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A STYLISTIC APPROACH TO
THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS WRITTEN
BY ARUNDHATI ROY

CHAN WING YI MONICA

MPHIL

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2007

A STYLISTIC APPROACH TO
THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS WRITTEN BY
ARUNDHATI ROY

by
CHAN Wing Yi Monica

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in English

Lingnan University

2007

ABSTRACT

A Stylistic Approach to
The God of Small Things written by
Arundhati Roy

by

CHAN Wing Yi Monica

Master of Philosophy

This thesis presents a creative-analytical hybrid production in relation to the stylistic distinctiveness in *The God of Small Things*, the debut novel of Arundhati Roy. Roy's text drew the world's gaze after winning the Booker Prize in 1997. Many studies have been written on diverse aspects of the book, and much has been said regarding the writer's style. However, those studies rarely focus on the minutiae of Roy's writing and this thesis provides a greater degree of detailed analysis. The objective is to achieve a deeper understanding of the relationship between style and literary aesthetics in *The God of Small Things* by studying the stylistic patterns behind Roy's resonating poetic prose.

The stylistic study is carried out adopting two approaches: the corpus-based approach (Part A) and the empirical-creative approach (Part B). The first section provides a stylistic analysis concentrating on the most significant stylistic features of the novel. The study is based on the list of style markers rendered by Leech and Short, *Style in Fiction* (1981) and elaborated according to the following key aspects that were extracted from the repertoire using my intuitive observation of the novel. These chosen style markers taken together represent key aspects of Roy's style: (1) Lexis—Roy's very frequent and particular utilization of adjectives; (2) Grammar—the high concentration of minor sentences and the listing of noun phrases in the text; (3) Figures of Speech—repetition and neologism. The second section presents a self-written pastiche which aims at imitating Roy's style in literary prose and adapting its approach to a Chinese context. The creative process serves as an experiment on taking pastiche writing as an “experiential” approach to stylistics. In addition, since the resemblance of the pastiche to Roy's style should not be the only value of the piece, some key themes in the original text are also reproduced.

The analysis in Part A illustrates patterns of Roy's stylistic choices. On the use of adjectives, Roy tends to arrange adjectival elements in sequence, construct a fixed “like” sentence structure, and adopt combining word forms and affective adjectives. On minor sentences, Roy chooses to separate adverbial phrases, sentence fragments starting with “like”, “as though”, and clauses beginning with “that”, “which”, “and”, “but”, “or”. As for repetitions, there is repeated use of set phrases, sentence patterns and recurrent appearance of certain lines and images. Lastly, on neologisms, Roy's patterns of creating new words include hyphenation, direct merging, and prefix/suffix building.

The pastiche is entitled *Hong Kong Locust Stand I*. By juxtaposing with the original, it is found that many stylistic features in *The God of Small Things*, are present in the pastiche, though with variation. While stylistic elements cannot totally be independent from the theme, the atmosphere, character and plot of the pastiche also demonstrate qualities representing those in Roy's novel. The pastiche presents an innovative and respectful way to come to terms with Roy's style through selective imitation and creative adaptation.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this study opens the way for further hybrid studies of style that incorporate both analytical and creative approaches.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

(CHAN Wing Yi Monica)
Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

A STYLISTIC APPROACH TO
THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS WRITTEN BY
ARUNDHATI ROY

by
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Master of Philosophy

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Arundhati Roy was born in 1961 in the southeastern state of Kerala in India. Her only novel, *The God of Small Things*, was completed in May 1996, launched in April 1997 in Delhi, and won the Booker Prize in London in October 1997. Roy is the first Indian woman writer to win Britain's most prestigious literary award and this public acclaim assured her status as a new novelist of striking ability, especially at the level of her innovative style. Not long after the astonishing achievement of her first book, Roy was dubbed the "Literary Queen" by Barbara Wickens in *Maclean's* (64), and since that time she has been a figure of huge media interest both in her native India and worldwide. For a number of reasons, some of them literary and others more to do with her political activism, Roy's reputation remains very controversial, attracting extremes of praise and condemnation. Yet despite the varied responses that critics have shown towards her, it is true that her first and only novel has been and remains exceptionally popular. As a reader I am not alone in finding her book a very powerful representation of themes that, though tied to the particular place of India, have a resonance for those of us who live elsewhere and face different issues and cultural histories. The first time I read Roy's novel, I was struck powerfully by the shimmering quality of her prose style and Roy remains for me a woman novelist I admire and wish (in my own way) to resemble.

As is well known, the plot of *The God of Small Things* is set in Ayemenem, a small town in the state of Kerala on the southwest coast of India in 1969. The protagonists are a pair of fraternal twins, Esthappen and Rahel. The whole book orbits the critical day when the twins accidentally drowned their half-British cousin Sophie Mol and their divorced mother Ammu had a love affair with the house carpenter, Velutha. The series of events crushed the Ipe family while Rahel and Estha's carefree childhood started to fall apart. This domestic drama is set, however, against the political and social background in India in the recent past, especially the caste system and the prohibition against inter-caste relationships, among other themes that will emerge in this thesis. In response to what the book is about thematically, Roy herself is reported to have answered in several ways on different occasions. In an interview with Lewis

Burkes Frumkes, Roy says: “I’m always tempted to say that it (*The God of Small Things*) is about everything” (23). Perhaps though this is too off-hand in that it somehow contradicts what had been said in another interview: “I have to say that my book is not about history but biology and transgression” (Rao 13). Roy also rejected, in an interview with Taisha Abraham, the notion that the book is about “our culture”, which reminds readers that the book is not really about everything though it may point to Roy’s interest in writing for an international rather than a national audience.

Despite Roy’s varied and sometimes contradictory views on what her novel is “about”, some of the author’s more detailed perspectives on *The God of Small Things* are still worth mentioning in order to provide a general background for this thesis. 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” (<http://website.lineone.net/>). The description that is quoted most frequently is what Roy said in an interview with Taisha Abraham. There Roy suggested that the novel is “a book about human nature ... It’s really a way of seeing, a way of presenting the irreconcilable side of our culture, our ability to love so deeply yet be so brutal” (92). I take the phrase “love laws” (repeated many times in the novel) as a key part of Roy’s effort to present the natural feeling of love that people feel and the social rules that try to force them into narrow conventions. The struggle between these two forces – human feeling and social restrictions – shapes the novel as a whole and it is this, together with Roy’s writing technique, that draws my attention and is the motivation for this thesis. Her characters attempt to transgress against dominant social rules and it is this transgression, there both as theme as well as style, that captivates me.

Before proceeding to the main part of my thesis, a number of general issues and controversies should be mentioned to enable a broad understanding of *The God of Small Things*. First, is the very surprising fact that after the huge success of her first novel, Roy switched to be a political writer and has written no subsequent fiction. She published her first non-fiction book *the Cost of Living* in 1999, which was then followed by *Power Politics* (2001), *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2002), *War Talk* (2003), *the Checkbook and the Cruise Missile* (2004) and a number of other political essays and articles. Roy

fires bold attacks against the Indian government, as well as the United States, for example, on the dam construction of the Sardar Sarovar Project and on the issue of nuclear weapons. The demonstration against the Narmada dam occurred in March 2002, during which Roy was arrested and held captive in jail for 24 hours.

This is part of the enigma of Roy. She is famous for being a prize-winning literary writer; yet her identity as a political activist somehow dominates her mentality towards the role of a writer. It seems that Roy has no intention to write another novel yet in fact her definition of genre is interesting and worthy of comment. In an interview with David Barsamian in 2001, Roy remarks that though *The God of Small Things* is her only fiction, she does not see “a great difference” between *The God of Small Things* and her works of non-fiction. Roy suggests that “fiction is truth ... I think fiction is the truest thing there ever was. My whole effort now is to remove the distinction. The writer is the midwife of understanding” (36). Metaphorically, Roy reveals her understanding of what it means to be a writer—to make people see “sense” and motivate them to fight for righteousness. Roy puts forward her set of ideas and beliefs about Indian society in her works and wishes to educate and even politicize her readers. Her writings are her tool of social-political education. What drives Roy to write is accounted for more clearly in *Power Politics* (2001): “The trouble is that once you’ve seen it, you can’t unsee it. And once you’ve seen it, keeping quiet, saying nothing, becomes as political an act as speaking out” (7). Roy possesses a strong urge to voice out her opinions on the stage of politics and this yearning to be heard in times of social decision making constitutes her major purpose of writing, either within a fiction or in a political tract—the purpose remains for her the same.

Due to the dominance of politics in Roy’s reasons to write, it is not surprising to discover political elements in her fiction. In the David Barsamian interview, Roy concludes her point with: “It was a mistake maybe for so many people to have opened their hearts to *The God of Small Things*. Because a lot of dams and bombs slipped in along with it” (39). Though I am not sure what this means precisely, I suppose her point is to indicate that too strong an interest in literature as literature may detract from political involvement. Roy’s keen political involvement has certainly attracted various scholars and reviewers to interpret *The God of Small Things* politically. Megan Feifer-

McNair in a thesis entitled “The Politics of The God of Small Things: The Literary Prose and Political Essays of Arundhati Roy”, draws a parallel between Roy’s writing, activism and the long history of Indian women’s involvement in political resistance, and the global feminist movement. Aijaz Ahmad’s article “Reading Arundhati Roy Politically” openly criticizes Roy’s anti-communist sentiment presented in the book and within this accusation of anti-communism, it is said that Roy denigrates E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the first communist leader of Kerala, and misrepresents the facts regarding his house and property. Abu Abraham supported Ahmad’s accusation in his article “Breaking the Love Laws” when he writes: “Arundhati Roy’s references to E.M.S. Namboodiripad border on the libelous. While all the other characters in her books are fictitious, or can be made out to be so with some effort, E.M.S. alone stands out as a straight piece of historical misrepresentation” (3).

Apart from the political controversy stirred up within the Keralan communist groups, the Syrian Christian Community also expressed their disappointment with Roy arguing she has given a false and derogatory picture of their community in Kerala. They argue that the position of the untouchables was quite improved in 1969 when the story of *The God of Small Things* takes place, even though the caste considerations were still strong. Therefore, they raise the point that the inhumane treatment of Velutha, the untouchable in the story, whose love affair with Ammu, an upper caste woman, was exposed, is an untruthful representation of the Syrian Christians.

Another great controversy, not this time political but rather more social, concerns the explicit treatment of sex, masturbation and incest in the novel. In June 1997, Sabu Thomas, a lawyer from Kerala, filed a public interest petition alleging that the novel was obscene and likely to corrupt or deprave the minds of readers. Sabu Thomas demanded the removal of the last chapter, in which the sex scene between Ammu and Velutha takes place. Roy’s treatment of taboo topics connected with sex is a key part of the transgressions against conventional morality.

The disputes surrounding Roy and her novel touch on both political and moral issues, which mark Roy as one of the most controversial Indian figures in contemporary times. These topics are indeed very important and in the course of this thesis they will

come up again and again in the context of my analysis. The secondary literature that discusses these themes will also be referred to.

However, my primary purpose in this thesis is not to focus on themes and topics, though they are certainly not avoided as they cannot actually be separated from questions of style. Rather, my attention is drawn more towards Roy's style as a primary focus. The whimsical prose and the delicate architectonics of *The God of Small Things* have caught reviewers' attention around the world and I am no exception. For example, James Wood in *The New Republic*, described the language of Roy in the novel as "the playground of its politics". He praised: "the great pleasure of *The God of Small Things* flows from its language, and its delight in verbal comedy" (32). Ramlal Agarwal, in *World Literature Today*, compared Roy's writing to the father of modern Indian writings in English, Salman Rushdie: "the narrative is splashed with humor and irony and is reminiscent of Rushdie's felicity and freedom in using English" (208). In fact, apart from Rushdie, Roy is also often compared to James Joyce for her language inventiveness and William Faulkner for the strong sense of regionalism in her writings. Though dominated by compliments, some reviewers point out language flaws in the novel. Sybil S Steinberg, for example, in *Publishers Weekly*, subtly remarked that "she (Roy) sometimes succumbs to overwriting, forcing every minute detail to symbolize something bigger, and the pace of the story slows" (62). Nevertheless, it is precisely the sensuous passages (over-written?) in *The God of Small Things* that seem to have impressed the judges of the Booker Prize. The chairperson of the Booker Prize judging panel, Professor Gillian Beer of Cambridge University, eulogized Roy's use of 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" (Dhawan 12).

The unique linguistic features of Roy have certainly been one of the key subjects of discussion among literary scholars. I too am driven to study Roy's supple application of words. My aim is to focus on the important stylistic features present in *The God of Small Things* through conducting a stylistic analysis of the novel. My objective is to

achieve a deeper understanding of the relationship between style and literary aesthetics by studying the stylistic patterns behind Roy's resonating poetic prose.

Beyond this academic stylistic approach, however, I also wish to approach Roy's style through a creative pathway. Constructing a pastiche is a practical approach to stylistic studies. Seymour Chatman in his book *The Later Style of Henry James* (1972) once said that pastiche is a good indicator of how well one masters the writing style of a particular writer. While such an approach to stylistic analysis is underdeveloped, this project may serve as an experiment to check the creative potential of this method. I would consider this project a success if it offers some new light on the hybrid study of linguistic and literary topics with creative writing. In addition, since creative writing is not yet widely recognized as a form of research to be carried out at local tertiary educational level, the hybrid nature of this project may also be the pioneer in introducing creative writing elements in literary research projects.

Although the pastiche is only a part of the project, I regard it as a stand-alone piece of writing. I reckon that the pastiche should be rated not only in the aspect of how it has emulated or been inspired by Roy's style, but also in terms of Roy's themes. Therefore, I prefer to reproduce some of Roy's key themes. I have decided on the theme of "love law" which I will reproduce against a Hong Kong setting. In *The God of Small Things*, the oxymoronic term "love law" often appears. It mainly implies how the traditional caste system hinders human desires for love. In the pastiche, I will discuss through fiction whether "love law" is relevant in Hong Kong. Our society nowadays is largely dominated by popular culture in which "love" is very often casually portrayed. However, serious family tragedies are far from rare—suicide, maltreatment, and murder. I am curious about the desire of individuals in this society. Do we yearn for anything else other than material needs? The phenomenon and mentality of how people love in this cramped place, to me, is very intriguing and worth investigating fictionally. I do not reckon myself as trying to teach people how to love; instead, by putting forward the problems we may have, I hope to create a chance for us to rethink and relearn our relationship with one another, those who are close to our heart as well as random acquaintances.

I have aspirations to become a fiction writer in combination with an academic career. Writing a pastiche is also an opportunity for me to practice complex syntactic structures with self-imposed rules and limitations to resemble Roy, though certainly not to follow her slavishly or to reproduce in minute detail the results of my stylistic analysis. This project, I hope, will help train and refine my techniques in creative writing. Furthermore, in the course of writing creatively with her style at the forefront of my mind her style, it is necessary that I scrutinize Roy's writing in detail. And to reproduce (loosely) her style with respect, I regard, is a way to pay homage to the writer.

1.1 Structure of the Thesis

The project will comprise two main sections. The first section will be an evaluation and description of Roy's writing style, including a literature review with a particular focus on features of style. The second section will be a self-written pastiche prompted by reading Roy's novel. This will be followed by a self-reflective essay in which I attempt to discover whether there are significant relationships between Roy's writing style and my own.

In the first part, following a literature review and a discussion of literary stylistics, a stylistic analysis will be carried out to cover a selection of the most significant characteristics in *The God of Small Things*. The focused stylistic features in the book will be chosen according to their degree of significance, which can be preliminarily judged by how frequently they appear in the text and whether the stylistic choices construct certain patterns in the course of revealing the plot, creating atmosphere, portraying character and conveying messages. The major reference in this process is *The Style in Fiction* (1981) written by Leech and Short. The list of stylistic choices Leech and Short offer is taken to help identify key features in Roy's text. Once the characteristic features are collected, they are categorized under three headings according to the list rendered by Leech and Short: *Lexis*, *Grammar*, and *Figures of Speech*. To execute a detailed analysis, which has not been previously carried out on *The God of Small Things*, a complete list of examples extracted from the text is generated in the form of databases and which are given in the appendices. The lists of examples are

produced by manual tallying, which is a method adopted in lieu of using computer software for statistical formation. This time-consuming method was chosen due to the intimate link between syntactic structures and meaning. In other words, the manual construction of the databases drew me closer to Roy's text than would a computer-generated process. Also, some of the features are simply impossible to be counted mechanically, such as the use of adjectives, as the nature of words must be processed and decided by the human brain in many cases. Based on the databases, an analysis will be made in the sense that Roy's stylistic choices are studied together with the themes that are encoded in them, so as to understand the functions they perform. That means, the stylistic features remain connected to the thematic meanings in my analysis.

In the second part of the project, I will present a self-written pastiche of *The God of Small Things* which is prompted and informed by the writing style and themes in Roy's original text. It is an attempt to write like Roy (or at least not-unlike Roy), which will partly serve as another approach to the stylistic studies in *The God of Small Things*. The rationale is that after the corpus-based stylistic analysis in the first section, Roy's stylistic choices in the novel will be experienced through modeling. However, her stylistic features are not followed mechanically; instead, the course of writing the pastiche is essentially creative insofar as trying to replicate Roy laboriously would smother my own creativity. Another important point mentioned earlier is that the pastiche should be treated as an individual piece of creative work reproducing some of Roy's themes in another context; thus, its value does not rely on being a strict stylistic replica. As a conclusion to the thesis, my work will be juxtaposed with the original to reflect upon the stylistic choices demonstrated in Roy. If my observations are accurate, the pastiche should (I hope) produce an impression not un-like the speaking voice in *The God of Small Things*.

CHAPTER 2

The Style of Arundhati Roy: A Literature Review

In *Power Politics* (2001), Arundhati Roy states her rudimentary rules for being a writer: “Rule One for a writer, as far as I’m concerned, is There Are No Rules. And Rule Two (since Rule One was made to be broken) is There Are No Excuses for Bad Art” (5). Even though she often denies the importance of writing as a profession, preferring to assume a broader self-description as an activist-citizen, traces of these statements can be spotted in all of Roy’s narratives and there may indeed be a kind of disingenuousness in Roy’s anti-writerly rhetoric. For whatever Roy may say by way of negating her role as writer of fiction, it is undeniable that she is a very self-conscious writer who pays huge attention to the way that she builds her fiction at the sentence and thematic levels. Part of this is her desire to subvert rules and conventions. Creating “good art” is achieved to a large extent by avoiding or disparaging restrictive and inhibiting boundaries in language as well as interpersonal and political relations. Thus, her writing style is not only a linguistic matter but also a politically subversive one.

2.1 Postmodernism

Roy’s style has been commented upon extensively in the secondary literature, if in general terms only. The construction of *The God of Small Things* is described by Frederick Luis Aldama as “generously roomy” and “capable of fitting in anything and everything from the external world and from the subjective world of feelings and thoughts” (<http://www.humanitiesretooled.org>). Aldama means that Roy, in appropriate postmodern fashion, has applied all the narrative techniques humankind has invented, including free indirect speech, stream of consciousness, dramatic narrative, lyrical narrative and prose poem. In the same paper, Aldama adduces the research that associates Roy’s writing strategies with postmodernism. Previous studies by Akshaya Kumar (60-69), Yogesh Sinha and Sandhya Tripathi (151-157) are referred to, with their focus on Roy’s novel as a “‘Thirdworld’ artifact swept up into a global marketplace”, thereby bridging postmodern and postcolonial boundaries. Indeed, the novel appeals

equally to scholars who explore the novel's anti-colonial (and anti-patriarchal) representational features. Anita Singh explicitly links the novel to a postcolonial and feminist frame saying that Roy's retrieval of subaltern voices becomes a postcolonial "act of liberation" (132-136). In a summary of previous postcolonial critical frames, Aldma says that postcolonial readings of the book generally suggest that *The God of Small Things* participates in and extends the line of the traditionally Western identified postmodern approach, such as, anachronistic narrative collage, fragmentation of self and multiplication of centers of truths of history.

In relation to the postmodern writing style, Linda Hutcheon provides a concise and useful argument. As quoted by Sheena Patchay, Hutcheon uses the term "historiographic metafiction" to describe postmodern narratives that "interweave both history and fiction to reveal that history as a grand narrative has collapsed and has been replaced by islands of plural discourse that emphasize discontinuities, erasures and occlusions" (145). According to Hutcheon, this kind of fiction emphasizes "the constructedness" and "fabrication of History", which usually highlight the marginal disruptive elements and present a sanitized version of History. To associate this theory with *The God of Small Things*, Patchay uses a bottle metaphor to illustrate her idea of "official" versus "unofficial" history. It is described in the book that the pickle bottles of Paradise Pickles and Preserves were never successfully sealed. There ought to be some oil stains on the labels, which never faded. Patchay suggests that the bottled pickles were like the official version of history, which is approved by the authority; somehow, the authority cannot stifle the unofficial personal history from being revealed (the oil stain metaphor). In the story, Roy particularly focuses on the incidents associated with Velutha and Ammu. Through the omniscient narrator, mostly Rahel, we are told both versions of history: the official one, as made up by Baby Kochamma together with the police, which is that Velutha kidnapped the twins and raped Ammu; while the unofficial version is that Velutha and Ammu made love to each other and the twins crossed the river perplexed by the ostracism of their mother. Apparently, the official version was settled and sealed by force; yet, the unofficial history still exists and becomes the personal memory of the twins, which continues to seep out. Patchay proposes that the way Roy highlights marginal events in order to break down History

(the official history) is a lucid example of the postmodern writing style. In this way, official and restrictive “authority” as a version of conformist orthodoxy is subverted fictionally and structurally.

Apart from the retelling of “marginal history” as an alternative to dominant points of view that are associated with Hindu conservative cultural practices, Patchay also points out that Roy adopts the technique of elision, which means placing the personal history of the invented characters against the political history of Ayemenem in 1969. This juxtaposition of the two strings of history marks the tension between official and unofficial versions of the past in what Hutcheon, as we have seen, calls “historiographic metafiction”. In fact, Hutcheon’s idea is further elaborated by Tirthankar Chanda. In the section entitled “Problematization of History”, Chanda uses the term “generic blurring” which is coined by Linda Hutcheon, to refer to the way Roy constantly blurs the boundary between fiction and history throughout the text. Chanda suggests that the novel “inscribes the dialectic of Self and the Other, subaltern and authority into the historical text” (40). The function of history in the text is to serve as the context of fiction, as well as a thematic sub-text of the novel, which is “human history masquerading as God’s Purpose” (Roy 309). Chanda considers that the time setting reveals the writer’s deliberate effort to blur the frontier between historical time and fictional time. By subverting the conventions of the time frames, Roy further attempts to undermine normative ways of presenting cultural situations.

According to Chanda’s illustration, there are two turning points in the book, 1869 and 1969, which are the years (respectively) when the founding ancestor of the Kochamma family Reverend Ipe was born and the Kochamma family drove down to receive Margaret and Sophie Mol. The family’s reputation stems from the blessings Reverend Ipe as a child received from the Patriarch of Antioch during the latter’s visit to India. Ironically enough, it is exactly after a hundred years that the great-grandchildren of Reverend Ipe drive down to receive Chacko’s estranged wife and the twins’ “British cousin”. If the former event marks the climax of the family history, the latter one embodies the anticlimax. While the two significant years are associated with the consolidation of Christianity and Communism in Kerala, not only do they form a socio-historical backdrop for the events to take place but, to be more specific, they represent a

social satire. While Chanda argues that the purpose of such a technique is to reveal the subjective underpinnings of our perception of the past, I think it is Roy's subjective underpinning of the political situation of India that emerges. In other words, Roy implies a subversive attack on entrenched and conservative interpretations of history as fact.

2.2 Magic Realism

While Chanda developed Hutcheon's study, S. Kannamal chose to adopt the term, "Magic Realism", to encompass similar studies. In Kannamal's paper entitled "Magic Realism and Arundhati Roy: India's Response to Emerging Literary Theories", the said phrase refers to a mode of writing where reality and the fantastic coexist. Kannamal suggested that the magic realism created in *The God of Small Things* is successful because Roy let neither the world which is opened to empirical proof or the one not empirically proven to dominate. Kannamal suggested that Roy's handling of "time" in narrating the story is an important factor in achieving the prodigious composition. Since time is the very basis of reality that serves our understanding of the real world, the way the fiction keeps jumping in space and time destroys our sense of being in reality of which time is in linear form. Kannamal's analysis of the time frames at the exposition of the novel shows that the text undergoes a large number of glides. It first slides from Ayemenem in May to early June when Rahel returned, then to twenty three years earlier, to the childhood days of the twins. After that, it moves forwards to speak of the death of Ammu, moves backwards to the birth of the twins in Shilong, fast forwards to the death of Sophie Mol and so on. This reorganization of the sequence of events is what Kannamal regards as the most powerful element in creating magic.

Apart from the rapid time shifting, the fantasy world was enhanced by insertions of supernatural happenings and descriptions. Kannamal illustrated this point by quoting a set of lines about the funeral of Sophie Mol: "The children feel that Sophie Mol had come for her funeral stood in the church with the other two children and Rahel noticed that Sophie Mol was awake for her funeral" (137). Compared to the time arrangement, this technique is more deliberate in constructing the unreal side of the novel. In addition,

Kannamal draws our attention to how Roy blended history and the political condition of India with the personal stories of the characters, which can be seen as a variation of what was put forward by Chanda and Hutcheon in the previous paragraphs. In magic realism, Roy also slipped in portraits of the conditions of marginality and her view to subvert the hierarchy in between lines of emotional descriptions. After all, the text sounds natural despite all the insertions, which is what impresses Kannamal most.

2.3 Time Referencing

Since Kannamal has brought forth Roy's time tricks, I will go on to introduce more studies on the use of time and memory in narrating the story. In the paper written by Kannammal Srinivisan, which is entitled "The Future Memory and the Metaphysics of Technological Space: Text in Flux as Narrative Strategy in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*", Srinivisan focuses on one main technique that Roy demonstrated and which Srinivisan names "memory in advance". This term was previously used by Jacques Derrida to refer to fictions that give accurate descriptions of events that have not happened yet. Srinivisan terms the insertions of texts in the narrative that contribute to changes in time and space the metaphysics of technology space. Srinivisan justifies Roy's attempt in problematising chronology and history saying that what Roy was depicting was something timeless: "The reality that the text speaks is not the reality of history but the reality of human sensitivity, perception and emotion. The truth that the text seeks is a different kind of truth, perhaps the truth of the depths of human passion, the deceptions, happiness, disappointments, shocks...and everything that the human heart is capable of at varying degrees" (97).

Srinivisan's point of view is echoed by another paper in the same realm by Madhu Benoit. In the paper "Circular Time: A Study of Narrative Techniques in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*", Benoit develops a model of Roy's novel, which he defines as written in "metatemporal narrative mode". The term "metatemporal" refers to the various layers of storylines going at the same time that involve different time settings. In the paper, Benoit examines the double-time pattern that is established at the exposition of the text: the chronological time, or time pertaining

to the diegesis, which operates syntagmatically, and a-chronological time, or time pertaining to history, or the collective memory shared by a society, which operates paradigmatically. Benoit uses the beginning of the story as an example to illustrate how the interwoven time pattern achieves a consciousness of the weight of the past on the present. Benoit suggests that the way Roy switches abruptly from talking about the arrival of Sophie Mol to what she calls “Love Laws” which had been laid down thousands of years ago is a blend of temporal and atemporal dimensions.

In his paper, Benoit works out five storylines with five chronological levels that co-exist in the text. They are labeled T0 to T4, which are respectively “Rahel’s return as an adult”, “The story of the main drama”, “Baby Kochamma’s story”, “Ammu and Chacko’s stories” and “Baby Kochamma’s father’s story”. The alternations between temporal levels are characterized by analeptic, proleptic and elliptic movements. Benoit explains that Roy adopts analepses to fill in information gaps which are either inherent in the book’s structure, or deliberate, created through elipses, as the writer withholds the information to give later with a different focus. As for prolepses, it is somehow similar to what Srinivisan calls “memory in advance” because they both perform the function of revealing the future. Benoit deduces that the mystification and suspense are functions fulfilled by the technique, but more importantly, prolepses anticipate the narrative and ease the shock of the plot. It functions especially well in handling the death of Velutha. Readers already note in the first place that when Velutha died, the image of the boots that kicked him is also reiterated throughout the book; that is why, when the end of Velutha finally came, it is expected and sounds almost like an inescapable destiny. In sum, Benoit concludes that analepses and prolepses do not only help to take away the shock of the plot, they work paradigmatically, cutting vertically through the syntagmatic linear act of reading. To take a step further, Benoit associates the fragmentation of chronological time with Roy’s political activism. Since the book is about deconstruction of the rigid caste system and unfair social customs of the past, the disconnection in time symbolizes a revolutionary mentality.

In the paper entitled “Material, Mode/Manner, Musicality with Metaporic Multiplicity: *The God of Small Things*”, Prayag D. Tripathi accounts for the disorderly structure of the novel. He explains that the work has no chronological sequence or

coherence of different events because Roy aimed to imitate the disorderly appearance of images in the human mind. Tripathi puts forward that the human mind, in spite of its rationality, keeps moving around from one thing to another, not always in an orderly fashion. A memory is not a systemic recollection, we may suddenly recall some past events for no apparent causes. Tripathi's argument links the non-sequential narration with the fickle nature of memory.

Emilienne Baneth-Nouailhetas provides an overview of the use of memory in the chapter called "The structures of Memory" in her book *The God of Small Things, Arundhati Roy*. Baneth-Nouailhetas starts off with an overall statement saying the novel develops around a highly complex and sophisticated narrative structure based on the combination of digression and anachrony. "Digression" is a general term here, according to the definition offered: the function of digressions is to cause the narrative to recurrently side-track the central story. They are effected mainly through the recollections or musings of various characters, whose thoughts are followed by the narration as they lead away from, or back to, the principal events of the story. Baneth-Nouailhetas explains that the narrative is organized according to the characters' traces of memory. More specifically, the recollections are frequently inserted in the narrative before the related events in the story are actually evoked; therefore, the readers tend to experience what is called "apparent technical amnesia" (50). While in the course of bringing out traces of memory, a combination of three major narrative techniques are provoked: paralipsis, prolepsis and analepsis. This part of Baneth-Nouailhetas's argument basically reiterates and verifies with the studies done by Benoit and Srinivisan.

Nevertheless, while others label the narrative of Roy as "a-chronological", Baneth-Nouailhetas proposes that achronicity never really took over for there are few elements that completely evade ascription to a determined period in time. The few hesitations one might feel, according to Baneth-Nouailhetas, are essentially caused by overlapping between adult focalizer and the children's voice. Yet, Baneth-Nouailhetas agrees that the narration does suggest a circular structure with repeated allusion to memories that blur the chronology of narration. Baneth-Nouailhetas's comment about the fragmentary quality of the revelations of memory in fact goes in line with the idea of Tripathi. Baneth-Nouailhetas brings forth that the fragmentary arrangement involves the

readers in the unreliability and mystery inherent to memory. It also reminds us of the nature of recollections which do not necessarily emerge in the logical order of a linear narrative but as a constantly changing process.

2.4 Semantics of Metaphor

All of the above studies we have discussed concern the structure of the story. In the following, we will look into the semantics of metaphor in *The God of Small Things*. The paper written by Jeannine Fontaine and Joyce Stavick, entitled “Like Nobody Else: The Secrets of Metaphorical Style”, elaborates Roy’s preferred forms of metaphor. It says that nearly one-third of the novel’s metaphors use the traditional *like*, *as*, *as if*, and *as though* forms, and many of these appear in sentence fragments. Fontaine and Stavick relate metaphor with the plot and themes, thus suggesting that the “simpler” forms may contribute to establishing a tone of simplicity, innocence, and spontaneity, which reflect the children protagonists’ point of view. With this as the motif, the paper goes on to develop branches of sub-themes, such as, how most of the *like/as* forms link the plot to simple, concrete images that would be readily available to children, how some metaphors bear semantic features that hint at the agony suffered by the children and other characters. Evidence quoted includes the use of “bubbles” to refer metaphorically to the fragility of the twins and the helplessness of the untouchables. In particular, the paper highlights the clusters of “silence” metaphors, which are mostly about Estha. Silence is compared to an octopus, mango hair, a saturated sponge, a bruise. To sum up the analysis of metaphors, Fontaine and Stavick conclude that not only do these comparisons put weight on the suffering of the vulnerable, the “simple *like* forms” in fact hold the narrative together by reminding readers continuously that the children were telling a tragedy they do not understand and we may not appreciate fully without the constant emergence of those metaphors.

Prayag D. Tripathi, in the same paper quoted earlier on, raises a rather interesting point concerning metaphor and Indian English in response to the independent practice frequently followed by Roy, as well as other Indian-English novelists. Tripathi quotes a line spoken by Raja Rao about the English language saying that English is “not really an

alien language to us” (311), which implies that non-native speakers enjoy supreme freedom in the language’s literary use. Among the techniques adopted by Roy, Tripathi finds *analogy* most significant as in India, mixed forms of analogy is an important aspect of everyday conversation, such as “laltain” for “lantern” and “mombatti” for “candle”. The abundant analogies that are present in the novel contribute to a radical metaphoric approach. Tripathi illustrates this point by extracting a paragraph from page 61 of the novel “His mind was full of cupboards”. These structures of semantic/ metaphoric implication, to Tripathi, remind readers of how, in non-official language, similar maneuver and artifice often occur.

2.5 Narrative Voice

In addition to the study of metaphors, narrative voice is also an important topic in style. In the paper, “The Feminist Voice in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*”, Mohini Khot touches on the issue of female as the inferior gender in India by studying the depiction of the four female characters in the book, which are Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Ammu and Pillai’s wife. Khot proposes that Ammu’s inability to speak towards the end is a metaphor underscoring the subservience and silence of women. In addition to the issue of gender, Meenakashi Bharat raises the point that Roy’s strategy of using the girl child’s consciousness as the basic narrative vehicle serves to draw attention to both issues of gender and childhood. Bharat quotes and agrees with Viney Kirpal’s emphasis on the necessity of a new approach to “girl child” since previous studies shows that “girl child” was seen only as a child-de-sexed, possessing the universal traits of a child, and of little interest to society. To go along with Kirpal, Bharat suggests that the conscious adoption of the perspective of the “girl child” by Arundhati Roy, together with Bapsi Sidhwa and Mrinal Pande, aims at rendering her visible by bringing out her qualities both as a member of her marginalized sex, and as a “universal” child. In other words, the three writers are using an interpretation of narrative voice to express their view on gender inequality as it is reflected in the novel.

Madhu Benoit in the paper cited earlier comments on shifting points of view. He proposes that in Roy’s writing, in addition to changing perspectives through differing

narrative voices, which gives the reader access to the minds of characters through free indirect style, the shifting points of view are accompanied by changes in the temporal level. An example quoted by Benoit is that readers shift from being an “invisible witness” to seeing through eighteen-year-old Baby Kochamma’s eyes the pathetic story of Baby Kochamma’s “non-affair” with Father Mulligan in T3, to seeing through young Ammu’s terrified eyes how Pappachi murderously beats Mammachi in T4, to seeing through Margaret’s eyes the charming Chacko during his student days at Oxford. What Benoit finds most striking is that the story of the main drama in T1 is mostly seen through young Rahel’s eyes, which means our perception is that of a young innocent seven-year-old. In the sub-conclusion, Benoit once again remarks the constant lack of system in the text: “Frequently, the focus is impersonal...especially in T0, where we are rarely given an intimate glimpse into adult Rahel’s mind” (101).

Within the realm of studying the point of view, some scholars tend to treat the novel as Roy’s autobiographical work. In the paper “The Goddess of Small Things: Some Observations on the Fictional Techniques of Arundhati Roy’s First Novel”, Pier Paolo Piciuccio makes a rather assertive argument on the autobiographical theme of the book. Piciuccio starts by describing the narrative conscience of the book, which is a third person narration but primarily focuses on Rahel, then on the twins and sometimes Ammu. Yet, the narrator is at the same time omnipresent and omniscient, which now and then ventures into the stream of consciousness of minor characters, like Baby Kochamma. Piciuccio also compares the narrating voice to the narrators in fairy tales, which are moving but technically detached. Presupposing that Roy was relating her own story, Piciuccio thinks the way Roy tackles the narrative voice is very skillful because she succeeds in calling for readers’ sympathy without reducing the distance between the “implied author” and its narration. Piciuccio suggests that Roy’s choice of giving the central consciousness a childish point of view helps vent the rage of Rahel/ Arundhati Roy on discovering in her adult age that both she and her brother had been manipulated by relatives too tied to social conventions. Piciuccio went on to exemplify that this point of view also acquires a clear meaning, respondent to hostilities due to the burden of past sorrows and injustices suffered by the writer herself. Thus, Roy was conveying a message through Rahel, inviting a move towards innocence and purity, and as a

metaphor of the dominating homecoming theme. In sum, Piciuccio concludes that taking Roy as the “implied author”, the motif of the novel can be understood as a tribute to the innocence of childhood.

In conclusion to his article on the architecture of *The God of Small Things*, Frederick Luis Aldama quotes the phrase “will to style”, which formerly referred to the literary ideal of the “perfectly sculpted prose page” enacted by Flaubert, to summarize the way Roy attends to both thematic and formal elements. The phrase is in fact a succinct paean to the writer since it implies, according to Aldama, the exploration of language and its possibilities, the search for a personal voice and the shaping of a personal worldview and of a distinctive way of expressing it. To Aldama, and to many scholars and readers, Roy’s will to style shimmers through her alternation in tones and lexical level of words, recurring images and symbols, variation in chronology and points of view.

2.6 Summary

To sum up, former studies of the novel that relate to style, as reviewed in this chapter, mainly dwell on five areas of interest: on postcolonial/ postmodernist aspect, on magic realism, on time/ space shifting, on metaphor and on narrative voice. Despite the diversity in focus, various arguments tend to dovetail into the fact that Roy demonstrates the post-structural notion that complex and central constructions are deliberately torn down to give rise to marginal objects as the new locus points. To recapture some of the reviews discussed, Prayag D. Tripathi explained that the lack of chronological sequence in the novel is because Roy aims to imitate the disorderly appearance of images in a human mind. On narrative voice, Mohini Khot suggested that Roy’s use of a girl child’s perspective is to bring out the quality as a marginalized sex. Thus, in other words, I would summarize that the majority of the former studies on *The God of Small Things*, cannot but reinforce the post-modernist flavor embedded in the story, which is so strong that it seeps out in almost every linguistic and structural technique Roy adopted.

Whereas I agree with previous critics’ characterization of Roy’s writing style as post-modern and postcolonial, it remains the case (as we see in the brief discussion

above) that most of the criticism (with the exception of Fontaine and Stavick's paper on metaphor) is content with remaining at a rather general level of observation, focusing on the larger element of structure. For my purposes of understanding Roy's writing style, root and branch, a much more detailed linguistic/stylistic analysis is required. In one sense, after all, to describe Roy as a postmodern writer is to say very little of much use in a practical linguistic sense if imitation by way of a pastiche is a key goal.

CHAPTER 3

An Evaluation/ Description of Arundhati Roy's Writing Style

In the last chapter, former critics on the style of Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things* are summarized and reviewed. Based on the studies covered, it is found that the majority of the criticisms choose to evaluate the text from a non-linguistic point of view. Various critics, including Frederick Luis Aldama, Sheena Patchay and Tirthankar Chanda, have adopted a postmodernist approach, commenting on the overall structure of the novel, as well as the time and space arrangements in revealing the plot. Elleke Boehmer pronounces that the novel demonstrates postcolonial English by “expanding, distorting, excavating, disconcerting” the language (67). Other critics, for instance, Jeanine Fontaine and Joyce Stavick who studied metaphors in the text, though are comparatively more specific in their focus; they tend to apply psychological and sociological theories in their interpretations.

Analyses of the novel conducted by these critics may serve the study needs of sociologists and philosophers; however, since my goal is to experiment on pastiche writing as an “experiential” approach to stylistic studies, I need an in-depth analysis on Roy's language choices and patterns as a control. To attain a full view on the specificity of language usage that enables establishment of a particular writing style, a descriptive corpus-based analytical approach to style is preferred; yet, in the scope of linguistic research, former studies are inadequate in mapping out Roy's exploitation of words in detail. Thus, in this chapter, I will concentrate on studying Roy's language at sentential and lexical levels.

This chapter will consist of the following sections: firstly, there will be a concise review on former approaches to stylistic studies, and in particular, literary stylistics; secondly, an explanation of the approach will be covered, followed by exemplifications of a list of stylistic/linguistic features subjected to scrutiny of the text; lastly, there will be a description of the data obtained, together with evaluations of the findings.

