage reflects convention and upholds social norms, it fails miserably as a model for their children to emulate. Roy's criticism of social convention and marriage customs deepens with the contrast between the two "model" relationships and the rest of the relationships featured in the novel. She threatens social order as such comparisons destabilise hierarchical structures and heighten our awareness of the boundaries maintained by normative behaviour."* (Deshmane, 2013; p. 156)

"She [Baby Kochamma] subscribed wholeheartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parent's home. As for a divorced daughter – according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all." (Roy, 1997; p. 45)

Ammu herself thought about her life as it had already been lived. *"She had had one chance. She made a mistake. She married the wrong man."* (Roy, 1997; p. 38)

Her daughter's experience was obviously different. Rahel met her future husband while she was in College. Likewise her mother, neither Rahel did not know her husband well when she decided to marry him.

"Rahel drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge. With a Sitting Down sense. She returned with him to Boston." (Roy, 1997; p. 18)

Unlike her mother, the circumstances of Rahel's divorce were not so critical. They just did not understand each other. Rahel also had no children when she got divorced. Because of that, she did not mind her divorce as much as other people in Ayemenem did.

"'We're divorced.' Rahel hoped to shock him [Pillai] into silence.

'Die-vorced?' His voice rose to such a high register that it cracked on the question mark. He even pronounced the word as though it were a form of death." (Roy, 1997; p.130)

5.2.3 Career

In the past, women were supposed to stay at home and take care of their husbands and children. It was not common that they would work at all. They had relied on their husbands to provide them with financial security and everything they needed for living. Working women were therefore regarded as those neglecting their families.

"In the evenings, when he [Pappachi] knew visitors were expected, he would sit on the verandah and sew buttons that weren't missing onto his shirts, to create the impression that Mammachi neglected him. To some small degree, he did succeed in further corroding Ayemenem's view on working wives." (Roy, 1997; p.48)

Ammu wanted to be a teacher, but she was not working before her return to Ayemenem. Then she was helping at Mammachi's pickle factory.

"Though Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chacko, whenever he was dealing with food inspectors or sanitary engineers, he always referred to it as my factory, my pineapples, my pickles. Legally, this was the case because Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property. Chacko told Rahel and Estha that Ammu had no Locust Stand I." (Roy, 1997; p. 57)

During her studies, Rahel worked as a draftsman in architectural firms. In America, when she got divorced, Rahel worked as a waitress in an Indian restaurant and then as a night clerk at a gas station *"where drunks occasionally vomited into the money tray, and pimps propositioned her with more lucrative job offers." (Roy, 1997; p. 20)*

Not much had changed in the matter of work. All of the characters had been insulted or at least looked down on just because of their gender.

6. Novel analysis

The following chapter is based mainly on the Constance School of Reception Aesthetics, which underscores the role of the recipient in the process of reading. According to the representative of the Constance School of Reception Aesthetics, Hans Robert Jauss, “the final form and meaning of a work, which does not exist for its own sake, but has a social function and impact, is achieved through the process of interpretation and reception. Work is thus constituted through a mutual, dynamic interaction between author, text and reader.” (Mišterová, 2016; p. 76). As a result, various “forms” of reception and subsequent interpretation may arise.

6.1 Setting

The story takes place in India, in the village named Ayemenem, which is located in the Kottayam District in the state of Kerala in southern India.

There are two different timelines in the book. The first one takes place in December 1969 when the main female protagonist Rahel was a child and the second one when she returned to her native house as an adult in June 1993. These two timelines can be found throughout the whole novel.

6.2 Theme and Genre

One of major themes of the novel is a contrast between “the big” and “the small”. Furthermore, it is also a novel about family relationships, innocence and guilt, all of that interwoven with the topic of social and class rules in India.

Regarding a particular literary genre, the novel belongs to realistic fiction, which means the story could happen or could have happened in real life. The similarities to the life of the author only support this idea.

6.3 Characterization

Considering the novel and its impact on the reader, it is crucial to know the characters and understand them. The most important female characters

have already been discussed in the previous chapter. In this subchapter, there are introduced some other important characters in the novel.