3.1 Literary Stylistics

In capturing a definition of “style”, Leech and Short, in *Style in Fiction*, devote a whole chapter on the meaning of “style”. As stated in the book, there are several complex levels of stylistics. In general, the interpretation of the word “style” is fairly uncontroversial, which refers to the way in which language is used; also, the domain of “style” is rather universal. Leech and Short suggest that “style can be applied to both spoken and written, both literary and non-literary varieties of language; but by tradition, it is particularly associated with written literary texts” (11). Saussure, a Swiss linguist, marked a distinction between *langue* and *parole*, which is rather useful in clarifying the domain of style. Saussure’s study suggests that *langue* is the code or system of rules common to speakers of a language, while *parole* is the particular uses of this system, or selection from this system. And “style” pertains to *parole*. In addition, Leech and Short point out that since studying stylistics in terms of writers or time periods can be overly broad and may lead to generalization, to think of style as “the linguistic characteristics of a particular text” is the most recommended.

At a more specific level of interpretation, views on style are quite divided. Leech and Short review three main streams of stylistic theory, which are dualism, monism and pluralism. Dualism assumes that there is a division between form and meaning. One branch of dualism proposes style as the “dress of thought”, which suggests style is an “optional extra” and it is possible to demonstrate “zero style” in writing. Another branch of dualism proposes style as manner of expression, which basically means the same things can be expressed in many different ways. On the contrary, monism emphasizes the inseparability of style and content; thus, change in style will lead to change in content. Above all, there is stylistic pluralism, which suggests that “language performs a number of different functions, and any piece of language is likely to be the result of choices made on different functional levels” (30). The most significant pluralist is Halliday with his model consisting of Ideational, Textual and Interpersonal functions.

On “stylistics”, though the definition is simply “the linguistic study of style” (13), the focus is rarely on *what* but *why* and *how*. Leech and Short think style is a relational

concept, of which the aim of literary stylistics is to “relate the critic’s concern of aesthetic appreciation with the linguist’s concern of linguistic description” (13). Leech and Short quoted Spitzer’s argument which illustrates the study of literary stylistics with a cycle. When some linguistic features are observed and described, one seeks their aesthetic functions. On the other hand, when some literary appreciations, including critical evaluations and interpretations, are launched, one should seek linguistic evidence from the text. While both ends stimulate or modify insights or observations of the other side, the task of linguistic-literary explanation proceeds cyclically.

Stanley E. Fish has suggested a similar understanding of stylistics in his paper “What is stylistics and why are they saying such terrible things about it?”. He proposes that stylistics is “born of a reaction to the subjectivity and imprecision of literary studies” (94) and that stylisticians can proceed from impressionistic critics to precise linguistic descriptions of a text. However, Fish defies an entirely scientific approach which offers fixed relationships between observable data and meanings. He points out that the fallacy in the attempts of Louis Milic, Richard Ohmann and J. P. Thorne to establish interpretations from descriptions of linguistic features is the absence of constraint; thus, their conclusions drawn are basically arbitrary. Fish proposes that the shape of the reader’s experience should be the constraint because meaning is not expressed by just the capacity of a syntax, but conferred by the ability of a reader. That is what he terms “affective” stylistics, in which “the focus of attention is shifted from the spatial context of a page and its observable regularities to the temporal context of a mind and its experiences” (109).

Sharing the belief that readers’ responses on literary texts tend to vary with context, including the readers’ experience, some linguists have carried out experiments on text interpretation. Short and Van Peer have conducted an experiment on reader responses, which is reported in the paper entitled “Accident! Stylisticians evaluate: Aims and methods of stylistic analysis”. In the experiment, Short and Van Peer were given, one line at a time, a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, which they had not studied before. Their immediate reactions were recorded down as they struggled to interpret the text independently. In another experiment by Alderson and Short, as elaborated in the paper “Reading Literature”, the first page of a piece of fictional prose was adopted as the

target text. The two authors spoke their thoughts out loud as they read the text in order to obtain two protocols. Upon comparison of the protocols, both of the experiments support initially the idea of “a large degree of common understanding with a peripheral amount of differing interpretation” (Short 4). Somehow, as Short summarizes the significance of the experiments in the introduction of *Reading, Analysing and Teaching Literature*, he suggests that since the experimenters involved were all highly educated, the essential next step is to widen the database to determine whether readers with similar educational and social background respond in similar ways to the same texts.

The experiments discussed above echoes with what David Birch addresses as intertextuality in the paper called “Working Effects with Words—Whose Words?: Stylistics and Reader Intertextuality” in which Birch draws attention to reading process particularly. Birch thinks that the aim of stylistic analysis is to provide the means for readers to relate the text to their own experience of language and reality. Birch agrees with Fowler’s idea that language use is not merely an effect or reflex of social organization and processes but a part of social process which constitutes social meanings and practices. Thus, the saying that language can be freed from context is not tenable in linguistics; instead, Birch supports that a text constitutes just a part of the meaning, while the remaining part is what the readers construct with their intertextual experiences. Since the readers articulate their own meaning, Birch regards the roles of reader and writer as functionally inseparable.

In his paper entitled “Studying literature as language”, Roger Fowler also goes along with the importance of context in linguistic criticism. He emphasizes his view that “linguistics *can* very appropriately and revealingly be applied to literature” using “the richest and most suitable linguistic model” which aim to be “comprehensive in offering a complete account of language structure and usage at all levels” (199). According to Fowler’s descriptions, the model should account for three branches of thought. Firstly, it ought to be comprehensive in covering all dimensions of linguistic structure, pragmatics in particular; secondly, there should be an account of the functions of linguistic constructions, of which Halliday’s “ideational” is focused; thirdly, the model needs to acknowledge the social basis of the formation of meanings, in which Fowler followed Halliday’s study on “social semiotic”.

Among various branch of stylistic studies, statistical stylistics is always a realm of controversy. Here, I will discuss a few significant thoughts by Bloch, Leech, Short and Halliday.

In the light of frequency, Bernard Bloch proposes an absolutely quantitative approach, in which the style of a text can be measured. His argument finds its root from the ordinary usage of the word “style”, which refers to a pattern of choice and thus implies the concept of frequency. So, Bloch defined the style of a text as “the message carried by the frequency distribution and transitional probabilities of its linguistic features, especially as they differ from those of the same features in the language as a whole”(Leech & Short 43); in other words, Bloch suggests that style is to be measured in terms of deviation from the norm. However, it is not feasible to extract an objective norm from “the language as a whole” due to subjective decisions in sampling. Moreover, Bloch’s measurement of style includes “transitional probability”, that is the probability that “some form X will be followed by another form Y”(Leech & Short 45), which will lead to infinite collocations of factors that can affect styles and result in the study of normal frequencies of certain features being even more unattainable.

In discussing the notion of defiance, Leech and Short bring forth the idea of “relative norms”. The basic argument of “relative norm” is that when we say a certain feature is frequent in a text, we are initially judging that the feature is more frequent in this text than in that text. The writers explain that because an absolute norm for English cannot be relied on, comparing the corpus whose style is under scrutiny with one or more comparable corpuses to establish “relatively reliable statements about what is frequent or infrequent in a text” (Leech & Short 51) should be the second best approach. Enkvist calls a suitable norm of comparison “a contextually related norm”; however, choosing a relative norm involves a series of subjective decisions, for example, in defining the degree of narrowness about “the same category of writing”. Regarding this uncertainty, Leech and Short conclude with two remarks: firstly, the greater the range and size of the corpus which acts as a relative norm, the more valid the statement of relative frequency; secondly, the narrower the range of comparison, the surer we shall be that the stylistic features we are attributing to a particular text, rather than to the style of a larger category of writings including it.

To sum up, instead of viewing stylistics as a sheer objective study, the majority of stylisticians tend to regard linguistic descriptions as a way to help justify affective observations from stylistic intuition. The reassuring statement from Halliday is also generally accepted: “a rough indication of frequencies is often what is needed: enough to suggest why we should accept the analyst’s assertion that some feature is prominent in the text, and allow us to check his statements” (Leech & Short 47).

3.2 Approach

The objective of this chapter is to conduct a stylistic analysis, with a tight focus, on the language of Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things*. Similar to any feasible method of stylistic analysis, a selection procedure is vital in picking out significant features to analyze and rule out the others left in the text. The general practice in selecting features is largely related to the concept of foregrounding, as suggested by Mick Short in *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose* (1996) that readers tend to be alert to items that are literary or linguistic salient. It is in fact a psychological effect that deviant features, such as, repetition of certain words and structures, are perceptually prominent and thus easily noticeable. It is shown in studies quoted in the last section that stylisticians largely accept the idea that stylistic studies should elaborate on the relation between linguistic characteristics and the significances of the text manifested; therefore, I decided on using a combination of literary discrimination and linguistic discrimination as the selection criteria. The aim of the selection process is to pick out significant features of style for further investigations. The chosen features are named “style markers”.

Roger Fowler in *Linguistic Criticism* has expressed a linguistic view on “being creative” and how it relates to language codes, which I reckon as not unsuitable in deciphering the gist of Roy’s unique application of words. According to Fowler, any activity that is creative is capable, under the right conditions of production and reception, of reanalyzing people’s theory of the way the world works. The process of linguistic creativity involves *uncoding*, meaning disestablishing the received tie between a sign and a cultural unit, and *recoding*, tying a newly invented concept to a sign and

establishing its validity. Fowler said the ultimate aim is to form a whole new code which is a system of new linguistic arrangements encoding a whole new area of knowledge. This revolutionary effect of linguistic creativity is termed as *defamiliarization* by the Russian critic Viktor Shklovsky who proposed that by using a range of *techniques* or *devices*, the art imparts the sensation of things as they are perceived but not as they are known. Another Russian Formalist, Boris Tomashevsky outlined the basic principle of *defamiliarization* as: “The old and habitual must be spoken of as if it were new and unusual. One must speak of the ordinary as if it were unfamiliar” (Fowler 57). In Chapter 2, Frederick Luis Aldama’s description of Roy’s writing style is relevant, which says that Roy has exhausted all possible linguistic devices in the English language. In a way, Roy’s deviation from the norm is exactly what is termed *defamiliarization*. Although the encoded theme of the novel, that is love and transgression, is doubtlessly a familiar one, Roy presented it in an innovative way. The ancient themes of the novel are “defamiliarized”. This will be further elaborated in later chapters when the reproduction of the theme in the pastiche will be discussed.

Since the novelty of Roy’s language depends heavily upon the adaptation of a wide range of linguistic devices, deviant details in the text are so abundant that solely relying on “intuitive observation” to exhaust all salient style features may be inefficient and imprecise. For this reason, I have borrowed the checklist of potential style markers rendered by Leech and Short as a map to survey the text. The checklist consists of four main categories: Lexical, Grammatical, Figures of Speech, Cohesion and Context, the first three of which I take for my thesis in the interest of reasonable brevity. Under each title, there are subsections in the form of questions. Leech and Short insist that the list is heuristic in nature, which intends to inspire reader observations. Based on my close reading and intuitive observations, along with the checklist as a guide, I searched through the novel and constructed a list of linguistic and stylistic features that occur to me as literary and linguistic important.

Before going through the list, a few clarifications of terminology should be stated. According to the explanation offered by Leech and Short, the term “features” is defined as the occurrence in a text of a linguistic or stylistic category. The distinction between linguistic and stylistic categories is explained in the following. Linguistic categories are

“essentially contrastive” therefore their occurrence “entails the non-occurrence of other categories” (Leech & Short 64), for example, the occurrence of transitive verbs entails the non-occurrence of intransitive verbs. Stylistic categories, on the other hand, are more complex phenomena which are often difficult to define. They are also assumed to be describable in terms of linguistic categories, for example, “alliteration” as a stylistic category can be described as occurrence of a certain consonant which is a linguistic category; thus, stylistic categories are viewed as not necessary in description of a language. However, since we still use stylistic categories to label significant elements of style, these categories are kept but are not formally distinguished from linguistic categories.

3.3 List of Style Markers

The list of style markers found in *The God of Small Things* presented below is categorized under three general headings: *Lexis*, *Grammar* and *Figures of Speech*, which are derived from the checklist composed by Leech and Short. Due to the fact that each feature requires prolonged justification procedures and elaborations, stylistic analyses tend to and ought to be highly selective. In the enclosed list, not more than five features are investigated; yet, all the chosen features are literary and linguistic crucial. They incorporate and constitute Roy’s specialty in writing.

The complete list of intuitive examples of style markers from the text can be found in the appendices. To give a brief outline of the list, under *Lexis*, I will point out Roy’s frequent utilization of adjectives; under *Grammar*, I will investigate the high concentration of minor sentences and the listing of noun phrases in the text. Lastly, under *Figures of Speech*, I will address different levels of repetition and neologism.

3.4 Description/ Evaluation of Style Markers

In this section, style markers identified from *The God of Small Things* will be exemplified and evaluated according to each of the three headings.

3.4.1 Lexis

Lexical Categories is the first of the three general headings in the checklist rendered by Leech and Short, which appears in the textbook *Style in Fiction* (1981). The authors do not provide a definition for the term “lexical” in the text because the chapter in which the checklist is presented assumes “a basic familiarity with the working of the English language, whether in literary or non-literary contexts” (74). Since the said condition is taken for granted, Leech and Short probably regard the set of linguistic categories in the checklist as “more or less common knowledge” to the readers, and possible controversies should be at the minimum. The only areas in which technical terms are thought to be potentially problematic are those under *Grammar* and *Figures of Speech*, which I will elucidate in the later sections of this chapter.

Prevalently, in stylistic studies, the term “lexical” is understood as features concerning vocabulary in general. In the checklist, there are five subheadings under *Lexical categories*. The first subheading *General* has its reference to the typical understanding of the term. The set of questions aims to stimulate thoughts on the property and usage of the choice of words in a particular text, while the other four sets each takes in a specific type of words; namely, *Nouns*, *Adjectives*, *Verbs* and *Adverbs*. Questions under each subheading are basically regarding their frequency, functions and other typical associations of the words.

3.4.1.1 Roy Style Marker—High Frequency of Adjectives

The style marker on lexical level identified from *The God of Small Things* is the high frequency of adjectives. In fact, densely adjectival is one of the most obvious features that mark the uniqueness of Roy’s writing. Former critics, like Shulin Nishant and Elleke Boehmer have complimented Roy’s language as being lush, sensual, exuberant and elaborative. After going through the novel numerous times, I realized that such an impression is supported by application of a huge amount of adjectives. In this section, I am going to discuss and elaborate the specialties in Roy’s utilization of adjectives. I will start with a justification of the high frequency of adjective in Roy’s

text in term of comparisons with other literary writers. Then, an account of the general patterns and forms of adjectives that are present in the text will be exemplified with close readings of some selected examples.

3.4.1.1.1 Justification

In stylistic studies, deviations of a certain stylistic feature are often dubious to prove using statistics; yet, a justification process is somehow unavoidable. Even Halliday, who acknowledged the problems of relying on data, reckons that a “rough indication of frequency” is needed to check affective observations (Leech & Short 47). In the light of looking for evidence to justify the high frequency of adjectives in Roy’s writing, I have chosen to follow a simple comparative approach using works of other literary writers. The reason for running a comparison is that it is almost impossible to work out an objective norm about the “proper” amount of adjectives that a certain length should bear. Instead, whether a passage consists of too many or too few adjectives is greatly dependent upon one’s experience in reading, background and other subjective qualities, such as, one’s own preference. Due to the lack of a reliable unbiased criterion to judge the frequency of adjective in a text, I resort to work out a “relative norm”. This term appeared previously in section 3.1 *Literary Stylistics*, quoting the stance of Leech and Short about the notion of defiance. Although the rationale behind setting up a “relative norm” is still not absolutely independent of subjectivity, this approach is neat enough to illustrate roughly to what extent the frequency of adjectives in *The God of Small Things* is a feature of deviation. As for which texts to use to compare with Roy’s novel, to ensure that the “norm” is contextually related, contemporary literary narrative prose of the twentieth century will be used; in particular, I have chosen those writers whose writing styles critics often identify with Roy’s, namely, Salman Rushdie, Joseph Conrad, William Faulkner and James Joyce. The range of comparison involving these writers is thus believed to be appropriately narrow to offer rough indication on Roy’s high frequency of adjective as a highlight of her style.

The comparison is twofold. In the first part, Roy’s text will be juxtaposed with works from writers whose styles are commonly recognized as being relatively decorative

and adjective-packed. Then, as a control, in the second part, I will compare Roy with writers whose styles are widely known as relatively plain and unadorned. In both of the comparisons, I will calculate the number of adjectives in the first one thousand words in each chosen text and collate the data. For the first part, I will adopt *Heart of Darkness* (1902) by Joseph Conrad, *the Dead* (1914) by James Joyce, *Midnight's Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie and *As I Lay Dying* (1930) by William Faulkner, as the comparative texts. In the latter part, I am going to use *the Old Man and the Sea* (1952) written by Ernest Hemingway.

The tallying is performed manually so the figures obtained are prone to inaccuracy. Yet, within limitations, the data is checked thrice and miscalculation is kept to the lowest. The table below presents results of the enumerations.

Writer	Text	Number of adjectives
Arundhati Roy	<i>The God of Small Things</i>	93
Joseph Conrad	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	87
James Joyce	<i>The Dead</i>	62
Salman Rushdie	<i>Midnight's Children</i>	59
William Faulkner	<i>As I Lay Dying</i>	53
Ernest Hemingway	<i>The Old Man and the Sea</i>	43

Table 3.1 Number of adjectives in the first 1000 words of the listed texts.

The writers and texts in the above table are arranged in descending number of adjectives. *The God of Small Things* sits at the top of the list, followed by the texts of Conrad, Joyce, Rushdie and Faulkner, which rank from second to the fourth. At the bottom of the list is Hemingway's narrative *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Statistics reveal that among the sampled texts, Roy's novel consists of the largest number of adjectives of 93 items within the first one thousand words, which is close to one tenth of the total amount of lexical items. The finding also shows that the frequency of adjectives in *The God of Small Things* is even higher than Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, of which the dense language has drawn attention of academics. F.R. Leavis

coined the language use in *Heart of Darkness* as “adjectival insistence”, saying that Conrad’s excessive adjectives upon “inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery” is “not to magnify but rather to muffle” (180). Leavis thinks Conrad’s manipulation leads to the adjectives losing the function of describing but drawing readers’ attention to the self-conscious writing style: “The insistence betrays the absence, the willed ‘intensity’ the nullity. He [Conrad] is intent on making a virtue out of not knowing what he means” (180). While the adjectival frequency in Roy’s text is found even higher than that of Conrad’s, given Leavis’s notion is credible, the adjectives in Roy’s text may also diminish in a similar way, which will be discussed later in the section.

Since the adjectival frequency in Roy’s text is already on the top rank, it is not surprising to find that in comparing with the unmarked style of Hemingway, the data also goes in line with our observation. *The Old Man and the Sea* consists of 43 adjectives which is lower than those found in Roy’s text by 50 items.

Overall speaking, the result is close to our expectation, given that adjectives found in those texts commonly agreed as rich in style have outnumbered those found in the text thought to be non-decorative. So, taking the figures from Conrad, Joyce, Rushdie and Faulkner as the relative norms of “high” frequency of adjective, and that from Hemingway as the counter-norm of “low” frequency of adjective, *The God of Small Things* legitimately falls into the high frequency group.

3.4.1.1.2 Adjectival Patterns

Having confirmed the high frequency of adjectives as a distinctive stylistic feature in Roy’s writing, I will move on to describe the properties of Roy’s adjective arrangements so as to understand her language in fine details. I will first focus on the syntactic patterns in which adjectives are positioned; then, I will look at adjectives in combining forms.

Pattern 1: Adjectives precede Noun

Almost certain as being the most prominent feature in Roy’s utilizations of adjectives, the majority of adjectives used in the text are placed in front of nouns. Since

adjectives are so abundant, very often, almost every noun in a paragraph is modified by at least one adjective. In some parts of the text, adjectives are found piling up to form sequences preceding nouns. Here are some examples:

Example 69, With cool stone floors and dim walls and billowing ship-shaped shadows. Plump, translucent lizards lived behind old pictures, and waxy, crumbling ancestors with tough toe-nails and breath that smelled of yellow maps gossiped in sibilant, papery whispers. (53)

Example 142, She wielded strange weapons. A tiny vial. A rectangle of glass with blood smeared on it. A test tube of sparkling, back-lit urine. A stainless-steel tray of boiled needles. The hairs on her leg were pressed like coiled wires against her translucent white stockings. The box heels of her scuffed white sandals were worn away on the insides, and caused her feet to slope in, towards each other. Shiny black hairpins, like straightened snakes, clamped her starched nurse's cap to her oily head. (133)

The above examples are selected to render an overview of the adjectival intensity in the book. In the first example, there are two sentences which consist of four and nine adjectives respectively. Merging the two sentences, thirteen out of thirty-seven words, that is about more than one third of the items in that particular extract are adjectives. In the second example, only the third sentence is without an adjective. The rest of the sentences are so packed with adjectives that provide specificity to the description of the clinic waiting room insofar as the major function of having adjectives is to provide mostly visual and sometimes non-visual details to entities. This purpose is, in truth, very well performed in the above excerpts; as a matter of fact, the enormous amount of sublime detail in Roy's descriptive passages is stunning.

It is mentioned in the opening paragraph that adjectives are very often found piling up to form a sequence. Here are some typical lines:

Example 119, Driving past the inky sea, Estha put his head out of the window. He could taste the hot, salt breeze in his mouth. [...] He felt the shaming, churning, heaving, turning sickness in his stomach. [...] The sticky neon night rushed past the taxi window, it was hot inside the taxi, and quiet. Baby Kochamma looked flushed and excited. She loved not being the cause of ill feeling. Every time a pye-dog strayed onto the road, the driver made a sincere effort to kill it. The moth on Rahel's heart spread its velvet wings, and the chill crept into her bones. In the Hotel Sea Queen car park, the skyblue

Plymouth gossiped with other, smaller cars. *Hslip Hsli Hsnooh-snah*. A big lady at a small ladies' party. Tailfins aflutter. (113)

Example 23, When Khubchand, his beloved, blind, bald, incontinent seventeen-year-old mongrel, decided to stage a miserable, long-drawn-out death, Estha nursed him through his final ordeal as though his own life somehow depended on it. (12)

Example 35, That something happened when personal turmoil dropped by at the wayside shrine of the vast, violent, circling, driving, ridiculous, insane, unfeasible, public turmoil of a nation. [...] Then small God (cosy and contained, private and limited) came away cauterized, laughing numbly at his own temerity. (19)

Example 110, He had a greenwavy, thick-watery, lumpy, seaweed, floaty, bottomless-bottomful feeling. (107)

Apart from providing visual and non-visual details to things and characters related to the plot, as in the first two excerpts above, sequences of adjectives in these four examples manage to create a kind of rhythm and rhyme, such as the repetition of the last syllable /i:/ in Example 110, which has its reference to people's reaction to vomit. The regular first-syllabic stresses in Example 119 shaming, churning, heaving, turning also form a regular rhythm to remind us of Estha's tumbling stomach. In addition, the rows of adjectives generate a visual effect which reinforces semantics, for instance, in Example 35, there are eight adjectives pre-modifying "turmoil of a nation", while the "small God" has only 2 pairs in a bracket. The construction of adjectives sequences in this way helps convey the meaning by making it visually prominent.

It is discussed in former studies that Roy's urge in exhausting the very fine details in her narration is aiming to resemble the viewpoint of a child. It may be Rahel who was recalling the happenings when she was an eight-year-old child. Since children are keen on observing fringe minutiae, Roy pre-modified every little thing in the scene with adjectives. Such child-like use of adjectives can be rather comical. The accumulation of adjectives is sometimes redundant and nonsensical, say for example, "greenwavy, thick-watery, lumpy, seaweed, floaty, bottomless-bottomful" but as a reader I was bemused by the absurdity, as if a child is desperate to capture your attention. Of course, the inventive adjectives, or neologisms, have a share in boosting the amusement. The new-formed words are similar to what children do when they are

eager to describe something complex with their limited vocabulary. This technique will be further elaborated in *Pattern 4: Combining Forms*.

In my reading of the novel, I noticed that some of Roy's narrations and descriptions of characters are, in fact, rather cartoon-like and I deduce that adjectives are an important element in achieving such effects. Here are some excerpts from the text which I think are comical:

Example 119, A big lady at a small ladies' party. Tailfins aflutter. (113)

Example 124, A fat man on a dark stage. (117)

This kind of sentence structure is not unlike the "big bad wolf" and "fluffy yellow ducklings" type, in the sense that they both use simple, uncomplicated adjectives as pre-modifiers. Moreover, the repetitious use of some of the adjectives, such as, Margaret Kochamma's "kind-schoolteacher voice" and Estha's "beige and pointy shoes" created a sort of labeling effect. In children's stories, these labels imprint a more vivid memory in child readers' mind, thus helping them to follow the storyline. I think Roy brings in this technique of storytelling not for delivery efficiency but sheer amusement.

Pattern 2: The "like" form

Roy uses the word "like" very often in the novel. In Jeannine Fontaine and Joyce Stavick's study of metaphors in *The God of Small Things*, it is pointed out that Roy's "like" form metaphor is imitating children's minds. I only partially agree with this view because even though the word "like" sounds colloquial and light-hearted, the adjectives loading around the metaphor are heavy and deliberately arranged, which betrays the trick. Here are some examples with "like" form metaphors:

Example 130, On the other side of the river, the steep mud banks changed abruptly into low mud walls of shanty hutments. Children hung their bottoms over the edge and defecated directly onto the squelchy, sucking mud of the exposed river bed. [...] Eventually, by evening, the river would rouse itself to accept the day's offerings and sludge off to the sea, leaving wavy lines of thick white scum in its wake. Upstream, clean mothers washed clothes and pots in unadulterated factory effluents. People bathed. Severed torsos soaping themselves, arranged like dark busts on a thin, rocking, ribbon lawn. (125)

Example 136, And things that cannot-that sit on dusty shelves like stuffed birds with baleful, sideways staring eyes. (128)

Example 140, A feverish baby hiccupped on its mother's breast. The slow ceiling fan sliced the thick, frightened air into an unending spiral that spun slowly to the floor like the peeled skin of an endless potato. [...] From below the scanty curtain that was stretched across the doorway that led directly onto the street came the relentless slip-slap of disembodied feet in slippers. The noisy, carefree world of Those with Nothing Up Their Noses. (132)

It is demonstrated in Examples 130, 136 and 140 one of Roy's very distinctive sentence structures. The syntactic form is composed of "like" which is metaphorical and adjectives preceding nouns. The structure goes in the following pattern:

[verb (phrase)]—like—[adjective] [noun]—[preposition]—[adjective(s)] [noun]

To illustrate the application of the pattern, lines from the quoted examples are juxtaposed down below.

Example 130,				
[arranged]	like	[dark][busts]	[on]	A [thin, rocking, ribbon][lawn]
Example 136,				
[sit on dusty shelves]	like	[stuffed][birds]	[with]	[baleful, sideways staring][eyes]
Example 140,				
[spun slowly to the floor]	like	the [peeled][skin]	[of]	an [endless][potato]

Table 3.2 The syntactic form composed of "like", Example 130, 136 and 140.

Personally speaking, I am uncertain whether this is a very skilful writing technique. At the beginning of the novel, this "like" pattern is certainly impressive in offering surprising details, or interesting comparisons to the subject being described. However, as the plot moves on and this sentence structure keeps recurring throughout the text, it becomes predictable. It is similar to what F.R. Leavis pointed out in the paper about "adjectival insistence" in *Heart of Darkness*. I think the logic of excess can suitably be applied to the *like*-structure. Towards the end of the novel, after coming across many of the above "like" structures, the function of the metaphor

embedded seems to fade. Eventually, what the subject being portrayed is really like is not the matter of concern anymore; rather, the overarching insistence in style dominates the whole of the readers' attention. The gradual reduction in practical function is related to "habitualization" which suggests that when a particular element has been repeatedly used too many times, readers tend to get used to it and when it becomes a habit, its meaning will be ignored and readers just take it as it is. Again, how many appearances of this structure one can endure in a text is subjected to preferences of individuals, so it is hard to tell if Roy has over-written in this sense. To me, the appeal of this writing technique is no longer tenable to charm me after my first readings.

Pattern 3: Affective adjectives

The mood in *The God of Small Things* is distinctively sensual with the application of a generous amount of affective adjectives both in descriptions of the environment and portrayals of characters. The word "affective" pertains to emotional effects or dispositions, so the term "affective adjective" includes the type of adjectives that inclines to arouse emotions in readers. In the following, affective adjectives in sketching the environment will first be discussed, followed by affective adjectives in portrayals of characters.

It is commented that Roy's depiction of Kerala where the story is set, is always hot and humid. Nature is full of fecundity and plants grow big and dense. Such an exotic and sensual environment somehow resembles the writing of D.H. Lawrence. At the beginning of the novel where there are prolonged descriptions of the setting, this characteristic of Roy is most blatantly demonstrated.

Example 1, May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees. Red bananas ripen. Jackfruit burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they stun themselves against clear windowpanes and die, fatly baffled in the sun. (1)

Example 2, The nights are clear but suffused with sloth and sullen expectation. (1)

Example 3, But by early June the south-west monsoon breaks and there are three months of wind and water with short spells of sharp, glittering sunshine that thrilled children snatch to play with. The countryside turns an immodest green. Boundaries blur as tapioca fences take root and bloom. Brick walls turn mossgreen. Pepper vines snake up

electric poles. Wild creepers burst through laterite banks and spill across the flooded roads. (1)

Example 4, Slanting silver ropes slammed into loose earth, ploughing it up like gunfire. The old house on the hill wore its steep, gabled roof pulled over its ears like a low hat. [...] The wild, overgrown garden was full of the whisper and scurry of small lives. A rat snake rubbed itself against a glistening, stone. Hopeful yellow bullfrogs cruised the scummy pond for mates. A drenched mongoose flashed across the leaf-strewn driveway. (1)

Adjectives relating to moisture are unavoidably tinted with pseudo-sexual associations, while there are numerous adjectives about humidity in the opening paragraph of the novel. In Example 4, words like “slanting”, “silver”, “loose”, “glistening”, “scummy” and “drenched” suggest a very thick, damp and slushy environment. Sultry is the weather which also drives hidden passion. Clamminess in the air is sweaty and latently links to body fluids during sexual intercourse. That is how the adjectives in the quotations are affective.

Critics tend to associate *The God of Small Things* with other stories about love and transgressions. In terms of both themes and narrative style, D.H. Lawrence is often mentioned. In truth, Kerala in Roy’s writing is comparable with D.H. Lawrence’s English countryside in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. Here is an extract from Lawrence’s text.

The weather came rainy again. But after a day or two she went out in the rain, and she went to the wood. And once there, she went towards the hut. It was raining, but not so cold, and the wood felt so silent and remote, inaccessible in the dusk of rain.

She came to the clearing. No one there! The hut was locked. But she sat on the log doorstep, under the rustic porch, and snuggled into her own warmth. So she sat, looking at the rain, listening to the many noiseless noises of it, and to the strange soughings of wind in the upper branches, when there seemed to be no wind. Old oak-trees stood around, grey, powerful trunks, rain-blackened, round and vital, throwing off reckless limbs. The ground was fairly free of undergrowth, the anemones sprinkled, there was a brush or two, elder, or guelder-rose, and a purplish tangle of bramble: the old russet of bracken almost vanished under green anemone ruffs. Perhaps this was one of the unravished places. Unravished! The world was ravished. (97)

The most prominent similarity between the two writers is the emphasis on moisture; yet, generally speaking, the atmosphere in Roy's text sounds lustier since the temperature in Indian monsoon season is high, while in Lawrence's passage, there are still words like "cold", "remote" and "inaccessible". The atmosphere is dank, not as intense and suffocating as in Roy's portrayal of Kerala.

In addition to the sensual adjectives regarding heat and humidity, in a way, adjectives indicating colors and textures are affective too. Taking the color adjectives in the quoted Example 1 to 4, words like "black", "bright", "dustgreen", "red" and "yellow" all imply intense emotion. As for textures, Roy used adjectival nouns preceding other nouns for pre-modification in particular, for example, "plastic dustpan", "pink plaster gnomes", "marble counter", "brick wall" and "laterite bank". Although it has been discussed earlier on that Roy's narratives tends to acknowledge every fine detail, this emphasis on the sense of touch, together with the sense of sight heightened by the color words, enable a very sensual climate. Besides, the densely packed color words and textual pre-modifiers in Roy's passages somehow promote a kind of dreamy air. The vivid colors possess an effect like patches in a mosaic picture, with an underlying dizziness.

The third type of affective adjectives in Roy's depictions of environments is adjectives implying personification. Compared with the adjectives of humidity, color and texture discussed above, this type should be the most obvious one because these are adjectives picturing human feelings and manners, which directly evoke readers' thoughts and reactions. Examples found in the first paragraph of the novel are "dissolute bluebottles", "immodest green", "hopeful yellow bullfrog" and "reluctant old well". These personifications are sometimes humorous; more importantly, they work together with the other kinds of affective adjectives above to intensify the disposition of being in an unreal state of vision.

After discussing the various kinds of affective adjectives in Roy's narration of the environment, we move on to examine the adjectives in her portrayal of characters. Roy spent long passages to describe appearance of characters and is especially fond of describing naked bodies of the characters, which are sexually appealing.

Example 61, She had a delicate, chiseled face, black eyebrows angled like a soaring seagull's wings, a small straight nose and luminous nutbrown skin. On that skyblue December day, her wild, curly hair had escaped in wisps in the car wind. Her shoulders in her sleeveless sari blouse shone as though they had been polished with a high-wax shoulder polish. Sometimes she was the most beautiful woman that Estha and Rahel had ever seen. (45)

Example 89, Estha put on the tap and water drummed into a plastic bucket. He undressed in the gleaming bathroom. He stepped out of his sodden jeans. Stiff. Dark blue. Difficult to get out of. He pulled his crushed-strawberry T-shirt over his head, smooth, slim, muscular arms crossed over his body. [...] Rahel watched his stomach suck inwards and his ribcage rise as his wet T-shirt peeled away from his skin, leaving it wet and honey-coloured. His face and neck and a V-shaped triangle at the base of his throat were darker than the rest of him. His arms too were double-coloured. Paler where his shirtsleeves ended. A dark brown man in pale honey clothes. Chocolate with a twist of coffee. High cheekbones and hunted eyes. A fisherman in a white-tiled bathroom, with sea-secrets in his eyes. (91)

Example 90, Rahel at the bathroom door. Slim-hipped. A lizard on a map on her faded T-shirt. Long wild hair with a glint of deep henna-red, sent unruly fingers down to the small of her back. [...] A thin, gold, serpent-headed bangle glowed like a circle of orange light around her wrist. Slim snakes whispering to each other, head to head. Her mother's melted wedding ring. Down softened the sharp lines of her thin, angular arms. At first glance she appeared to have grown into the skin of her mother. High cheekbones. Deep dimples when she smiled. But she was longer, harder, flatter, more angular than Ammu had been. Less lovely perhaps to those who liked roundness and softness in women. Only her eyes were incontestably more beautiful. Large. Luminous. Drownable in, as Larry McCaslin had said and discovered to his cost. (93)

Example 37, She had lost weight on her face and shoulders, which had made her from being a round person into a conical person. But sitting at the dining table with her enormous hip concealed, she managed to look almost fragile. The dim, dining-room light had rubbed the wrinkles off her face leaving it looking- in a strange, sunken way- younger. (21)

In the portrayal of characters, it is in fact a rather common practice to use affective adjectives, which embody the writer's judgments towards the particular character. To some extent, it is almost impossible to avoid being affective since to describe one's appearance requires judgment from the others. So, words from "lovely", "beautiful", to "strange" and "sunken" are all affective which forms readers' impression towards the characters. It is not the way Roy portrayed the good characters as stunningly pretty and vice versa that is especially unique but the amount of adjectives

she adopted in portraying a character and the frequency of these prolonged descriptions. In a sense, Roy is coherent in her attempt to exhaust all possible detail of the subjects.

Pattern 4: Combining Forms

a) Traditional combined color words

One of the common phenomena of adjective use is that Roy tends to use more than one adjective at a time. This gives rise to “combining forms”. According to *Collins Cobuild Grammar Patterns 2: Nouns and Adjectives*, “combining forms combine with other words to form compound words, usually written with a hyphen” (531). Color words is the most typical type, for instance, “skyblue”, “nut brown”, “henna red” in the above examples and “snow white” and “coal black” in the example below. These combinations are similar to cliché because they are so well-ridden that they are almost fixed phrases which people use as a habit. Using rather old-fashioned clichés is sometimes said to be one characteristic of Indian English but putting so many of them together functioning as adjectives is Roy’s style feature.

Example 43, All day they sat in the drawing room, Baby Kochamma on the long-armed planter’s chair or the chaise longue (depending on the condition of her feet), Kochu Maria next to her on the floor (channel surfing when she could), locked together in a noisy Television silence. One’s hair snow white, the other’s dyed coal black. (28)

b) Neologism

In *The God of Small Things*, combining forms nearly reach the “anything goes” extreme where any words can be placed together as an adjective. Neologism is a vital element in creating Roy’s uniqueness. Inventive adjectives appear in two-word form, hyphenated, also in one-word form as those in the previous section. In one-word form, Roy made up new words by adding prefix and suffix to nouns and verbs that are grammatically restricted. In combining form, creative adjectives emerge even more extensively, either with hyphens, or by simply joining preexisting words.

Example 46, Cold handcuffs with a sourmetal smell. (31)

Example 127, Ammu was asleep and looked beautiful in the barred-blue streetlight that came in through the barred-blue window. She smiled a sleepsmile that dreamed of dolphins and a deep barred blue. (119)

Example 128, And the dull, sullen sound of the boatmen's bamboo poles as they thudded against the dark, oiled boatwood. It was warm, the water. Greygreen. Like ripped silk. With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it. When they grew tired of waiting, the dinner smells climbed off the curtains and drifted through the Sea Queen windows to dance the night away on the dinner-smelling sea. (123)

Example 129, Downriver, a saltwater barrage had been built, in exchange for votes from the influential paddy-farmer lobby. [...] Despite the fact that it was June, and raining, the river was no more than a swollen drain now. A thin ribbon of thick water that lapped wearily at the mud banks on either side, sequined with the occasional silver slant of a dead fish. It was choked with a succulent weed, whose furred brown roots waved like thin tentacles under water. Bronze-winged lily-trotters walked across it. Splay-footed, cautious. [...] It was just a slow, sludging green ribbon lawn that ferried fetid garbage on the sea. Bright plastic bags blew across its viscous, weedy surface like subtropical flying-flowers. The stone steps that had once led bathers right down to the water, and Fisher People to the fish, were entirely exposed and led from nowhere to nowhere, like an absurd corbelled monument that commemorated nothing. (124)

Example 186, As she spoke, the Waiting Melody that hung over her like a shimmering temple elephant's umbrella crumbled and gently fell about like dust. Chacko, in his *What Happened to Our Man of the Masses?* suit and well-fed tie, led Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol triumphantly up the nine red steps like a pair of tennis trophies that he had recently won. And once again, only the Small Things were said. The Big Things lurked unsaid inside. 'Hello, Mammachi,' Margaret Kochamma said in her kind-schoolteacher (that sometimes slapped) voice. Thank you for having us. We needed so much to get away. Mammachi caught a whiff of inexpensive perfume soured at the edges by airline sweat. (She herself had a bottle of Dior in its soft green leather pouch locked away in her safe.) Margaret Kochamma took Mammachi's hand. The fingers were soft, the ruby rings were hard. [...] She spoke in a slow deliberate manner. [...] There was a short, Sad-Aboutjoe silence. (173)

Example 196, Mammachi played a *Welcome Home, Our Sophie Mol* melody on her violin. A cloying chocolate melody. Stickysweet, and meltybrown. Chocolate waves on a chocolate shore. (183)

Adjectival use of nouns and phrases can also be counted into neologism, such as, "a *Welcome Home, Our Sophie Mol* melody" and "Chocolate waves on a chocolate shore."

Roy's deliberation in creating new phrases to describe things is another way of imitating children. Most of the innovations are successful in conveying a sense of playfulness, such as, "stickysweet" and "meltybrown", which to some extent evoke

graphically a pulp-like image. Apart from serving as adjectives in the text, neologisms in the text actually perform multiple functions, including creating new-formed nouns, which will be specifically discussed in section 3.4.3 *Figures of Speech*.

3.4.1.1.3 Summary

The lexical analysis above presented four patterns of Roy's use of adjectives in *The God of Small Things*: 1) Adjectives precede nouns; 2) The "like" form; 3) Affective adjectives; 4) Combining forms. Although the four adjective forms are different in presentation, the common aim behind such adjectival density is to load the story with details. Not only does this tactic add flavor and texture to characters and scenes, the piled-up adjectives, fixed labels and new-formed words also enable a touch of childishness. In the later sections, Roy's capture of fine details in the story will again be shown and echoed as one of her recurrent signature stylistic features.

3.4.2 Grammar

This is the second category in the style checklist generated by Leech and Short, which is also the largest one among a total of four categories. There are nine subheadings in this group to cover different areas distinguishing sentential features, that includes, *sentence types*, *sentence complexity*, *clause types*, *clause structure*, *noun phrases*, *verb phrases* and *word classes*. The principle of selectivity referred to earlier is applied here and the style features to be investigated in this section is the frequent occurrence of minor sentences and the listing of noun phrases, which come under the subheadings of *sentence types* and *noun phrases*, respectively.