6.3.1 Estha

Rahel's twin brother, one of the major protagonists in the novel. He loves Elvis Presley, wears beige and pointy shoes and a puffed hairstyle. Together with Rahel, they are very much alike. He is smart, inventive and rational.

We can observe his passionate side when he has to leave the cinema to sing a song he loves. However, his departure is followed by him being molested by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, a beverage seller working in the cinema. That experience haunts him and results in his negative perception of the world, or rather of an uglier side of living. Consequently, he became even more protective towards his sister and mother.

Because of the fear that the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man could come to their home, Estha thought two Thoughts:

"Anything can happen to anyone."

and

"It's best to be prepared." (Roy, 1997; p. 194)

Realizing this, he decides that they need a boat. Unfortunately, this decision leads to Sophie Mol's drowning. Moreover the same night, he and Rahel witness Velutha being brutally beaten by police. At the police station, when a police officer realises that they have made a mistake for what an innocent man is going to die, Baby Kochamma convinces Estha to give a false testimony that Velutha abducted him and Rahel under the threat of Ammu's death. Estha believes her, so he has no choice. He has to betray his beloved friend in order to save his mother.

This combined with the separation from his twin sister finally destroys his childhood and adolescence, and it leads to his self-imposed isolation and silence. In fact, he stops talking at all.

After reuniting with his sister as an adult, noticing her resemblance to their mother, and their mental consonance, the impression is so strong that they end up having sex together.

6.3.2 Sophie Mol

Sophie Mol is Chacko's daughter from his failed marriage in England. She has red-brown hair and blue-grey-blue eyes. Sophie always wears yellow bellbottom pants and her favourite go-go bag. She and her mother decide to spend Christmas in India after the sudden death of the man Sophie loves most, her stepdad Joe. Sophie Mol is cheeky, witty and joyful.

Although the whole novel oscillates around Sophie Mol and her death, the reader actually knows only a little about what she indeed is like. Most information the reader knows are either expectations or opinions of the twins. The twins do not seem to like Sophie much. This is understandable because they are often compared to their cousin. In addition, she has been presented to them as someone better and most loved from the beginning.

"She [Baby Kochamma] said Sophie Mol was so beautiful that she reminded her of a wood-sprite. Of Ariel. D' you know who Ariel was? – Ariel in The Tempest? (...) Where the bee sucks there suck I? (...) In a cowslip's bell, I lie?" (Roy, 1997; p. 69, originally Act 5, Scene 1)."

Yet, they cannot see her pain for her deceased stepfather nor her attempts to win their favour.

Eventually, she manages to get on their side through gifts and by rejecting Baby Kochamma's propositions. She also informs Chacko about loving him less than Joe so that he may be available for the twins as some kind of father figure. Sadly, all of this finally leads to her death.

At the beginning of the story, the reader already knows that Sophie Mol will die. The author tosses the reader to her funeral right in the first chapter.

6.3.3 Velutha

Velutha is a carpenter at Ayemenem house, Rahel and Estha's best friend and eventually Ammu's lover. His appearance is mostly described through his well-built body, high cheekbones, and white smile. He is untouchable, which means he belongs to the lowest caste in India.

He became a carpenter thanks to Mammachi who noticed his exceptional talent. She persuaded his father to send him to school for untouchable children, which was founded by Mammachi's father-in-law. Afterwards, he was an apprentice at a carpenter from Bavaria. Mammachi employed him because of his ability as a carpenter and also because of his machinery skills. He does mostly everything around the Ayemenem house.

The first encounter with Velutha is in the communist march, while the family is waiting for a train to pass. Later, the reader finds out he is a member of the communist party and that it was really him whom Rahel saw that day.

Ammu repeatedly warns her children not to visit Velutha in his house, but eventually, she gets involved with him herself. In their childhood, they used to be friends, and now they are secret lovers. They are meeting each other at night and make love on the same place Rahel found the boat.

At first sight, their love seems to be perfect and admirable. He was single, she was divorced, which would be enough in our reality. In India, the fact that a paravan would even touch a girl out of his caste was unthinkable.

"Mammachi told Estha and Rahel that she could remember a time, in her girlhood, when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint. In Mammachi's time, Paravans, like other Untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed

to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed.” (Roy, 1997; p. 35)

It is not surprising then that Velutha’s father was so devastated by Ammu and Velutha’s relationship that he offered to kill his own son so that Mammachi would forgive him.