Former studies of Arundhati Roy discussing her novel from a postmodernist/postcolonial perspective, tend to touch on her unconventional sentential features. It is often commented that the way traditional linguistic rules are deliberately violated is a practice of how syntactic features imply semantic elements. Roy's subverted grammar echoes and reinforces the theme of caste transgression that is presented in the book. Following this line of thought, the use of minor sentences can also be thought of as reiterating the idea of "small things". The constant absence of a finite verb, the key element in a sentence, is a linguistic revelation of how "the big thing is left behind". The missing of the main verb can be viewed as how the reality behind the main action in the story, how Velutha was wronged as the kidnapper and the rapist, will be left behind forever, behind the veil of the official version of history. To quote Sheena Patchay's study, the motive of the novel is retelling "marginal history" as an alternative to dominant points of view, which is associated with the avoidance of commonly accepted grammar for subaltern forms.

3.4.2.1 Roy Style Marker 1—High Frequency of Minor Sentences

Minor sentences are in some cases referred to as "fragments" or "non-sentences"; either way, the main verb is absent. The rather circular definition provided by David Crystal and Derek Davy in *Investigating English Style* (1969) states that a minor

sentence is “any structure other than those which displays functional characteristics normally associated with a major sentence” (49).

The huge number of minor sentences in *The God of Small Things* is quite easily observable. To give a general picture of the distribution of minor sentences in the novel, a sample of ten pages from the text is drawn at random. The task involves counting the total number of sentences, followed by a simple tallying of minor sentences. The result shows that within the page range 215 to 225, there are 292 sentences; and among them, 106 are minor sentences, which is about one third of the total. The frequency should be considered as extremely high as the simple statistic in fact illustrated that among every three sentential constructions in the text sample, there appears one minor sentence. The density in distribution accounts for the vividness of the feature in Roy’s writing.

3.4.2.1.1 Minor Sentence Patterns

Pattern 1: Separated “like...”, “as though...”, “as...as” part of a metaphor;

Example 12 He began to look wiser than he really was. Like a fisherman in a city. (13)

Example 6, Gently. *Tap, tap.* As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket. Painting out the ones that he wanted packed and delivered. (8)

Example 273, History was wrong-footed, caught off guard. Sloughed off like an old snakeskin. [...]In its absence it left an aura, a palpable shimmering that was as plain to see as the water in a river or the sun in the sky. As plain to feel as the heat on a hot day, or the tug of a fish on a taut line. So obvious that no one noticed. (176)

The above quoted three examples represent each of the three most commonly seen conjunctions in the novel, which are “like”, “as though” and “as”. In each quote, the particular conjunction starts a new sentence on its own, which cannot pedagogically be considered as demonstrating correct grammar. First, the meaning of this type of sentence is not grammatically complete. As these conjunctions are signposting metaphorical elements, the metaphor cannot be complete without the subject matter. In the first excerpt above, it is from the pronoun “he” in the previous sentence that readers are diverted to the subject that the subsequent fragment is related to. In the first example, it is Estha in the sentence before who is “like a fisherman in a city”. It is not difficult to see the same argument can be aptly applied to the other two quotes, insofar as the

grammatical functions of the three conjunctions are introducing metaphors in a similar way. Since the latter sentence fragment alone does not embody a subject reference, the message conveyed is not normatively composed. As the meaning is not grammatically complete, these constructions starting with “like”, “as though” and “as” are not complete sentences but fragments.

Another reason why these phrases fail to pass as sentences is the absence of finite verbs. This error is the most obvious in fragments starting with “like” which are usually restricted to precede noun phrases. Roy did not tamper with this particular grammar rule in this sense. As for the other two conjunctions “as though” and “as...as”, they tend to be complemented by a clause with its own subject and predicate, say in the above example, “as though” is followed by “he (subject) was choosing mangoes (predicate)”; however, with “as though” at the beginning, the thought is not yet completed and, thus, the words do not form a sentence.

As discussed in the previous section about the lexical features of Roy’s writing, she is very conscious in arranging adjectives in rows to elaborate on details of the entities being described. It seems that this kind of sequential characteristic is found consistent also at sentential level, for Roy has a tendency to organize fragments in series as quoted below:

Example 538, She touched him lightly with her fingers and left a trail of goosebumps on his skin. Like flat chalk on a blackboard. Like breeze in a paddyfield. Like jet-streaks in a blue church sky. (339)

Example 254, It was a grand old house, the Ayemenem House, but alooflooking. As though it had little to do with the people that lived in it. Like an old man with rheumy eyes watching children play, seeing only transience in their shrill elation and their wholehearted commitment to life. (165)

In the first excerpt, the “like” form is repeated three times and presents three metaphors in a sequence in relation to one subject, which in this case is the trail of goosebumps on Velutha’s skin. Although the three images of comparison are placed together, each of them belongs to a different context: (1) chalk and blackboard belong to school; (2) breeze and paddyfield belong to nature; and (3) the church sky belongs to Christianity. To me, these seemingly unconnected images and connections are all

deliberately designed in complement to the characteristics of the subject. In this sequence, the three images are built to highlight Velutha's youth, closeness to nature (the river) and God-like references. Also, since the three images, chalkboard writing, breeze and jet-streaks, are transient things, they imply aptly Velutha's short span of life. Apart from that, the last metaphor echoes with previous images in the text. It was elaborated at the beginning of the novel that Rahel observed two things during Sophie Mol's funeral; one of them is the "newly painted high dome of the yellow church". Rahel imagined someone like Velutha, bare bodied and shining, sitting on a plank to draw the clouds and jet streaks against the blue ceiling. She also thought of what would happen when the rope snapped, that he would drop "like a dark star out of the sky that he had made" (6). When the way the goosebumps, caused by Ammu in their process of lovemaking, is remotely associated with the former church metaphor in which he died catastrophically, the point of ecstasy joins the trough of destruction and hence results in a contrasting sense of irony, a premonition of the tragedy of Velutha.

In Example 254, there are two consecutive metaphor fragments starting with "as though" and "like". The personification of the old Ayemenem house as an old man watching the children play offers specificity to the first metaphor by pointing out the house's supreme status compared to the "monkey business" inside. Somehow the line "As though it had little to do with the people that lived in it" implies a segregation of the house from the people as if the people are inviting shame. It sarcastically hints at how the Ipe family brought itself into scandal as the story develops and this sarcasm is reinforced by the second metaphor which portrays how the senile old man laughed at the transience of life and the enthusiasm of the children. Personally, "the transience" refers to the loss of lives in the course of the tragedy—the drowning of Sophie Mol, the suffering death of Velutha and Ammu, the ruin of Estha and Rahel. On the other hand, "their wholehearted commitment" can refer to both the transgressors' determination to act according to their will and the conservationists' insistence on rules and traditions. But with the foreshadowing irony within the metaphor, either side is doomed to fall apart. What remains will simply be a good laugh in history. The metaphors in the text, apart from contributing to descriptions by creating images in comparison, implicitly express Roy's personal judgments towards people and events in the novel. The

sequential metaphors can surely elaborate on the imagery expansively, while at the same time allowing more room for the writer's implied opinions. As illustrated in the above two examples, it is speculated that Roy tends to arouse sympathy for Velutha, who was bold enough to fight against his fate as an Untouchable. On the whole, Roy despises caste division and teases at the fiasco brought about by difference in Hindu castes.

In addition to the above significances, these fragmentary metaphor series perform inter-textual meta-functions, which are above narrative interpretations. In the quote below, the repetition of the "like" form gives rise to figurative language that demonstrates graphological idiosyncrasy.

Example 27, What Larry McCaslin saw in Rahel's eyes was not despair at all, but a sort of enforced optimism. And a hollow where Estha's words had been. He couldn't be expected to understand that. That the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other. That the two things fitted together. Like stacked spoons. Like familiar lovers' bodies. (19)

The last two lines of the above excerpt explicate the telephonic intimacy of the pair of twins, which the syntactic arrangement tightly echoes. There are two lines starting with "that" followed by two lines starting with "like", which result in two pairs of repetitious patterns. The two metaphors are idiosyncratic in the sense that they emphasize dyad by the distribution of stress. "Like stacked spoons. Like familiar lovers' bodies." With the stressed syllables underlined, we can see that the stresses in the first fragment lie at the rear of the articulation, while those in the second fragment are mostly at the onset of the words. The three stresses in the first part match and fit in the unstressed gaps between the four stresses in the second part. To me, this additional stress-level characteristic reinforces the perfect form—when one fills the cracks and smooths the rough of the other. The syntactic arrangement also symbolizes the reunion of the twins when they finally entwined in carnal love.

From the perspective of viewing the characteristics of the metaphor fragments series within the structure of the novel, the most prominent significance is that metaphors are very often placed at the end of paragraphs. One associate function of such a feature is that since Roy's writing is largely loaded with extremely wordy narrations, the metaphors at the end help sum up all details with one or two concise

images. They clearly deepen readers' impression, though this impression will be tinted with Roy's hidden comments, for which the rationale is explained above. Another function is that Roy is using metaphors to drop hints to sensitive readers about the development of the plot, and by leaving clever signs at the end of paragraphs and chapters can certainly make parts of the novel seem more cohesive. This involves adapting images appearing in other parts of the story and rephrasing them in other ways.

The main purpose of applying metaphors, similar to that of other post-modifying phrases/clauses, is to put additional details on top of what is already portrayed, so as to reinforce its image. In the section on Lexical features, Roy's descriptive indulgence has been illustrated by her exploitation of adjectives; and now, with examples of metaphor fragments, Roy's "writerly aim" to build up a style rife with forms of narrative detail is more vividly shown. This point will be further exemplified in the next two patterns, in which fragmentary subordinate clauses and adjectival/adverbial fragments are discussed respectively.

Pattern 2: Separated subordinate clauses, mostly beginning with signifiers "that" and "which";

Sentences starting with subordinate signifiers, such as "that", "which", "when", are traditionally attached to an independent/main clause so as to imbue additional information to what has been conveyed. This kind of subordinate clause, or dependent clause, serves the function of modifiers in the sense that it post-modifies the subject matter. What is found distinctive in the novel is that though these clauses are obviously semantically linked to the previous sentence which is supposed to be the main clause, they are separated by a period. In other words, Roy tries to present these (pedagogically considered) dependent clauses as individual sentences. Here in this section, I quote some of the most prominent examples.

To begin with, five excerpts of fragmentary "that" clauses are brought forth for discussion, they are Examples 27, 275, 84, 49 and 82. The signifier "that" is the commonest one used among this type of fragment. During the course of scanning for typical subordinate clause fragments, two interesting phenomenon are observed. First, this type of fragment marked in the text is less frequent than I predicted on my first and

second reading. I realized most of the fragmentary sense was created by clauses starting with “and”, “but”, “or”, which in fact in many cases accompany the “that” clauses, as in example 49 (“And that when they do...”). Somehow, there is a common function in presenting the law-breaking theme between separated “that” clauses and those starting with “and”, “but” and “or”, which will be further elaborated in the section after next. Another interesting observation is that fragmentary subordinate clauses are mostly found when the narration dwells on the theme of transgression. All the quotes in this section centre around the topic of transgression, for instance, Example 275 is about Velutha’s enlightenment, and Example 244 is about Ammu and her tragic destruction resulting from her seditious behaviors. Although one has to admit the theme of transgression appears extremely frequently in the novel, the co-occurrence of fragmentary subordinate clauses is still significant. Since the idea of transgression is based on how the well-laid down system is shattered and how the former minority rises to power, the high intensity of fragmentary minor sentences found existing as independent clauses in these narrations is in fact not surprising. It can be regarded as another piece of evidence to show how Roy incorporates the themes into linguistic arrangements of the novel.

So, let us look at some characteristics of these clauses. As subordinate clauses existing alone do not construct a complete sense in normative grammar, the “that” clauses here have to be considered as attached to the closest previous main clause. Thus considered, it is possible to see they actually perform various grammatical roles.

Example 27, What Larry McCaslin saw in Rahel's eyes was not despair at all, but a sort of enforced optimism. And a hollow where Estha's words had been. He couldn't be expected to understand that. That the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other. That the two things fitted together. Like stacked spoons. Like familiar lovers' bodies. (19)

Example 275, For instance, he saw that Rahel's mother was a woman. That she had deep dimples when she smiled and that they stayed on long after her smile left her eyes. He saw that her brown arms were round and fine and perfect. That her shoulders shone, but her eyes were somewhere else. He saw that when he gave her gifts they no longer needed to be offered flat on the palms of his hands so that she wouldn't have to touch him. His boats and boxes. His little windmills. He saw too that he was not necessarily the only giver of gifts. That she had gifts to give him too. (176)

Example 84, They would try to tell themselves that in terms of geological time it was an insignificant event. Just a blink of the Earth Woman’s eye. That Worse Things had

happened. That Worse Things kept happening. But they would find no comfort in the thought. (55)

The “that” clauses in the above three examples take up the role of object: direct object in Example 27 and 275, indirect object in Example 84. In the first quote, the main clause is “He couldn't be expected to understand that”, of which the “that” at the end is repeated by the two separated “that” clauses following. Each of the separated clauses can be joined to the main clause on replacing the original “that” without making any grammatical alteration. In this example, the fragments can be joined and rewritten as: 1) He couldn't be expected to understand that the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other. 2) He couldn't be expected to understand that the two things fitted together. This rewriting can be applied to the other two quotes above in which the “that” clause fragments are the objects. In Example 275, there are three main clauses begun with “He saw that...” and are entailed by two subordinate clauses, one grammatically linked and one separated by periods. They can be reformed as: 1) he saw that Rahel's mother was a woman. 2) He saw that she had deep dimples when she smiled and that they stayed on long after her smile left her eyes. 3) He saw that her brown arms were round and fine and perfect. 4) He saw that her shoulders shone, but her eyes were somewhere else. 5) He saw too that he was not necessarily the only giver of gifts. 6) He saw too that she had gifts to give him too. As for the third example, similar to the last one, the main clause has a tied-in subordinate clause already which is the indirect object, but still, with the writer’s manipulation, there are two more “that” clauses scattered in the same paragraph. So, three new complex sentences emerge after rephrasing: 1) They would try to tell themselves that in terms of geological time it was an insignificant event. 2) They would try to tell themselves that Worse Things had happened. 3) They would try to tell themselves that Worse Things kept happening. This rewriting exercise shows that the fragments can be easily linked up and form complex sentences. It is Roy’s intention to cut them up and leave them grammatically “incorrect”.

In the following, there are two other excerpts in which the “that” clauses are adverbials if viewed as part of the closest previous main clauses.

Example 49, Perhaps it's true that things can change in a day. That a few dozen hours can affect the outcome of whole lifetimes. And that when they do, those few dozen

hours, like the salvaged remains of a burned house - the charred clock, the singed photograph, the scorched furniture - must be resurrected from the ruins and examined. Preserved. Accounted for. (32)

Example 82, They thought about it often. The house on the other side of the river. Looming in the Heart of Darkness. A house they couldn't enter, full of whispers they couldn't understand. They didn't know then, that soon they *would* go in. That they would cross the river and be where they weren't supposed to be, with a man they weren't supposed to love. That they would watch with dinner-plate eyes as history revealed itself to them in the back verandah. (55)

Just as has been demonstrated in the rewriting exercise above, the “that” clauses in these two examples can be incorporated into the main clauses without making any grammatical alteration, but since they are comparatively long, I think if they are not started with the signifier “that”, they may as well be a complete sentence on their own. By omitting the first words, from Example 49, we have: 1) A few dozen hours can affect the outcome of whole lifetimes. 2) When they do, those few dozen hours, like the salvaged remains of a burned house - the charred clock, the singed photograph, the scorched furniture - must be resurrected from the ruins and examined; from example 42, we have: 1) They would cross the river and be where they weren't supposed to be, with a man they weren't supposed to love. 2) They would watch with dinner-plate eyes as history revealed itself to them in the back verandah. These lines read perfectly well as independent sentences; viewed in this way, perhaps some of the “that” clauses are redundantly formed and Roy simply adds in “that” at the beginning so as to create a stylistically complex impression. The repetition of “that” also gives a rather pressing and intense feeling, especially when the text is rendered orally.

Apart from “that”, some other different signifiers are also found in the text, though they are much rarer in comparison. The reason behind the abundance of “that” can be due to the inclusive nature of the word that it can refer generally to all things, places and matters, while other signifiers such as those in the following examples have their specificity in types of entities. Here in the first excerpt, Example 224, there are three fragments beginning with “who” which directly points at a particular person and the character is Ammu. The fragment in the second one, Example 496, uses “whose” and “where”, which refer to a particular place and its qualities, and in this case is the “history house”. Lastly, in Example 519, there are “when” and “while” to refer to

moments in time, which is Velutha's moment of enlightenment when he peeped at Ammu on the veranda of the Ayemenem house.

Example 244, Little Ammu. Who never completed her corrections. Who had to pack her bags and leave. Because she had no Locusts Stand I. Because Chacko said she had destroyed enough already. Who came back to Ayemenem with asthma and a rattle in her chest that sounded like a faraway man shouting. Estha never saw her like that. Wild. Sick. Sad. (159)

Example 469, Old scars slashed across their bark. Sealed. Healed. Untapped. Acres of this, and then, a grassy clearing. A house. The History House. Whose doors were locked and windows open. With cold stone floors and billowing, ship-shaped shadows on the walls. Where waxy ancestors with tough toe-nails and breath that smelled of yellow maps whispered papery whispers. Where translucent lizards lived behind old paintings. Where dreams were captured and re-dreamed. Where an old Englishman ghost, sickled to a tree, was abrogated by a pair of two-egg twins - a Mobile- Republic with a Puff who had planted a Marxist flag in the earth beside him. As the platoon of policemen minced past they didn't hear him beg. In his kind-missionary voice. *Excuse me, would you, umm. . .you wouldn't happen. to umm . . . I don't suppose you'd have a cigar on you? No? . . . No, I didn't think so.* The History House. Where, in the years that followed, the Terror (still-to-come) would be buried in a shallow grave. Hidden under the happy humming of hotel cooks. The humbling of old communists. The slow death of dancers. The toy histories that rich tourists came to play with. (306)

Example 519, That knowledge had slid into him that afternoon. Cleanly. Like the sharp edge of a knife. When history had slipped up. While he had held her little daughter in his arms. When her eyes had told him he was not the only giver of gifts. That she had gifts to give him too, that in return for his boats, his boxes, his small windmills, she would trade her deep dimples when she smiled. Her smooth brown skin. Her shining shoulders. Her eyes that were always somewhere else. (332)

No matter what signifier is adopted, this type of fragmentary subordinate clause cluster does not fail to achieve a poetic sense by inserting pauses, repetitions of words and structures which create cadence and rhythm. The periods signaling the end of each fragment may act as line breaks in a stanza as well. This poetic-prose feature of Roy's novel has been commented upon by many critics, and even Roy admitted personally that a lullaby-like structure helps "take away the shock of the plot" (<http://website.lineone.net/~jon.simmons/roy/tghost4.htm>).

Pattern 3: Adjectival/adverbial fragments

On discussing the characteristics of “like” fragments, one of Roy’s motives for adopting plenty of metaphor in the text is her indulgence in detailed descriptions and image depictions. Here in this section, we will look at a more direct and primary language device for description, which is the use of adjectival and adverbial phrases in the text. Since it is already discussed earlier in the lexical category that Roy is very fond of using adjectives in clusters, I am focusing on longer adjectival and adverbial phrases here. Moreover, while this section is on Roy’s grammatical arrangements within sentences, it is essential for me to point out how many of these phrases are isolated as if they are independent sentences, or simply fragmentized. In the following, I am going to first discuss fragmentary primary adjectives and adverbs, then participles as adjective, and lastly longer adjectival and adverbial phrases.

a) Primary adjectives

Example 11, It stripped his thoughts of the words that described them and left them pared and naked. Unspeakable. Numb. And to an observer therefore, perhaps barely there. (12)

Example 31, The silence sat between grand-niece and baby grand aunt like a third person. A stranger. Swollen. Noxious. (21)

In the two examples above, the fragmentized pairs of adjectives, “unspeakable”, “numb”, “swollen” and “noxious”, are all about blocking of communications, which in the first case represents Estha’s retreat from speaking and the second case the absence of exchange between Rahel and Baby Kochamma. The way two adjectives are placed side by side, but isolated by periods, symbolizes how two persons, or in Estha’s case him and his confronting ego, choose to ostracize themselves. Such a fragmentary arrangement provides visual effect for the meaning the words are embedding and in the quoted examples, the single adjective sentences put weight on the sense of wordlessness brought forth in the content.

b) Participle as adjectives

Participles are found widely used by Roy for descriptive purposes. I list here four representative excerpts:

Example 12, People got used to seeing him on the road. A well-dressed man with a quiet walk. His face grew dark and outdoorsy. Rugged. Wrinkled by the sun. (13)

Example 94, Within minutes there was no one on the road. Except Murlidharan. Perched with his bum on the burning milestone. Unperturbed and only mildly curious. There was hustle-bustle. And police whistles. (64)

Example 317, What was Estha sitting on? On what they always sat on under the mangosteen tree.

Something grey and grizzled. Covered in moss and lichen, smothered in ferns. Something that the earth had claimed. Not a log. Not a rock...Before she completed the thought, Rahel was up and running. Through the kitchen, past Kochu Maria fast asleep. Thick wrinkled like a sudden rhinoceros in a frilly apron. Past the factory. Tumbling barefoot through the greenheat, followed by a yellow wasp. (201)

Instead of putting adjectives, or participle phrases in front of the entity being described, Roy chooses to put them at the back, separately. This kind of construction actually amplifies the images produced a great deal. In discourse analysis, it is said that one tends to put the known ideas at the beginning of a discourse and the unknown ideas at the rear. This ordering format facilitates communication because the familiar knowledge at the onset helps catch the receivers' attention and prepares them for the more important things. This theory in discourse studies tells us that we tend to concentrate more on what is at the end in receiving a string of information. So, looking back at the sentence structures of Roy, it seems that she is very conscious about the effect of her descriptions, which offer ample visual details and a sense of touch. Say in example 12, Estha's face was said to be "rugged" and "wrinkled by the sun"; in Example 317, Kochu Maria in sleep is described as "thick wrinkled like a sudden rhinoceros in a frilly apron" and the deserted boat Estha sat on and Rahel found is "covered in moss and lichen, smothered in ferns".

Apart from adding texture to objects, Roy is very keen on creating amusing images, like in Example 94, where the madman Murlidharan is fully elaborated as "Perched with his bum on the burning milestone. Unperturbed and only mildly curious".

These absurd but highly rhythmic descriptive phrases taking the end position serve well the function of a comic punch line, which constitute a style of joke telling in the novel. Such comic effect also produces a sarcastic tone which teases at the downfall of the Ipe family. It is narrated in the story that when Chacko, a chauvinist and mediocrity in business management, dominated the pickle factory, problems started to occur. So, when the love affair between Ammu and Velutha is exposed, the family, especially Baby Kochamma, is extremely eager to save the family reputation. They are so anxious that they simply expel Velutha, who is actually the true keeper of the factory. The irony part is that given the aim of the Ipes is supposed to be protecting the family name, they did something which stimulated their downfall instead. Their futile attempt to save the family name, which is part of the main action of the book, thus can be one element driving Roy to a prevalent sarcastic register.

c) Other post-modifying adjectival and adverbial phrases

Example 79, Very few people had seen it. But the twins could picture it. The History House. With cool stone floors and dim walls and billowing ship-shaped shadows. (53)

Example 65, Ammu felt the woman that looked back at her was someone else. A foolish jeweled bride. Her silk sunset-coloured sari shot with gold. Rings on every finger. White dots of sandalwood paste over her arched eyebrows. (43)

The above two quotes demonstrate how Roy adapted fragmentary phrases to post-modify things and people. The underlined phrases in both of the excerpts are adjectival: “With cool stone floors and dim walls and billowing ship-shaped shadows.” The former describes the house, and the latter example describes Ammu’s appearance as a bride.

While the above are adjectival fragments, the examples quotes below are adverbials.

Example 61, Ammu left her husband and returned, unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenem. To everything that she had fled from only a few years ago. (42)

Example 302, Ousa [...] watched him walk. Past floating yellow limes in brine that needed prodding from time to time (or else islands of black fungus formed like frilled mushrooms in a clear soup). Past green mangoes, cut and stuffed with turmeric and chilli powder and tied together with twine. (they needed no attention for a while.) Past glass

casks of vinegar with corks. Past shelves of pectin and preservatives. Past trays of bitter gourd, with knives and coloured fingerguards. Past gunny bags bulging with garlic and small onions. Past mounds of fresh green peppercorns. Past a heap of banana peels on the floor (preserved for the pigs' dinner). Past the label cupboard full of labels. Past the glue. Past the glue-brush. Past an iron tub of empty bottles floating in soapbubbled water. Past the lemon squash. The grape-crush. And back. (193)

Example 536, They had nothing. No future. So they stuck to the small things. They laughed at ant-bites on each other's bottoms. At clumsy caterpillars sliding off the ends of leaves, at overturned beetles that couldn't right themselves. At the pair of small fish that always sought Velutha out in the river and bit him. At a particularly devout praying mantis. At the minute spider who lived in a crack in the wall of the black verandah of the History House and camouflaged himself by covering his body with bits of rubbish - a sliver of wasp wing. (338)

Coincidentally, all three of the above excerpts involve repetition: “to” pattern in the first one, “past” structure in the second one and the “at” pattern in the last one. In fact, these repeated adverbials are very abundant in the text and they are usually loaded after the respected entities, dragging behind like a tail. So, while the fragmentary form creates a brisk rhythm, the long repetitions of some simple patterns manage to produce a run-on effect. Such contrasts in phonological arrangement stimulate the rise and fall in speed and tone, thus resulting in a prose with musical quality or a lyrical nature.

In these excerpts, the adverbials, though separated by periods can actually join the end of the main sentence that they originally stemmed from. For instance, the adverbials in Example 302 can be linked to the main clause as “Ousa watched him walk past floating yellow limes in brine”. The whole idea behind this writing style is like the structure of a tree: there is a mother trunk, the main clause and plenty of smaller branches, post-modifying adverbials. Although the mother trunk is the structurally more salient part, the branches are somehow more visually prominent. Applying to Roy’s syntactic arrangement, readers’ attention is frequently directed to the lengthy adverbials presenting numerous detail of motions and events. This certainly illustrates once again Roy’s consistent urge to execute fine portrayals, which in a way reveal empirically what is implied in the title of the book *The God of Small Things*. The story of the novel dwells on the alternative, unnoticeable version of history that Rahel and Estha experienced in their childhood. As the same time, the “big things” in the book, especially those characters in power, like the police and the male chauvinists, are very

evilly portrayed. By focusing on detailed descriptions, Roy brings out the theme in a matching style, and echoes suitably that in the repressive society set in the novel, only by focusing on the small things can one seek possible confrontation.

Pattern 4: “And”, “But”, “Or” fragments

Coordinative conjunctions are traditionally used in the middle of a sentence to join two clauses with the same level of importance; however, the practice of starting a sentence with “and”, “but” and “or” has eventually become more acceptable. In fact, it has penetrated gradually into the style of some contemporary fiction writers, like Amy Tan and Roy. A glimpse of Tan’s second novel *The Kitchen God’s Wife* (1991) may offer a general idea of the intensity of this kind of fragment in a contemporary literary text:

A middle-class Chinese person would have to work more than ten years to earn that sum of money. But it did not mean the Wen family was really giving my father that money. He was supposed to hand back the money on my wedding day, give it to the Wen family, saying, “You are sharing a lifetime of your family’s wealth with my daughter. That’s already enough.”
And my father was then expected to give me a money dowry that was the same size as their gift, telling me, “This is some extra money so you are not too much of a burden on your new family.” And that money would be mine, put into a bank account under my name. I didn’t have to share it. No one could take it away from me. But it would be the only money I would have for my entire lifetime. (142)

To begin a sentence with these simple conjunctions is a very interesting phenomenon because this kind of writing is in a sense imitating speech. Discourse analysis teaches us that speech tends to allow more variation in grammatical rules than its written form due to its transient quality. In other words, since words formed, articulated and received cannot be erased and re-pronounced—thinking and speaking processes run simultaneously during the fast turn-taking—conversations largely consist of mostly simpler grammar words aiming for efficient understanding. Moreover, punctuation is in fact non-existent in speech; it is only assumed that longer pauses are stops and therefore punctuated with periods. In many cases, when a speaker suddenly

adds another piece of information after a long pause and starts with “and”, it is then commonly regarded as opening a new sentence, which violates the grammar rules.

So, application of large numbers of some basic grammatical words like “and”, “but”, “or” becomes a general characteristic of spoken English, and such a specialty is also found in Roy’s text. Here are some of the excerpts:

Example 11, As Khubchand lay dying on his cushion, Estha could see the bedroom window reflected in his smooth, purple balls. And the sky beyond. And once a bird that flew across. (12)

Example 152, He saw, with gummy eyes, Estha Alone in his beige and pointy shoes. And his spoiled puff: The Man wiped his marble counter with a dirtcoloured rag. And he waited. And waiting he wiped. And wiping he waited. And watched Estha sing. (102)

Example 44, Perhaps, Ammu, Estha and she were the worst transgressors. But it wasn't just them. It was the others too. (31)

Example 7, When they left the police station Ammu was crying, so Estha and Rahel didn’t ask her what *veshya* meant. Or for that matter, illegitimate. (8)

Similar to the characteristics of the “that” fragments already discussed, the clauses in the above examples can actually get rid of the period and join the previous clause and be a legitimately grammatical sentence instead of being set apart. It is possible that Roy deliberately arranges the clauses this way for the purpose of emphasis, both orally and visually. In addition, Roy’s exploitation of such simple conjunctions to a certain extent resembles a child talking, for which we know the narrative voice is mostly Rahel, but whether it is Rahel as an adult or a child is not fixed. Rahel can be narrating from her childhood memory, trying to experience her life backward. That also explains why sometimes there are fairly complex patterns constructed with simple words, especially when they are densely and repeatedly used, like in Example 152. The series of short clauses “And he waited. And waiting he wiped. And wiping he waited. And watched Estha sing” is a rhythmic wordplay, the seemingly simple but complex style may be hinting that it is adult Rahel reliving her childhood. Also, the painstakingly complex combinations following the simple “and” can be a metaphor representing how the sexual assault done on Estha by the Orangedrink Lemondrink man in that scene is something too difficult for the simpleminded child to comprehend.

Pattern 5: Nouns filling in the missing subject references of pronouns

In contrast to traditional grammar, which teaches that one uses pronouns only after the particular noun reference has been mentioned, Roy reorders the usage by adopting a pronoun before its subject reference has appeared in the text. So, instead of ensuring the reference before applying a pronoun, she chooses to fill in the missing noun reference afterwards, after the sentence has ended. In the following examples, the underlined pronouns correspond with the underlined noun phrases.

Example 517, She couldn't believe it. The cheap coincidence of those words. (332)

Example 79, Very few people had seen it. But the twins could picture it. The History House. With cool stone floors and dim walls and billowing ship-shaped shadows. (53)

Example 82, They thought about it often. The house on the other side of the river. Looming in the Heart of Darkness. A house they couldn't enter, full of whispers they couldn't understand. (55)

Example 83, They smelled its smell and never forgot it. History's smell. Like old roses on a breeze. (55)

Example 535, It was a little cold. A little wet. A little quiet. The Air. (338)

The above quotes demonstrate one of Roy's constantly chosen techniques—leaving entities at the end of sentences for emphasis. The first three quotes apply the same skill of filling in the place of the object first with the pronoun “it”, which create a short suspense, before naming the real noun. The periods isolate the key nouns and form noun fragments, like “The cheap coincidence of those words.” and “The History House.”, which are highlighted visually, with the capitals, and orally, with the pauses inserted in front of and behind the noun fragment. As for Example 535, “it” is in the place of the subject, which could be performing a double function. Apart from being the pronoun of “the Air”, “it” can also be a dummy pronoun without a specific noun reference. The latter option opens the adjectives up to imagination; based on the context, “a little cold”, “a little wet” and “a little quiet” can be describing the lovemaking of Ammu and Velutha.

Prompted by the last interpretation, it appears to me that the way Roy put “it” before the real nouns, even though they are duplicating closely in the above cases, is in fact an attempt to imitate people's attitude towards certain events in 1960's Ayemenem.

Generally speaking, when people are embarrassed by something, or they regard it as a shame, they tend to avoid referring to it directly. People may try to use pronouns to touch upon it slightly, keeping a careful distance, which is exactly the idea in the quoted excerpts. In the above lines, Example 79, 82 and 83 are all talking about “the History House”, while Example 535 is hinting at the atmosphere when Velutha and Ammu’s lovemaking takes place. The three quotes on history are close to each other in distance. “History” in the three examples, according to the book’s description, is referring to the ancient Hindu caste system which constrains minds and restricts human behaviors, and most of all, love. “The History House” is the deserted house on the opposite side of the river where the twins later tried to hide from the adults after being shocked by the ostracism of Ammu. It is also where Estha and Rahel witnessed the police beat up Velutha, the man they both so painfully loved. As for “history’s smell”, it is the stink of blood that Estha smelled when he was led to see for the last time Velutha, who was by then captive and seriously wounded. Knowing that the four examples are in various ways all related to the theme of caste transgression, it is not hard then to understand why the “pronoun precede noun” pattern is adopted. Velutha and Ammu’s inter-caste love affair in the story is treated as an extremely shameful family scandal, which is far too embarrassing to be said aloud. It has become a kind of euphemism that Roy illustrates by building up hesitation with the doubtful “it”.

Apart from “it” in the above cases, other pronouns are also used in the same pattern.

Example 138, Rahel liked this. Holding the handbag. Everyone pissing in front of everyone. Like friends. She knew nothing then, of how precious a feeling this was. *Like friends. They* would never be together like this again. Ammu, Baby Kochamma and she. (95)

Example 191, Something lay buried in the ground. Under grass. Under twenty-three years of June rain. A small forgotten thing. Nothing that the world would miss. A child's plastic wristwatch with the time painted on it. Ten to two it said. (127)

In these two excerpts, in addition to inviting attention to the subject at the end, this arrangement manages to stimulate emotion. In the first one, Ammu, Baby Kochamma and Rahel, named together at the end, illustrates a poignant irony on what

happened as the story developed. The mother-daughter, aunt-niece and grandaunt-grandniece relationships totally fall apart. The other example acts like a riddle, in which numerous hints are dropped before the subject emerges. It creates a visual effect that “something” really lies below layers of earth, and layers of rhetoric, which requires one’s patience and fine observation to discover, just as how readers eventually realize the trivial story between two ordinary people and the unnoticeable trauma imprinted onto the children’s tiny minds.

Pattern 6: Metaphorical noun (phrase) fragments

Some nouns fragments have already been discussed previously; in the following, we will see how these phrases are metaphorical images separating from the subject as a different sentence.

Example 10, Estha carried them home in the crowded tram. A quiet bubble floating on a sea of noise. (11)

Example 84, They would try to tell themselves that in terms of geological time it was an insignificant event. Just a blink of the Earth Woman’s eye. (55)

Example 277, The froth of her stiff frock pressed rough lace flowers into Velutha's back. Lace flowers and a lucky leaf bloomed on a black back. (178)

Example 439, His feet walked him to the river. As though they were the leash and he was the dog. History walking the dog. (288)

The metaphorical noun phrases left alone are very effective in leaving clear images in reader’s mind, especially after lines of Roy’s run-on narrations. In the first two quotes, the isolated images embed a visual effect reinforcing the smallness of the subjects under portrayal, like in the first case, Estha, who had ceased to talk, was then occupying very little space on earth, and in the second case, the lifetime of human beings in terms of that of the Earth is utterly insignificant. Following this line of thought, the other two examples above also dwell on bringing up things that are largely unnoticed. Both Example 277 and 439 are about Velutha, who according to his caste is supposed to be the most unimportant person with the lowest possible status in society. The fragmentary metaphors match aptly his position; moreover, the imagery in the last example “history walking the dog” is referring to how Velutha was doomed to receive

the inevitable punishment for breaking the ancient law of caste segregation, and was eventually destroyed, erased by the upper caste authority. Although the unjust treatment of Velutha may as well be a case of murder, it did not hit home to the society at that time as he was trespassing on the limit of his caste. Since he was born as an untouchable, his words and actions and even his life will remain as invisible as his ancestors' swept-away footprints. In this light, the short noun fragments tied at the end of passages help illustrate this point.

In addition, some of the images in the metaphorical noun fragments in the text are rather amusing, serving another function of giving a touch of humor to the whole descriptive passage. The excerpts below are examples in which the underlined fragments act like punchlines in jokes.

Example 175, Chacko lay in bed in the pool of light from his bedside lamp. A fat man on a dark stage. (117)

Example 96, Within minutes, the road was swamped by thousands of marching people. Automobile islands in a river of people. (65)

Example 429, They sat beside each other on steel folding chairs, on the afternoon of the Day that Sophie Mol Came, sipping coffee and crunching banana chips. Dislodging with their tongues the sodden yellow mulch that stuck to the roofs of their mouths. The Small Thin Man and the Big Fat Man. Comic book adversaries in a still-to-come war. (280)

The separated images that we looked at in this section do not have any overt grammatical link to the previous sentences and clause in the same paragraph; instead, they are more subtly joined by cohesions in content. This marks another feature of style in Roy's novel.

3.4.2.2 Roy Style Marker 2—High Count of Noun Phrase Sequence

The other style marker in grammatical category is the listing of noun phrases. It is illustrated below that in some of the noun sequences, phrases are separated by periods, which results in a chain of noun fragments. On the other hand, some sequences only separate each phrase using a comma and form a non-stop flow of nouns. Example 127 shows the phenomenon in the first case, while Example 168 belongs to the latter.

Although the former example consists of longer phrases than those in the second example, which are mostly compound nouns such as, “roast chicken” and “finger chips”, it is not a must that shorter phrases are then marked by commas. It is observed in Example 161 further down that even though they are basically single-word nouns, like “neck”, “collar”, “hair” and “buns”, there is a period behind each noun. Therefore, I speculate that the difference in punctuation is more due to context and rhythm, rather than length of phrases.

Example 127, The terrible ghosts of impossible-to-forget toys clustered on the blades of the ceiling fan. A catapult. A Qantas koala (from Miss Mitten) with loosened button eyes. An inflatable goose (that had been burst with a policeman's cigarette). Two ballpoint pens with silent streetscapes and red London buses that floated up and down in them. (91)

Example 168, Chacko was in his room. Caught feasting. Roast chicken, finger chips, sweetcorn and chicken, soup, two parathas and vanilla ice cream with chocolate sauce. Sauce in a sauceboat. (114)

Example 240, Rahel groped behind the row of books and brought out hidden things. A smooth seashell and a spiky one. A plastic case for contact lenses. An orange pipette. A silver crucifix on a string of beads. Baby Kochamma's rosary. (155)

The noun sequences in the above three excerpts list out items in a row, but each of them is presenting a distinctive mood. First, the toys in Example 127 are what the twins felt reluctant to recall but impossible to forget. They are the “necessities” the twins brought across the river while preparing for their hiding place in the History House, and from where the two children eye-witnessed the beating of Velutha, a trauma overshadowing their entire lives. Due to the terrible memory implied in the toys, the noun phrases are fragmented to generate a lingering heavy sadness. The long tied-in post-modifiers, such as “Two ballpoint pens with silent streetscapes and red London buses that floated up and down in them”, also help slow down the speed of the sequence to remind readers that these children’s playthings are after all remains of the past sorrow. In contrast to the weighty atmosphere in the first excerpt, Example 168 is a sheer light-hearted list, naming all the food Chacko was feasting on. To enhance Chacko’s greedy but comical eating manner, the rhythm of the list is speeded up by avoiding long post-modifiers. Commas are also used for shorter pauses. Then, the third example

demonstrates a moderately gentle pace. The context is twenty-three years later when Rahel went back to the Ayemenem house. The noun fragments are the hidden items Rahel brought out from behind the dusty bookshelf that she was examining. Her manner should be unhurried but careful. To bring about this feeling, the noun phrases in this example are particularly tidy and identical in form: each of them is introduced by an article, an adjective and then perhaps a short prepositional phrase.

Example 240, A smooth seashell and
a spiky one.
A plastic case for contact lenses.
An orange pipette.
A silver crucifix on a string of beads.

The uniformity in this series is soothing to the ear. The comfort also echoes with the pleasant memory that the hidden items brought up, except Baby Kochamma's rosary which I think is a deliberate twist at the end.

The arrangements of the noun sequences in the following two examples also match well with the meaning of the passage.

Example 161, The back-inside smell. Fan shadows. Back of heads. Necks. Collars. Hair. Buns. Plaits. Ponytails. A fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo. A little girl and an ex-nun. (110)

Example 17, The world, locked out for years, suddenly flooded in, and now Estha couldn't hear himself for the noise. Trains. Traffic. Music. The Stock Market. A dam had burst and savage waters swept everything up in a swirling. Comets, violins, parades, loneliness, clouds, beards, bigots, lists, flags, earthquakes, despair were all swept up in a scrambled swirling. (15)

Example 161 separates each noun using periods, even though most of them are just single words. To me, the series can be a metaphor of the sitting arrangement in the cinema, where each person occupies one seat; also, the stops may as well be hinting at the slow and stuffy air inside the movie theatre. Lastly, Example 17 includes both of the two different arrangements, which presents a sharp contrast in reinforcing the relation between punctuation, content and rhythm that has formerly been illustrated. There are two sequences in the example, the first one is before the arrival of Rahel, when the world was locked out from Estha's mind; the other one is after Rahel came and broke

the lock so things just rushed in like bursting water. To emphasize the hindered connection to the outside world, the former sequence is shorter and marked with periods; on the contrary, the other one is much longer and marked with commas to emphasize on the endless flow of happenings from all over the world.

The last two excerpts here are composed of exceptionally long noun phrases. The way these long phrases, loaded with modifiers, are piled up is by now not surprising as a prominent style feature of Roy. What attracts my attention are the fantasy elements in the sequences:

Example 93, Murlidharan had no home, no doors to lock, but he had his old keys tied carefully around his waist. In a shining bunch. His mind was full of cupboards, cluttered with secret pleasures. An alarm clock. A red car with a musical horn. A red mug for the bathroom. A wife with a diamond. A briefcase with important papers. A coming home from the office. And I'm sorry, Colonel Sabhapathy, but I'm afraid I've said my say. And crisp banana chips for the children. (63)

Example 316, She could hear the blue cross-stitch afternoon. The slow ceiling fan. The sun behind the curtains. The yellow wasp wasping against the windowpane. In a dangerous dzzzz. A disbelieving lizard's blink. High-stepping chickens in the yard. The sound of the sun crinkling the washing. Crisping white bedsheets. Stiffening starched saris. Off-white and gold. Red ants on yellow stones. A hot cow feeling hot. Amhoo. In the distance. And the smell of a cunning Englishman ghost, sickled to a rubber tree, asking courteously for a cigar. 'Umm . . . excuse me? You wouldn't happen to have an umm...cigar, would you?' In a kind-schoolteacherly voice. *Oh dear.* (201)

The noun phrases in the two excerpts above are built around two respective loci: the imaginary past domestic life of Murlidharan and the quiet afternoon of the day when Sophie Mol arrived. It is obvious that the first one is depicting an unreal scene, with a made up line of conversation and made up belongings. As for Example 316, though the time of the scene has its real life reference in the story, the entire sequence is tinted with a drowsy mood, as if in a dream. There is adoption of personification, such as, “A disbelieving lizard’s blink” and “A hot crow feeling hot”; besides, the noun phrases are rife with descriptions that stimulate various human senses. For sense of sight, there are plenty of color words, such as “Red ants on yellow stones”; for sense of touch, there are words depicting textures, such as “Stiffening starched saris”; for the sense of hearing, there is an imagined line spoken by the Englishman ghost and the sound of nature, such

as “The yellow wasp wasping against the windowpane.” and “The sound of the sun crinkling the washing”. Moreover, some adverbial and adjectival phrases are inserted in between the noun phrases to enrich the saturated mood, such as, “In a dangerous dzzz” and “Off white and gold”. Critics refers to this type of writing style as “Magic Realism”, as fantasy and reality are blended together completely; other critics may also call this “stream of consciousness” and even compare Roy to Joyce. Whatever the name is, this kind of noun phrase sequencing is certainly one of Roy’s signature writing techniques in *The God of Small Things*.

3.4.3 Figures of Speech

This is the third category in the heuristic list of style features rendered by Leech and Short in *Style in Fiction* (1981) and in this section I will explore (selectively) how such figures constitute a further aspect of Roy's writing style. As is generally understood, figures, or figures of speech, according to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2004), are expressions that depart from the accepted literal sense or from the normal order of words, or where an emphasis is produced by patterns of sound. Figures of speech are generally considered important parts of literary works, especially in poetry or prose that has poetic qualities. Theorists of rhetoric traditionally sub-divide figures of speech into tropes (or "figures of thought") and schemes (or "rhetorical figures"). It is generally agreed in modern theory that tropes change or extend the meanings of words, whereas schemes merely rearrange their normal order or affect their impact upon an audience. Some of the major trope figures are metaphor, simile, irony and personification; rhetorical figures can enliven a point by techniques such as repeating words in various patterns, placing words in contrast together and assuming different modes of address. There is also a further category of figures that some rhetoricians describe as "figures of sound", which achieve emphasis by the repetition of sounds, as in rhymes and alliteration or other effects based on repetition. In Roy, the poetic effects of her style, referred to earlier, are also reflected and constitute a particular kind of "figures of sound" that is related to her playful way with language and her wish (at times) to mimic the manner in which children experiment with language (children being the main protagonists of the novel).

Leech and Short take a view of figures of speech that is obviously related to classical ideas but their description is somewhat different. They provide a broad explanation of figures of speech stating they are linguistic features fore-grounded by departing in some way from general norms of communication. This definition, though basically in accord with that found in the *Dictionary of Literary Terms* above, is of more immediate use in a stylistic analysis. They organize figures into the following sub-categories: 1) Grammatical and lexical schemes, 2) Phonological schemes, and 3) Tropes. For the purposes of my analysis I will rely on Leech and Short's taxonomy. In

my detailed analysis of the writing style of Roy, I have identified a total of five features that accord with Leech and Short's figures of speech, namely: Lexical Repetition, Structural Repetition, Rhythm, Neologism, Deviant Lexical Collocations, and other general Phonological and Graphological Deviations. The first two of these belong to Leech and Short's first sub-category, Grammatical and Lexical Schemes. I take the incidences of strong Rhythm as belonging to the sub-category of Phonological Schemes. Last, Neologisms, Deviant Lexical Collocations and Phonological and Graphological Deviations may be characterized in a general way as Tropes. However, in the interests of brevity and a wish not to obscure my main points with endless detail and examples, in this section of my thesis I will limit my analysis to selected features, namely: Lexical and Structural Repetition and Neologism. At the same time, it should be said that many aspects of Rhythm, Deviant Lexical Collocation and Graphological Deviation are referred to *inter alia* in the following analysis. There is considerable cross-over between these categories and it is hoped that my analysis will at least indicate to the reader the importance of those features of figures of speech that are not here given a separate sub-heading.

One further point needs to be made with respect to the databases established and which are included as Appendices. Unlike the analyses in the previous two categories, *Lexis* and *Grammar*, which are based on complete lists of examples, I have not produced a complete list of examples for all the five figures of speech listed above. This is because the figures investigated here stretch across numerous levels of style. For instance, neologism is on the lexical level, while repetition may concern the construction of the story, thus involving the structural level. Therefore it has proved rather inefficient to generate a list putting together all scattered examples as such a list would be very large indeed. Moreover, many of the figures are in fact branched from the previous two categories, *Lexis* and *Grammar*, hence there would be considerable repetition and redundancy. For instance, a type of repetition called anaphora is related to the use of sentence fragments and some deviant lexical collocations can be traced from the use of adjectives. For this reason, most of the excerpts analyzed in the following are extracted from the complete list of examples in other appendices.

3.4.3.1 Grammatical and lexical schemes

Roy Style Marker—Use of Repetition

Former critical studies note that the story of *The God of Small Things* has a circular time structure by which the writer tells the story not according to chronological order. Instead, Roy chooses to shuffle the time frames, which results in an effect whereby random scenes are built around the main theme, love and transgression. Since Roy is known to have received early training in architecture, some reviewers use the term “architectonic” to describe her style, referring metaphorically to her writing style by which events orbit the key idea, like a stairwell around a pole, that will eventually lead to the climax, the roof. This kind of writing is also multi-dimensional because without the restriction of time, readers can technically start reading the text at any point and still can understand the story, just as people are free to stare at a building from any angle and still make sense of it. Realizing the macro theory behind the book, it is then not unexpected to see an abundance of repetition. Part of the reason, I reckon, is to ensure cohesion, to make sure the scenes, which are taken from different spots on the timeline, can echo with each other in the form of meaning. In other words, repetition helps remind readers of scenes that the particular event is related to, which is important for people to keep track of the plot. There are diverse types of repetition mingling at various levels of the novel. In the following, I am going to look at repetition on the lexical, sentential and structural levels. For lexis, repetition of set phrases will be discussed; at the sentence level, we will look at repetitions of certain sentence patterns; and lastly at the structural level, I will consider repetitions of lines and images at different points of the book.

3.4.3.1.1 Lexical level—repetition of set phrases

By now, it is clear I hope that one of Roy’s characteristics in style is the tendency to multiply linguistic features so as to create a lush and dense picture. We have already seen this in her adjective sequences and rows of fragment series; yet, the same formula is also found in the way certain phrases are reused. The table below records a sample of

some of the most lively or significant phrases that, based on my intuitive observations, recur throughout the text. It is important to note that at first they are just compound nouns invented by Roy. They may not make much sense upon the first reading, they may even be awkwardly contradictory, but as they recurrently appear, the combinations start to become more stable in meaning and attain a kind of “fixed phrase” status. The seemingly meaningless compounds also reveal more sense as the storyline pushes forwards. When the new-formed nouns become ordinary within the context of the novel, they are fixed finally.

“Fixed” phrases	Page no.	No. of Counts
“Little man.”	51, 99, 100, 119, 163, 272, 294, 319, 325	9
“The God of Small Things.”	217, 220, 224, 265, 288, 290, 330	7
“Love Law”	33, 177, 233, 328	4
“Sudden smile”	175, 176, 217, 330, 334	4
“Thimble-drinker. Coffin-cartwheeler.”	135, 141, 251	3
“Upside down smile”	32, 320	2

Table 3.3 Distribution and appearance of selected “fixed” phrases in
The God of Small Things

After listing these phrases in the first column, tallying is carried out to find out how often each of them is repeated, while the page numbers are noted down for ease of reference.

Among the six selected phrases, “little man” is recorded to have been repeated the most number of times in the text, followed by “The God of Small Things”, “Love Law”, and “sudden smile”. The last two entries, “upside down smile” and “Thimble-drinker. Coffin-cartwheeler”, occur only twice, a surprisingly low number that contradicts sharply my subjective intuition. It seems that the notion from close reading that these two phrases recur many times in the text is a misguided perception, demonstrating perhaps the unreliability of subjective intuition. One possible reason is that there are similar words used in the text but not precisely in the same lexical combination. For instance, there are in fact many instances when the “silver thimble” is mentioned, as something Sophie Mol still clutched in her fist while she was drowning. The eccentricity of this phrase leaves a vivid image in readers’ mind; yet, the word

“thimble” does not collocate with “drinker” in the text. In this case, readers’ impression of repetition is influenced by multiple use of single words and depiction of unusual scenes, rather than the reappearance of the particular phrase itself. In other words, variations of particular words in phrases may give the impression of a greater frequency of the phrase than is actually the case.

The very low occurrence of “upside down smile” (also contradictory to intuitive perception in which the phrase seems to have a larger importance) demonstrates the same kind of misperception. The phrase originally describes the smile on Velutha’s seriously injured face when he sees Estha at the police station (implying a frown or a sad emoticon). It was the scene when Estha answers an obeying “yes” to a question, which he realizes years later has betrayed Velutha. The scene sentimentally marks the tragic ending of Velutha’s life, as well as that of Estha’s innocence. It is related in the novel that the ‘upside down smile’ is sealed in Estha’s mind since that time; it continues to haunt him twenty-three years later and still looms large in his moments of silent reflection. As the story shifts back and forth in time, the permanence of the peculiar smile gradually becomes sharper in the reader’s mind. A similar expression is echoed by Ammu’s “trying-not-to-cry mouth” (324) when she holds Estha’s hand through the Madras Mail window.

3.4.3.1.2 Sentential level—repetition of sentence patterns

In an earlier part of this thesis, it was shown that some sentence fragment sequences are built using the same patterns, such as the series of metaphorical fragments begun with “like”; subordinate fragments starting with “that” and “which”, and fragmentary clauses of which the first word is “and”, “but”, “or”. Schematically, formal structures tend to construct a regular rhythm. Some commentators point to the fact that the central characters are the twin children and thus regard metaphorical fragments that have a strong and consistently simple rhythm as an imitation of nursery rhymes. In addition to repetitive sentence patterns that show highly rhythmic features, some of the fragment sequences incorporate visual effects. The most commonly observed one in the text is that rows of fragments are arranged in stanzas, adopting the usual format of poetry.

In order to generate a full view of Roy's exploitation of repetitive sentence patterns in the text, I have created a collective database by putting together all the lines demonstrating the characteristics in question (Appendix 3). Although I refer to these as examples of repetitive "sentence" patterns, most of them cannot grammatically be called "sentences" (they are named "minor sentences", or "fragments" sometimes). The complete list of sentential repetitions has extracted 75 examples from the novel which are discussed in the following.

First, it should be acknowledged that the quantity of relevant examples collected in the database turns out to be less than expected intuitively. A possible reason may be that many of the most audacious linguistic innovations created by Roy are not in fact achieved by grammatical arrangements within a sentence; instead, they very often depend upon the content of the message that is encoded inter-sententially. I cite here a relevant excerpt from the book which, though not demonstrating a neat repetition similar to those captured in my database, still possesses a strong sense of unity and coherence, in particular when rendered orally.

Example 26, To learn her. Imprint her on his memory. To ensure that when he thought of her, the child that he invoked would be accurate. He memorized the brown down on her soft skull. The shape of her puckered, constantly moving mouth. The spaces between her toes. The suggestion of a mole. (117)

There are two sets of repetition in the above quote, but neither of them is a strict parallel. In the first set, although both the first and the third sentences start off with "to", this arrangement may not be considered as a repetition. Somehow, due to the fact that the second sentence reads like a continuation of the previous one, the repetition becomes suddenly tidy or uniform in sound. As for the second set, the last three sentences are all noun fragments starting with a noun, followed by a preposition. The repeated pattern is not especially vivid either, only the first word "the" is practically reused; yet, because the three noun fragments can aptly join the main clause at the front, that is "He memorized the brown down on her soft skull", the last four sentences are then merged into one when read out loud. To be frank, it is rather disillusioning that as Roy's prose is known for its elegant audaciousness, one finds a low intensity of direct repetition.

While it is shown here that a sense of unity can be created despite inexact repetition, the source of the small number of relevant excerpts must be noted.

Another observation to explain the comparative rarity of sentential repetitions is that most of the repeated “sentences” are in fact noun fragments. This kind of repetition is rather hard to define because in one way, to judge graphologically, they are sentential repetitions even though the words between periods do not make a grammatical construction. Roy’s indulgence in creating noun fragment series has already been thoroughly studied in the grammar section and does not here need reinforcement. Thus, not all examples of noun fragment repetition that appear in the text have been included in the database. Only those demonstrating some sentence pattern are chosen. See the following two examples:

Example 52, It gives him shape. Structure. It harnesses him. It contains him. His Love. His Madness. His Hope. His InffinateJoy. (231)

Example 72, He kissed her eyes. Her ears. Her breasts. Her belly. Her seven silver stretchmarks from her twins. (337)

The first one is collected in the list of examples because the noun fragment series matches well with the previous repetitive sentence pattern of “it” followed by a verb and then “him”. The switch from three-word sentences to two-word sentences with “his” being repeated also helps speed up the pace and enhance emotion. In contrast, Example 72 is included as a control, so as to illustrate that counting noun fragments itself is not a good way to exemplify repetition. Little of interest can be yielded in the light of sentence patterns because, under Roy’s stylistic manipulation, those fragments are, after all, noun phrases only. The lack of complex structure thus leads to the result that they are largely avoided in the subsequent analysis. In this sense, the deliberate attempt to expel marginal cases from the novel confined the number of examples in the list.

Having gone some way to account for the relatively small database of repeated sentences, I now turn to a discussion of the examples that are included. In the following, repetition from the novel will be discussed under the various rhetorical figures, namely anaphora, antistrophe, parison, and anadiplosis.

Anaphora

This device of repetition marks that the same word or phrase is repeated in, and usually at the beginning of, successive lines, clauses, or sentences. It is the characteristic most often seen in Roy's work, largely in the form of fragmentary sequencing. Here are some prominent examples:

Example 75, She touched him lightly with her fingers and left a trail of goosebumps on his skin. Like flat chalk on a blackboard. Like breeze in a paddyfield. Like jet-streaks in a blue church sky. (340)

Example 61, The History House.

Whose doors were locked and windows open.

With cold stone floors and billowing, ship-shaped shadows on the walls.

Where waxy ancestors with tough toe-nails and breath that smelled of yellow maps whispered papery whispers.

Where translucent lizards lived behind old paintings.

Where dreams were captured and re-dreamed.

Where an old Englishman ghost, sickled to a tree, was abrogated by a pair of two-egg twins - a Mobile- Republic with a Puff who had planted a Marxist flag in the earth beside him. (306)

Example 34,

Past floating yellow limes in brine that needed prodding from time to time (or else islands of black fungus formed like frilled mushrooms in a clear soup).

Past green mangoes, cut and stuffed with turmeric and chilli powder and tied together with twine. (they needed no attention for a while.)

Past glass casks of vinegar with corks.

Past shelves of pectin and preservatives.

Past trays of bitter gourd, with knives and coloured fingerguards.

Past gunny bags bulging with garlic and small onions.

Past mounds of fresh green peppercorns.

Past a heap of banana peels on the floor (preserved for the pigs' dinner).

Past the label cupboard full of labels.

Past the glue.

Past the glue-brush.

Past an iron tub of empty bottles floating in soapbubbled water.

Past the lemon squash.

The grape-crush.

And back. (194)

The above three excerpts demonstrate clearly how fragments are piled up by repeating the first words, which are "like", "where" and "past" respectively. The first one can actually be regarded as a parallel because apart from repeating the first word

“like”, each fragment is composed of a noun (“chalk”, “breeze”, “jet-streaks”) and a prepositional phrase (“on a blackboard”, “in a paddyfield”, “in a blue church sky”). These elements show that it is a tightly measured repetition.

As for the other two examples, one should notice the visual effects, by which fragments are put in linear form, constituting end-stop lines as in poetry. Such an arrangement intensifies pauses and cadences which consequently generate a bolder rhythm. In this sense, it is correct to note that Roy’s style approximates elements normally associated with poetry, specifically line arrangements and a strong sense of poetic rhythm.

Antistrophe

In rhetoric, antistrophe is the name given to two rhetorical figures of repetition. The first type is that the order of terms in one clause is reversed in the next.

Example 55, Work is Struggle. Struggle is Work. (268)

Example 22, The Man wiped his marble counter with a dirtcoloured rag. And he waited. And waiting he wiped. And wiping he waited. And watched Estha sing. (101)

This figure of reversed parallel composes mirror image sentences and so these compositions tend to possess a comical sense with a witty edge. Consider Example 55, the positions of “work” and “struggle” are swapped in the second sentence, which generates a huge irony regarding Comrade Pillai’s Communist movement in Kerala. It is a Communist doctrine that the People have to struggle in fighting for their ideal equality, which explains why “struggle” is their “work”; however, “Work is Struggle” can also be interpreted as one hates one’s job and thinks doing it is a struggle, an unbearable torture. It is portrayed in the book that Comrade Pillai was actually a pseudo-communist who did not mind bonding with Chacko, the owner of the Paradise, Pickles and Preserves factory, in order to obtain a printing contract and earn money to organize a workers’ movement. The reciprocal nature of his work and struggle echoes the reversed parallel slogan in his house. The figure of speech builds up a satirical, but at the same time, laughable effect.

The second example is also cunningly constructed. “And waiting he wiped” is a mirror image of “And wiping he waited”. Instead of producing a comic effect, the reversed parallel lengthens time and creates suspense by toying with the same words, which I think is very well managed. The reversed word order symbolizes the to and fro movement of the action of wiping. The alliteration of /w/, which is a rather rough sound, also hints at the danger hiding behind the unkind looking man behind the counter at the cinema. The application of the figure puts a strong enhancement on creating a spooky atmosphere foreseeing that something harmful to Estha is about to happen.

The second type of antistrophe refers to the technique that a word or phrase is repeated at the end of several successive clauses, lines, or sentences. This figure is comparatively rare in the text as Roy inclines to repeat the first word rather than the last one. Here are the examples marked:

Example 20, Rahel giggled. Ammu giggled. Baby Kochamma giggled. (95)

Example 22, In the lobby, the orangedrinks were waiting. The lemondinks were waiting. The melty chocolates were waiting. The electric blue foamleather car-sofas were waiting. The *Coming Soon!* posters were waiting. (101)

Example 63, She whispers.
She moves her mouth.
 Their beautiful mother's mouth. (327)

In spite of the few examples found, this kind of repetition evokes a mood distinct from using anaphora, repeating the first word, while the two figures, anaphora and antistrophe, seem to take up either ends of a sentence. It is illustrated in the previous section that anaphora gives a pushy feeling, quickens the speed of storytelling and tightens linkages between the lines; antistrophe on the contrary slows down the pace. It is best shown in Example 22, in which the meaning of “waiting” is emphasized by the repetition as if everything has joint force in expecting hideous things to happen. This “dovetail” effect does not always aim to foretell the worst, it can also generate a sense of unity. In the first example, a harmonious scene in the toilet is depicted in which the pattern ends with the word “giggled”, making laughter a contagious “virus” filling up the air in the cramped toilet cubicle. In addition, repeating the end word intensifies the atmosphere in a languid manner, such as the way “mouth” is repeated in the last quote,

which is portraying how Estha gradually accepted to recall the tragedy that happened in his childhood, especially Ammu and her death. The resemblance of Rahel's mouth to their mother's brings to mind the sorrow in the past, like an old wound torn open, and as the sadness accumulated, the twins were finally reunited, physically and mentally, back to the stage of their mother's womb where they knew each other before life began. The repetition in the narration is intended to build up the sad emotion gradually for the climax to take place.

Parison

Parison is the name in classical rhetoric which refers to parallelism, that is the arrangement of similarly constructed clauses, sentences, or verse lines in a pairing or other sequence suggesting some correspondence between them. Such a balanced arrangement is achieved through repetition of the same syntactic forms. Lines demonstrating parallel structures are very abundant in the book. Here I quote some of the examples:

Example 21, The orange too orange. The lemon too lemon. The chocolates too melty. (98)

Example 40, If he held her, he couldn't kiss her. If he kissed her, he couldn't see her. If he saw her, he couldn't feel her. (215)

Example 70, Her brownness against his blackness. Her softness against his hardness. Her nut-brown breasts (that wouldn't support a toothbrush) against his smooth ebony chest. (335)

Example 26, And so, out the gate, up the road, and to the left. The taxi stand. A hurt mother, an ex-nun, a hot child and a cold one. Six goose bumps and a moth. (112)

Parison is clearly a strengthening device; its ability to explicate multiple strands of detail within a context is shown in the three excerpts above. The first quote is taken from the description of the food and drinks served at the refreshment counter in Abhilash Talkies. The lines present a comical effect through the wordplay "too orange", which is grammatically acceptable since "orange" can be an adjective, but the case does not apply so clearly to "too lemon". Just when readers are expecting "too chocolate",

the sequence brings up “too melty” which is equally unacceptable (by conventional usage) because the word “melt” does not have such an adjective form.

While the wordplay in the first parallel set is amusing, the same figure in Example 40 and 70 is exotically sensual. Both of the two later excerpts dwell on the forbidden passion between Ammu and Velutha. The narration in Example 40 is around the one-arm man, the God of Small Things, in Ammu’s dream, in which the three sentences replay the same syntax of “If he (verb) her, he couldn’t (verb) her”. Despite the fact that the verbs used suggest the action of caressing, the syntactic form here, to me, is highly biological, and implies overt sexuality. The three parallel sentences produce a steady pace, faster for the “if” clause, slower for the main clause, one can easily imagine the balanced rhythm conducting Ammu and Velutha’s carnal excitement. Thus, the parallel structure of the clauses in this example symbolizes the unity, modulating the sequence of actions encoded in the words.

Parallelism is also evident in the second to last and last quotes, Examples 70 and 26. The first shows the same emphasis on the harmonious union of a male and female body, only that the verbs are not motion words but depict posture. So the three lines are in fact building on a freeze moment, when Ammu stood opposite to Velutha, skin to skin. The way Roy explores detail through the use of parallel syntax certainly puts weight on the sense of spiritual ecstasy in the love-making scene, which is a key action of the novel, the climax placed at the end. The last example is shown as it underscores the very high level of rhythmic insistence that Roy wishes to achieve. There is delight in the balance and movement of the words and it is this form of jaunty parallelism that marks a strong phonological characteristic.

Apart from the above effect on presenting the sex scenes, the arrangement of parallels in pairs can generate a kind of folk song style with regular rhythm, and tinted with a sense of lightheartedness, or even ruthlessness.

Example 53, He was grateful to her for not wanting to look after him. For not offering to tidy his room. For not being his cloying mother. Too much was happening in his life and Ayemenem seemed so far away. The river too small. The fish too few. (246)

The first set of parallel lines stem from the main clause at the beginning and is an extension of “for not wanting to look after him”, but then the clauses exist on their own

and form two fragments starting with “for not” and followed by a gerund. The second set is more snug which consists of four words in each fragment but both formed according to the pattern of “the”, followed by a noun, and then “too” accompanied with an adjective. The two parallel sets function very well in creating steady rhythms. To illustrate this point, the stressed syllables are highlighted in bold:

For **not** offering to **tidy** his **room**.

For **not** being his **cloying** **mother**.

The **river** **too** **small**.

The **fish** **too** **few**.

The marking above shows that the first two lines consist of four stresses each and the other two lines have three each. The same pattern of stress distribution offers a rather gentle and sure-footed rhythm. While the narration is about the occasion when Chacko first met Margaret Kochamma in his carefree student life, the regular rhythm resembles that of a folk song. The lighthearted beats matches and reinforces his casual lifestyle and hints at his juvenile disrespectfulness towards his mother and family.

Anadiplosis

This is rhetorical figure of repetition in which a word or phrase appears both at the end of one clause, sentence, or stanza, and at the beginning of the next, thus linking the two units. This device is not very often discovered in the novel, but when it is used, it tends to stir up a rise in the cadence, as well as in the flow of the rhythm. The effectiveness of anadiplosis can be seen in the following excerpts.

Example 12, And we cannot understand the whispering, because our minds have been invaded by a war. A war that we have won and lost. (53)

Example 47, The oil replenished the light. The light lit the tin. (229)

The first quote is taken from Chacko’s speech on the way to Cochin, during which he was condemning the people in the family for being anglophiles, and even going to see *the Sound of Music* is “an exercise of being an anglophile”. The “war” in Example 12 refers to the colonial invasion when India was made a British colony. The term “a war” is repeated here in order to tie in the significant post-colonial influence on

the Indian local mindset that Chacko wanted to convey. Although this extract of Chacko's speech is an irony to mock his bookish language and "Oxford mood", it demonstrates the major function of anadiplosis as to tie in additional meanings to a word phrase, usually a noun, by joining two clauses. The connection by repeating the same phrase in the middle enables a very strong emphasis.

The other excerpt above performs a slightly different purpose which focuses on composing the atmosphere. In Example 47, a smooth transition is constructed by using the object of the former sentence as the subject of the latter sentence, which successfully creates a floating, sense. Since the quote is taken from the prelude description before the story of the Kathakali dance began, the power of the light was magnified in the repetition, as if guiding one to cross the boundary and enter the unreal domain of storytelling. In this case, a drifting, dreamy mood with a transient quality is enhanced by adopting the particular pattern of repetition.

In addition, due to the prominent function of emphasis brought by anadiplosis, this device is found to create suspense, even premonitions of the development of the story. In the following extracts, both of the latter clauses are hinting at the tragic ending of the event that was started in the first clauses.

Example 35, An old river silence. The silence of Fisher People and waxy mermaids.
(200)

Example 54, To negotiate a friendship. A friendship that, unfortunately, would be left dangling. (267)

The first example is taken from the part when the twins were thinking out the plan of an alternative home across the river, when there was silence in the pickle factory on Sophie Mol's arrival. The first "silence" was the quietness for ideas to bloom, while the second "silence" is a deathly one mourning the loss of Sophie Mol, as the images of "Fisher People" and "waxy mermaids" are used later in depicting the scene when the drowned girl was found. The other example quoted above is also taken from the narration on the day when Sophie Mol arrived. It is telling how the half-British cousin looks in the suitcase for the gifts to be given to Estha and Rahel, which would serve as token for her to "negotiate a friendship". The first half of the excerpt is certainly about

the beginning of the children's bonding, while the second half is about the awkward ending of it, resulting in a cruel contrast between the innocence and the loss of innocence, implied in the two consecutive clauses respectively.

Apart from the different types of rhetorical tropes of repetition discussed above, there are in fact some other patterns of sentential repetitions adopted by Roy in the text. A popular one is direct transpositions of phrases and clauses in alternative lines.

Example 29,

'D'you know who Ariel was?' Baby Kochamma asked Sophie Mol. 'Ariel in *The Tempest*?'

Sophie Mol said she didn't.

"Where the bee sucks there suck I?" Baby Kochamma said.

Sophie Mol said she didn't.

"In a cowslip's bell I lie"?

Sophie Mol said she didn't. (144)

The above excerpt is comical in the way that, on one hand, the one-line paragraphs ring a bell of the arrangement of conversations on paper; on the other hand, the fast-moving exchange between the two parties presents such a huge gap in the richness of content. It is said that Baby Kochamma was trying to show off her English literary knowledge so as to differentiate herself from the "sweeper" class around them at the Cochin airport. She compared Sophie Mol to a fairy character in a Shakespearean play but Sophie Mol had genuinely no clue what the Baby grandaunt is talking about. The way "Sophie Mol said she didn't" is repeated three times after each of Baby Kochamma's increasingly desperate attempts to elaborate on her metaphor reinforces the little girl's blankness in mind which is in sharp contrast to the other speaker's complexity. It also amuses readers by teasing indirectly Baby Kochamma's yearning but futile effort in giving herself a blush. The embarrassing awkwardness of her behavior is thus obvious to the other characters present in that scene, as well as to the readers.

Apart from clause transposition, the following two quotes are examples of phrase transposition found in the text.

Example 31, She had no plans.

No plans.

No Locusts Stand I. (188)

Example 64, That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much. (328)

This kind of repetition is similar to anadiplosis, in which the last phrase in the previous line is also the first phrase in the line following, only that the repeated phrase here is separated as an individual “sentence”, punctuated by periods. This type of clustering is certainly one of Roy’s familiar stylistic choices of conveying messages in fragments; somehow, repeating part of an already short sentence and breaking it further down into single-phrases in fact evokes a very eye-catching effect and draws attentions not only to the particular fragment but the whole pattern.

3.4.3.1.3 Structural level

—repetition of lines and images at various points of the text

In the earlier analysis, we have seen that a number of sentence patterns are deduced from Roy’s use of adjectives in the text and some recurring throughout the book. This emerged as one of Roy’s characteristic structural elements because these repetitions enhance the cohesion within the novel. The most characteristic pattern is that the verb phrase is very often followed by the word “like” and then a noun pre-modified by adjectives and finally an adverbial phrase (refer to section 3.4.2.1.1).

As for repetitions of some lines that appear at various points of the novel, I have carried out some simple tallying for a few particularly impressive lines that, based on my intuitive observation, have been noted many times. The relevant statistical data is presented in the following table. A declaration should be made prior to the discussion that there is no deliberate intention in including fragments only; instead, it is entirely by chance that all the most memorable lines to me are fragmentary ones. Besides, most of the targets are not single lines only, but largely sets of fragments. It is perhaps not so surprising a situation because of the abundance of fragments in the novel, the significance of which has been noted earlier on. So, due to this fragmentary property of the target, words in respective lines are subjected to minor variations in repetition; however, as long as the key ideas and most of the lexical items are present, they are still

treated as repetitions of the same original line. The counting process is firstly done by technology, with the automatic searching function installed in the Microsoft Office software; afterwards, the data obtained is counterchecked manually so as to keep deviations to the minimum.

Lines	Page no.	No. of Counts
“Not old. Not young. But a viable die-able age.”	3, 92, 161, 327	4
“...who should be loved, and how. And how much.”	31, 33, 177, 328	4
“Things can change in a day.”	32, 192, 202, 339	4
“Like old roses on a breeze.”	6, 32, 55	3
“It was a little cold. A little wet. A little quiet. The Air.”	299, 328, 338	3
“And these are only small things.”	3, 148, 338	3
“Not rude. Not polite. Just quiet.”	14, 237	2

Table 3.4 Number of line repetitions in *The God of Small Things*

The table above shows that among the most commonly seen lines in the book, the top ranked ones are recorded to have been used four times, which is in fact a lot lower than my personal intuitive prediction. One reason can be deduced from the finding is that the effect is even more prominent than the repetitions. In other words, despite the low frequency, these sentences linger strongly in the memory. It is therefore possible that the influence of those lines on the reader does not actually depend on recurrent appearances. Rather, it is the distinctive sentential or lexical arrangement of the lines that deepens their effect on readers. To take the last example of the table to illustrate my point, “Not rude. Not polite. Just quiet.”, this sentence demonstrates a very stylish textual quality. Not only is it visually neat, its content and the arrangement taken together echo the predominating “Not old. Not young.” structure that was found to have been used more times. Thus, despite the fact that the particular set of lines has appeared only twice in the entire piece of prose, one has no problem reciting it from memory.

Stylistic intensity is established therefore not by repetition as such alone but by associated techniques.

As mentioned previously, sentential elements tend to vary in repetition. A freer form of creating a recurrent style is by rebuilding images. As shown in the table below, the number of counts is much higher than that found in table 3.4. Both the “moth” imagery and “a hole in the Universe” are recorded the greatest number of times, which was rather a confirmation of my intuitive recollection.

Imageries	Page no.	No. of Counts
<i>Moth</i>	112, 113, 117, 118, 136, 139, 145, 146, 198, 225, 293, 316, 329	13
<i>A hole in the Universe</i>	82(×4), 118, 143, 156, 179, 188, 191, 235, 250, 307	13
<i>Time was ten to two</i>	37, 64, 82, 96, 123, 127, 312	7
<i>Cupboard</i>	29, 63, 115, 140, 208, 326	6

Table 3.5 Frequency of image re-creations in *The God of Small Thing*

All the four images are in truth closely connected to the theme, in particular the highest ranking two are related to the two main chains of actions of the story. First, moth was first introduced to readers in Chapter 2 as Pappachi’s discovery of a moth of an unknown species which was unfortunately labelled not under his name. Since then, the moth represents Pappachi’s greatest disappointment in life, and as the story goes, it develops to symbolize despair, fear, worry, and other sorts of internal unrest in the girl Rahel’s mind. The lack of comfort in her mind was what added to Estha’s insecurity and drove her to prepare an alternative home across the river, which in turn directly leads to the tragedy. The other recurrent image, “a hole in the Universe”, first came out as a joke about a dead frog on the road which was so well-squashed that it looked like a frog-shaped hole on the road. It is later merged into Vellya Paapen’s saying of “a black cat-shaped hole in the Universe” and is used to represent the loss or, to be more specific, the people who got expelled from existence because they trespassed on some social rules, like Velutha and Ammu. The recurrent use of these images surely helps lay out a mood for the key action to happen. Also, the creative multiplication of images is quite amusing

and to a certain extent reminds readers of the anything-goes attitude that is commonly found in children.

Apart from these tightly constructed images, cross-referencing is very often found in the text to reinforce cohesion, presenting more systemically how one (unfortunate) even leads to another (unfortunate) event. A suitable example is the series of drink images in Estha's experience with fear. It is in the Abhilash Talkies that the Orangedrink Lemondrink man triggered off the whole series. The sexual assault Estha encountered sparked off his insecurity and his "home away from home" plan; ironically, the event was completed by another free bottle of fizzy drink—two cans of coca-cola were given to the twins at the police station after Sophie Mol was drowned and Velutha was arrested. The cross-referencing of drinks marks the beginning and the end of the trauma that ruins their entire lives, making one wonder whether their drinks are sweet cold beverages or toxic potions of tradition's vile impositions.

3.4.3.2 Tropes

Roy Style Marker —Neologisms

In contrast to schemes which mainly rearrange the normal order of words, tropes extend and change the meaning of words. Some major figures that are widely agreed as tropes are metaphor, irony and personification. Although these suggested three are thoroughly exploited in Roy's novel, in this last section on figures of speech, I am going to elaborate on, to me the most exaggerate trope device in *The God of Small Things*—neologism.

This figure is sometimes named "coinage", which refers to the same device of introducing newly-invented words into a text. This is one of the most prominent stylistic features of Roy, who basically disregards conventional grammar on lexical formation and is found extending forms, that are originally applied to some lexical items only, to all other types of words, resulting in an "anything goes" phenomenon. Generally speaking, Roy's word-invention follows a few key formulas. One the most commonly seen way is that new words are formed by direct merging of two lexical items graphologically as if they are legitimately one word-forms, such as "babylegs" and

“bluegreyblue”. Others, which are mainly inventive adjectives, are joined by hyphenating two items and sometimes with a tied-in adjectival suffix, such as “angry-coloured”, “fan-whirring” and “easy-to-understand”. Then, of course, there are many inventions that have forcefully incorporated prefixes and suffixes which are mismatched according to pedagogical grammar, such as, “hatted”, “melty” and “uncrumpled”. Since different types of lexis, including nouns, adjectives and verbs are integrated in the use of each techniques, in the following, the inventiveness of Roy’s lexical application will be studied under three topics, which are 1) patterns of hyphenations, 2) patterns of direct merging and 3) prefix/suffix building.

Pattern 1: Hyphenations

Most of the examples collected in this section serve as pre-modifiers of other nouns in the text. The most frequently seen are the “-shaped” and “-coloured” phrases, which are demonstrated in the following excerpts.

Example 104, She put her violin away into its black, violin-shaped box. (183)

Example 111, Where a red, tender-mango-shaped secret was pickled, sealed and put away. (192)

Example 101, An embarrassed schoolteacher-shaped hole in the Universe. (179)

Example 32, Rahel put on her sunglasses. The World became angry-coloured. (85)

Example 9, [...] tea-coloured puddles' the way memory bombs still, tea-coloured minds. (10)

The first three examples above demonstrate the “-shaped” pattern phrases, among which one can easily observe that the length of the lexical item linking with “shaped” can be quite variable. It ranges from one item “violin”, two hyphenated items “tender-mango” to two separated items “embarrassed schoolteacher”. Among the three quotes, Example 101 is particularly worth-noticing as it presents a two-fold modification. The compound noun “schoolteacher”, though in the main body of the whole underlined phrase, is pre-modified by the adjective “embarrassed” before joining “shaped” to pre-

modify the noun following, that is “hole”. This kind of multi-modification is consistent with other types of complex and wordy wordplays, which are very typically Roy.

As for the other two examples presenting the “-colored” pattern, one can probably see the way Roy describes colors metaphorically. “Tea” color in Example 9 is not hard to understand because tea is a physical entity in real world with mostly brown color; yet, “angry” used in Example 32 has no definite color. It is only from our metaphorical ideology that angry can be related to the color red and may be orange and yellow too, which is exactly the color of Rahel’s view after putting on her red sunglasses. In fact, there is another metaphorical example about color that is found in the text. It is not put together with the other examples above because it is not a pre-modifier and there is no hyphen.

Example 168, But painted in weathercolours now. (306)

Similar to “angry”, weather is not a tangible thing that has one color of its own; yet, the effect weather has on physical surfaces, especially the outer walls of buildings, very often causes fading, changes and loss in color. So one of the ways to interpret the compound noun “weathercolours” can be the colors resulted from corrosion of weather. Another explanation of the neologism is that weather to a large extent interferes with one’s feeling, such as one feels happier on a sunny day and more prone to depression on a grey day. In this sense, “weathercolours” can mean the various warm and cold tones of colors that have dappled the wall of the ancient house over the years. So this illustrates Roy’s metaphorical element in using the “-colored” pattern for pre-modification.

Nevertheless, the most obvious point is that the words “shape” and “color” are not used to pre-modify objects in conventional grammar. Also, the participle form of “-shaped” and “-colored” basically stems from Roy’s invention which shows that they are in fact coinage constructions. Now, we will move on to other hyphenation examples that act as adjectives. The following three examples are hyphenated phrases without adjectival suffix at the end.

Example 19, Reverend Ipe smiled his confident-ancestor smile out across the road instead of the river. (30)

Example 35, The terrible ghosts of impossible-to-forget toys clustered on the blades of the ceiling fan. (91)

Example 94, There was a short, Sad-About-Joe silence. (173)

The uniqueness of these kinds of phrase is that the adjective phrases can be presented in the form of a post-modifying clause so as to suit the grammar rules. So, after rewriting the three examples should become:

Example 19, Reverend Ipe smiled his smile out across the road like a confident ancestor. (30)

Example 35, The terrible ghosts of toys, which are impossible to forget, clustered on the blades of the ceiling fan. (91)

Example 94, There was a short silence, when everybody was sad about Joe. (173)

This method of post-modification with additional clauses, though it saves the sentences from trespassing against grammar rules, the lines lose their originally rich, dense and somewhat clumsy quality, which I think should probably be the effect Roy was intentionally aiming for. The lush sentence structure of Roy, as discussed previously, is deliberately designed to match the hot and humid weather of Kerala, the setting of the story, which was an atmosphere full of life and fecundity. The saturated sensuality can only be portrayed with a relatively complex style, loaded with intense adjectival elements. I believe that is why Roy chooses to pre-modify objects, even though the pre-modifying phrases are long and complicated.