Unfortunately, Velutha decided to hide himself at the same time, when children went missing. All of that helped Baby Kochamma’s accusations sound believable. When police found Velutha sleeping near the History House, they have beaten him so much it finally resulted in his death.

6.3.4 Baby Kochamma

Baby Kochamma is Mammachi’s sister in law. Therefore, she is twins’ great aunt. She is short and fat with very tiny feet.

Baby Kochamma is the antagonist of the story. Her bitterness of presumed injustice, which cost her first and only love, results in the unbearable character of sad women. She is jealous of everyone who may be somewhat happier than she is, and her mission is to destroy such happiness. She finds pleasure in another’s misfortune.

“Baby Kochamma recognised at once the immense potential of the situation, but immediately anointed her thoughts with unctuous oils. She bloomed. She saw it as God’s Way of punishing Ammu for her sins and simultaneously avenging her [Baby Kochamma’s] humiliation at the hands of Velutha and the men in the march. She set sail at once. A ship of goodness ploughing through a sea of sin.” (Roy, 1997; p. 257)

She manipulated Mammachi and supported her in her anger against Velutha and Ammu. She is the one who eventually caused Velutha’s death by her false accusations, and she also made Estha lie to justify her actions.

Years later, Baby Kochamma outlived everyone in Ayemenem house and remained there alone with her servant Kochu Maria. When Rahel returned

from the United States, she found Baby Kochamma with dark-coloured hair, paranoid and decorated with all Mammachi's jewellery. As Rahel aptly remarks, "*She's living her life backwards.*" (Roy, 1997; p. 22)

6.3.5 Chacko

Chacko is Rahel and Estha's uncle and the father of Sophie Mol. He is a large and fat man, who likes food and plastic aeroplane kits. He is also a former Rhodes Scholar from Oxford University, thanks to which he thinks about himself highly.

When he was still a student at Oxford he was rowing, which it made him healthy and his body athletic. At that time he met his future ex-wife Margaret. They got married without the presence of Chacko's family in England. When they began to live together and had the lack of money, they eventually found out it was not going to work out. Chacko was jobless and lazy. It was the time when their daughter Sophie was born. However, Margaret asked him to leave, so they got divorced.

As there was nothing left for Chacko, he returned to India, where he became a teacher in Delhi. After Pappachi's death, he returned to Ayemenem and took over the family factory. This placed him to the difficult situation, as he declared himself to be a Marxist and at the same time, ironically, an enemy of this ideology.

He never stopped loving Margaret, so he was happy about her and his daughter coming to visit him for Christmas. The reader can notice that he is hoping to take them both back, which is instantly resented by Margaret at the airport: "*Margaret Kochamma smiled and wagged her rose at him. Ex-wife Chacko! Her lips formed the words, though her voice never spoke them.*" (Roy, 1997; p.142)

After Sophie's death, Chacko is devastated and angry. However, he still cares about his sister and Rahel. When Ammu dies, he arranges for her cremation and provides Rahel with money for her studies. After Mammachi's death, he, however, emigrates to Canada.

Chacko is the character that tends to be liked by the reader. It cannot be said that he is a positive literary character, mostly because of his unfair protection and of injustice towards his sister. However, despite all his flaws, the reader somehow wants to understate his action.

6.3.6 Margaret Kochamma

Margaret is Chacko's ex-wife from England and Sophie Mol's mother. The only mention of her appearance is while describing her and Chacko's wedding photo. She has dark curly hair and she is as tall as Chacko is.

She met Chacko in Oxford, while she was working there as a waitress in a café. She fell for him because of his unforceful behaviour. However, she was used to obeying the rules, so the same thing turns out to be an obstacle in their relationship. She disliked his messiness and laziness. Moreover, they faced troubles getting enough money for living. When she was pregnant with Sophie, she met Joe, who – unlike Chacko – represented security for her and her child. That is why she asked Chacko to leave. It broke his heart.

When Joe died in an accident, Margaret did not want to be alone with Sophie for Christmas. Therefore, she gladly accepted Chacko's invitation to his family house. Sadly this turned out to be the most regretful decision in Margaret's life.