Lastly, I will point out some other forms of the hyphenated pre-modifiers, so as to give an overall impression of the diversity of Roy's self-imposed freedom in using hyphens.

Example 119, And that inside, map-breath'd ancestors with tough toe-nails whispered to the lizards on the wall. (199)

Example 73, She turned around to find her crisp-knickered daughter communing with cement marsupials. (141)

Example 139, Inside, everything was white-walled, moss-tiled and moonlit. (228)

Example 42, The Torch Man opened the heavy Princess Circle door into the fan-whirring, peanut-crunching darkness. (98)

Example 38, In their irreconcilable far-apartness. (93)

The first three examples are of the same format that the last word item of the hyphenated phrase are tied with an “-ed” to make it a participle, while the phrases in the other two examples are tied with “-ing” and “-ness” respectively. The last quote, Example 38, is special in the sense that it is not a modifier but a noun phrase, so as Example 42 in which the two phrases are trying to pass as adjectives. Yet, as demonstrated earlier on, the words in the top three examples actually do not possess a participle form. They are not designed to pre-modify but post-modify using addition clauses, though Roy deliberately twists them for literary purpose. Nonetheless, no matter it is describing characters (Example 119 and 73), settings (Example 139 and 42), or serving as a noun (Example 38), the hyphenated phrases present the same degree of oddity in grammar. Roy’s motive behind ignoring grammar rules was formerly studied as a way to enhance childishness in the text due to the obvious reason that the protagonists are a pair of children. It is imitating the manner when children, given their limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge, make a rough attempt to interpret linguistically the complicated world of adults.

Pattern 2: Direct merging

Direct merging refers to the way one word is joined graphologically to another word so as to create a new word with a new imbued meaning. I personally found this type of neologism most amusing as it allows the greatest freedom for wordplays. The simple logic of connecting two lexical items to convey a combined meaning also implies some childishness which echoes the predominating mentality of the twin children characters. In the interpretation below, examples of newly-formed nouns will be discussed first, which will be closely followed by inventive adjectives.

Example 5, The singing stopped for a 'Whatisit? Whathappened?' and for a furrywhirring and a sariflapping. (6)

Example 7, She heard (on Sophie Mol's behalf), the softsounds of the red mud and the hardsounds of the orange late rite that spoiled the shining coffin polish. She heard the dullthudding through the polished coffin wood, through the satin coffin lining. (7)

Example 123, A grey old boatplant with boatflowers and boatfruit And underneath, a boat-shaped patch of withered grass. A scurrying, hurrying boatworld. (202)

All the three excerpts quoted above demonstrate high flexibility in the creation of nouns and each of the examples possesses its own characteristics that will be elaborated respectively. The first extract was taken from the funeral scene when a baby bat was found creeping up Baby Kochamma's sari when her frantic reaction caused a stir in the church. There are three inventive nouns in the quoted line of which the first one "Whatisit? Whathappened?" is a straightforward transformation from a discourse to a noun, while the latter two new lexes "furrywhirring" and "sariflapping" are in fact creative gerunds. All three of them are originally composed of more than one lexical item, but they are jammed together in forming new nouns. On interpretation of meanings, the discourse that was created in the first new noun conveys its meaning metaphorically as the questions were formerly asked by the funeral participants shocked by the interruption, but then they are adopted to represent a chaotic interval upon becoming a noun. The originally specific discourse was then generalized in the course of the transformation. As for the two creative gerunds, their target form is by nature rather general, such as "singing" and "dancing"; yet, by putting the object noun in the front, the meaning becomes more specific, which is also what makes it deviate from ordinary gerunds.

In the second excerpt above, there are three inventive nouns that are examples of an adjective merged with a rather general noun, and result in a sub-category of the nouns. The noun "sound" in "hardsound" and "softsound"; the gerund 'thudding' in "dullthudding" are the general words. With the adjectives "hard", "soft" and "dull", a kind of detailed specificity is enforced as if there is an urgency to distinguish the particular kind of sound and thudding to other kinds of sound and thudding. Since the example is quoted from Sophie Mol's funeral scene when Rahel observed indulgently how soil was thrown over her coffin, the inventive sub-categories of words imply the

child's fearlessness, attentiveness and curiosity towards her first encounter with real death.

The third excerpt above, Example 123, is the most interesting one to me as the word "boat" is added in front of a number of nouns "plant", "flowers" and "fruit" to give a new identity to them for being in the "boatworld", the undisturbed world under the inverted boat until it was unearthed by the twins. Similar to the purpose of the pre-modifying nouns in Example 7, the way "boat" is merged with the ordinary nouns is like putting a label on them so that they are identified as the particular species grown under the boat. This fine division of an alternative marked the twins' eagerness in building a world of their own, "a home away from home", where they ceased from being transgressors (hybrid children of a divorced mother), freed from adult stubbornness to seek a true sense of security.

The following two examples highlight how the merged words serve as adjectives to describe complicated feelings and moods.

Example 54, He had a greenwavy, thick-watery, lumpy, seaweedy, floaty, bottomless-bottomful feeling. (107)

Example 154, A rushing, rolling, fishswimming silence. (293)

In the first example, "greenwavy" combined "green" and "wave" with an adjectival ending, while "bottomlessbottomful" simply merged two adjectives "bottomless" and "bottomful" together. They are describing the sickening feeling Estha suffered in his stomach, which is actually rather hard to describe for children as well as for adults. The same as in Example 154 when the silence of the river is described, it is very hard to capture the not totally unperturbed silence of a river as there are always subtle stirrings under the water. So, again, taking the view point of children, simple words "fish" and "swimming" are merged together to make a relatively more complicated adjective. The painstaking attempt is childish and amusing but at the same time heartbreakingly desperate.

Pattern 3: Prefix/ suffix building

Some of the above examples have demonstrated prefix/ suffix building to turn a particular word into a noun or adjective which are in fact violating grammar rules. This type of neologism is fairly simple in logic, which keeps reminding readers of the children protagonists in the book. Somehow, it is said in the story that they always found learning English a struggle. Applying this to the inventiveness in forming English words in text, it is to some extent reflecting the way children exercise their imagination to learn, that is, in other words, trial and error. In this part, we will first look at some more general examples how words change their forms to look like the other types of word. Thereafter, we will look at some more specific examples in which neologisms perform some literary functions.

The following four excerpts are relatively broad examples of how words transform by putting on prefixes/ suffixes.

Example 13, A professional omeletteer. (14)

Example 67, She arrived on the Bombay-Cochin flight. Hatted, bell-bottomed and Loved from the Beginning. (135)

Example 89, The way she held their faces steady with one hand (squashed-cheeked, fish-mouthed) while she parted and combed their hair with the other. (163)

Example 23, The fate of the wretched Man-less woman. The sad, Father Mulligan-less Baby Kochamma. (45)

The inventive “omeletteer” in Example 13 has its root from words like “engineer” and “pioneer”, but to the majority it is reasonably hard to regard omelette constituting a profession. In a way, I think the “-eer” suffix has successfully “borrowed” an association with the professional sector, which can be seen as the hidden purpose behind the awkwardly put phrase. Since “professional omeletteer” is in fact referring to Comrade Pillai, the oddity of the lexical collocation helps ring a bell to readers about what he has carried out, that is his act of sacrificing Velutha (an egg) so as to arouse public hatred towards the capitalists and thus support the communists (omelette).

While in the first example the word remains a noun, the rest of the above examples switch from being a noun to an adjective. The inventive words in Examples

67 and 89 are about appearance; for instance, a hat and a pair of bell-bottom trousers are what Sophie Mol was wearing when she first arrived, but then “-ed” was added and the nouns become adjectives “hatted” and “bell-bottomed”. To form adjectives from garments may be easily done, but not for those demonstrated in the next excerpt. They are also neologisms of appearance but this time related to facial expressions. In Example 89, “squashed-cheeked” and “fishmouthed” are obviously developed from “face got squashed” and “mouth like that of fish”. The visual images of Estha and Rahel being held by Ammu who was trying to comb their hair violently is already a funny scene. The comic element is then enhanced by presenting the description in condensed adjective form. Also, as the latter one is metaphorically based on the comparison between the mouths of the twins and that of fish, the compressed compound noun/adjective is very concise in throwing the humor out in one go.

The last quote, on the contrary, chooses to elaborate in using neologism. In Example 23, “Man-less” is further clarified by the second inventive phrase “Father Mulligan-less” to focus on Baby Kochamma and to tease her withered clinging to her disappointed love, which taunted her and made her extraordinarily evil-hearted. The elaboration by the newly-formed word certainly helps draw attention to her embarrassing marital status which leads her to despise Ammu so severely, who was also a “man-less” woman but resulting from, even more shamefully, divorce from inter-communal marriage.

In the introductory section of figures, it is said that tropes manipulate the sense of words by definition. In the two examples below, it seems that the unusual events and situations can only be effectively articulated in coinages.

Example 8, And now, twenty-three years later, their father had re-Returned Estha. (9)

Example 143, The dejammed strawberries were summoned one by one, and sliced into delicate pieces. (242)

In the first example, “re-Returned” refers to how Estha, who was supposed to be kept by his father when his parents divorced, was sent back to his father after Sophie Mol died and Ammu was evicted. It was the first “return”, while the second one was that Estha’s father had a work transition and refused to bring Estha along, so Estha was

returned again, back to Ayemenem. To say “returned again” does not entirely capture the repetitive way in which Estha kept being pushed to and fro like an unwanted parcel. The newly-formed word in this case is actually useful in explaining a unique situation within the context of the story. It is a message that the existing words and phrases are not able to encode and get across, at least not completely.

The same idea is also illustrated in Example 143 when the breakfast ritual of Chacko in a café in Oxford is being narrated. It is depicted that Chacko picked the strawberries out of the strawberry jam and put them on the side of his plate until the strawberries were sliced and placed on little squares of toast. It is certainly quite an unusual eating habit and there is genuinely no short and precise adjective to indicate the status of the strawberries except by saying that “those strawberries that are picked out from the strawberry jam”. So, it seems that the inventive word “dejammed” is an effective word, if not the only one, to specify the said entity conclusively. That is how the trope of neologism alters word sense so that words can adjust to accurately carry meanings that are unique to the particular context.

Very often, some of the neologisms in the text are formed to cast parallel effects. Here are some excerpts.

Example 22, As though she had temporarily set aside the morality of motherhood and divorceehood. (44)

Example 62, A dinnerless niece and her dinnerfull uncle brushed their teeth together in the Hotel Sea Queen bathroom. (116)

Example 49, First slowly. Then fastly. (103)

The sentence pattern quoted above is a very frequently seen one, which includes first a grammatical compound noun, such as “motherhood” in the first example, then followed by a contrasting compound noun that is not standardly correct, “divorceehood” in this case. Personally, I always find the latter words very humorous, with the quality of a punch line at the end of a joke. The effect, to me, is like children arguing, when one child is trying to be smart and rebut what the other just said in the same format but ends up distorting the language, although sometimes the inventive word, with the grammatical one acting as a disguise in the front, is quite effective in fooling readers to

regard it as another legitimate grammatical word. For instance, in Example 49, “First slowly” and “Then fastly” are so neat a pair of mirror images, with the same number of syllables, stresses and even letters, that one may hardly notice the grammatical error on the first reading. The tidiness in arrangement also evokes an intertextual image that visualizes the content, such as in Example 62, the combination of “dinnerless” and “dinnerfull” brings out the contrast between a full fat man and a hungry little girl standing side by side brushing teeth. The comic effect is reinforced by placing closely together words that are structurally the same but opposite in meaning.

So far as Roy’s writing style is chiefly achieved by her accumulative structure, in the text, there are sometimes more than one invented phrases arranged in a row. Take this example, also discussed earlier.

Example 41, The orange too orange. The lemon too lemon. The chocolates too melty. (p.98)

While “orange” can be a color word to describe oranges, “lemon” is not a frequently used color word and thus should not collocate with “too” as adjectives do. As for the word “melty”, it is invented by added “-y” to make it seemingly adjectival. Such a sequential arrangement, apart from magnifying the comic effect, creates a regular rhythm which is not unlike a nursery rhythm that tends to recur on the same beat. The steady rhythm also echoes the drifting boredom at the refreshment counter where later Estha was framed inside to be assaulted by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man.

Lastly, here is a particularly good excerpt in which the invented lexis incorporates the creation of rhythm and parallelism.

Example 74, Across the tall iron railing that separated Meeters from the Met, and Greeters from the Gret, Chacko, beaming, bursting through his suit and sideways tie, bowed to his new daughter and ex-wife. (p.142)

First, on lexical invention, there are no “meeters” or “greeters” according to strict English grammar, but Roy puts “-ers” behind the verbs “meet” and “greet” to refer to the people who went to the airport to meet and greet their newly-arrived friends and relatives. There is the word “met” within grammar rules but Roy distorts its meaning here to refer to the newly-arrived relatives and friends, who would be met by those

waiting for them. (It is in fact rather exhaustive to put it grammatically, which once again shows that the twist in sense actually helps sometimes.) Then, “gret” implies similar meaning as “met” here but it obviously does not exist in grammar. The word was made up in parallel and rhyme to “met” in the previous expression, giving the two consecutive expressions a regular rhythm and a full rhyme too, like a slogan. The stresses are put in bold:

Meeter from the **Met**, **Greeter** from the **Gret**

Personally speaking, the unity achieved here is only a virtual one, as it is done forcefully and artificially by breaking grammar rules for stylistic effect. Thus, I reckon a laughable sense of irony is created in the parallel pair, which aptly underpins the ritual quality of the airport scene when Chacko was showing off his British ex-wife to the onlookers by introducing Margaret Kochamma loudly and proudly.

3.4.4 Summary

To sum up, Part A of the thesis demonstrates a corpus-based stylistic analysis of *The God of Small Things* in terms of Lexis, Grammar and Figures of Speech. The process of the study begins with my intuitive observation which deduces psychological salient features to form a set of style markers based on Leech and Short’s model. They are then put to test by means of simple statistics. To evaluate the extent each style marker is supported by statistical counts, features in Lexis and Grammar sections are soundly exemplified by a substantial amount of examples from the novel, as in recording the frequency of adjectives, minor sentences and noun phrase sequences. Nevertheless, features in Figures of Speech seem to be substantiated in a less significant sense, as the number of repetitions and neologisms obtained from Roy’s text is lower than my initial expectation. Such a phenomenon reveals a lapse between one’s intuitive response and statistical proof in detecting a stylistic characteristic, which in turn emphasizes the importance of striking a combination of the two in empirical stylistic studies. More importantly, perhaps, the stylistic analysis helps to reveal the extraordinary and varied

modes of style innovation that Roy creates. The linguistic investigation also contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexity and intensity of Roy's writing.

CHAPTER 4

A Pastiche on Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Hong Kong *Locust Stand I*

1.

Prologue

Two and a half years of museum time passed in peace and quiet. While Seen's seniors regarded her frequent excursions down into the heart of darkness as a yearning for knowledge about the museum collection. They passed a unanimous nomination for Seen to go along to the London collaborative conference expedition. Half a year later, another unanimous nomination was passed for Seen to work on the annual-based internship at the Museu de Macau. And Seen gladly accepted the once-in-a-lifetime windfall.

The magic moment when escapologist ideal shook hands with luck.

The atypical consensus was flattering. Too flattering perhaps. The point about separating with her fiancé never came into her range of considerations.

Carrying a light suitcase of youth. Seen, *young and carefree*, traveled light. With a clear conscience, crystal clear. Totally unaware of the storm tailing tightly behind. She must have brought it along on a leash subconsciously. Elegance in manner, like a jeweled lady richly walking a tame and domesticated Pekinese dog, she walked a rip-roaring storm.

The first two days following her arrival were raining cats and dogs. Seen was housed in one of the numerous ordinary oldtown Macau buildings, one block away from her new workplace. Rather central in location but facing away from the hustle-bustle main streets. Saving the room some pleasant stillness of relief.

The coziness was healing. Like a tepid balm to her fresh-off-the-boat, hard-tumbled, wounded soul.

Bottle-green paint peeled from walls and exposed patches of off-white underpaint. Wooden desk and chair creaked at rusty-nailed hinges. The green-framed window should be overlooking the St. Paul Cathedral ruin but as Typhoon Pearl was getting too close for comfort, it was securely shut. Latesummer sent off its last futile

effort to fight the invasion of Septemberness. Loaded the air in the senile flat with heavy humid stuffiness. Making the new tenant feel like an innocent prisoner in soft custody.

Seen sank into the acceptably clean white mattress and started nibbling from a pack of Macvites digestive biscuits, with dark chocolate coating. One that Mum insisted on buying and successfully shoved into her Gregory bag. Together with a Park n' Shop plasticbagful of other things.

1	Van Houten chocolate bar with raisons and hazelnuts
1 pack	Garden Marie biscuits
1 packet	Extra White chewing gum pellets
1 bunch	Maxim's Bakery salted bread sticks
1 jar	Herbal honey (travelers' package)
1 tin	Strepsil throat drops (pocket-size)

In her memory, Mum seldom bought snacks in tubs. It was always Grandma's style to bring her beloved grandchildren tubs of junk food. When she visited Big Sister and Seen, she always doubled up every item carefully to ensure the two girls wouldn't fight. Knowing that they didn't fight like girls. Not at all. But at the departure hall, there was only one of every item in the fragile, heavily-loaded and dangerously-stretched bag.

Big Sister wasn't there. She had a special board meeting with the executives, of which the responsibility was too important to shed.

Mum hadn't got much to say. The remains of the miscast spell a long, long time ago. Seen wasn't sure if every daughter will eventually become like their mother. Checking out the food on the tumbling ferry, Seen was glad Mum still remembered her favorites. Unlike Grandma, who possessed a tendency to pick the weirdest-taste items, even from a brand with reasonably good reputation.

Big Sister and Seen could never forget those cartons of super rich and creamy Dreyer's Grand Vanilla ice cream that they found intolerable. To the extent of revolting. But they were obliged to sit and enjoy a lush generous scoop in front of Grandma. They could do that. Obedient as they were. But the carton was usually left untouched ever since, and vanished unceremoniously. Big Sister didn't bother *when* and *how* it

disappeared from the neverempty fridge. Seen somehow speculated that Mum finished them in discreet every time. Sneaked off bed at a quarter past midnight with a silver spoon in one hand and the stripy brown paper carton in the other. Digging self-indulgently into the melty dessert.

Perhaps she was the real vanilla lover, cream craver, sweet eater. Seen was mesmerized by the lucid sense and logic that the ordinary family scenarios were suddenly making. That frothy, white, sugary and intensely milky gift was actually from Grandma to Mum. From a mother who remembered her daughter's favorite. To a daughter who destined to become like her mother, sooner or later.

The dark chocolate coating melted on her thumb and forefinger as her hand rummaging between package and mouth. Seen licked the oozing chocolate mud from her finger tips, savoring every treacle trace. Like what she usually did. The loose springy bed rocked her softly in response to her every subtle toss. As if lulling her to a sound sleep. Or to passionate sex. The heavy atmosphere refrained her clammy long hair from drying. Strands of dripping ends transparented her cream-colored top. Her tight jeans were totally soaked from exposing in the rain an hour ago hunting desperately for a taxi. Seams and buckles subsided into her skin as fabric shrank. She must take off her jeans. Her sticky fingers felt into the wet and nearly-indistinguishable pocket. In which hid a few startled-looking, damp and ruffle hundred dollar notes. The money Dad insisted on and successfully tugged into her tightly closed fist at the departure gate. His hand rough but warm. Hers cold and bony. Seen saw behind his stern face quivering a low burning fever. She could not ignore the fireflies in his eyes. She must take off her jeans. Wind blew severely outside the securely shut window by her bedside, from which her vision was a mushy cloud of mist. She knew the painstaking process was inevitable. If she didn't want to get close to the wind, she must as well turn back from the ill wind. Dad's secure lips suggested conversations withheld, but all reduced to an encouraging pat on Seen's back. Encoded cloze hung under the departurehall ceiling for a while. Like perplex soap bubbles. Burst. Before anybody dared to take a wild guess.

Seen the Summary of All Virtues

the rubric rider

the exotica

Even herself found it hard to trace back how she changed from a timid neighborhood girl to a rule breaker. She assumed the spell cast on that pale blue dawn had sparked off the whole chain of unfortunate events. When mother-daughter relationship started to fall apart. When father-daughter relationship twisted awry. When a girl at puberty eventually got used to sitting in the dark till a quarter past midnight, counting and recounting the treasures locked up in her chest and rationed her speech. Atoms bearing *plus* and *minus* signs set off their not very long journey into the sky venue decorated with hanging vapors. Accumulating enough electricity for a stormy day.

2.

Family Rubric vs. *The Essential Guide to be a Well-liked Woman*

Implication was a funny thing to a human brain.

Like a seashell always had a sea sense. Camels always reminded people of the desert. And birds, the sky. Big Sister could never wholly wash away her hospital scent of bleach and sterilization.

When a white bunch of robed doctors hurried in a flock down the long mercury-lit corridor, the grayish-bluish-cream *I See You* door flipped, flapped and poised. In carefree nonchalance. Female patients, who looked stunningly attractive in hospital pajamas, lying in bed all day waiting for the handsome young doctors to accidentally drop by. Among all, one astoundingly slim and beautiful-profiled girl, who suffered from the fictional blood cancer, fell secretly in love with the dazzlingly stylish cancer specialist. After rounds of false turnings and planned coincidences in the white hospitalmaze, as the incredibly energetic bloodcancer girl, catwalked along the colorless corridors, she finally bumped into the gorgeous cancer doctor. Surprising, like long-awaited Prince Charming (riding a white horse) found his destined Snow White, at last.

Big Sister turned the television off, yawned and retired into *the girls' room*, which was a relief to the house members, Mum and Dad. The remaining three quarters of the four-member family.

Nobody had paid any attention to when Big Sister had acquired the skill to carry along her halo of misfortune and spread it wherever she went. She frowned at basically everything to try and invite mass commiserations. Seen had long given up all attempts to cheer her up. She did question herself if she wasn't caring enough but doubted the speculation now. Seen remembered once she brought her sister a Peter the Rabbit vacuum flask from Ocean Terminal, expecting a pleasing shower of thanks and solace. It turned out disappointingly. Meeting nothing grateful but a shaft of cold gaze.

But Seen knew how much Big Sister adored rabbits. And everything rabbit-related. Grayish furry rabbit white. Like the whitewashed walls of the grimy white hospital.

When she stepped once again into the standard four-people family apartment shaped and molded by the Housing Authority, Seen was amazed by the permanence of

the lowerdeck situation. Big Sister the lowerdecker hadn't changed a bit, all these years. The plush toys were still there, sleeping in a row. Two monkeys, three rabbits, one frog, one squirrel, two teddy bears, one Hello Kitty, one girl, one baby. Her favorite was still the big fat rabbit-human/human-rabbit in faded pink cotton nightgown with pale blue collar and pale blue socks. It had a very bun-shaped head and a pair of cute but disproportioned ears. Adorable as ever. A fine-taste toy from Auntie Snow during Big Sister's hospital time. It had been occupying the pillow beside her at night ever since.

Before setting off for the London collaborative conference expedition, Seen promised to get Big Sister one of those Peter the Rabbit flasks. Chiefly out of a spur of generosity and a good intention to redeem the guilt of losing the vacuum flask they once possessed, until Seen used it to bring her third ex-boyfriend herbal tea and broke up with him before making him return the flask. But Seen found out later that those products were actually Korean manufactured. She saw no point in carrying them all the way back when they can easily be bought in Hong Kong, cheaper and from a larger variety. *She was amazingly practical on money matters. The sole area where she could successfully exercise Dad's practicality.* The first weekend after she came back, Seen aimlessly passed a shop that sold plenty of rabbit products while roaming around at Ocean Terminal. She did the purchase to keep her words.

The new vacuum bottle didn't cost too much but was pretty neat. With a custard-colored coating. And with an illustration from one of those Yorkshire Bunny stories, *of course*. Since the bottle was marked a lucky price, eighty-eight dollars, Seen was confident that Big Sister would love it, despite her bitterness. But all the human kindness simply ended in another desolating, heart-sinking, gut-wrenching disenchantment.

"I think she hates me," Seen said to her fiancé that night after dinner with her family.

"For what?"

"For all I have that she hasn't."

"Give me examples."

Seen was tempted to say "youth" though she was just three years younger than Big Sister. She held it back. Reluctant to go too far extreme. A twist of slightly

devilish smile flashed across the acute corner of her never sweet enough mouth. “Say... a promise of bright future, beauty, a decent lover and carnal bliss...”

He stretched her out and kissed her fervently on the lips and all the way down, sailed along her sinuous curve. She felt his yearning desire. An instrument well in tune.

They had been together for two whole years. Seen got her museum job and a fiancé in a package. Not at the same time, but almost. He worked as an auditor a few blocks away from the museum. Seen met him the first day of her work. In the afternoon in the city park collaborating their workplaces. During the typical post-lunchhour smoking session, white-collar ladies, but mostly fearless men gathered amid the city greenery for a sinful puff of health-hazard nicotine. She and her *Davidoff* walked into him and his *Davidoff*. A nod, a consensus to each other’s marvelous taste. But Seen couldn’t quite pull her eyes away from him. Something in his manner of smoking suggested a hidden sadness, a not totally healed wound. An unfulfilled dream. The next day, Seen didn’t bring her own pack of *Davidoff* down to the park. And fairly soon, they started sharing a lot more than cigarettes.

“Good fortune is important to women,” he marked blurrily, lips lingering on her tawny skin.

“Yeah, and so as to men,” Seen protested, bolt straight. “You better try not to be so sexist.”

*

When Big Sister started to wear pink, it was said that such an act was Big Sister’s vindictiveness towards Dad’s tyrannical oppression in her early childhood.

Dad, though had retired now, used to be a vicious jailer who insisted on a long list of strict rules in the family. The well-renounced Family Rubric. It was tailored by the father, for the children. To restrain their inborn ruthlessness.

Rule no.1 You should always obey your parents.

Rule no.2 You must do good in school.

Rule no.3 No television in the morning.

Though the family rubric existed as a form of verbal entity, Seen liked to draw a table in her childmind in which behaviors fell tidily into one side or the other. *Tick* or *Cross*.

√	X
Obey your parents.	Watch TV in the morning.
Good results in examinations.	Fail a dictation.

Dad's policy to the children was totalitarian. It was utterly unnecessary to explain every rule. There should be no doubt, no protest. No claims of innocence, no excuse of ignorance. No appeal once the verdict was given. No seeking of maternal protection. No shedding of tears of injustice. No shaking of angry fists. No emotional blackmailing, no answer back, no smirk, no joke.

And the girls dared not rebel. All their naughty little thoughts could vanish in one mild blow seeing the stern face of Dad, flat as fact. His small chinaman eyes flashed.

With unspecified reason, Dad despised dressing up in any sense. In reminiscence, Seen thought it was due to Dad's childhood as a poor boy discarded by his family in the Mainland and came to live under his uncle's roof. Dad had been a stoic guy who had fought very hard for his future so, in his opinion, something isn't worth its salt unless it was practical. He was definitely eager to shove this sense of value judgment into the two ruthless girls' naïve heads, without realizing that effects tend to bounce back in the extreme. Seen could hardly suppress a triumphant laugh at her father's complete failure. A disastrous backfire. Despite all the severe indoctrinations, she had grown up to be a hopelessly impractical person.

So Dad raised Big Sister up like a boy, with hair shaved way above ears and had nothing but pants and nearly-patternless shirts to wear. Albeit the navy-blue skirt which was an item of her school uniform. The whole of the "degirlization" process ran without much obstacle since Big Sister had been a genuinely obedient child. The question about whether that was a quality of her nature or from nurture didn't exist. Anyhow, Big Sister did wonderfully well at school and learned to play basketball. Building up an image of a handsome-looking boyish girl. Only that all these soon went beyond from being simply her image. It started to penetrate people's perceptions and mentality, and even replace memories about Big Sister's birth as a baby girl, with a babygirl genital.

It was so successful, more successful than everybody had expected. Vicious looking but in fact endearing co-workers of Dad and happy-faced but in fact gossipy textile workmates of Mum fondly enquired after their pair of son and daughter. Their vivid but inaccurate notion about Mum and Dad's children was a loveable pair. Dragon and Phoenix; a BOY and a GIRL, always going side-by-side. When coming across the family on the street, jailer uncles and weaver aunts confidently ruffled Big Sister's short hair and called her *sonny*. When corrected by mostly Mum and sometimes Dad, their faces suggested half an apology, a little embarrassment, but largely resembled a met-the-alien sort of expression. Then next week, or the next month with luck, the fiasco took place again, with a few changes in cast perhaps. Uncles and aunties came and went, while *sonny* was corrected into *sweetie*. Audible laughter and stifled giggle went around the family, like a merry-go-round that Mum, Dad, Big Sister and Seen could never get off.

By the time Big Sister was in Primary Four, muscles had already been building on her upper body, giving her broad shoulders, big chest and thick waist. But her legs were always quite slim and surprisingly feminine, like those of Mum. They unfortunately marked a sharp contrast with her masculine upper self. Strangers mistook her gender and bellowed, "Get out of the way, chubby boy!" Big Sister didn't care much about being big then, even less about being called *chubby*. But as puberty approached, Big Sister became more sensitive about her appearance and body shape. Discreet discomfort started to find its disturbing way into Big Sister's younglady heart, making her frown and turn away sourly when being called a *guy*.

Seen was luckier in a sense. Lucky enough to have been saved by Auntie Snow.

The superb fashion sense of Mum's glamorous third younger sister did lucratively rescue Seen from being *degirlyzed* by Dad. Apart from having a wonderfully good brain and keen eyes on styles, Auntie Snow also possessed a craving for girls. Some girls like Seen who appeared to be quiet, shy, gentle, obedient, polite and hardworking. Fulfilling exactly every quality that her name overtly suggested and covertly implied: *fine and pure*.

The Summary of All Virtues.

Auntie Snow loved to borrow Seen out for weekend shopping trips. Mum and Dad avowed no objections so long as Seen got her homework and revisions done well ahead, which was never a challenge to the girl. The aunt and niece excused malls after malls, rummaging about scarves, gloves, hats and sunglasses. Fitting on shirts, skirts, belts and boots. But wherever they were and whatever they were doing, conversations recurred on the same predominating topic. Like the Earth spinning around the same rigid orbit. Repetitively feeding on infinite supply of heated inputs.

And Auntie Snow could never stop complaining to Seen about her two craggy boys. While running her silverringed fingers through a full rack of rainbow-colored fluffy lace dresses, she told the niece about how Lee, the elder son, snacked on the family's invaluable pack of dry scallops which was especially stored up for New Year. While deciding among the gleaming bean necklaces to accessorize Seen's new salmon-pink dress, the aunt went on to describe how Lok got a detention for his indecipherable handwriting. When the niece was set free to roam around shocking pink stacks of glamorous Barbie dolls, there came the aunt's voice from the next row lamenting about how she was the only one in the house who made a sincere effort to keep the place clean and tidy, as she was buying her favorite girl a salon playset.

Charismatic Auntie Snow didn't only shower Seen with generous helpings of girlish gifts. She genuinely schooled Seen on woman knowledge. Thorough and thoughtful. From the elementary skills to equip a four-season wardrobe, to advanced make-up techniques for special occasions. From the must-know flash-proof undergarment gadgets, to the noble art of flirting. Seen was no older than eight at that time.

So Auntie Snow's shopping mall lectures hadn't simple barely counteracted Dad's *degirlization*. Her teachings were collected as an important handbook in Seen's impressionable head: *The Essential Guide to be a Well-liked Woman* written by Auntie Snow, the beauty master.

Seen never admitted verbally that the handbook had gone out of hand.

3.

Pre-departure Party

After dinner, Seen's fiancé wheedled Seen to show him her old picture albums. Seen wasn't particularly keen on doing that. In contrast to her fiancé who voluntarily brought out his thick big old album the first time she went to his home. Browsing at other people's images in the past was alright, but it didn't work vice versa. Seen was constantly shocked by those ridiculous age-old hairstyles that she once had. She couldn't bear the shame when got pointed out and laughed at. She kept trying in vain not to do that to others. And she hated to be the laughing stock. A valid reason for her resistance in showing others her old picture albums. But under his irresistible sweet talk. In the presence of Mum and Dad. Seen yielded.

The old albums were bounded, stacked and stored in the cupboard on the upper desk of the double-decker bed. The one Seen used to sleep in. The one Big Sister was still occupying.

Seen became the upperdecker only after Big Sister had returned home from the hospital. (Big Sister by then had been far too big to be a qualified upperdecker.) It had been years since Seen last regularly traveled between decks. Now she stood at the foot of the double-decker, something she once contemplated about came back to her.

The three essential qualities that a qualified upperdecker must possess:

- a) Eagle-like vision;
- b) High body flexibility;
- c) Strong arms.

Seen was bemused by her list. She honestly knew that lack of either one or more of the three items should not be a problem for an ordinary upperdecker, but would certainly cause a disaster on the bed in front of her. Because it was designed by Dad, who peculiarly removed its ladder to make room for Big Sister's glass-topped desk. Leaving the route to commute between the decks only three stepping spots:

- a) The very edge of the lower deck (if Seen mistakenly or consciously stepped on Big Sister's blanket, or even sheet, she would be very mad);

- b) The bottom right corner of Big Sister's glass-topped desk (Seen often skipped this middle step because if she broke the glass, Big Sister would be very mad);
- c) The upper deck.

In a few familiar strokes, Seen jumped lightly up. Astute as a well-trained dolphin. The picture albums were extremely dusty. Long neglected. Among the piles of charcoal grey, there was one marked *20-24 April 1993* and those were photos taken during the trip that left no memory in Seen's brain.

When Seen was still in primary school and Big Sister just went onto Secondary One, Dad organized their first trip to Mainland China for the whole family, by joining a China Travel Service package tour. Seen could hardly remember now where they had visited. Some temples with ingenious carvings, some caverns in glorious Technicolor bulbs, some tombs, lagoons, and ruins. But Seen remembered very well the pre-departure party. It was held in one of those grand looking glass-walled buildings in Wan Chai, on a school day. The party time clashes Dad's work shift and Big Sister had an important after-school test. Both duties were too important to shed. So there were only Mum and Seen going. Mum waited for Seen to come out after school at the main gate and took her straight to the party. Seen had no idea what a pre-departure party was like but enjoyed being waited by Mum at the school gate.

And Seen was marveled. Cartons of Vita Lemon Tea, VitaSoy and VitaJuices with natural artificial flavors and colorings were laid out on the long table beside boxes of cakes and tarts from Maxim's Cake Shop. Seen was very excited, about the food. A chubby middle-aged man, whose shirt and tie were a bit crumbled, went onto the platform unceremoniously and cracked a few stale jokes into the microphone to draw attention of the pre-departure tourists in the conference room, who had already started the pre-departure feast, pre-announced. Mum took a VitaSoy for Seen, which was a hint of approval. So Seen observed what other pre-tourists did and followed suit. She joined the queue for a paper plate, a plastic fork and a paper napkin. Stopped at the first Maxim box which held pieces of sharply cut Swiss rolls, tidily arranged in three fat columns of three beautiful colors. Like a lazy troop of tricolor snails.

Yellow. Dark brown. Light Brown.
Butter. Chocolate. Coffee.

Seen slipped her tiny fingers into the gigantic equipment like a pair of scissors with blunt shears and dived at a flat plain piece of butter Swiss roll. Making the route as straight and accurate as she could. Like a mechanic eagle diving for a poor yellow chick. The equipment was so heavy that it strained her nervous fingers. And in fear of delaying the queuing pre-tourists, Seen had clammed the shears too tightly together that she thought she was crumbling the cake. Her fingers got a most untimely cramp and refused to let go the weird scissors. While its shears had stuck and trapped the cake. Unprepared perspirations perched on her perplexing pores, at the pre-departure party

In a most unobtrusive way, she raised her whole arm to shift the embarrassing situation onto her plate. With enormous effort against the untimely cramp, the shears finally slackened and the poorly pressed piece of yellow cake dropped tiredly onto her now getting soggy paper plate. Holding her breath, Seen placed the untamable monstrous scissors back into the Maxim box. Carefully, at an angle convenient to the next pre-tourist. And with the Queen's elegance that she acquired from Uncle Member's daughters whom Big Sister and Seen both despised.

No one seemed to be listening to the chubby guy's pre-departure blather, though judging not from his appearance, the man's voice was quite attractive. Plump and magnetic, like sticky milk on peanut butter toasts.

Seen had proceeded through the next two glossy boxes and helped herself to two more pieces of yellow edibles: a rectangular piece of walnut butter cake and a wobbly circular egg tart. Seen didn't particularly like the color yellow but she appreciated unity.

The way back to mother's side among the dashing pre-tourists was a winding road.

When Seen decided to cut across right in front of the platform in ant-speed, she could hardly have predicted the attention she was going to attract. The attractive speech of the chubby guy was drawn to a halt. Pre-tourists heads turned to see the little floating girl in dazzling white Holy Angel school uniform. Holding a heap of yellow on her palms, like a graceful halo. Though she sensed the pre-tourist gaze, Seen dared not pull her eyesight away from her plate on which the three edibles were dancing like mad. In

particular, she felt a warm beam shine from above her head, from the halting chubby guy. She could imagine his chubby smile was very Santa-like. It was a long slog. When Seen finally arrived with her plate of yellow edibles, Mum beamed. Seen proudly climbed into the chair beside Mum. With the same compatible manner to Uncle Member's daughters. Both of her hands were still clutching the now collapsing plate.

*

"Seen, I can't believe that you've forgotten everything!" screamed Big Sister. "Don't you remember that father of another family in the tour who sat with us at the dinner table the day they served steamed ricefield worm with eggs? That man pointed his finger at me as he told his scared son admiringly 'See how courageous that boy is, he dares eat the worms!' That's outrageous! And you forgot about that! Shame. Shame on you."

"I didn't forget," said Seen, trying not to fight back Big Sister's jellybean eye glare. "The point is: it has never got into my head at all."

"Seen's that kind of girl, always gets sidetracked by the fringe," said Seen's fiancé with a professional smile, eyeing Seen lovingly and giving the family an understandable, diplomatic, inviting, agreeing, soothing round of glance.

"Well, I don't know about that," Big Sister chirped satirically, as if declaring a war against the fiancé's sociability. "Not when my sister's living here."

"Oh you're JOKING!" the fiancé let go a falsetto high laugh. "You know how she views the meals I cooked? They are forever her second priority! What she loves most are always cakes, fruits, ice cream, biscuits, chocolates and coffee! I bet she can survive snacking all day without a decent meal. Can you imagine that?"

Mum and Dad joined in an echoing *You Girl* chuckle. Seen saw the corner of Big Sister's mouth twisted discreetly but swiftly replaced by a smirk, like having heard some nonsense. She turned to face the television which was showing the very TVB series in which a bunch of lady-killer doctors kept disturbing nubile patients in the hospital full of psychos. Well-renounced, among housewives. Big Sister had been staying in the hospital as a patient for almost a year, nine months. And Seen knew she admired doctors more than any other kind of male professionals.

4.

Bad News Hunting

Big Sister first discovered to have got lupus when she was fifteen. When Seen learnt about the news, she was confused by the very long and muddy medical name of the disease, something about wolf and the color red. Mum told Seen that was a family disease which only passed onto girls but not boys. *Oh yeah, Big Sister was biologically a girl.* And why Big Sister got it but not Seen was due to the mix-and-matching of genes. Dad explained to Seen that it was like in a game of cards, each player received a set distributed from a shuffled deck. It was only by chance that one got patterns like a full house. *So Big Sister got a full house?* Dad said it was sheer bad luck. Mum never commented on Dad's gamble metaphor.

During the nine months, Big Sister's fame in her school soared, and so as Seen's. The convent school where Big Sister was in actually belonged to the same church as Seen's primary school. Seen was doing her last year in Holy Angel's Primary, while Big Sister was in Form 3. Big Sister's school was one of those traditional brandname colleges that every parent of Seen's classmates were dying to send their beloved daughters to. And because the two schools were close in relationship, nearly two-thirds of the Holy Angel girls went to Big Sister's college each year. Mum was never keen on pushing her two girls to anywhere famous. She chose that college for Big Sister because every teacher in Holy Angel's recommended it. She liked Seen to go in too simply because Big Sister was there. So when Big Sister's sick news broke out, information traveled fast.