6.3.7 Kochu Maria

Kochu Maria is a cook in the Ayemenem house. She is short, ugly and has a head that is too large for the rest of her body. *"She looked like a bottled foetus that had escaped from its jar of formaldehyde in a Biology lab and unshrivelled and thickened with age."*(Roy, 1997; p. 170) She also has *"unchristian"* breasts that need to be flattened. She always wears her heavy golden earrings to display her higher status, although it is hurting her and splitting her earlobes.

She cannot speak English, so she assumes that everyone insults her intelligence when speaking the English language. She does not trust easily, supposing that others are only making fun of her.

When Rahel returns to Ayemenem, Kochu Maria lives there with Baby Kochamma. They are both addicted to watching television. Kochu Maria most of all adore wrestling matches.

6.3.8 Comrade K.N.M. Pillai

Comrade Pillai is the leader of the local communist party. He has small and thin narrow body with a distended belly. He wears a neat pencil moustache and combed back hair to cover receding of his hairline. He is generally described as a low and repulsive boor in both timelines he appears.

He also runs a local printing press that prepares labels for Chacko's factory. However, his political ambitions lead him to gradually villainise Chacko in the eyes of his workers even if it costs him a critical customer. For the same reason, he wants to get rid of Velutha, which he eventually does.

When Rahel encounters him a couple of years later, he is not aware of his contribution in the past tragedy of her family.

6.3.9 Minor characters

Among minor characters, there are, e.g. the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, Pappachi, Baba (father of the twins), Joe, Kuttapen (Velutha's brother), Inspector Mathew, Lenin (Comrade K.N.M Pillai's son) and some others. These characters are of lesser significance. They have to be present in the story in order to make sense, but their characteristics are already expressed with those they affect.

6.4 Structure

The novel indicates two basic structures in which stories are usually written. The first one is based on a question; in the case of *The God of Small Things*, the question is: *What happened to Sophie Mol?* However, it would be only a secondary structure type, because the story does not start by

posing this question, nor it ends by answering it. Therefore, the primary structure focuses on characters. Each character has his/her own story, and the reader witnesses its evolution in the course of time.

This idea is also supported by the epigraph in the novel written by John Berger: *“Never again will a single story be told as though it’s the only one.”*

6.4.1 Point of view

The point of view of the story is presented by a third-person omniscient narrator. It is not important to know who the narrator is. He observes the story from more than one perspective and more likely from a distance. Therefore, he can present the characters to the reader in the way not even other characters in the novel may know.

6.4.2 Style

The style which is used in the novel uses is called nonlinear, which means that the order of actions in the story is not chronological. The reader knows right from the beginning that Sophie Mol will die, even though at the end of the book she is not dead yet. In addition, the story uses two different timelines.

Multiple symbolic expressions can be found in the novel. For example, “The History House” that represents both a metaphor used by Chacko and the real abandoned house across the river where Rahel and Estha seek shelter after running away from home. Another symbol frequently used throughout the novel is “Pappachi’s moth”. The moth represents Pappachi’s biggest disappointment, but also an overwhelming feeling of sadness and fear that follows his children and grandchildren have. It is described like an actual ghostly moth sitting on one’s heart, fluttering its wings and tapping its cold legs.

“On Rahel’s heart, Pappachi’s moth snapped open its sombre wings. Out. In. And lifted its legs. Up. Down.” (Roy, 1997; p. 293)

The author uses extensive descriptive passages. That results in a convincing imaginary idea of its surroundings. Not only can the reader almost feel being present in the story, but the author also stresses out the contrast of “the small and the big” by her detailed description of even the smallest details of nature. This is particularly noticeable while the policemen are looking for Velutha at the History House. The description of small and fragile contravene with the brutal force of those men. Six pages of the chapter number eighteen are dedicated to this description.

“The early morning heat was full of the promise of worse to come. Beyond the swamp that smelled of still water, they [police officers] walked past ancient trees cloaked in vines. Gigantic mani plants. Wild pepper. Cascading purple acuminus. Past a deepblue beetle balanced on an unbending blade of grass. Past giant spider webs that withstood the rain and spread like whispered gossip from tree to tree.” (Roy, 1997; p.305)

In a different novel, it may become stereotyped or monotonous. This is not the case of Arundhati Roy’s work. All the passages are written in the way they retain reader’s attention and carry it through its tension to the very end of the book.