Like detectives, nuns immediately worked out that Big Sister got a younger sister in the close-by Holy Angel's. *No Less!* They spotted Seen out at the playground during recesses. Cornered her at corridors. And, in times of great urgency, took her from class. Everything was done to shake the most updated sickbed news out of her. Those from Big Sister's college sometimes called their home number, which was also received by Seen. She bet nuns from different colleges must have exchanged information because the enquiries were never repeated. *So can you tell me which bed your sister is in now? What sort of medication is she taking? Did the doctors say when she will be fit to come out? God bless.*

To imagine how Big Sister's sickbed news being passed around was an entertainment. Old ladies in starched white dresses slipped tightly folded miniature letters into each others' praying palms. Some were tugged into starched white sleeves under the starched white breakfast tablecloth. Some were read inside an opened Bible during masses. Seen didn't mean to spoil their fun but she really hadn't got much to offer. Her pocket of information was exhausted in two shakes. Like a skinny piggy-bank.

In those days when Mum and Dad were preoccupied by Big Sister, Seen, too, needed to hunt for news. But she never did.

Big Sister's fame at that time was expanding fast. Very soon, Big Sister's sickbed was piled with dolls and toys and letters and cozy-reads from classmates and friends. Very soon, Big Sister's deserted upper desk was piled with dolls and toys and letters and cozy-reads from "classmates" and "friends" whom she hardly had met. Not long before nuns from the two schools set off on their alternative pilgrimage.

Neither Mum or Dad were Catholics, but they did their best to be kind to those guest-nuns. When troops of starched white uniformed old ladies started to knock on their door, marching up and down the stairs in tidy single files, Mum and Dad kindly offered them tea to wet their panting mouths. An acknowledgement to their hard work in achieving the holy mission. Tenants in the same block awed at the sight. Wondering whether the fifth floor was a church. The five-storey staircase was busy like a Sunday Mongkok street. Astonished by the old ladies' energy to conquer the steps, Seen treasured their boxes of chocolate assortment even more. And after nine months of intimate Catholic contact, the family remained secular.

Big Sister's fame wasn't short-lived at all. Years later, when Seen was in her Form 5 having a Human Biology class talking about genes and inheriting diseases, Big Sister's name came back to her.

"So, Class, do you know some years ago in this school, there was a girl who got lupus?" asked enthusiastic Mr Dominic. "It is very unfortunate because lupus cannot be cured entirely but suppressed. That means she has to take medications and avoid the sun for the rest of her life. Do any of you know her?"

“Why not? She’s my Big Sister.” Seen said instinctively. Not loud. Not soft. A perfect volume for sixty-two ears in a classroom.

Thirty pairs of shocked, astonished, speechless, unbelieving, nonplussed, thunderstruck eyes fixed on Seen. Felt like under thousands of burning spotlights. Or those 60-watt reading lamps that TV police used for interrogations. Seen wasn’t sure she was proud of something.

5.

Tangerine Stars

Among the dusty stacks of foolish old picture albums on the deserted upper deck sat a rusty Van Houten chocolate tin that let out a hollow jingle when lifted.

Seen took the elliptical tin down from the shelves with languid respect. One hand on each side. Savoring the honorable moment. Like receiving the Holy Grail handed down from a long beard priest perching high on the velvet crimson altar. One hand on each handle. The redcurrant paint had long tarnished by films of erosion. Dirty tassels of moth marred the gloss. Mouth-watering illustrations indistinguishable. But her memory told her it used to be a full tin of chocolate-coated raisin and hazelnut nuggets. One of those rare goodies bought by Mum on one of those special occasions. A birthday, a Christmas, a Lunar New Year.

She felt the elliptical edge of the lid. Fine grains of dark-brown rust remained on her fingertips as it orbited smoothly over the dull rim. For a second, she thought it was melted chocolate and was tempted to lick. What she always did. Seen weighted the newly-found piece of entity plainly out of instinct. Its tangibility amazed her. She couldn't be surer of what produced the enchanting jingles.

She was afraid if the rustic lid was pulled apart too forcefully, all the almost-lost pieces of memory would all jump out in a thrust. Scattered everywhere and lost. Like a clumpy hand firing a firecracker. With ultimate care, her bony hand grabbed the rough lid tight and turned.

By now, Seen had collected a Van Houten chocolate tinful of stars. As years went by, Dad was proved to be a great fan of China Travel Service. After the Guangdong trip that Seen had almost no memory of, Dad took them all on one Mainland tour nearly every Easter. The practice retained until Seen's Form Four summer when she completely lost interest in package tours. Before that, the family had managed to visit Beijing, Xi'an, Shanghai, Suzhou, Hangzhou and Guilin.

Dad would be angry to know, but the sweetest part of the touring experience to Seen was her first pre-departure party. The shock when the four little pale tangerine-colored stars darted into sight. Plastic fork poised in midair. Jaw dropped. Awed.

Seen gave a gasp of amazement at the treasure trove. She examined each star-shaped plastic badges with *China Travel Service* written on it in deep tangerine and safety pins at the back. She let her forefinger race along the winding edges of tangerine star badges. Making FormulaOne rapid turnings at the acute angles. Mum eyed her with a mildly disapproval gaze, attached a *Be Careful Don't Drop That Or Youknowwhat* warning.

She obviously sensed Seen's agitating curiosity, which was quite hard to miss. She explained to Seen that every tourist was distributed one of that to wear on their shirts to identify themselves. And added that it was very important because, for example, the tour guide needed to make sure you really belonged to his group when he saw you eating at their booked tables.

"Can I keep them?" asked Seen eagerly.

Mum was busy reading some paper. "Okay, but don't lose them. Put them in your schoolbag."

Well-trained Seen placed the envelope diligently in the front sub-division of her very practical multi-division schoolbag that Dad bought her from Wing On Sale. Dad taught her that the front sub-division was for keeping important stuff like her pencil case and the assembly hymnbook. Seen made sure the crisp envelope was lying flat and unruffled before she zipped up quietly. As if feared to wake the sedately resting tangerine stars. A quartet of pre-departure stars ready to take off their front-division ride.

Having done that, Seen returned to her plate of yellow edibles. As she was ready to pitch in, she met Mum's mildly-disapproval eyes again *If you eat too much and lose your appetite for dinner, youknowwhat*. It was threatening. Seen unconditionally surrendered the rectangular piece of walnut butter cake. Mum's all-time favorite.

*

Seen loved going to places with Mum, and with Mum only.

When Big Sister was coming along, she most probably dominated Mum with her endless speech about her school and those not-always-funny tales about her classmates. When Dad was there, he tended to put an arm around Mum's shoulders and physically dominated Mum. Being alone with Mum was Seen's only chance to really hold her

hand and chat, even though it was just some tiny household chores like going to the market. But Seen loved markets.

Seen's childhood was spent in Hung Hom, in one of those fairly old but spacious Civil Servant family quarters, with no elevator. There were only five floors and they lived on the top one included the roof area. Seen never worked out from where Dad gathered all those huge potted plants to put on the roof to shade the heat from passing down to the living room. The plants needed watering very evening, which Seen and Big Sister called "irrigation session". It was usually done by Dad. When he was away, Seen took up the responsibility delightfully.

When they first moved in, Dad used a rather long red plastic tube with one end connected to the tap at our balcony, the other end dangling on the roof. So water from the tap was pumped up and splashed onto the plants from the other end. The setup was visually spectacular. A glimmering red tube hanging on the grasscolored outer wall of the building barely linking the two floors. Like a deathly serpent flashing its gory tongue.

The construction was ironic in hindsight. Since the water tank was in fact installed on the roof. By turning on the tap, water floated down to their home but was directed at once back to the roof through the red dangling tube. A round trip. A full circle.

A water cycle under the dictatorship of Dad.

Seen at the age of seven loved that arrangement because it made her feel like a ladyfirefighter. She used to roll the red serpent into a red coil under her foot and aimed at individual plants. Like real firefighters exterminating sources of flame. She was reminded by Mum to put on insect repellents but she kept forgetting every time before she set off, resulting in legs dappled with mosquito bites. It was itchy as hell at midnight but Seen clutched her teeth and bore. Her heroic scars from fighting fire. It was a painful disappointment to her when Dad abruptly abandoned the design after the first three months upon receiving the first water bill. Technology exacerbated. The cease of the tap pushed everything back to the most primitive stage and irrigation sessions became solid tough work.

After the water bill shock, pails of water were to be carried upstairs to the roof every evening. Stopped at each plant to pour water down with a ladle. So Seen quitted being a ladyfirefighter and happily took up the ritual performed by a priest. She raised the ladle high up and let fall a sparkling silver stream, arched and landed lightly on leaves and twigs. She sacredly baptized and blessed God's creatures one by one. Like the Gardener of Eden. It usually took three rounds for Dad to water all the plants. Four rounds for Seen. It definitely wasn't as exciting as the ladyfirefighter one. It was meditative.

Less splashes and screams. More spiritual and serene.

And less water was consumed.

Seen's primary school classes were held in the afternoon. Every morning when Big Sister struggled out of bed at 6.30am and stumbled down from the upper deck, Seen felt most grateful for her plush bed. Once Big Sister stormed out, peace restored to the flat for Mum and Seen. Two of them. Seen usually spent the morning revising lessons. She used to take dictations from Mum in junior grades. Mum shouted aloud words from the kitchen which was far at the end of the corridor, as Seen wrote them down in the living room. Very often Seen knew the passages so well, too well, that she might as well recite the whole thing out. But she treasured the process. Of being guided by Mum step by step. It was like committing a long hard adventure with Mum, in partnership.

As the texts Seen studied got more and more difficult, Mum could no longer read out words for Seen. But they had more free time instead. Mum sometimes liked Seen to go along to the market with her, and helped carry things back. But she never gave direct orders. Always made an attempt to make it insidious. *Let's go to McDonald's for breakfast. There's nothing left at home.*

Grocery shopping with Mum marked a prominent contrast to Auntie Snow's weekend shopping trips.

Hung Hom used to have what Seen still considered as the only genuine form of wet market. The characteristic priority was that the market place must be literally wet. Hawkers hawking vegetables, fruits, seafood, meats, tofu, noodles, flowers and towels, all crowded in one narrow street. Incorporated in disorderly. It was probably Seen's personal preference. Chaotic venues were almost always amiable to her. Immersed into

store after store with purse and money. Emerged with plastic bags of morning vegetables, fish and bloody chops.

Seen was so accustomed to the filthiness and germs of the old market. So when she visited the newly established clean and organized Hung Hom wet market building, she missed the forlorn sickening and pleasing smells terribly. Smells of chicken excretions, dead fish, raw meat, ground soybeans, pickles, hand-pulled noodles, rice barrels, herbs and medicines.

And once the old wet market closed down, Mum's insidious invitations to the morning market stopped altogether. They never got across. Not anymore.

*

Seen picked out the tangerine star among the bright red, light purple, sky blue, pale yellow, peach pink and lime green ones. She felt it in her palm. The pioneer star.

Their first tour turned out to be a big one with about thirty tourists to somewhere popular near Guangzhou. Thirty something stars formed a constellation. A tangerine constellation of tangerine stars. Swiped across temples with ingenious carvings, floated through caverns in glorious technicolor, lighted up ancient tombs, lagoons, and ruins. Busy flooding on and off coaches, streaming pass entrance/exit slots. Shining in cheap restaurants, average hotels and expensive shops. Dazzled the hungry eyes of Mainlanders.

And that's all she could figure out.

Mum told Seen some time ago when she was still studying for her degree in university that Dad actually enjoyed those family outings very much. And he was kind of disappointed when Big Sister and Seen refused to go on another one. Seen did realize Dad felt offended at that time, and saw to it that he rightfully did. After all, it was Dad who did the research, went through the travel agent hassles, paid their fares, covered their expenses, supervised the tour guide and guarded their safety. Seen was in fact grateful for all Dad had done. But there somewhat seemed to be an invisible wall between the two parties, between father and daughter. Even since Seen was a child. The mysterious wall sometimes absorbed, and mostly bounced back discourses. In either case, conversations were hindered.

Mum had long noticed that her younger daughter had inherited Dad's signature characteristics: impulsive, stubborn, short-tempered, selfish. Leaving the plausible ones behind. Similarities between the father and daughter linked them with nothing, but a wall.

Or, perhaps the wall was a nightwatcher in disguise. A guard of order. To oversee the Family Rubric. Once the wall crumpled down, things went out of everybody's hands.

*

Another series of unrehearsed high laughs followed another of the fiancé's in-stock jokes flew into *the girls' room*.

Seen returned the rustic tin back onto the shelf diligently, *one hand on each side*, and climbed down from the upper desk. Landing only on the precise spots. Exited with the foolish old albums.

6.

Uncle Member and his Black Pearls

Uncle Member was one of Dad's jailer colleagues. The reason behind the absurdly peculiar name had been a constant puzzlement to Big Sister and Seen ever since the first time they were introduced to him. The sisters once desperately asked Mum *Why Uncle Member was called Uncle Member?* which entailed a very disappointing reply. Mum guessed it was probably-a-nickname. *But WHY?* Mum said she didn't know. She didn't tell them to go ask Dad and they dared not go ask Dad because it was not courteous to be curious about uncles. So the story behind the probably-a-nickname remained untold.

The unresolved mystery somehow led to other problems. The flourishing speculations and imaginations aroused in the sisters by the name had refrained them from greeting Uncle Member respectfully. In fear of another string of stifled giggles got triggered off any moment, they chose to emphasize on the initial syllable and muddled up the next. *Hi Uncle Mamb, how's your lamb?* Another problem was about the spelling of the name. Big Sister and Seen never saw any written form of the name, which made it as mysterious as the name's origin. Their limited English only allowed them one word that gave a similar sound. But the way Dad pronounced it was somehow quite hard to catch. MAM-BA, like the name of a Congo God of Fire whose name was chanted as tribepeople danced.

Mam-ba, Mam-ba, Mam-ba-ba-ba,

Mam-ba, Mam-ba, Mam-ba-ba-ba.

Mi-nee, Mi-nee, Mom-ba-sa!

Mam-ba, Mam-ba, Mam-ba-ba-ba.

Seen later read from a back copy of National Geographic magazines in the school library that mambas were in fact *fast-moving tree-dwelling snakes of Africa*. She learnt three things about mambas from the article:

- a) There were black mamba and green mamba.
- b) Both mambas were deadly poisonous (two drops of mamba venom was enough to kill a human).

- c) The green mambas were green but the black mambas were not black in color. They were rather olive or gunmetal-gray. The inside of their mouths bluish-black.

Seen thought perhaps that was what Uncle Member's name should be. One that they had mistaken for so many years. Yet the mambas in illustrations all looked so hideous, which hadn't got the slightest reference to good Uncle MAM-BA. She decided by then the name was spelt M-E-M-B-E-R. Though no one ever found out the society of which he was a member.

Big Sister and Seen remembered Uncle Member particularly well not only because of his name, but also his very hybrid face. Uncle Member had an attractively deep profile which wasn't unlike an Indian. Nut brown skin, very dark indented eyes, long curly lashes and a very hairy face. Among Dad's troop of cruel looking friends, Uncle Member belonged to the friendly and handsome type. The sisters agreed that Uncle Member's wife was a very beautiful woman too. They used to see her almost everyday in one whole month but only a few minutes each time. They couldn't exactly recall her face but knew that she was tall and slim, with shoulder-length hair in stylish curls of ebony. She always wore make-up and posh suits, that the sisters admired so much. In the same way they admired TV news reporters. Mum said they were a fine-looking family, which Big Sister and Seen took only half of it. They hated Uncle Member's two daughters' guts.

It started out of the blue. One day in termtime in Autumn, when both Big Sister and Seen were still in primary school, when the big clock above the TV set read 11 o'clock, someone pressed the doorbell twice and produced a pair of clean cut *dee—dee*—Mum went to open the door in keen expectancy. And there they were. Three quarters of the fine-looking family were standing at the door. A primly-attired mother. Two clean daughters in crisp Holy Angel's school uniforms. Long straight hair tied into two shiny ponytails. Tidy. Frayless. Two azure ribbon bows adorned two angels' heads. Mum announced that Maggie and Natalie would come eat lunch with them for the month and walk to school together. Two pairs of awe-struck eyes met Mum's with *Why?s* but Mum ignored them. Well-trained Big Sister and Seen (still in their

nightgowns) greeted a loud and obedient *Auntie* in simultaneous articulations. And took an instant dislike of the two girls at the first sight.

Maggie and Natalie had doubtlessly grown into Uncle Member's skin. They got their father's indented eyes, prominent cheekbones and tan skin. "Black Pearls" was the name, that women of the older generation tended to use to call dainty girls with dark smooth skin. And eyes sparkled. Mum didn't call them that but Big Sister and Seen knew by heart that Mum classified people with hybrid features as PRETTY. Like the springhinged doors that Seen saw in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, through which patients were thrown into with their beds on wheels. There were signposts above every door signaling *where to*. She once saw Big Sister being pushed through one labeled *I See You*. The door flipped, then flapped, and poised, in nonchalance. Shutting out the view. Seen, who was told to remain outside, got a gloomy feeling that Big Sister might never come out. But of course she did. So Seen pictured two springhinged doors in Mum's heart. One posted PRETTY, the other PLAIN. Children lined up in front of the doors waiting to be asked one question. *Do you have hybrid feature(s)?* No. Off they went, through the PLAIN door. The door flipped, then flapped, and poised, in nonchalance. Seen got an even gloomier feeling that they won't come back out. That was how Big Sister and Seen were sorted out the category of beauties, as easy as taking pebbles from pearls, the suck from the succulent. Mum never made an effort to conceal her prejudice, which bruised her two mediocre girls' mediocre hearts.

Big Sister and Seen noticed that Mum loved the Member girls more. Mum usually made only one simple dish for an ordinary schoolday lunch, but when the Member girls were there, the table was loaded with elaborate dishes. Instead of steamed salted fish or leftover melon soup, there were steamed chicken, fresh vegetable soup, even the pork chops were adorned with Del Monte pineapple slices, rimming the edge of the dish. Making the whole thing look like a fountain. A porkchop fountain. On their way to school, the two beauty queens strolled along with Mum chattily in the front. Big Sister and Seen were left lagging at the rear. Mum put her arm around Natalie, the younger of the beauty queens, while crossing the road. Approaching the school gate, rounds of envy gazes were thrown to them, wrapped around them and moved as they moved. The eyes of those parents at the gate told Seen that Mum was proud to take the

two beauties to school. She dared say Mum rather had them as daughters than the two ugly ones at the rear. Their resentment towards the two girls bubbled.

But there were other things. Something implanted in Uncle Member's family culture that enraged the sisters. Big Sister and Seen saw to it that Auntie gave her girls each a brisk kiss on the cheek every day she bid them goodbye. It happened so matter-of-factly. Kiss and hug. Kiss and hug. That was embarrassing because "kiss" was an *unexist* element in Big Sister and Seen's family life. They didn't remember having received any kiss and they never once saw Dad kiss Mum or vice versa. Seen recalled having overheard Big Sister ask Mum about it in the kitchen one slow evening in that month, of which time was oozing away like snail, or slug. Seen barely caught Mum explained placidly that Uncle Member's family was very westernized. Not sure where they got the idea but most probably some part of their indoctrination told them that *westernized* presupposed *noble* and *classy*, which took their hatred up to another level. The sisters couldn't stand the every single way the beauty queens tried to act like faux duchesses. It ranged from their ridiculous English names to their pretentious table manner. They held spoons with pinkies stuck up, up. Held chopsticks at the very end and picked food up with a reluctant sense, as if the pea was too heavy for their fragile fingers. Or, they literally ate like a bird. Big Sister and Seen particularly hated the way they wasted food. They threw away vegetable stems and chicken bones with tissues of juicy meat attaching. Big Sister and Seen took that as an insult to Mum's cooking.

They were sure that Mum loved Maggie and Natalie more because they were pretty. But in Big Sister and Seen's dictionary written by Dad, ornament was a completely redundant subject. They felt their sense of value was under threat. To secure their castle of value, for family honor and Dad, they decided to put up a fight. They somewhat reckoned that acting the beauty queens' complete opposite was a superb strategy. Since they behaved like faux duchesses, the sisters acted as grassroots as possible. The sisters called them bitches, the worst foul word they knew by far to call a woman. They stuck one foot on the chair while having lunch, elbows on table, held their spoons and chopsticks in the reverse way. And that was all. Big Sister and Seen were too disciplined to go on. More disciplined than they had expected. In spite of all these

seditions (done in Mum's absence), they gave up the fight and put on a daring attempt to put up with the two beauty bitches.

It was the longest month ever. When the hardtime finally passed, Big Sister and Seen though knew the two bitches were still at school, they chose not to greet them even when walking into them. The next autumn, they no longer saw the two bitches around and didn't give a damn. Later, they overheard Dad's telephone conversation and learnt that Uncle Member's two daughters went to study abroad in England. After that, images of the two bitches and whatever went around them started to fade from Seen and Big Sister's maturing mind.

Putting down his bowl of soup, Dad said that when Seen was on her London collaborative conference expedition, Uncle Member was also in England. To attend Natalie's graduation ceremony, in the University of London. *Kiss and hug. Kisses and hugs.* He and his family's going to travel around for a while.

"Oh, I didn't know Natalie's just graduating!" Seen exclaimed. "How sweet!"

"She is two years younger than you, isn't she?" Big Sister scowled. "And I think it's unlikely for you to walk into them in London. Don't you think so?"

"Of course, it's a very big place."

"It's huge," said Big Sister testily.

Seen went back to her bowl, pleased to have ended the discourse exchange. Big Sister picked a piece of roast duck. Oil dripped its way to her bowl from the trembling chopsticks, fuming with unidentified annoyance. Seen stole a look at Dad. And noticed some unsteady sparks in his chinaman eyes, like fireflies.

Once they stepped out the door, Seen's fiancé asked with ultimate interest. "What was the name of you uncle again? The one in London."

"Uncle Member. He got two daughters who used to eat in our house but we never liked them, I guess, because they were beautiful."

"Wow, a member," he grinned with juvenile excitement. "I'm surprised he has a family. And two children too."

"Oh, come on, drop that."

"Poor guy being called a member even though he's not, you know, gay." The fiancé sighed and shook his head with dramatized pity.

7.

Good News Hunting

Dad never admitted verbally that his doctrine had got out of hand.

Perhaps because Big Sister was so stout and muscular, she was treated as the tough one, inside and out. Nobody seems to notice her frailty, not to say caress her when she was upset, ever since she was a child.

Seen still found it hard to imagine Big Sister did actually go out with the guy called Steve and got *dumped*. Seen had never met Steve. She's not fast enough to catch a glimpse of him, not before they *broke up*. But Seen did keep a brief info-sheet of him in her mind. Collected from bits and pieces that Big Sister let slip from her tongue.

Name: Steve (*Yeah, that's all Seen got.*)

Age: ±30

Appearance: Chubby

Occupation: Computer Technician

Work Address: Bank of China, Olympic Branch

Specialties: Painting, calligraphy, sculpture

Place of Acquaintance: Kowloon Tong Alliance Church (*Big Sister was a Christian by that time*)

Big Sister became a Christian in her Form 6 under the influence of a very good friend, Christy. Mum and Dad were surprisingly quiet about it. Mum didn't oppose Big Sister's decision at all because she had met Christy's Mum and family who were very wealthy and had been really supportive to Mum when Big Sister was in hospital. As for Dad, Seen doubted his knowledge about Christianity and the meaning of being a Christian. Seen constantly held a very low opinion about church people after having met tons of phony nuns and tedious Christian girls in her convent school. So when Seen heard how that Steve simply vanished all of a sudden, leaving poor Big Sister and the bag of self-baked Macaroons that Seen helped in their making, Seen wasn't particularly astounded.

Big Sister's relationship began most discreetly. By the time Seen knew Big Sister was falling in love, Big Sister had already fallen in love. It was an enormously humiliating insult to Seen who always trusted herself as a wonderful clue-picker. Like a

detective, like Sherlock Holmes. But that might not exactly be Seen's failure. It could be Seen's subconscious denial towards the idea that Big Sister's head leaning on a guy's shoulder, his arm around her waist. Unprepared to admit. Refused to take the fact. Seen reckoned that some blatant clues had popped up around Lunar New Year time, two years ago when Seen went to visit her fiancé's family for the first time. For one reason or other, she didn't take the fuss to work them out. Seen once overheard Big Sister comment on an on-show romantic comedy that nobody went to, except fresh couples and stale fools. Another time, Big Sister overheard Seen chatting with Mum about a posh harbor-side lovers' café at Takoo Place that she went with her fiancé, and added that in a clear evening the atmosphere there was so soothing, like the desperate mother's river lullaby to baby Moses.

So Seen noticed but turned a blind eye to sister's night-outs, with concealed *with-whom* and *what-happened*. Seen would have preferred to retain her chosen ignorance, if Big Sister hadn't *pleaded* for help.

Big Sister's speaking tone had undergone a dramatic renovation within the month. And as Valentine's Day approaching, her voice had turned high-pitched and flourishing, dappled with twists of girlishness. Before Seen could escape from the foreseeable explosion of womanly passion, she was cornered by Big Sister's stout stature and delicate talk that literally *pleaded* her to give a hand in baking, for a church guy. Whose name's Steve.

Seen's sack of chosen ignorance was then ruptured. Pink sap burst like an over-ripe guava, rotted on the branch before anyone came over to pick. It's an omen. A premonition. That Seen followed by keeping the wound small. She believed her sack of chosen ignorance would need suture, sooner or later. Though she could not predict the time came so soon. Too soon.

It was Big Sister's first love, no less.

Seen went online, taking with her a quick hand and a complex internal status. She fetched a recipe in which no flour was required as she knew the next round of baking would not come soon. Without knowing that macaroon was in fact one of the most difficult baking goods to do right. And the easiest to do wrong. So Seen and Big Sister had a hard time fighting with the semi-serviceable toaster/oven that Mum had

owned for eons. Dozens of deformed cookies came out. Only the best-looking ones were placed in a gift bag and sealed, with a pink ribbon bow. The rest was left to Mum and Seen in a pile. Dad impolitely declined any sweets in fear of diabetes.

A few days after Valentine's Day, Seen went back home to take Mum for tea and spotted out the pink macaroon gift was still lying on Big Sister's desk. The first thought went to Seen's mind was that Big Sister had lost valor at the last minute to give out the *best-looking* macaroons. It was a week and a half later, when dust settled and earth subsided, that Big Sister told Seen how Steve had kept her waiting down at the Olympian Shopping Arcade for three hours full without showing up and disappeared from then on.

"What? Who the hell does he think he is?" Seen was furious, about the incompetent Steve and the waste of her macaroon effort. "Did you call him up then?"

"Of course I did," Big Sister's voice was rife with feminine sorrow. "But it's directed to his voicemail."

"I'll tell you what? That guy was absolutely hopeless. I know this sort of guy. They just walk away when they don't feel like continuing the relationship with you. Leaving not a word, not a single reason," Seen added. "My ex-boyfriend was this kind. That bastard still got the vacuum flask."

The sisters laughed. "But WHY?" continued Big Sister's pitiable voice. "Why did he hold my hand if he didn't want to further develop our relationship?"

Seen couldn't help gasp at the classic question. "Oh Lord, Big Sister, MEN are driven by sexual desire, most of the time. Of course, you can blame them but that's no use. If you like, you can leave your angry message in his voicemail box until it is full. I did that once. Otherwise, I don't see much you can do to that bastard."

"But what's the point?"

Seen was sure Big Sister's eyes were dry when saying so.

Soon, the sack of chosen ignorance towards Big Sister's love life was sutured and perfectly sealed. Later, Seen related this incident to her fiancé and unintentionally evoked another round of brusque comments on church people.

"I think that Steve must have gone to bed with Big Sister."

"Don't be silly. That's not possible."

“Why not?” the fiancé was already celebrating his triumph. “See, you can’t think of a reason. That means it’s possible.”

Seen didn’t even have the energy to utter an *I know*. But she just knew.

*

When Big Sister was in hospital, she had a major operation done to her right leg which left a long deep scar on her right thigh, next to the big joint to her pelvis. Seen couldn’t resist the temptation to peep at the spot. Where grayish yellow flesh sucked in, like an angrily shut mouth with tight thin lips. It was a long time ago when the sisters were living in the same flat, sharing the same room, eating the same quickie meals fixed by Mum. And changing into the same conventschool navyblue skirts.

Their morning changing session fondly gave Seen fat chances to feed her famished eyes. Her astute irises flashed to take sharp shots of the complicated spot where question marks danced. Seen, though curious, never felt like asking Big Sister about what really happened during the operation. She actually learnt it from Dad a few days after the operation. She was terrified to have seen Dad waiting for her at the school gate after class. On the way back home, which was only a fifteen-minute normal walk or a four-minute almostlate run, Dad briefed her about Big Sister’s situation. Only that his description was so full of gory details that Seen found too horrifying to believe.

Still, Seen never talked about the surgery with Big Sister. The reason was that the Family Rubric said *Never Enquire An Elder About His/Her Sickness (not even entirely/partially out of authentic/forged concern)*. On the second thought Seen reckoned it was after all a stupid question to ask because Big Sister was probably under doses of anesthetic and had fallen unconscious even before the operation took place. So what Big Sister learnt about her body was in fact from the surgical people’s words. Dyed with individual subjective perceptions, overarching impression and possibly placebos. That didn’t make any sense to Seen.

Big Sister’s body between costumes stunned Seen at the first changing session after Big Sister’s long absence from the girls’ room. Every single inch of Big Sister’s skin was snowy white due to prolonged shade from direct sunlight. Though she had always been rather fair, Seen hadn’t encountered so white a Big Sister before. It was extraordinary. Too white. But the hospital didn’t let her go so purely. Visible grayish

pink scars slashed across her thighs, shins, back and marked around her waist area, in a pattern not unlike tiger skin.

A white tigress. Invincible in the jungle of cement.

Surprising enough, Seen did fathom out from-what Big Sister got those tiger patterns. Probably it was during the exciting sickbed news hunting that a nun participant accidentally dropped a piece of information from her holy palms (trembling with thrill), and it accidentally landed on Seen's lap.

What she got was that due to some unknown distant side-effect of some uncertain medications, Big Sister had suffered from severe oedema for a period of time. It was said that her entire body was extremely swollen with fluid and became two-times bigger and three-times heavier. Seen imagined a flood inside Big Sister's body, in which gall bladder got lost in the current, liver screamed for help, pancreas volunteered to be a lifeboat and set out on a search along the intestines. Anyways, the oedema stretched her skin and left her stretch marks after the flood had gone down. That was the origin of the tiger pattern. Seen's windfall piece of information was later confirmed by Mum and Dad's ritual of pressing a thumb on Big Sister's ankle and checked for how long the pressed mark lasted. Mum explained to Seen that was to ensure Big Sister hadn't got excessive water inside.

8.

I See You door and the Spell Miscast

Seen remembered having fallen asleep and woke up with a start to find out she was still the only soul in the very spacious quarter in Hung Hom.

Seen at the age of twelve was already totally capable of looking after herself. Although Grandma often came to cook dinner for Seen, during the nine months when Big Sister was ill, Seen was mostly left alone at home. Seen wasn't close to Grandma in any sense. She found it impossible to communicate with her since she had a heavy Chiu Chow accent. But life was full of *should haves* as always. Years after Grandma had passed away, Seen discovered a craving interest towards homemade Chiu Chow cuisine. By the time she started to wonder about the making of Chiu Chow sticky rice dumplings, it was already too late. Mum said Grandma had taken the skill with her. None of Mum's siblings had acquired Grandma's marvelous technique in forming and rolling out a mysteriously shocking (and) pink dough to wrap up sticky rice and fried peanuts. No one was quick enough. Not even Auntie Snow, who had inherited most of Grandma's superb cooking. Grandma's secret would remain a secret. Including how to press the wrapped-up into the wooden mould and throw it out in a nearly-effortless hit. Seen was often disturbed by the notion that she *should have* seized that nine months to learn some of Grandma's Chiu Chow cooking.

But it was just a *should have*.

What actually happened was that Grandma usually left when done watching the second round of TVB series, at about a quarter to nine in the evening. After bidding a quiet but respectful goodnight, Seen was on her own until a quarter past midnight when Mum, or both Mum and Dad if Dad was not at work, came back from the hospital, exhausted.

It was a particularly ordinary night which Mum and Dad were both absent. Seen, for no particular reason, had stayed up until a quarter past midnight. She was reading a long and boring book borrowed from the class library about Qiu Jin, the pioneer of the feminist movement in Ancient China. Three and a half hours passed as Qiu Jin grew up from a rebellious little girl into a feminist who persuaded all Han women to untie their bound feet. *Interrupted by a few info-hunting phone calls.* And Qiu Jin went political.

Mum and Dad still hadn't come back. Seen remembered having fallen asleep and woke up with a start to find out she was still the only soul in the very spacious quarter.

Seen abandoned the increasingly complicated book, three-quarters read, and stared out the window, at the empty quarter-past-three street. She had heard about the pessimist/optimist test, on judging a half-full/half-empty glass. At a quarter past three, a quarter of her mind was DENIAL, she believed she was in a dream; a quarter of FEAR, she visualized Mum and Dad had a car accident on their way back and went to hospital too, like what Big Sister did; a quarter of WORRY, she wondered what she should do if Mum and Dad never came back; the last quarter was also WORRY, she was afraid something bad about Big Sister had happened. Four pessimistic thoughts. Four empty quarters formed one entirely empty glass.

It was not until the next morning Mum and Dad's footsteps woke Seen. She must have dozed off waiting in vain for some form of human carriage to make their charitable turn into the god-forsaken street. Seen faintly recalled the silhouette of Mum and Dad against the pale, quarterly-lit-up, winterdawn sky, standing at her bedside. Through the slits of her quarterly-lifted up eyelids, she figured out Mum was mouthing something. Her face blurred. The backdrop was too bright. Maybe Mum was asking if Seen had been scared throughout the night. Maybe Seen shook her quarterly-asleep head twice. Maybe she had said something she wasn't supposed to say.

Mum, please don't ask Grandma to come at night again. I'd rather be alone.

It was supposed to come out as the softest possible request, or even plead. But the cadence of the delivery reiterated in the spacious quarter, quarterly-lit-up, and was tuned high and clear, like a seamaiden's singing to the dolphins in the morning sea.

Mum, please don't ask Grandma to come at night again. I'd rather be alone.

Articulations hit the off-white walls of the den and bounced back, fell slow-motioned onto the *too young* girl's heart, like a silly shower of tacks. Upon the first touch of the utmost tip of the first landed pin, Seen fell back into a futile sleep. In her futile sleep, the unforgettable line reiterating.

Mum, please don't ask Grandma to come at night again. I'd rather be alone.

When she woke up for the third time in the last twelve hours, Seen couldn't help suspecting that the whole thing was just a dream, a nightmare. But her mind, which was

awfully clear, led her through every single detail of the event. Seen was gravely shocked by what she had spoken to Mum. Where it came from was utterly a mystery. Honestly, Seen didn't care about Grandma's presence much, though the forever blocked communication sometimes seemed irritating. But she dared to swear she didn't hate Grandma a tiny little bit. Now that the spell was cast, it could not be uncast. The unfamiliar words that Seen carelessly let glide past her quarterly-asleep tongue had reinstated an aged-old curse. Seen's amount of verbal exchange with Mum decreased dramatically.

Since she opted for loneliness, her wish was granted.

The next day, Dad met Seen at the school gate and offered her Big Sister's latest news. The primary six girl by then had long got used to commuting solo. The government officers' quarter was serenely isolated in the imperturbable core of the district, amid the most peaceful drives and playgrounds. The walk was pretty straight forward, just quiet, concealing hidden dangers, in a way. Dad frequently reminded Seen to be cautious about the surrounding while cutting across the tranquil little path, enveloped by columns of tall pine trees. He warned Seen to pay extra attention to male pedestrians because all men are potentially dangerous. In a way.

So Dad's appearance gave her a jaw-drop. After years of serving in the disciplinary team, Dad's standing posture always retained an air of ATTENTION in foot drill, which enabled Seen to spot him out from afar. And before Seen had overcome the emotional uprising, Dad started right away that Big Sister had undergone a very complicated surgery on her right leg last night. He said blood suddenly ceased flowing to her right leg in the evening and her legs became lifelessly cold. Icy and lavender-colored. The doctor said that if they didn't immediately *do something*, Big Sister's leg might have to be amputated. In order to save Big Sister's right leg, a mouth was cut open on her thigh, somewhere near the pelvis, and a tiny pump was inserted into the big artery to force blood through. An awful lot of blood split out in bridging the chunky artery. Several packs of donation blood were transferred into Big Sister's body. But there was no bloody chance that she had got any of Seen's blood because:

1) Seen's blood type was AB+, while Big Sister's was A+. Seen would have no problem receiving Big Sister's blood but not the other way round.

2) Seen was *too young* to make any donation at that time.

Dad's tone was flat as fact all through. His very typical *chinaman* eyes keep staring forward, sternly. Rarely took a sketchy blink. Making Seen feel the legendary hidden danger was actually waiting to jump them from behind the pine trees. Dad added that the atmosphere was very tense last night and they both were worried sick. It would be dreadfully sad if Big Sister missed a leg for the rest of her life. But luckily it seemed that the overnight surgery went quite smoothly and most probably Big Sister could keep her leg. It was indeed a massive relief.

Dad went through the ten-hour bloody surgery in less than ten minutes. By the time he finished, they were still in the middle of the tranquil little path.

With him being the only male pedestrian in sight, Seen couldn't help wonder if Dad's presence was an act to rekindle his fraternal love, or her filial affection, after months of negligence.

*

The first weekend after the surgery, Seen went along with Mum and Dad to visit Big Sister and barely caught sight of her being pushed into ICU, of which the door flipped, and flapped, and poised.

For some reason, Dad insisted Seen should go *take a look* at Big Sister after months of separation. Seen wasn't keen, nor reluctant. Indifferent. Before setting off, Mum placidly reminded Dad Seen was legally *too young* to get into the ward according to hospital regulations. But Dad said she could sneak in for a while, at least. Mum gave in and so three of them hopped onto the no.5 bus.

Mum and Dad followed Big Sister's sickbed into the Intensive Care Unit. Seen could read from their face that they cared about Big Sister a lot. The CAREs went inside, the CAREFREE remained outside. Seen, *too young and carefree*, sat on one of the long hardwood benches in the lobby and waited. There was a book lying in her bag. One of those cozy-reads that Big Sister's "friends" had given her. The pile that was bound and stored in the upper desk. Seen had deliberately left the Qiu Jin book at home, in protest from getting involved in her late political life. She instead brought along a book called *The Tears of Red Wine* written by Erica Li. Big Sister was always a great fan of Erica Li. It must be a mistake that the book fell into the unwanted pile. Seen

obviously hadn't checked when she simply grabbed one out of the pastel color pile and went. All the romances.

This type of book was what Seen's fiancé now coined as *women's pornos*. His logic was actually quite impressive. He said while men wanted physical excitement and women wanted emotional stir, men read pictures of nude women for visual enjoyment and women read romances to caress their souls. Their parallel purposes to satisfy one's desire showed that they both were *pornos*.

PLAYBOY—for him

Erica Li—for her

Since there was no sign that the *too young and carefree* Seen could get in the Intensive Care Unit very soon, she started turning the pages *carefreely*. The book began with a hugely gorgeous, very James Bond-like businessman drinking red wine while taking a flight to god-knows-where. Then he chatted up a stewardess, or the stewardess hooked him up. Either way, they went out for a drink. The very James Bond-like guy went in the bar first and had a boring *men's talk* with the bar tender about women, sex, money, football, cars, cards and horse-racing. There was a prolonged description of how the stewardess showed up in tiny skirt and sat on the bar stool making a carefree halfway turn. Her slim bare legs aroused all males in the set. The bar tender gave the James Bond character a big thumbs-up and winked wickedly. Seen felt someone was winking at her too. She looked up and found Dad was actually standing by the springhinged ICU door, beckoning her to sneak in. Seen shoved the stupid book away at once and pushed her way into the Intensive Care Unit. Without feeling any more caring.

Dad led Seen down a bright white endless corridor in the most unobtrusive manner. Seen slipped past room after room. All consist of two sickbeds. Then Dad halted all of a sudden and spirited Seen into one of the rooms. There was Big Sister on the left, with five thousand ducts and wires connecting to countless spots of her body. She looked rather pleased to see Seen. Dad helped Seen to get closer, with an encouraging pat on her back.

"You sisters chat a bit," said Dad, tone flat as fact. Expressionless.

They said *hi* and nothing else. Smiled. Nodded. Waved. And then nothing. No. Nothing, no.

Seen sensed Mum's slightly annoyed eyes, as if urging her to make a better effort. Since she was the one up and fit, she should take the initiative. *Be pro-active.* Try to strike up a happy conversation with a hopeful end que. Some lines like *I'll be waiting for you to go shopping with me!* Or *When you come back home, we'll try to make crêpe suzette together again. We won't make a mess this time, ha ha.*

Seen also sensed Dad's question-marked eyes. In his mind, Big Sister and Seen could never stop chatting. In fact, when they first moved into the spacious quarter and started sharing a bedroom, they very often worked on their homework till one or two in the morning. The way they burned their midnight oil infuriated Dad. He didn't need to carry out series of investigations and interrogations to sort out the sisters' homework completion behavioral problem. And tackled it in no time. Every evening, when Dad intentionally and unintentionally passed the girls' room, either to urinate (the toilet was right opposite to the girls' room) or simply to check on them, he could hardly miss the jump of the last syllable of some merrymaking conversations coming to a halt. For several times, they were embarrassingly caught red-handed. So in order to increase their homework completion efficiency, Dad enforced apartheid to tear the sisters apart. The well-trained sisters did what was told. Every evening, after dinner, at seven o'clock, Seen would drag her schoolbag to Mum and Dad's room and start working. Alone. While Big Sister remained in the girls' room working. Alone. The order soon consolidated into a rule, then became a practice. A good habit. Obedient as they were.