6.4.3 Plot and message

Initial Situation

Putting the tangled timeline into chronological order, the story begins when the family drives to the cinema in Cochin. On the way there, they are forced to stop at a railroad crossing and wait for the train to pass. While waiting, they witness a communist march which besides its general disturbances also focuses on teasing Baby Kochamma. She already hated them (i.e. communists) before, but when Rahel identifies one of its members as their friend Velutha, Baby Kochamma decides to put the blame on him.

Conflict

In the cinema, the reader witnesses a rare moment of almost normal familiar behaviour on the ladies’ toilet. Sadly, this experience is very soon

spoiled when Estha is molested by a beverage seller in this cinema. A relatively pleasant atmosphere in the cinema is finished by Rahel, who offends her mother. That is followed by a heart-breaking lesson delivered by Ammu: *“When you hurt people, they become to love you less. That’s what careless words do.”* (Roy, 1997; p.112)

Complication

Rahel is terrified that her beloved mother loves her less than before. On the other hand, Estha worries that the man who molested him in the cinema knows where he lives. They decide to get a boat that can get them to the History House.

When Ammu is locked in her room and in the moment of despair and distress she feels her children are a burden, the twins decide to run away. Sophie Mol insists on going with them.

Climax

Sophie Mol cannot swim and drowns in the river.

Suspense

The police find Velutha and beat him to death. Coincidentally, children are at the same place and witness the whole situation. After the interview with the twins, Inspector Thomas Mathew realises that Baby Kochamma lied and they killed an innocent man. To save herself, Baby Kochamma persuades the twins to say it was Velutha who abducted them unless they want to send their own mother to prison.

Denouement

Shortly afterwards (please see above), Estha is sent to his father. Rahel and Ammu say goodbye to him at the train station. Estha stops talking. Rahel aimlessly wanders through her life. Ammu starts drinking and eventually dies of untreated asthma.

Conclusion

Estha returns to Ayemenem at the age of 31. Rahel also returns from America to see him. They are both broken, but still somehow understand each other even without words. The inner consonance is so strong that they eventually end up making love together.

6.5 Brief commentary on Czech translation

For this purpose, the translation by Michaela Lauschmannová published in 2001 have been chosen. The translation is considered to be a more successful one, in comparison with the later translation by Veronika Křemenová (2003).

Michaela Laushmannová was able to aptly reproduce the tone, flow, and style of the novel. Moreover, Laushmannová's Czech translation is more readable than the above mentioned later one.

As an example, a reference to a proverb can be used: *"You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs."*

"Comrade Pillai. Ayemenem's egg breaker and professional omeletteer."
(Roy, 1997; p. 236)

In the Czech language, the most appropriate proverb is: *"Když se kácí les, létají třísky."*

Michaela Lauschmannová was aware of this and came up with a funny though apposite translation:

"Soudruh Pilai. Producent třísek a profesionální dřevorubec."
(Lauschmannová, 2001; p. 223)

Other examples represent names. Firstly, geographical names, which are for apparent reasons used in its official transcribed forms like *Kočín*, *Dillí*, *Kalkata* or *Madrás*. Less understandable may be the translation of the character names, so Estha becomes *Esuta*, Rahel gains a punctuation mark and becomes *Ráhel*, Chacko takes even more punctuation marks and becomes *Čákkó*. These changes, or rather modifications, are apparently caused by a different approach to transcription from languages that do not use a Roman script like Czech or English. Considering that the pronunciation in Czech is utterly different from the English one, it is only

understandable to adjust it in a translated text, so the Czech translation is easily readable.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Michaela Lauschmannová added a glossary of Hindu/Malayalam – Czech words at the end of her translation. As mentioned above, it summarises all of the non-English words that are used in the text, and propose their Czech equivalents. Unfortunately, no glossary is used in the original English novel. It is conceivable that Roy expected her readers to guess the meaning from the context and subsequent explanations inserted into the text. Naturally, it is possible to conjecture the meaning from the context in the Czech translation too but the glossary is helpful and enables to check the supposed meaning of the given word.

7. Conclusion

This bachelor's thesis dealt with the depiction of injustice committed on women, Anglo-Indian post-colonial relations, and specific modifications of English in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*. The interpretation of the above-mentioned topics was supported with concrete examples from the text.

Moreover, this thesis aimed at literary interpretation of the novel. In this work, mainly the descriptive method was used, which enabled the incorporation of various information sources, concerning not only the writer but also the necessary social and historical background. In addition, the author's aesthetic reception of the novel was used to comment on various issues.

Furthermore, the work aimed at a detailed description of main characters of the novel, with the emphasis on female protagonists, i.e. Ammu, her daughter Rahel, her mother Mammachi, her aunt Baby Kochamma, and others. It is conceivable that Roy's characters are plausible figures who pursue their own ways of life.

Of these four above mentioned women, Rahel seems to be the most independent one. In contrast, her mother and grandmother's opinions and behaviour seem to have been affected by conventions and gender stereotypes, stressing traditional gender roles. Roy pays attention particularly to the institution of marriage and its perception by different generations of women. Whereas Mammachi has an apparent reason for divorce, she does not divorce her violent husband. In fact, she perceives marriage as a traditional institution. In contrast, Ammu is more independent and divorces her husband who is a heavy drinker and his drinking obviously threatens their children. Ammu's daughter Rahel also divorces her American husband but she perceives marriage as a temporary "bond" between two people. She lives her life and does not exclude a possibility of another relationship or even marriage.

Finally, a brief commentary on the Czech translation was added. Michaela Lauschmanová's translation is faithful to the original. The translator preserves Roy's tone and style, which, however, seems to be demanding due to the density of the author's language and her figurative statements.

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9. Résumé

This bachelor's thesis focuses on the literary analysis of the novel *The God of small things* written by the Indian born author Arundhati Roy. It also deals with the description of injustice committed on female characters in the novel, Anglo-Indian relationships and the novel's specific use of English. All these issues are supported by the relevant examples from the novel. The thesis contains a brief biography of the author, a general introduction to above mentioned issues, and the analysis itself.

A considerable part of this bachelor's thesis deals with the description of the novel's characters. It is due to the type of the story, in which each character is described from a different point of view. Therefore, it is possible that the reader knows the details of various information that are unknown to other characters. Moreover, the detailed characterisation also contributes to reader's familiarity with novel's characters. Therefore, great importance is placed on this characterisation.

The analysis is based on the Constance School of Reception Aesthetics, which allows for the projection of individual reading perception, based on the age, gender, education, experience, etc. The final form of a literary work is thus created in the receiving mind of the reader. This fact was, besides other things, used also when analysing the novel *The God of Small Things*.

10. Shrnutí

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na literární analýzu románu *Bůh Maličností* indické autorky Arundhatí Royové. Kromě toho se také zabývá problémem nespravedlnosti páchané na ženských postavách tohoto románu, otázkou anglo-indických vztahů a také specifickým použitím jazyka ve zmíněném románu. To vše je podpořeno vhodnými příklady z románu. Bakalářská práce obsahuje stručné představení autorky, teoretické uvedení do problematiky a samotnou analýzu díla.

Značná část této bakalářské práce je zaměřena na popis postav románu. Důvodem je především autorský styl, kterým je román napsán. Každá z postav je prezentována z odlišného úhlu pohledu. Je tedy zjevné, že čtenář je obeznámen s detaily života postav, které jsou ostatním protagonistům neznámé. To také přispívá k pocitu, že čtenář postavy dobře zná a může tedy lépe pochopit jejich jednání. Z tohoto důvodu je popis postav považován za velice důležitý.

Samotná analýza románu je založena hlavně na Kostnické škole recepční estetiky, která je založena na konceptu odlišné recepce téhož literárního díla různými recipienty v návaznosti na věk, pohlaví, vzdělání, zkušenosti apod. Výsledná podoba literárního díla je tedy vytvářena v recipujícím vědomí čtenáře. Této skutečnosti bylo, mimo jiné, využito rovněž při interpretaci románu *Bůh maličností*.