It was far beyond Dad's scope of knowledge when he saw the normally blabbering girls silent as lambs.

"I saw this book lying on upper desk and thought you may like to read. It's written by Erica Li."

"Good."

So Seen felt she had done her best to meet the parents' expectations. She put the book safely in Big Sister's bedside drawer and bid her a simple goodbye. Perhaps she was really *too young*, she didn't feel it had been a long time since she last saw Big Sister. She was still up and healthy last time. Or the act of reconciliation was simply redundant? Something subtle. Something subdued amid the branches of the family tree had been

keeping the sisters in touch. Light and invisible like a newly-weaved cobweb. Revealed only when a shot of sunshine hit on the lines and rays reflected.

“Is that it? Are you sure you really want to wait outside?” Dad stopped Seen at the doorway of the cramped room and asked anxiously. Tone no longer flat as fact. She had never heard Dad speak so gently to her. His chinaman eyes weighted with tons of sensuality. Irresistibly touched her heart. The fireflies in his eyes.

But Seen wanted to cry.

She wanted to tug into his arms and huddle for a loving stroke. Like what a girl-child normally does to their father. But she didn’t. It was an unstated *no-no*, neither on the *tick* side of the Family Rubric. Nor on the other side. It was marginal and menacing. A maneuver to smuggle the passion from fire. The jeopardy ponderous. She let the luster languidly thickened and ennui took over. A far *too young* head nodded and exited.

On her way out of the Intensively Caring Unit, Seen walked into a few Caring-looking nurses in Uniforms, who glared at her with Intensely Unfriendly eyes.

*

When Seen first saw Big Sister’s scar, the twelve-year-old head simply knew it wouldn’t look good in a swimming suit. She could hardly realize the seriousness of that scar to Big Sister’s future. Not until Seen started to get over-familiar with some guys in college. She knew Big Sister wouldn’t be able to do it, at least not without difficulties. But Seen couldn’t bear imagining Big Sister having sex with anyone. It was just too disrespectful.

Once Seen realized Big Sister’s implied handicap, profuse questions without answers popped up like fountain spurs. Like a dam lifted and water flooded out, all broke free from custody.

Does that mean Big Sister will remain a virgin until the day she dies? So she can’t bear a baby? Then, is it Seen’s responsibility to ensure Mum and Dad have grandchildren? How about Big Sister’s future husband? Perhaps the first question should be: Can Big Sister find a man who does not care about having real sex?

She couldn’t deny Big Sister’s marital prospect was bleak. That might explain why Big Sister was hurt *so severely* when she was ditched by the churchguy Steve. Though there was no heartbreaking wail, no suicidal act, no threat, no curse, no foul

language, no dirty word, Seen knew her sorrow. Telephonic or not, she just felt what she felt. Shattered hope was like spilt milk, which was no use crying over.

In a way, Seen regretted not sharing Auntie Snow's guidebook with Big Sister.

Who had suddenly equipped her wardrobe with shades of pink, and many with floral patterns. Big Sister's floral patterns were the most spectacular. Everybody who had seen it couldn't help gasp at the apparently identical but in fact differentiating patterns on her pieces of garments. So when Big Sister asked if the Peter Rabbit bottle was pink as she opened the box absently, Seen shouldn't feel a bit weird at all. Seen should have long got used to her aloofness, especially in expressing gratitude. Seen's fiancé was shocked by Big Sister's crudeness and thought that might have bruised Seen's heart but yet, Seen was perfectly calm.

It was not until two weeks later when Seen went back to collect the mis-sent internship contract from Macau and saw a pink Peter Rabbit flask, that Seen felt a real blow.

Both Mum and Dad were away and wouldn't be back until three days later. They had gone back to the mainland to attend a banquet. Dad's younger brother's eldest son's firstborn was one-month old. "So what's that baby's relation to us?" Seen was totally lost.

"You just be calm and track. His level is parallel to Auntie Snow's children's babies to us."

"Oh I see." Seen knew she would never see but sensed Big Sister's displeasure. "So you need to cook your own meals in the coming three days?"

"Well, I can always *grab* something."

Before Big Sister finished her line, Seen noticed a Styrofoam box of fried rice with some vegetables was lying on the dining room table, obviously bought from the on-estate restaurant. When Seen went into the kitchen and checked what else she was reheating for dinner, she caught sight of the pink Peter Rabbit vacuum flask. The mustard-colored one was nowhere to be seen. She bet Big Sister knew what she just discovered. But neither of them touched on it. They read each other's mind.

That night, Seen didn't tell her fiancé either. Their conversation was done before they ever got to the point.

“How on earth can a girl of her age bear staying at home alone on a Sunday night? What’s wrong with your sister?”

“Gosh, you can’t really blame somebody for staying at home when there’s no urgency for them to get outside, can you?”

“But she’s completely isolating herself! Last weekend, she spent two whole days in front of that bored-to-death classical *pi-an-o-for-te*! Playing some nice midis I bet.”

“Mind you. Don’t FUCKING insult my sister.”

9.

The Black Sheep

Big Sister once said on her blog that her past was invaded by a series of unfortunate events. Guess no one can deny that because the same happened to everybody else as well. To Seen, Seen's fiancé, Mum and Dad as well.

Seen's fiancé possessed a flair for heated speech. And was particularly cynical in response to Big Sister's laments towards her misfortune. He coined that "emotional masturbation", for the reason that one caressed one's own soul by bringing up all sorts of unhappiness he or she had experienced in the past. The more downhearted one got, the more excitement and satisfaction one got out of the process. To Seen, that sounded like a sado-masochist idea in pornos but she didn't challenge him. At least not verbally.

It was understandable to Seen that her fiancé seemed to possess a furnace inside. She also knew in his mind lay a serious love deficit. He felt it unfair because he was not given what other children could take for granted. A normal family.

She was briefed on his tragic family history the first time at his home. With the aid of the old picture album, *of course*. His mother died of breast cancer when he was very young and his father discarded him to marry another woman. *Young and beautiful. And with big boobs, Seen thought.* He was left to his grandma all those years, until his grandma died a few years ago. *So I am basically an orphan.* He used to say. But Seen wasn't sentimental enough to commiserate. The effect actually bounced back far. *The inescapable bounce back mechanism.* Seen saw to it that his lamentation was in fact a form of "emotional masturbation", like those of Big Sister's. The sadder he got, the more hyper-excited he became. And his hyper-excitement was adulterated with arrogance. His *Oliver Twist* childhood.

In a way, his background was similar to Dad's. They both were discarded by their family. They both fought hard to survive. They both grew up to be unbearably chatty and keen on voicing out their opinions. Both tended to ignore the audience's preference.

But ever since the fiancé became a regular guest of the family, Dad's chatterbox was covered and locked.

They were engaged ten weeks after smoking from the same pack at the city park. The fiancé turned out to be a family guy behind his wounded face of an unfulfilled dream. Seen was too young to care about marriage but she found it impossible to say no. There wasn't a legitimate reason in her pocket to back up her refusal. Her experience told her the guy smoking next to her was a trustworthy one. But there was something missing she couldn't quite put her finger on.

A notion in her head said she would never be able to love him. Not wholeheartedly.

*

“Big sister doesn't like the idea that you go along for dinner too.”

“Why?”

“She said Mum's going to work tomorrow and therefore will not have much time to cook many dishes.”

“Tell her we will buy some barbecue, say half a roast duck?”

“I did already. I think there're some problems with her. Maybe she just doesn't like to meet, don't mind me saying, ‘strangers’”

“Well, I'm not surprised to hear that as long as she is completing her transformation into an old virgin. See, she is money-minded, hates to contact the outside world, hates new ideas and traps herself in the fictional romances of Erica Li. Pah!” With the angry remark, he lifted all the plates to the kitchen in one perilous heap. Soya sauce saucers on the top, rice bowls slipped in the middle, greasy plates of fish skins and bones at the bottom. And started washing them violently.

None of his accusations hadn't been heard by, or thought about by Seen before. Though she did agree with him, in a way, she felt irritated hearing him trembling on Big Sister. She knew it would be much easier if she joined in his harsh terms or echoed him to form a duet. But something had forbidden her to do so. Something subtle amid the twigs of the family tree.

In one of those touchy days, Seen would definitely have a go with him. But she was never a debating person. And fighting with the fiancé was the last thing she opted for, anyhow. “Don't you worry about it Honey.” Seen tried halfheartedly to send across her pacification. “I'll phone Mum up directly tomorrow and I'm sure she'll like you to

come.” There was no reply, save the hurtling sound of the rushing tap. And Seen continued despite the absence of an answer, *And by the way, darling, I’m going swimming tomorrow.* She was certain the washerman knew it was a gentle protest.

The fiancé was so accustomed to Seen’s escapologist ritual. Taking swimming as a reliable excuse to ignore everybody around without being explicitly rude. What he failed to see was the other big correlation to *swimming*.

It was the childhood activity that Seen engaged in with Dad the most. So, like an olive to the Mediterranean. Dad was correlated to the pool.

Seen loved to go swimming more than anything else. Diving into the water was like entering another world. A world of glittering bubbling soothing bright blue with surrounding checked tiles and I-lines at the bottom. A silent world of masculinity, rationality and stability.

In the bright blue world, all forms of stir were subdued but seeped in a crimson thread. Revealing the concealed trace of flow. Fluid massaged the back of her neck, caressed the narrowest grip of her waist. And within a blink, water slipped away between her thighs, gently as seamless garments of silk.

The pool was so blatantly transparent. There was nowhere to hide.

Seen was taught by Dad, who was a trained frogman, the technique to stay under the water for a prolonged period of time. Just like any other of Dad’s taught life skills, Seen never achieved its supposed result but she could somehow keep her head under the surface long enough to spy on other swimmers in the same bright blue world. In this universe where strength is gravely diminished, it is a lamentably deplorable sight watching grown men working out powerful stokes, yet only covered dashes of short distance with helpless thuds of silence. The frailty reminded her of infants in mother’s wombs. She had once come across a biology program on television saying that swimming was actually our preternatural ability. She had forgotten details about the experiments but remembered quite vividly a scene that a baby was put into the water and he started to swim with its own stroke. There was no rule about which one of his fleshy limbs should go after which. It was all dictated by the early rhythm imprinted in his innocent and premature head. With his eyes wide open. An angel in the bright blue world.

And also because the pool was so blatantly transparent and with nowhere to hide, there was nowhere to avoid men's gaze. Not when she was in her skintight suit.

Even before encountering the Member girls, Seen knew she wouldn't grow up as a beauty. She was born with a drowsy look. Eyes drooped constantly and lips relaxed. Like a senile curtain draping heavily in an ancient state of inactivity, almost anchored to the ground. As she grew up, her leaden face looked more like under the influence of drugs or sedation. Worse still, when she tried to concentrate, her face could be very repelling, to the extent of frightening. The long, stern, ruminating expression kept every passer-by at arm's length.

Seen had never received any positive comments about her facial features, not even crypto-compliments from jailer uncles and weaver aunts, whom the family walked into, from time to time.

Praises were as rare as kisses. All except those from Auntie Snow. Who sensed a tender aura of elegance and early charisma in little Seen. Her chosen successor of her *Essential Guide to be a Well-liked Woman*. A secret pact to bond the aunt and niece.

Auntie Snow's unique point of view proved that everybody had been on the wrong track. Seen soon developed into a prominent curvy figure. And when she smiled, her seraphic solace could thaw steel hearts.

Filled up arid caverns with nectar.

Rejuvenated broad swathes of loam.

Gifted Seen mastered Auntie's noble art of flirting. And enjoyed it as a social lubricant which made things go more easily and smoothly; somehow, her love interests always had difficulties scaring away horny guys and romantic pursuers. Her fiancé liked to refer to that burnt-colored lifeguard at Silver Strand Bay with a touch of wrath, *If he had been a little less respectful, I would definitely have a go with him.*

Going to the beach was slightly better, though guys were horny as ever.

The first time Seen went sunbathing with her fiancé was on a notvery sunny day. The beach was almost empty and Seen was the only half-nude girl in a bikini. Just when those beachboys were steaming with boredom, a strong-looking burnt-colored lifeguard in chrome yellow vest, blood red shorts and a pair of Oakley shades strolled over to Seen in apparently casual steps. In a cheerful tone and toothpaste-ads smile. *Frantic fireflies*

in his eyes, he said, “Hi, is everything okay?” The question was obviously directed to Seen.

“Ah fine, thank you. Well, some garbage in the sea though,” Seen answered politely.

“Oh that’s because of the wind today. Blowing from the east, you know, so we got all the garbage. If you come on a nicer day, this place looks even more beautiful than Pattaya.”

Seen and her fiancé laughed a courteous agreeing laugh *Oh really*.

“So,” the strong-looking lifeguard gave them a burnt-color wave and said in his consistent cheerful tone. “Enjoy your time!”

“Thanks,” replied in a matching tone.

The lifeguard made his way back to the lifeguard’s pavilion. All the burnt-color heads had turned to look at Seen in strong avidity. The fiancé cast her a *what's wrong with these guys* expression. Seen tinkled a fresh string of high-pitched laughter. Like a fountain of crystals spewed into the lively sea, with too much garbage.

The whole incident was so much like a sit-com. Seen also remembered when they were waiting for a bus back to Kowloon, they saw the very lifeguard at the bus stop again. They exchanged friendly glances before the strong-looking burnt-colored guy tore away his gaze, with some effort.

*

Anyways, she couldn’t think of a more tedious thing than being passively lured into a chat by strangers in the pool. On a beach was slightly less unbearable but in a swimming pool was inarguably exasperating. Two acquaintances. Chatting naked. *Hi, my name’s Dick. I’m Lucy. Nice weather, isn’t it? It’s wonderful.*

Even swimming into friends embarrassed her.

Perhaps that’s a violation of some rubrics, or there was a bottom line that marked the traditional modest side of her as a Chinese.

Since she went on to Secondary school, jailer uncles and weaver aunts all agreed that Seen looked Malay. Her tan from hanging out on the beach all day. They didn’t call her the *Black Pearl*. And she would decline the name if they did. As if she had been trying hard to attain some hybrid features and finally won status quo with the

Member girls. To wear the badges they no longer cared to wear. Unwanted and chucked away as trash.

The *Black Sheep*. Seen would trade the trashy label for this one.

Amid the pandemonium, Mum would be baffled to hear that Seen was bashful to talk to guys in bathing suit. She couldn't stop nagging Seen about her indecently limited costumes—a tank top and a short skirt. *How can you walk around with bare shoulders and bare legs?*

It was originally Dad who used to prevent Seen from going out with a larger-than-acceptable portion of exposed skin. He relinquished eventually. For a reason only Seen could get. Passed over the power to Mum to accomplish the endless mission. Seen used to retaliate with a *Do you want me to dress like a nun?* glare. But she soon started to sense a forthcoming mixed jealousy and envy in her eyes. Emerged as a tangy glow, and would soon become a roaring flame. Seen ceased to respond eventually, still cleaved to her habiliments which were neither prim nor proper.

But the tanginess was contagious.

It spread onto Dad's chinaman face when Seen reached the senior years of convent education. When she suddenly realized the parched crevices beyond her heart. An unnamable but undeniable dryness in her aching bone. She yearned for water, a rain. Irrigation sessions. Like Dad's potted plants sitting on the roof of the spacious quarter. Waiting for attention. But this particularly dark one was always in the shadow. Too insignificant to see. Or he had seen but pretended he hadn't. Acknowledging its potential to harm. Once he showered the amorphous pot of weed, it broke out in a thick floating mass. Clogging all others in a bank.

She waited until she couldn't afford waiting.

She brought home the first guy. Just for the sake to fix a dreadful computer. When she appeared from the girls' room with that guy, who later proved to be a real dreadful one, Seen was caught by Dad's annoyance. It was not one of those angry faces that Seen was familiar with as a child when she violated the family rubric. Something had differentiated this from those. A gripping sorrow. A sprinkle of vengeance. Rigid as stone. Ridiculously sour.

She was not sure whether she had trespassed on any rule. The long neglected Family Rubric had passed its expired date. It was frightening as first, overrode later by triumphant ecstasy. Seen went on to collect the hearts of men. Victims fell for her. She took up one guy after another, like sleeves picked up dust. Driven by infant instinct to avenge. Busy not to take any note of the fireflies in his eyes.

Not until storm broke out in Seen's second college year.

When she crazily hooked up with a middle-aged man and sort of moved into his ugly apartment, it was her first time to co-habitat with a man, with a stable air. And it really trampled on Dad's nerves.

Seen always regarded Dad as a typical male who simply overlooked all details. Yet, her long absence from home had aroused Dad's alertness and thoughts started to turn in his *far more complicated than Seen had speculated* head. Or, maybe her infrequent guest appearance at the dinner table was way too hard to miss. Or, maybe he was so keen to discover Seen's news. It actually shocked her hugely one rare night when Dad fired off at her at the dinner table, out of the grayish blue.

The precision of his guesses was impressive. The things that he told her off on. She turned to Big Sister with a questioning look and was returned an innocent face. Big Sister couldn't have betrayed her.

Mum eyed her not with her signature slightly-annoyed gaze. Lime-green garnished with a handful of victorious pride. In a misty cloud of the familiar pale-blue color. A weary sigh. More in pity of the ruined dinner than anything faintly concerning Seen's love life.

But what Seen and Dad could never escape from was the incredibly ironic bouncing back mechanism. The more forcefully the indoctrinations were pushed, the further they rebounded.

The next day, Seen left home at dawn carrying nothing but a bruised heart. When the wintry sky was still quarterly lightened up. Salted sea-air blew and chapped her arid cheeks. Dad's freshly imposed rule was still reiterating in her drowsy head. Words sharp and hurtful, like vinegar.

From now on, if you fail to come back every night before midnight, latest by a quarter past, don't you ever come back again.

Seen wasn't scared. She was the only person who was able to fathom the true source of his wrath. And she was not going to yield. Her revengeful thought persuaded her that she was doing what normal girls of her age should be doing, after all. Maybe a little more than that.

We don't allow co-habitation in our family. If you get pregnant, don't expect us to rear your children.

For the next thirty-six hours, Seen refused to pick up any call from home. But she couldn't bear to cut her contact away from Big Sister.

"How could he be such a dictator? There's no room for negotiation at all. I'm done with it. I can't tolerate him anymore. Since I can either go back to comply or never, I better not go back. Ever."

"Mum cried the whole of last night. She thinks she's losing you."

"I think you think she thinks she's losing me. But that's not the case. How can it be? She'll actually be happier if I don't come back. She hates me."

"She loves you. She told me that. But to believe it or not, it's up to you."

Again, for reasons fluttering among twigs of the family tree, Seen agreed to meet up with Big Sister first and be escorted home. A sincere apology to Mum. A humble greeting to Dad. A nod, a consensus.

An unusually calm Dad sat at the dinner table watching exhausted Seen eat. She had not slept or eaten ever since she left home at the wintry dawn. Dad's eyes fixed gently on the starving girl as he began. In a tone Seen recognized. With stifled energy and intensive care that she encountered once beyond the *I See You* door.

"Seen, do you know we actually love you very deeply?"

A tired head nodded.

"I asked myself why you hate me so much but can't understand. I gave you a roof, feed you, clothe you, educate you, organized trips (to the mainland) for you. Whatever you want, if that's not unreasonable, I buy for you. I believed these are responsibilities as a father. But still. You don't like *home*."

Seen's brain had ceased to function. She could have uttered an *I do*. But then, thoughts started to muddle up, like a radiator receiving broken messages. *H-O-M-E. HO-ME. ME-oh*. "Of course I like you." Tons of complaints vanished as pale blue

vapor. He wanted to hold her in his arms, and pamper her, like what fathers normally do to their girl-child. But he did not. It was not allowed, or forbidden in his family. The nubile girl sitting in front of him was beautiful. He felt a hot flush sweltering inside him. He wanted to touch her, run his fingers through her curly hair, glide along her plain-profile, which was created in the image of him. Inherited his angles and turns in a feminine way. His not-protruded-enough nose, his not-sweet-enough mouth and his not-big-enough pair of chinaman eyes. Her features were so close to his. *Close? No, it wouldn't do.* Too close. So close that his blood was actually running in her.

He held his position until the flush gradually died down from his face. From pink, to chinaman yellow. All the roaring emotions compressed in one encouraging pat on her back.

When she recovered from her splitting headache and looked up, she found the long-gone fireflies in his eyes. Fluttering in pale blue tranquility.

*

It all seemed so juvenile when Seen recalled those episodes. She didn't last long with that middle-aged man anyway. Broke up in less than six months. Their relationship ended with a dramatic twist: when Seen discovered that he—was actually married.

*

Immersed in strokes. Seen conquered lengths after lengths, showing, at least not overtly, any sign of taking a break. To exterminate any false hope of insipid swimmers who viewed the pool as a propitious venue for romance. To exterminate any false hope inside her about kick-starting a perilous romance that was doomed to fail.

10.

Museu de Macau

Seen went to college to study Arts Management, which was a program compromising Dad's pragmatism and Seen's romanticism. And the only one among all listed in college prospectuses that they both were equally happy with. Before they settled on that, Seen opted for Fine Art where she could study Chinese instrumental music. She was fond of the Chinese lutes and had been taking classes in it in the convent school, in which girls either learnt the piano or the violin, sometimes flutes. She was obliged to choose one and she went for the Pipa, for a simple reason. To draw a line between her and the other girls.

When she secretly attended an interview and got accepted, a row between Seen and Dad sparked off. While the man betted the girl wouldn't get a job with a Fine Art degree, she said she could always teach. While the girl insisted on her way, the man threatened not to support her tuition. That cornered Seen at a dead end.

Seen underwent rounds of half-begging, pseudo-negotiations with Dad. And complied. And survived the program they decided on. And graduated with a first. She took up an easy job in Hong Kong History Museum as a cataloguer, right after graduation. She could definitely opt for something higher and better, but she didn't.

She loved her job, so much as she felt settled in her working environment.

The Department of Cataloguing was like a dreamland to Seen the Fresh Graduate. *Young and carefree*. In the workplace, job in need of urgent care hardly appeared. There hadn't been a museum object that fell onto her plate that required immediate action. Not a single piece. Somehow, people there including Seen were simply trying their best to organize history (who had never demanded any organization).

A task they could never conquer within their mortality.

A task that knew no end.

It was a hopelessly unrewarding mission impossible in which effort would never be paid off. No matter how hard they paddled, only dashes of short distance were covered. The impracticality behind the systemic menace of logicity marveled Seen. Impressed. Personal interests in the eyes of history were downheartedly devalued.

Insistent on mortal mere urgency in the grand time span of history suddenly became a disgrace. It even moved beyond a dreamland.

A Neverland.

That Seen had never dreamt about. Where waiting never ceased and imperativeness never left bottom line.

And her working area was systematically chaotic. Surrounded by piles of objects not-on-exhibit. Waiting to be categorized—recovered, wrapped, boxed, sealed, labeled, barcode encrypted, description scribbled. The very minute she saw her cubicle she knew her heart was melted, molded, merged to the heart of the museum. They were all waiting.

In a way, she sensed a kind of intimacy between her and the awaiting objects.

But they were no anxious kids or baby pugs. The first time she was sent down to the heart of the museum, to the main storehouse where objects not-on-exhibit lay in stacks. The first step she made through the threshold was welcomed by a mothy miasma of dusty mist. A familiar desolate smell. Frighteningly friendly. A suppressed yearning for attention. A silenced urge for identity. As if they were confident about their chance. Or their expectation had long dropped to zero. But continue they waited, in absence of avid interest. In deathly ancient silence.

In a way, history tidied itself.

The one who eons ago let escape a *spell miscast* was now struck back by a *spell probably-not-miscast*. The spellbound soul was obliged to venture into the dark, dark cellar time and again. She plodded along the long dark corridor and the steep stairwell. To pay her tribute. Humbly offered her attention to the mass of due collectors. She rubbed the labels clean and read their indecipherable descriptions. Counted the number of various items and made a note of her observations. She sat between shelves of objects not-on-exhibit and breathed on mutual comradeship. In the storehouse at the end of the long dark corridor, waiters marched in a long chained gang.

She thought she had been but wasn't a waitess anymore. Not until she looked down and saw the iron cuff. Rattled her steps.

*

The morning after Seen's violently clogged bedtime conversation with her fiancé, she reminded herself to discuss with him about two things: the pink Peter Rabbit flask and the contract from Macau. But before she saw the fiancé at the breakfast table, a great discovery turned her plan upside-down.

She discovered that the word CHOICE on her bra strap looked exactly the same in the bathroom mirror. It was still a CHOICE flipping this way and that. Two notions popped up in her head:

- 1) She could choose to override all the ostensibly fixed homey manners: instant wake, kiss good morning, shower, breakfast, listen to the news, kiss good day.
- 2) If she liked, she could choose to lose everything. Seen, *young and carefree*, could afford the choice.

Then he appeared and brought up the latest hot topic that he loved to probe into.

"So will you still buy Big Sister other Peter Rabbit stuff?"

Dead air.

"If I were you, I wouldn't. So as to punish her bad manners."

She never told the fiancé what he failed to see so far: Big Sister's interest was contagious to Seen, in a way. He never knew Seen could never resist the temptation to browse the shop in Ocean terminal time and again. Where the vacuum flask was purchased. Later she saw Big Sister had bought a new Playboy handbag, of which the logo was a bow-tied rabbit head. Seen couldn't help checking out Playboy consignments in department stores, unintentionally. Sighed when Big Sister's bag dropped from \$530 to \$350, and then to \$250 at clearance. It was all due to something subtle amid the twigs of the family tree. Something he could never get a clue of.

Only to tease at.

Seen stared into his eyes. She found no stars, no fireflies, no fervent, no. Nothing, no. She realized they could never love each other. Not when her heart still missed a piece. Not when he still hanged onto his love deficit. His furnace fed on the balance book in which recorded how much love he should have deserved but hadn't got settled. His deficit could reach down fathoms. Dry, cobwebbed and full of crevices. Like the ancient well Seen remembered peeping into in Forbidden City on one of Dad's Mainland tours. Even if she exhausted her bosom of passion, she couldn't fill his

barrow of loan for more than an ankle's height. And all vanished into cracks and folds in no time. In not more than two seconds. She was unable to make him see, sorry. No, she didn't. Sorry, no.

And he refused to let go. His welter of invoices of loan.

Uttering not a word, she walked out into the early summer air. Carrying nothing. Not even a bruised heart.

*

When Seen was woken by the roar of the downpour, thunders and lightening, the now dry, rigid and crumpled pair of jeans was tangling stubbornly at her ankles. Parched with dehydration. Like her throat, from engulfing too many Macvites. Mum would certainly have scolded her bad, if she knew. *Only if she knew.* Head spinning with a splitting headache. Prostrating Seen in trance felt for the tin of Strepsil throat drops. Her feverish fingertips white from overstretched. A pointless attempt to bring it close. The suicidal thing chose to annihilate itself. Jabbed into the floor with a cry of jingle. Jumped over the edge of the bedside table. Aluminum foiled pebbles mottled the milky white and green apple green tiles.

The quarterly-lit sky outside the shut window was packed with huge but intangible lumps of very dark cloud, like damp cotton patches. Dyed the furniture grayish-bluish-cream. Seen detached her immersed face from the moisture-loaded pillow and leaned over to summon the sparkling grains. Her covered shoulders searing while the exposed feet chilled. The copper-colored tin reflected her quarterly-awakened face. Grayish-bluish-cream.

Pensive fingertips searched scotchingly for scattered stones. *One, two.* Slow collected tiny jewels clanked the impatient tin. Reassembled in boring speed. *Three, four.* On arrival of the fifth foiled pebble, weighty eyelids dropped. The whole room was sedated in monotonous rhythm.

Seen the Summary of All Virtues.

the rubric rider

the exotica

She arrived once again at the very beginning of the long dark corridor. Her hair was still dripping with rainwater. Her cream-colored shirt took away the droplets but

couldn't stop her soles from leaving water footprints as she descended the hardwood stairwell. Barefooted. One print on every plank. The ebony fence of the circular stairwell was old, but strong. Stiff at joints and smooth to touch. Like polished with films of scented oil. Smelt of roses and cedarwood. It was welcoming. Encouraging like a pat on her back. Flirting with mild seductions.

Her feet were chilled upon landing on the cool tiled aisle. Toenails grayish-bluish-cream. Her feet might be amputated if she didn't plod on to keep blood flowing. It'll be very sad if she missed her feet for the rest of her life. She knew somewhere down the corridor lay a deserted room where no one cared. Insulated with walls of jet. Where she could seek balm and honey. And protection and pamper. The protection that she longed for. The loving strokes from a fatherly hand.

His rough but warm palms enveloped her cold and bony feet. Toenails grayish-bluish-cream. Heat seeped gently through the rub of his hands and bloomed fleshy pink. She must take off her jeans. They were too tight. He helped her unbuckle the soaked fabric and soothed her bound hip. The pressed sore vanished. The heart of darkness was rimless but they stood so close together. So close that they felt each other's breath. Hers smelt roses. His, cedarwood.

Time forgot how to count in Neverland. They never knew how long they had stood face to face, like forever taking an invisible lift of glass.

When his hand finally moved motionlessly upward, her cream-colored shirt was completely drenched. Parasite along her womanly curve like a second layer of skin. Moist and soft to touch. Rain dripped along the folds of his palms, his wrists and forearms as he voyaged against the cunning current. Her chest heaved. And her body heat restored. Rainwater started to evaporate from her second skin. Pale blue steam soared from her hair, her pores. Raindrop vapors danced with his perspirations. He pulled her closer, wanted to prove her tangibility. He desired her. He might as well free her from all external restrictions.

She waited until she couldn't afford waiting. Vapors continued to fill vacuity. Until each other's silhouettes were barely visible. Waiting might never end in Neverland. But when he decided at last to ignore foreign curbs, he hurried forward. Met no door but kicking up even thicker clouds of pale blue mist.

She tugged in his arms for a loving stroke. His fatherly fingers ran through her long and curly hair, chasing along angles and turns of her familiar facial features. Amazed, by the feminine inheritance, of his blood.

*

In a way, human instinct for survival was astounding.

When Seen thought she would have died of thirst, she automatically got up and fetched water. Despite her creaky neck, burning forehead, icy skin and limp legs. She sort of remembered the window above the bed was securely shut but her face was crisscrossed with water traces. Sweat, leaked raindrops, tears. All were washed away in a single morning shower.

*

Two and a half years passed in peace and quiet, when Seen started to see. The missing piece of her heart was voluntarily held captive. Reserved for a man whom she was dedicated to ever since those long and wintry nights. Perhaps he had longed forfeited the right to claim. Or the right wasn't in his pocket ever since the very beginning. But continued she guarded it. Until one day he would come.

CHAPTER 5

A Self-Reflection on *Hong Kong Locust Stand I* written after *The God of Small Things*

A key objective of this thesis is to achieve a deeper understanding of the relationship between style and literary aesthetics by studying the stylistic patterns within Arundhati Roy's poetic prose. In addition to the traditional approach of conducting a stylistic analysis, my intention was also to write a pastiche informed by and loosely based on the style of Roy's text. This pastiche comprises Chapter 4. My rationale for this approach is given in the Introduction and finds its focus in my wish to attempt a hybrid effort to understand style and to help develop my own literary output. In other words, my interest is both scholarly and creative, reflecting my own strong direction as a student of literature and as a would-be writer.

It is clear that the two sections of this thesis (analytical and creative respectively) have quite different features though both aim to provide ways of understanding style. While the former analytical approach collects the features of style statistically, and is followed by stylistic analysis, the latter creative approach studies Roy as an observing and modeling experience. In this sense, the thesis comprises two approaches to stylistics—the corpus-based approach (Part A) and the empirical-creative approach (Part B). Despite the fact that the two diverse ways, with a focus on the same original text, are balanced in significance, the focus of the dissertation is tilted in my mind towards the “experiential” one, which I consider to be an innovative experiment in the field of stylistics. Thus, in a sense, the traditional approach in the first half can be viewed as a form of control experiment to regulate the new approach. I think the juxtaposition of the traditional with the newly-invented may let us conceive a better idea about the significance of using pastiche writing as a practical way to study stylistic details that encompass a highly distinctive style such as that of Roy.

Although the resemblance of the style of a pastiche to the target work may show the accuracy of my understanding of the target writer's writing style, as well as my ability to imitate, the pastiche included in this thesis does not aim at becoming a straight, formulaic replica. Instead of following laboriously every pattern of Roy's stylistic choices, the creative process is mostly inspired and constructed according to an intuitive

impression, plus my analytical insights, from reading *The God of Small Things*. But interestingly, in spite of the fact that the pastiche is largely stimulated by and does not deliberately mimic the stylistic findings from the original piece, elements of Roy's characteristics are found infused in my own creative text. Accordingly, I think by comparing the stylistic features of my creative work with those of Roy, we may check to what extent the style of Roy is retained. Yet, to reinforce an earlier point, the objective of the pastiche is not to be tested for its accuracy in acting as a "substitute" to traditional devices in capturing Roy's style; rather, the creative section is for an exercise in emulating a style as a stylistic learning experiment.

So, to serve the purpose of evaluating the empirical approach, in this self-reflection, I will first briefly discuss some characteristics of Roy that are found in the pastiche. Then, I am going to integrate the effect on meaning that is conveyed through the style. Lastly, the value of the creative experience will be judged in terms of its contribution as an individual piece of Hong Kong creative writing.

5.1 On Stylistic Features

In Chapter 3, Roy's writing style in *The God of Small Things* is explicated in considerable detail; in the following, I will focus on elucidating linguistic features in the pastiche that demonstrate some of the most prominent techniques that are applied by Roy. The key aspects of style are: high adjectival density, the use of fragments, repetitions, neologisms and other graphological tactics.

The abundance of adjectives and adjectival elements in creating a dense, rich and sensual text is very typically one of Roy's signature writing techniques. In the pastiche, adjectives are deliberately added and sometimes stacked in front of some subjects of focus. For example, at the beginning of the prologue, the central character Seen found the coziness of her Macau apartment very comforting: "like a tepid balm to her fresh-off-the-boat, hard-tumbled, wounded soul" (p.98). Later, when Seen accidentally slipped out the information that her sister was the former student who has lupus, she was awed to find "thirty pairs of shocked, astonished, speechless, unbelieving, nonplussed, thunderstruck eyes" fix on her (p.114). Apart from adjectives arranged in sequences, in

some cases adjectival elements are simply densely populated within a few lines. When Dad's irrigation design was described, there are seven adjectives within the three sentences: "The setup was visually spectacular. A glimmering red tube hanging on the grasscolored outer wall of the building barely linking the two floors. Like a deathly serpent flashing its gory tongue" (p.117).

In the section on lexis in Chapter 3, Roy's adjectival frequency is compared with a group of other writers, one of whom is known for the quality of "adjectival insistence" in the works. It is indicated in Table 3.1 that *The God of Small Things* outnumbered the other masterpieces, including, *Heart of Darkness*, *The Dead*, *Midnight's Children* and *As I Lay Dying*, by yielding a total of 93 adjectives in the first 1000 words. As a way to illustrate the extent of "adjectival insistence" in the pastiche, I also draw up a simple statistical count of the first 1000 words; somewhat to my surprise, my manual tallying produces a total of 137 adjectives, which is far more than those counted in Roy's piece. In addition to the numerical significance, the form of adjectives in the pastiche is manipulated so as to match Roy's application of inventive combining forms, for example "grasscolored", "nearly-patternless", "grayish-bluish-cream" and "chinaman eyes", in which the nouns, suffixes and hyphens are simply matched up for an adjectival quality.

Roy's application of self-combined word forms to produce new adjectives is only part of her characteristic in creating neologisms. Some of the other new words found in the pastiche text are "hospitalmaze", "catwalked", "ladyfirefighter", "lowerdecker", "waitees", "transparented" and "degirlization". Generally speaking, the new words in both Roy's novel and in the pastiche manage to suggest a sense of childishness which is almost blithe. The inventiveness in the original fed on the innocence of the child protagonists; while in the creative piece, since it exists as a form of internal monologue, the neologisms can be seen as stemming from the consciousness of the main character, Seen, whose thoughts keep wandering back to her childhood.

To continue the technique of sequencing as pointed out previously, Roy's attempt in achieving a structurally complex text is overtly illustrated by the other sequences formed, which are reproduced in the pastiche. Like those made up with adjectives, noun sequences are frequently seen in the pastiche, for example, a series of

nouns about the different smells in the wet market is listed: “Smells of chicken excretions, dead fish, raw meat, ground soybeans, pickles, hand-pulled noodles, rice barrels, herbs and medicines” (p.119). While in describing Seen and Auntie Snow’s shopping excursions, nouns related to garments also turn up in heaps: “The aunt and niece excused malls after malls, rummaging about scarves, gloves, hats and sunglasses. Fitting on shirts, skirts, belts and boots” (p.107). Part of the reason for having these sequences can be to illustrate details of an object; yet, to me, the main purpose behind such constructions is to project a witty register that sounds like a child narrator, Rahel and Seen respectively. Neither of them is a child anymore by the time they are old enough to recall the past; nevertheless, part of their mentality seems to have remained in infancy, the time they treasure the most. Since a child tends to include everything that happened in an event, weighting not the importance of each, the narrations in both cases are intentionally loaded with details.

In addition to sequences made up by single-words, some sequences in the pastiche are achieved by a list of short phrases or sentences. The regularity is constituted by repeating the same sentence structure, such as the repeatedly used question forms in the following example: “So can you tell me which bed your sister is in now? What sort of medication is she taking? Did the doctors say when she will be fit to come out? God bless” (p.112). The repetition intensifies the nuns’ bubbling curiosity in their endless enquiries about Big Sister’s illness. Another phrasal sequence is formed under a repetition of the negative imperatives: “There should be no doubt, no protest. No claims of innocence, no excuse of ignorance. No appeal once the verdict was given. No seeking of maternal protection. No shedding of tears of injustice. No shaking of angry fists. No emotional blackmailing, no answer back, no smirk, no joke” (p.105). Dad’s rubric is emphasized in the course of these repetitive lines, with a touch of humor.

Repetitions appear on various levels in Roy’s novel; apart from repetitive sentence patterns, metaphorical images often come up recurrently. Such a technique is included in the pastiche; for example, the “pocket” imagery has appeared thrice throughout the whole text. It is first used to describe how there is not much of Big Sister’s news in Seen’s pocket, which has its reference to the pocket sewed into typical primary school uniforms. The same metaphor is then re-used to say there is no reason in

Seen's pocket for her to refuse the fiancé's proposal; towards the end, it is narrated that perhaps there is no such right in Dad's pocket that he can be entitled to claim Seen's missing piece of heart. Note that in all three situations, the things in the pocket sound like foreign objects that the characters discovered on the spot, rather than something they put in themselves. A meta interpretation of the imagery, especially in the latter two cases, can be that the items in their pockets are things imposed from the external world that were planted long ago to direct the characters' behavior. The foreign objects are boundaries and rules in a society applied externally.

The use of fragmentary sentences is one of the most observable qualities in Roy's novel, and the pastiche has followed the same style of sentential construction. Like Roy, the fragments in the pastiche are not always grammatical, pedagogically speaking. The pastiche particularly adopts the type of fragments started with "like" which are most frequently seen at the end of long descriptions as a form of summary statement. For example, in Part 4, after the elaboration on the nuns' persistence in shaking Big Sister's sickbed news out of Seen, actually not much, the paragraph concludes with a fragmentary metaphor saying that Seen's stock of information is "like a skinny piggy-bank" (p.113). Another example is taken from Part 1 when Auntie Snow and Seen's shopping excursion is depicted. The Aunt's endless grumble is first presented with concrete domestic scenes, and finally summed up with a metaphor, saying the way her anger is sourced from her two sons is "like the Earth spinning around the same rigid orbit" (p.107).

In *The God of Small Things*, Estha was the rational and practical twin who always tried to make sense of the complicated world by organizing things in lists. Similar graphological arrangements are adopted in the pastiche, like the use of point-forms in Part 3. When Seen was pondering about the three qualities to be a qualified upper-decker, she made up a list: "a) Eagle-like vision; b) High body flexibility; c) Strong arms" (p.108). When Seen was informed of details about Big Sister's surgery, she drew up two reasons to account for the fact that there would not be any of Seen's blood in Big Sister's body because: "1) Seen's blood type was AB+, while Big Sister's was A+. Seen would have no problem receiving Big Sister's blood but not the other way round; 2) Seen was *too young* to make any donation at that time". In addition to

listings, tables are also inserted between lines, such as the “tick/cross” table on the Family Rubric in Part 1 and the brief profile Seen kept in her head about Steve, Big Sister’s first love. Based on the narration, all the lists and tables in the pastiche actually take their form in Seen’s consciousness only; but unlike Estha, Seen is certainly not a rational person. In this case, the deviant formal arrangements are rather due to the protagonist’s desperate attempts to seek some fun in the dullness which seems to follow her around.