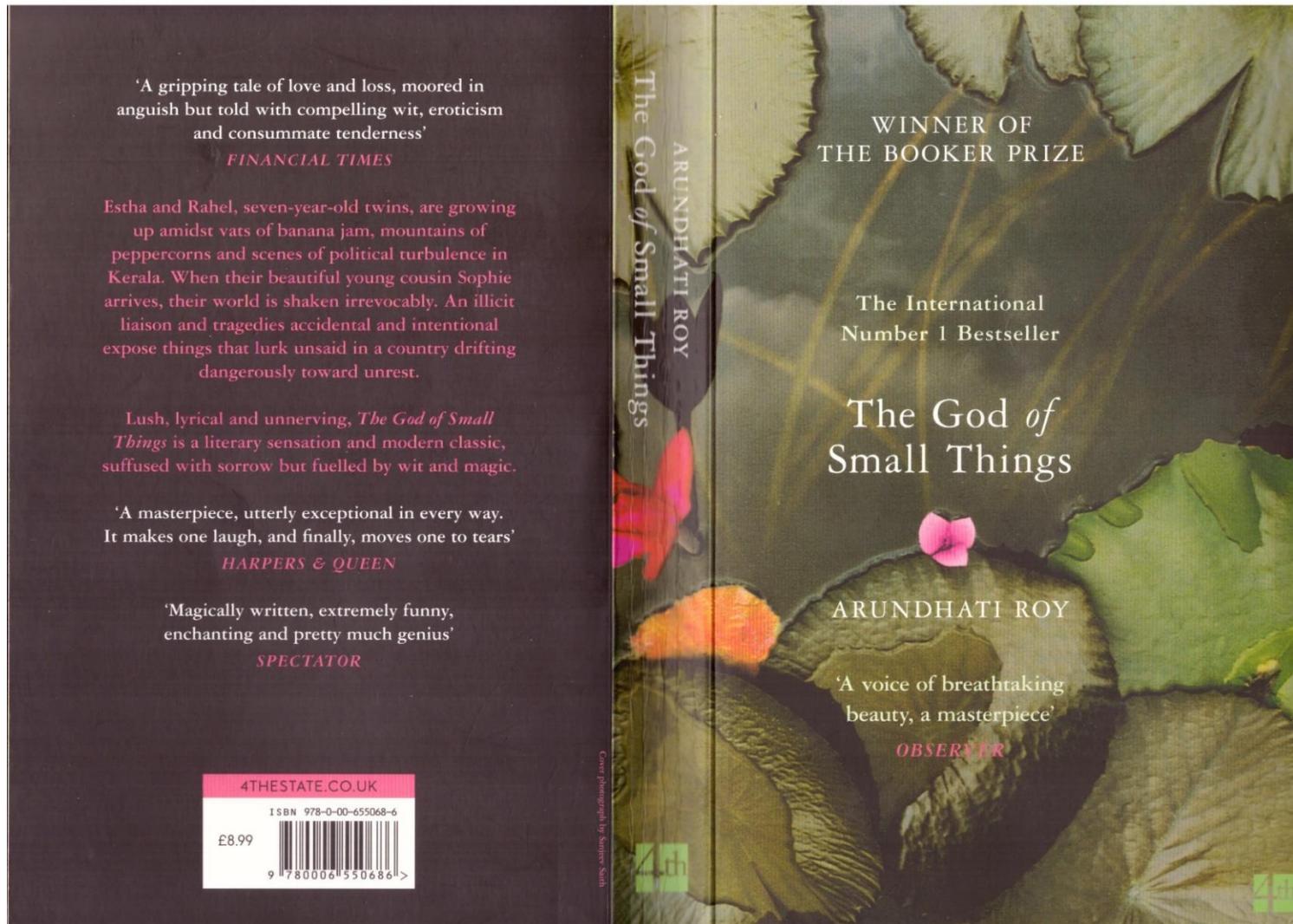
11. Appendix



1 Arundhati Roy Winning the Booker prize for *The God of Small Things* in 1997. Photograph: Getty Images [Online] Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/may/27/arundhati-roy-fiction-takes-time-second-novel-ministry-utmost-happiness>



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3 The cover of the novel – ROY, Arundhati. 1997. *The God of Small Things*. London: 4th Estate, Harper Collins Publishers, 1997. ISBN 978-0-00-655068-6.