5.2 On Thematic Elements

Having pointed out and discussed briefly some of the stylistic features that are found in common in both the pastiche and the novel by Roy, I will proceed to talk about the thematic elements embedded in the creative piece.

A “by-product” in adopting the practical pastiche approach is the content encoded by the imitated style. Insofar as syntactical elements almost always affect the semantic, the ingredients of the novel, including the plot, characters and atmosphere, which are literally shaped by the writing style of Roy, somehow have to be reproduced. I decided on restaging a story about transgressions in Hong Kong not only because it is the place I am most familiar with, but also because the phenomenon of Hong Kong as being excessively crowded and tending to smother individuality also falls suitably into the depiction of trespassing acts as acts of defiance and individuality. Therefore, in order to echo Roy’s seditious theme as related to her language, various levels of transgressions are portrayed in the pastiche and they are elaborated in the following.

First, as a parallel to the plot of the original, the main action of the pastiche is about an act of love transgression involving a father and a daughter, the hinted-at incest between the characters Dad and Seen. The illegitimate tie of love embeds a number of betrayals connecting other characters, including Mum, and the fiancé. It is sad to acknowledge that Mum was the worst victim in the story, innocently double-betrayed by both her husband and her daughter, though whether Dad and Seen actually got involved in real sexual intercourse is not explicitly told. It is the writing style of the pastiche that carnal descriptions are much more implicit compared to those in Roy’s text; after all, the

setting of the pastiche is a Chinese community, where sex is a serious taboo, and I think, generally speaking, it is a more sensitive topic in Chinese than in an Indian cultural setting. Having said that, transgression by its nature must be bold and in retrospect (perhaps especially when it involves sex) I must consider whether I too have not betrayed my intentions.

Transgressions also take place in refusing to conform, either to the society, or to facts in general. Seen's personality is from the beginning quite vividly portrayed as "exotic" who hates to be molded into a formulaic Hong Kong lifestyle. Ever since she was a child, a "bounce back" mechanism has always been dictating Dad's impositions, blocking rules and orders from passing across. As the story goes, Seen's rebellious nature eventually overrode the Family Rubric, as well as the spine of the system by loving Dad beyond filial piety. Her attitude is further illustrated by details about her decisions, like how she graduated with excellent grades from college but chose to be a low-skilled cataloguer and how she chose to learn the Chinese lute so as to differentiate herself from her piano/violin player convent schoolmates. It is also revealed in the narration that her interest in swimming is also derived from her will to alienate herself, "to ignore everybody around without being explicitly rude" (p.142).

The predominating feeling I got from reading Roy's novel is a prevailing stifling mood, signifying the characters' inability to fulfill their aching, unquenched desires due to traditional social rules. The same strangling atmosphere is deliberately created in the pastiche so that everything, instead of taking control of itself, seems to be passively falling into place. This forms an overarching malaise that everybody in the story has tried in vain to break through. While Seen possessed a tendency to isolate herself from mass conformity, Big Sister tried to escape from her fate of becoming an old virgin (which was very likely to happen). Mum didn't take up an active role in changing anything but sensed an unidentified unnaturalness in the family which made her tense and taut. As for Dad and the fiancé, both of them experienced a traumatic childhood which had distorted their psychology to a certain extent. Dad's tragic past made him extremely disciplinary about himself and the ones he cared for, and the excessive insistence on order turned him into a dictator. Although his motivation was undoubtedly good, Dad's totalitarian rule somehow led him to execute unreasonable rules over the

family, such as, ignoring the biological gender of Big Sister by “de-girlizing” her. Similarly, the fiancé’s scarcity of love in his tragic past left him a seriously self-centered person with an insatiable demand for attention and care; the unfairness that scarred him also made him despise society in general. In the pastiche, both Dad and the fiancé, though not always consciously, attempted to break away from their mindset that was shaped by past events: Dad tried to be more honest to his feeling and express his fraternal love to Seen, but it did not come out right; the fiancé tried to balance his hostility to others by constantly making jokes, but it only ended up as a kind of teasing. Acknowledging their damaged souls or not, both of the two characters had made an effort to self-help, like adult Estha and Rahel in the book, their awkward powerlessness becomes luminous despite the seeking of a smooth, normal relationship with their surroundings.

In addition to the characters’ confrontations with “fixities” in their lives, transgressions in the environmental sense appear both in the original and the imitation, as reflected by descriptions of ruthless tourists and the loss of heritage. In *The God of Small Things*, damage inflicted by the development of tourism is bitterly criticized, for the industry brings pollution and deformity of the landscape. The pastiche also touches on such topics but not as sourly as Roy does. The misgivings about tourism are indirectly referred to while narrating Dad’s Mainland tours, building a rather negative image of the well-offs who go to exploit a poor country. The loss of native culture is also a key message conveyed in the novel, for the novel devotes one whole chapter to telling the story of the traditional dance of Kerala, the Kathakali; similarly, Seen in the pastiche often tints the narration with slight melancholy about the loss of some traditional cultural forms. For example, Seen mourned about how the characteristic wet market in Hung Hom was replaced by a multifunctional building conglomerating a wet market, an indoor sports center, a Leisure And Cultural Department service center and, last but not least, a library.

In between Chapter 1 and 2 of *The God of Small Things* Roy inserted a lament towards the practicality of our world: “HOWEVER, for practical purpose, in a hopelessly practical world...” (34); such a sense of disgust at being practical is also hovering in the pastiche. While the mindless playfulness in the original is mainly

brought about by the twin-child protagonists, Seen is serving as the counterpart in the reproduction. Like the twins, Seen's active imagination keeps suffusing the central story with diverting, but amusing, thoughts and details. The overall structure of the novel, of which fine plots keep digressing the axis, represents an undercurrent transgression. If the rebellion is viewed socially, the practical central concept locally is business-biased, and the less significant concepts that keep interfering is the impractical persistence of the arts as a necessary but often repressed form of social activity.

5.3 Conclusion

In this last section, I am going to evaluate the pastiche not as a part of the project, but as a stand-alone piece of creative writing, which is, to me, an important notion because a personal goal of mine is to become a fiction writer. Thus, I regard the creative section in this thesis as a serious writing exercise. Besides, in the following, I will also try to explicate the significance of the work as a piece of Hong Kong fiction and the challenges in interpreting the local culture in the English language.

The writing process has been a valuable opportunity to practice composing deliberately complex syntactic structures. Insofar as I am writing after *The God of Small Things*, it is definitely my priority to consider the style and themes generated by Roy as the base of my creativity. Such constraints set by the task are genuinely a test of my sensitiveness towards Roy's characteristics, which also makes it an effective self-imposed writing exercise. In the arena of the literary arts, there is in fact a tradition of such practices. Probably the best-known predecessor is Raymond Queneau, whose book *Exercises in Style* (1947) demonstrates the same simple story in ninety-nine different ways. Another attempt is by George Perec, who wrote *La Disparition* (1960) with an effort not to employ the letter 'e'. A more recent contemporary comic adaptation built on Queneau's premise is executed by Matt Madden in *99 ways to tell a story* (2005), who carried out the same exercise in graphic novel form. The overarching objective in the above attempts is to impose on oneself certain limits so as to stimulate and push forward one's ability in the course of achieving the goal, and the "writerly" aim of the pastiche produced in this thesis falls aptly into the same trend.

In the light of adapting Roy's themes into a Hong Kong context, the greatest difficulty is in interpreting a local Chinese culture in English. In *The God of Small Things*, Roy tends to insert in the text transliterations of words in Malayalam, the dialect of Ayemenem, such as, *Mol* for "little girl" and *Mon* for "little boy". Those words blend in Roy's text rather naturally, but I choose not to use the same approach for Cantonese phrases in the pastiche. I deliberately avoid translating any utterances phonetically not only because it creates no meaning to non-Cantonese speakers, but also due to the enormous difference between Chinese and English. Chinese, unlike English, is a tonal language and it is based not on an alphabet, and both of the distinctions hinder in-text translation. So, instead of doing direct transliterations, my approach is to transform Chinese entities into something recognizable in western culture and blend them in. For example, in dealing with names, "Seen" is a pseudo-transliteration of the Chinese word which means "the Summary of All Virtues", but in addition to interpreting the sound, I deliberately choose a word meaningful in English that can also evoke significance in the story. In this case, "Seen" can be interpreted as the consciousness of the story and it is through the eyes of Seen that we see. In addition to names, I use the same method to interpret conversations which are supposed to be in Cantonese; that is, I write the lines as if they are said in English in the first place. I try to render similar effects created by Cantonese expressions using English "substitutes", such as "Pah!" and "How sweet!". Such effort results in fairly idiomatic English discourses, as idiomatic as they can be in Cantonese.

The title of the pastiche "*Hong Kong Locust Stand I*" consists of an intentional adaptation of a mysterious phrase coined by Arundhati Roy. The wordplay *Locust Stand I* first appears in the second chapter of *The God of Small Things*, as a distorted reconstruction of the pronunciation of the Latin phrase *locus standi*, meaning "legal status". Although this is the correct origin of the wordplay, I personally prefer to view it as an accented articulation of "local standard" by which "standard" refers to language and cultural mores. Roy in her novel skillfully merges fictional narratives with realistic phenomena, especially on the account of traditional Indian regional practices and the environmental degradation issues in Kerala. In writing the pastiche, I too attempt to give an honest depiction of the local livelihood through narrating the story of a typical

Hong Kong family. Admittedly, it is a contemporary trend that literary works portraying the Eastern diaspora is very marketable internationally; however, since I still consider myself as a writer in apprenticeship, I would be truly pleased if anyone, local or foreign, who reads my piece manages to sense a touch of Hong Kong dwellers' unique stamina and (paradoxically perhaps) powerlessness.

As a concluding and conclusive remark, the thesis has demonstrated how constructing a pastiche is a practical approach to stylistic studies. While such an “experiential” approach to stylistic analysis is underdeveloped, this project serves as an honest experiment to check the potential of the method. Judging on both the corpus-based analysis and the creative outcome, I consider this project successful (if I may be allowed self-assessment) in the way it offers some new light on hybrid studies of linguistic and literary topics with creative writing. In addition, since creative writing is not yet widely recognized as a form of “research” to be carried out at local tertiary educational level, the hybrid nature of this project may also be a modest pioneer in introducing creative writing elements in literary research projects.

Complete List of Examples on Lexis

Roy Style Marker: High Frequency of Adjectives

Example 1, May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees. Red bananas ripen. Jackfruit burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they stun themselves against clear windowpanes and die, fatly baffled in the sun. (p.1)

Example 2, The nights are clear but suffused with sloth and sullen expectation. (p.1)

Example 3, But by early June the south-west monsoon breaks and there are three months of wind and water with short spells of sharp, glittering sunshine that thrilled children snatch to play with. The countryside turns an immodest green. Boundaries blur as tapioca fences take root and bloom. Brick walls turn mossgreen. Pepper vines snake up electric poles. Wild creepers burst through laterite banks and spill across the flooded roads. (p.1)

Example 4, Slanting silver ropes slammed into loose earth, ploughing it up like gunfire. The old house on the hill wore its steep, gabled roof pulled over its ears like a low hat. [...] The wild, overgrown garden was full of the whisper and scurry of small lives. A rat snake rubbed itself against a glistening stone. Hopeful yellow bullfrogs cruised the scummy pond for mates. A drenched mongoose flashed across the leaf-strewn driveway. (p.1)

Example 5, The house itself looked empty. The doors and windows were locked. The front verandah bare. Unfurnished. But the skyblue Plymouth with chrome tailfins was still parked outside, and inside, Baby Kochamma was still alive. (p.2)

Example 6, Short creatures with long shadows, patrolling the Blurry End. [...] Thirty one. Not old. Not young. But a viable die-able age. (p.3)

Example 7, She had a special child-sized coffin. Satin-lined. Brass handle shined. She lay in her yellow Crimplene bellbottom with her hair in a ribbon and her Made-in-England go-go bag that she loved. (p.4)

Example 8, She looked small and ill in her crisp off-white sari. (p.5)

Example 9, It was hot in the church, and the white edges of the arum lilies crisped and curled. [...] Estha stood close to her, barely awake, his aching eyes glittering like glass, his burning cheek against the bare skin of Ammu's trembling, hymnbook-holding arm. Rahel, on the other hand, was wide awake, fiercely vigilant and brittle with exhaustion from her battle against Real Life. (p.5)

Example 10, Thing One was the newly painted high dome of the yellow church that

Rahel hadn't ever looked at from inside. It was painted blue like the sky, with drifting clouds and tiny whizzing jet planes with white trails that crisscrossed in the clouds. (p.5)

Example 11, She imagined him up there, someone like Velutha, bare bodied and shining, sitting on a plank, swinging from the scaffolding in the high dome of the church, painting silver jets in a blue church sky. [...] She imagined him dropping like a dark star out of the sky that he had made. Lying broken on the hot church floor, dark blood spilling from his skull like a secret. (p.6)

Example 12, During the funeral service, Rahel watched a small black bat climb up Baby Kochamma's expensive funeral sari with gentle clinging curled claws. (p.6)

Example 13, The sad priests dusted out their curly beards with goldringed fingers as though hidden spiders had spun sudden cobwebs in them. (p.6)

Example 14, She heard (on Sophie Mol's behalf), the softsounds of the red mud and the hardsounds of the orange laterite that spoiled the shining coffin polish. She heard the dullthudding through the polished coffin wood, through the satin coffin lining. (p.7)

Example 15, Anticipating the sharp, smoky stink of old urine that permeated the walls and furniture [...](p.7)

Example 16, Then he put his little arms around his rigid, weeping mother. (p.9)

Example 17, It was written in a slanting, feminine, convent school hand, but the signature underneath was their father's. (p.9)

Example 18, Swollen cupboards creaked. Locked windows burst open. Books got soft and wavy between their covers. Strange insects appeared like ideas in the evenings and burned themselves on Baby Kochamma's dim 40-watt bulbs. In the daytime their crisp, incinerated corpse littered the floor and windowsills, and until Kochu Maria swept them away in her plastic dustpan, the air smelled of Something Burning. (p.9)

Example 19, Heaven opened and the water hammered down, reviving the reluctant old well, greenmossing the pigless pigsty, carpet bombing still, tea-coloured puddles the way memory bombs still, tea-coloured minds. The grass looked wetgreen and pleased. Happy earthworms frolicked purple in the slush. Green nettles nodded. Trees bent. (p.10)

Example 20, He was wearing a crushed-strawberry-pink T-shirt, drenched darker now, and he knew that Rahel had come. (p.10)

Example 21, Venders in the bazaar, sitting behind pyramids of oiled, shining vegetables, [...] They gave him rusted film cans in which to put the vegetables he picked. [...] they would transfer them to his red plastic shopping basket [...] Estha carried them home in the crowded train. (p.11)

Example 22, It reached out of his head and enfolded him in its swampy arm. It rocked

him to the rhythm of an ancient, foetal heartbeat. It sent its stealthy, suckered tentacles inching along the insides of his skull [...] It stripped his thoughts of the words that described them and left them pared and naked. Unspeakable. Numb. (p.11)

Example 23, When Khubchand, his beloved, blind, bald, incontinent seventeen-year-old mongrel, decided to stage a miserable, long-drawn-out death, Estha nursed him through his final ordeal as though his own life somehow depended on it. (p.12)

Example 24, Then with bladder empty and conscience clear he would look up at Estha with opaque green eyes that stood in his grizzled skull like scummy pools and weave his way back to his damp cushion, leaving wet footprints on the floor. (p.12)

Example 25, A well-dressed man with a quiet walk. His face grew dark and outdoorsy. Rugged. Wrinkled by the sun. He began to look wiser than he really was. Like a fisherman in a city. With sea-secrets in him. (p.13)

Example 26, Past the new, freshly baked, iced Gulf-money houses built by nurses, masons, wire-benders and bank clerks who worked hard and unhappily in faraway places. Past the resentful older houses tinged green with envy, cowering in their private driveways among their private rubber trees. (p.13)

Example 27, He oiled himself with warm, peppered coconut oil, kneading his old, loose flesh that stretch willingly off his bones, like chewing gum. (p.14)

Example 28, 'Estha Mon!' he would called out, in his high, piping voice, frayed and fibrous now [...] Estha would walk past, not rude, not polite. Just quiet. (p.14)

Example 29, The wet mud under his shoes made rude, sucking sounds. The cold puppy shivered and watched. (p.15)

Example 30, Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria, the vinegar-hearted, short-tempered, midget cook, (p.15)

Example 31, When she was questioned by the Principal about her behaviour (cajoled, caned, starved), she eventually admitted that she had done to find out whether breasts hurt. (p.16)

Example 32, She was never invited to their nice home or noisy parties. Even her professors were a little wary of her-her bizarre, impractical building plans, presented on cheap brown paper, her indifference to their passionate critiques. (p.18)

Example 33, She was in jean and a white T-shirt. Part of an old patchwork bedspread was buttoned around her neck and trailed behind her like a cape. Her wild hair tied back to look straight though it wasn't. A tiny diamond gleamed in one nostril. She had absurdly beautiful collarbone and a nice athletic run. (p.18)

Example 34, Given to him in love. Something still and small. Unbearably precious. (p.19)

Example 35, That something happened when personal turmoil dropped by at the wayside shrine of the vast, violent, circling, driving, ridiculous, insane, unfeasible, public turmoil of a nation. [...] Then small God (cosy and contained, private and limited) came away cauterized, laughing numbly at his own temerity. (p. 19)

Example 36, In the old house on the hill, Baby Kochamma sat at the dining table rubbing the thick, frothy bitterness out of an elderly cucumber. She was wearing a limp, checked, seersucker night-gown with puffed sleeves and yellow turmeric stains. Under the table she swung her tiny, manicured feet, like a small child on a high chair. (p.20)

Example 37, She had lost weight on her face and shoulders, which had made her from being a round person into a conical person. But sitting at the dining table with her enormous hip concealed, she managed to look almost fragile. The dim, dining-room light had rubbed the wrinkles off her face leaving it looking- in a strange, sunken way- younger. (p.21)

Example 38, Father Mulligan was more than merely flattered by the emotion he aroused in the attractive young girl who stood before him with a trembling kissable mouth and blazing, coal-black eyes. For he was young too, and perhaps not wholly unaware that the solemn explanations with which he dispelled her bogus biblical doubts were completely at odds with the thrilling promise he held out in his effulgent emerald eyes. Every Thursday, undaunted by the merciless midday sun, they would stand there by the well. The young girl and the intrepid Jesuit, both quaking with unchristian passion. (p.23)

Example 39, Then he would reopen his umbrella and walk away in chocolate robes and comfortable sandals, like a high-stepping camel with an appointment to keep. He had young Baby Kochamma's aching heart on a leash, bumping behind him, lurching over leaves and small stones. Bruised and almost broken. (p.24)

Example 40, It was a circular, sloping patch of ground, with a steep gravel driveway looping around it. Baby Kochamma turned it into a lush maze of dwarf hedges, rocks and gargoyles. [...] Their single succulent spathes ranged from shades of mottled black to blood red and glistening orange. Their prominent, stippled spadices always yellow. In the centre of Baby Kochamma's garden, surrounded by beds of canna and phlox, a marble cherub peed an endless silver arc into a shallow pool in which a single blue lotus bloomed. At each corner of the pool lolled a pink plaster-of-Paris gnome with rosy cheeks and a peaked red cap. [...] She wielded an enormous pair of hedge shears in her bright orange gardening gloves. Like a lion-tamer she tamed twisting vines and muttered bristling cacti. She limited bonsai plants and pampered rare orchids. (p.27)

Example 41, They reached through the nostrils of the pink plaster gnomes and blossomed in their hollow heads, giving them an expression of half surprised, half sneeze-coming. The reason for this sudden, unceremonious dumping was a new love. (p.27)

Example 42, One weekdays she watched *The Bold and The Beautiful* and *Santa Barbara*, where brittle blondes with lipsticks and hairstyles rigid with spray seduced androids and defended their sexual empires. Baby Kochamma loved their shiny clothes and the smart, bitchy repartee. (p.27)

Example 43, All day they sat in the drawing room, Baby Kochamma on the long-armed planter's chair or the chaise longue (depending on the condition of her feet), Kochu Maria next to her on the floor (channel surfing when she could), locked together in a noisy Television silence. One's hair snow white, the other's dyed coal black. (p.28)

Example 44, They hung there now, the Little Blessed One and his wife, on either side of the stuffed, mounted bison head. Reverend Ipe smiled his confident-ancestor smile out across the road instead of the river. [...] Her heavy, dull gold kunukku earrings (tokens of the Little Blessed One's Goodness) has stretched her earlobes and hung all the way down to her shoulders. [...] A rushing, rolling, fishswimming sense. (p.30)

Example 45, An ambiguous, unclassifiable consistency, they said. (p.30)

Example 46, Cold handcuffs with a sourmetal smell. (p.31)

Example 47, And so Estha was Returned in a train with his tin trunk and his beige and pointy shoes rolled into his khaki holdall. [...] He has a tiffin carrier with tomato sandwiches. And an Eagle flask with an eagle. He had terrible pictures in his head. [...] The memory of a swollen face and a smashed, upside-down smile. Of a spreading pool of clear liquid with a bare bulb reflected in it. Of a bloodshot eye that had opened, wandered and then fixed its gaze on him. (p.32)

Example 48, And that when they do, those few dozen hours, like the salvaged remains of a burned house- the charred clock, the singed photograph, the scorched furniture-must be resurrected from the ruins and examined. [...] Little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted. Imbued with new meaning. (p.32)

Example 49, A skyblue Plymouth, with the sun in its tailfins, sped past young rice fields and old rubber trees, on its way to Cochin. (p.35)

Example 50, He said he couldn't bear to think of them spending a lonely, desolate Christmas in England. (p.36)

Example 51, When they were done, she scored them out with her red pen to make sure that the old lines were not recycled for new punishments. (p.36)

Example 52, Estha was wearing his beige and pointy shoes and his Elvis puff. His Special Outing Puff. [...] Estha had slanting, sleepy eyes and his new front teeth were still uneven on the ends. [...] Her yellow-rimmed red plastic sunglasses made the world look red. (p.37)

Example 53, He was a small man, but well-built. Pleasant-looking. He wore old-fashioned spectacles that made him look earnest and completely belied his easy-going charm and juvenile but totally disarming sense of humour. (p.39)

Example 54, Ammu had an elaborate Calcutta wedding. Later, looking back on the day, Ammu realized that the slightly feverish glitter in her bridegroom's eyes had not been love, or even excitement at the prospect of carnal bliss, but approximately eight large pegs of whisky. Straight. Neat. (p.39)

Example 55, When Ammu and her husband moved to Assam, Ammu, beautiful, young and cheeky, became the toast of the Planters' Club. She wore backless blouses with her saris and carried a silver lame purse on a chain. She smoked long cigarettes in a silver cigarette holder and learned to blow perfect smoke rings. Her husband turned out to be not just a heavy drinker but a full-brown alcoholic with all of an alcoholic's deviousness and tragic charm. (p.40)

Example 56, Puzzled brown eyes looked into lurid, red-veined, green ones. [...] Already there were a number of ragged, lightskinned children on the estate that Hollick had bequeathed on tea-pickers whom he fancied. (p.42)

Example 57, To Ammu, her twins seemed like a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each other's company, lolloping arm in arm down a highway full of hurtling traffic. [...] Her watchfulness stretched her, made her taut and tense. [...] And in the background, the constant, high, whining mewl of local disapproval. (p.43)

Example 58, Old female relations with incipient beards and several wobbling chins made overnight trips to Ayemenem to commiserate with her about her divorce. (p.43)

Example 59, A foolish jewelled bride. Her silk sunset-coloured sari shot with gold. Rings on every finger, White dots of sandalwood paste over her arched eyebrows. Looking at herself like this, Ammu's soft mouth would twist into a small, bitter smile at the memory- not of the wedding itself so much as the fact that she had permitted herself to be so painstakingly decorated before being led to the gallows. It seemed so absurd. So futile. (p. 43)

Example 60, A liquid ache spread under her skin, and she walked out of the world like a witch, to a better, happier place. On days like this, there was something restless and untamed about her. (p.44)

Example 61, She had a delicate, chiseled face, black eyebrows angled like a soaring seagull's wings, a small straight nose and luminous nutbrown skin. On that skyblue December day, her wild, curly hair had escaped in wisps in the car wind. Her shoulders in her sleeveless sari blouse shone as though they had been polished with a high-wax shoulder polish. Sometimes she was the most beautiful woman that Estha and Rahel had ever seen. (p.45)

Example 62, Ex-nun, and incumbent baby grand aunt. [...] Baby Kochamma disliked the

twins, for she considered them doomed, fatherless waifs. [...] The fate of the wretched Man-less woman. The sad, Father Mulligan-less Baby Kochamma. [...] She subscribed wholeheartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parents' home. (p.45)

Example 63, *Sturdy Koshy Ooman*- a pleasant, middle-class, God-fearing dwarf with low knees and a side parting. (p.46)

Example 64, On the Plymouth roof rack there was a four-sided tin-lined plywood billboard that said, on all four sides, in elaborate writing, *Paradise Pickles & Preserves*. Below the writing there were painted bottles of mixed-fruit jam and hot-lime pickle in edible oil, with labels that said, in elaborate writing, *Paradise Pickles & Preserves*. Next to the bottles there was a list of all the Paradise products and a kathakali dancer with his face green and skirts swirling. Along the bottom of the S-shaped swirl of his billowing skirt, it said, in an S-shaped swirl, *Emperor of the Realm of Taste*- which was Comrade K.N.M. Pillai's unsolicited contribution. (p.46)

Example 65, He slouched around the compound in his immaculately tailored suits, weaving sullen circles around mounds of red chillies and freshly powdered yellow turmeric, watching Mammachi supervise the buying, the weighing, the salting and drying, of limes and tender mangoes. (p.47)

Example 66, Late at night he went into his study and brought out his favourite mahogany rocking chair. He put it down in the middle of the driveway and smashed it into little bits with a plumber's monkey wrench. He left it here in there in the moonlight, a heap of varnished wicker and splintered wood. (p.48)

Example 67, Its pernicious ghost-grey, furry and with unusually dense dorsal tufts-haunted every house that he ever lived in. [...] Until the day he died, even in the stifling Ayemenem heat, every single day, Pappachi wore a well-pressed three-piece suit and his gold pocket watch. (p.49)

Example 68, He was a photogenic man, dapper and carefully groomed, with a little man's largeish head. (p.51)

Example 69, With cool stone floors and dim walls and billowing ship-shaped shadows. Plump, translucent lizards lived behind old pictures, and waxy, crumbling ancestors with tough toe-nails and breath that smelled of yellow maps gossiped in sibilant, papery whispers. (p.53)

Example 70, He sat on the burning milestones with his matted hair and eyes like windows, and was glad to be able to look away sometimes. (p.63)

Example 71, Estha noticed that the hair on his head was curly grey, the hair in his windy, armless armpits was wispy black, and the hair in his crotch was black and springy. (p.64)

Example 72, Except Murlidharan. Perched with his bum on the burning milestone.

Unperturbed and only mildly curious. (p.64)

Example 73, Suddenly the skyblue Plymouth looked absurdly opulent on the narrow, pitted road. (p.65)

Example 74, On their shoulders they carried a kg of ancient anger, lit with a recent fuse. There was an edge to this anger that was Naxalite, and new. (p.69)

Example 75, And that the arms that held the flags and banners were knotted and hard. Inside the Plymouth it was still and hot. Baby Kochamma's fear lay rolled up on the car floor like a damp, clammy cheroot. (p.70)

Example 76, A balled fist banged down on the burning skyblue bonnet. (p.70)

Example 77, What he heard was a familiar voice in a most unfamiliar circumstance. Rahel, standing on the car seat, had grown out of the Plymouth window like the loose, flailing horn of a car-shaped herbivore. With a fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo and yellow-rimmed red plastic sunglasses. (p.71)

Example 78, She wondered why it was that when she thought of home, it was always in the colours of the dark, oiled wood of boats, and the empty cores of the tongues of flames that flickered in brass lamps. (p.73)

Example 79, He built Mammachi a Bauhaus dining table with twelve dining chairs in a rosewood and a traditional Bavarian chaise longue in lighter jack. (p.75)

Example 80, Velutha who built the aluminium sheet-lined, easy-to-clean cutting surfaces, and the ground-level furnaces for boiling fruit. (p.76)

Example 81, Steelshrill police whistles pierced holes in the Noise Umbrella. Through the jagged umbrella holes Rahel could see pieces of red sky. And in the red sky, hot red kites wheeled, looking for rats. In their hooded yellow eyes there was a road and red flags marching. And a white shirt over a black back with a birthmark. (p.79)

Example 82, Even behind her eyelids the light was bright and hot. The sky was orange, and the coconut trees were sea anemones waving their tentacles, hoping to trap and eat an unsuspecting cloud. A transparent spotted snake with forked tongue floated across the sky. Then a transparent Roman soldier on a spotted horse. (p.83)

Example 83, He looked like a handsome, studious cricketer. [...] She looked grumpy and bad-tempered, with her babylegs dangling. (p.84)

Example 84, A distant train rumble seeped upwards from the frog-stained road. [...] The train slammed past under a column of dense black smoke. (p.86)

Example 85, A carbreeze blew. Greentrees and telephone poles flew past the windows. Still birds slid by on moving wires, like unclaimed baggage at the airport. A pale

daymoon hung hugely in the sky and went where they went. As big as the belly of a beer-drinking man. (p.87)

Example 86, The floor was sticky. White walls had turned an uneven grey. Brass hinges and doorhandles were dull and greasy to the touch. Infrequently used plug points were clogged with grime. Lightbulbs had a film of oil on them. The only things that shone were the giant cockroaches that scurried around like vanished gofers on a film set. [...] In an unconscious gesture of television-enforced democracy, mistress and servant both scrabbled unseeingly in the same bowl of nuts. (p.88)

Example 87, *Small Man the Varicose Veins*, he clean forgot to mention, as he wobbled off with less than half the money he had asked for and less than a tenth of what he deserved. Outside, the rain had stopped. The grey sky curdled and the clouds resolved themselves into little lumps, like substandard mattress-stuffing. Esthappen appeared at the kitchen door, wet (an wiser than he really was). Behind him the long grass sparkled. The puppy stood on the steps behind him. Raindrops slid across the curved bottom of the rusted gutter on the edge of the roof, like shining beads on an abacus. (p.90)

Example 88, Not in the disarray of rumpled sheets, nor the untidiness of a kicked off shoe, or a wet towel hung over the back of a chair. Or a half-read book. It was like a room in a hospital after the nurse had just been. The floor was clean, the walls white. The cupboard closed. Shoes arranged. The dustbin empty. The obsessive cleanliness of the room was the only positive sign of volition from Estha. The only faint suggestion that he had, perhaps, some Design for Life. [...] A pile of folded, crumpled clothes waited to be ironed. [...] The terrible ghosts of impossible-to-forget toys clustered on the blades of the ceiling fan. (p.91)

Example 89, Estha put on the tap and water drummed into a plastic bucket. He undressed in the gleaming bathroom. He stepped out of his sodden jeans. Stiff. Dark blue. Difficult to get out of. He pulled his crushed-strawberry T-shirt over his head, smooth, slim, muscular arms crossed over his body. [...] Rahel watched his stomach suck inwards and his ribcage rise as his wet T-shirt peeled away from his skin, leaving it wet and honey-coloured. His face and neck and a V-shaped triangle at the base of his throat were darker than the rest of him. His arms too were double-coloured. Paler where his shirtsleeves ended. A dark brown man in pale honey clothes. Chocolate with a twist of coffee. High cheekbones and hunted eyes. A fisherman in a white-tiled bathroom, with sea-secrets in his eyes. (p.91)

Example 90, Rahel at the bathroom door. Slim-hipped. A lizard on a map on her faded T-shirt. Long wild hair with a glint of deep henna-red, sent unruly fingers down to the small of her back. [...] A thin, gold, serpent-headed bangle glowed like a circle of orange light around her wrist. Slim snakes whispering to each other, head to head. Her mother's melted wedding ring. Down softened the sharp lines of her thin, angular arms. At first glance she appeared to have grown into the skin of her mother. High cheekbones. Deep dimples when she smiled. But she was longer, harder, flatter, more angular than Ammu had been. Less lovely perhaps to those who liked roundness and softness in women. Only her eyes were incontestably more beautiful. Large. Luminous. Drownable in, as

Larry McCaslin had said and discovered to his cost. (p.93)

Example 91, The sculpted hollows on either side of his taut, beautiful buns. Tight plums. (p.93)

Example 92, Both things unbearable in their polarity. In their irreconcilable far-apartness. A raindrop glistened on the end of Estha's earlobe. Thick, silver in the light, like a heavy bead of mercury. [...] He retreated into further stillness. As though his body had the power to snatch its sense inwards (knotted, egg-shaped), away from the surface of his skin, into some deeper more inaccessible recess. [...] Estha put his wet clothes in a bucket and began to wash them with crumbling, bright blue soap. (p.93)

Example 93, Through the red Formica door that closed slowly on its own, Rahel followed Ammu and Baby Kochamma into HERS. She turned to wave across the slipperily marble floor at Estha Alone (with a comb), in his beige and pointy shoes. Estha waited in the dirty marble lobby with the lonely, watching mirrors till the red door took his sister away. (p.94)

Example 94, Meat-smelling blood money. (p.95)

Example 95, Baby Kochamma lifted her rumpled sari. Rahel studied her baby grand aunt's enormous legs. (Years later during a history lesson being read out in school- *The Emperor Babur had a wheatish complexion and pillar-like thighs*- this scene would flash before her. Baby Kochamma balanced like a big bird over a public pot. Blue veins like lumpy knitting running up her translucent shins. Fat knees dimpled. Hair on them. Poor little tiny feet to carry such a load!) Baby Kochamma waited for half of half a moment. Head thrust forward. Silly smile. Bosom swinging low. Melons in a blouse. Bottom up and out. When the gurgling, bubbling sound came, she listened with her eyes. A yellow brook bubbled through a mountain pass. (p.95)

Example 96, A dirty broom, squash bottle half-full of a milky liquid (phenyl) with floating black things in it. A limp floorswab, and two rusty tin cans of nothing. [...] He stood on them, one foot on each, and pissed carefully, with minimal wobble. Like a Man. The cigarette stubs, soggy then, were wet now, and swirly. Hard to light. (p.96)

Example 97, Ammu felt a sudden clutch of love for her reserved, dignified little son in his beige and pointy shoes, who had just completed his first adult assignment. (p.97)

Example 98, They had to rush up the red steps with the old red carpet. Red staircase with red spit stains in the red corner. [...] Missed the rippled velvet curtain going up, with lightbulbs in the clustered yellow tassels. (p.97)

Example 99, In her mind she kept an organized, careful account of Things She'd Done For People, and Things People Hadn't Done for her. (p.98)

Example 100, The orange too orange. The lemon too lemon. The chocolate too melty. The Torch Man opened the heavy Princess Circle door into the fan-whirring, peanut-

crunching darkness. (p.98)

Example 101, The camera soared up in the skyblue (car-coloured) Austrian sky with the clear, sad sound of the church bells. (p.99)

Example 102, It was clear and true, cutting through the fan-whirring, peanut-crunching darkness. [...] Black-haired backs of heads became faces with mouths and moustaches. Hissing mouths with teeth like sharks. (p.100)

Example 103, The electric blue foamleather car-sofas were waiting. [...] Estha Alone sat on the electric blue foamleather car-sofas, in the Abhilash Talkies Princess Circle lobby, and sang. [...] The Man wiped his marble counter with a dirtcoloured rag. (p.101)

Example 104, His gold wristwatch was almost hidden by his curly forearm hair. His gold chain was almost hidden by his chest hair. His white Terylene shirt was unbuttoned to where the swell of his belly began. He looked like an unfriendly jeweled bear. [...] He had an unshaven, jowly face. His teeth, like yellow piano keys, watched little Elvis the Pelvis. (p.102)

Example 105, So he held a bottle in one hand and a penis in the other. Hard, hot, veiny. Not a moonbeam. [...] The lemondrink was cold and sweet. The penis hot and hard. (p.103)

Example 106, His hand closed tighter over Estha's. Tight and sweaty. And faster still. [...] Through the soggy paper straw (almost flattened with spit and fear), the liquid lemon sweetness rose. [...] Then the gristy-bristly face contorted, and Estha's hand was wet and hot and sticky. It had egg white on it. White egg white. Quarter-boiled. The lemondrink was cold and sweet. The penis was soft and shriveled like an empty leather change-purse. With his dirtcoloured rag, the man wiped Estha's other hand. (p.104)

Example 107, And so, behind the Refreshment Counter, in the Abhilash Talkies Princess Circle lobby, in the hall with Kerala's first 70mm CinemaScope screen, Esthappen Yako finished his free bottle of fizzed, lemon-flavoured fear. His lemontoolemon, too cold. Too sweet. [...] He would be given another bottle soon (free, fizzed fear). But he didn't know that yet. He held his sticky Other Hand away from his body. (p.105)

Example 108, Back inside the hairoil darkness, Estha held his Other Hand carefully (upwards, as though he was holding an imagined orange). He slid past the Audience (their legs moving thiswayandthat), past Baby Kochamma, past Rahel (still tilted back), past Ammu (still annoyed). Estha sat down, still holding his sticky orange. (p.105)

Example 109, Christopher Plummer. Arrogant. Hardhearted. With a mouth like a slit. And a steelshrill police whistle. A captain with seven children. Clean children, like a packet of peppermints. [...] They were clean, white children, and their beds were soft with Ei. Der. Downs. The house they lived in had a lake and gardens, a wide staircase, white doors and windows, and curtains with flowers. The clean white children, even the big ones, were scared of the thunder. To comfort them, Julie Andrews put them all in her

clean bed, and sang them a clean song about a few of her favourite things. [...] Oh Captain von Trapp, Captain von Trapp, could you love the little fellow with the orange in the smelly auditorium? (p.105)

Example 110, He had a greenwavy, thick-watery, lumpy, seaweeded, floaty, bottomless-bottomful feeling. (p.107)

Example 111, Outside in the marble lobby, the Orangedrink Lemondrink man was eating a sweet. His cheek was bulging with a moving sweet. He made soft, sucking sounds like water draining from a basin. There was a green Parry's wrapper on the counter. Sweets were free for this man. He had a row of free sweets in dim bottles. He wiped the marble counter with his dirt-coloured rag that he held in his hairy watch hand. When he saw the luminous woman with polished shoulders and the little boy, a shadow slipped across his face. Then he smiled his portable piano smile. (p.108)

Example 112, He was held up, wedged between the notclean basin and Ammu's body. Legs dangling. The basin had steel taps, and rust stains. And a brownwebbed mesh of hairline cracks, like the roadmap of some great, intricate city. (p.108)

Example 113, Dreadful, dreaded question. 'No thank you.' Estha looked at Ammu. Greenwavy, sea-weedy, bottomless-bottomful. [...] 'No. Not for me. Thank you,' Ammu said. Deep-dimpled, luminous woman. [...] Ammu saw her son's bright feverbutton eyes. (p.109)

Example 114, Ammu surprised at the unusually shrill insistence from her usually quiet son, apologized to the Orangedrink Lemondrink Uncle. (p.110)

Example 115, Captain von Trapp's seven peppermint children had had their peppermint baths, and were standing in a peppermint line with their hair slicked down, singing in obedient peppermint voices to the woman the Captain nearly married. The blonde Baroness who shone like a diamond. (p.110)

Example 116, Outside, Uncle was reorganizing his dim bottles. Wiping with his dirtcoloured rag the ring-shaped water-stains they had left on his marble Refreshment Counter. [...] Estha pressed his Parry's sweets into her hand and she felt his fever hot fingers whose tips were as cold as death. (p.111)

Example 117, A cold moth with unusually dense dorsal tufts landed lightly on Rahel's heart. Where its icy legs touched her, she got goose bumps. Six goose bumps on her careless heart. [...] A hurt mother, an ex-nun, a hot child and a cold one. [...] The taxi smelled of sleep. Old clothes rolled up. Damp towels. (p.112)

Example 118, A swathe of dirty yellow sponge spilled out and shivered on the back seat like an immense jaundiced liver. The driver had the ferrety alertness of a small rodent. He had a hooked Roman nose and a little Richard moustache. He was so small that he watched the road through the steering wheel. (p.113)

Example 119, Driving past the inky sea, Estha put his head out of the window. He could taste the hot, salt breeze in his mouth. [...] He felt the shaming, churning, heaving, turning sickness in his stomach. [...] The sticky neon night rushed past the text window, it was hot inside the taxi, and quiet. Baby Kochamma looked flushed and excited. She loved not being the cause of ill feeling. Every time a pye-dog strayed onto the road, the driver made a sincere effort to kill it. The moth on Rahel's heart spread its velvet wings, and the chill crept into her bones. In the Hotel Sea Queen car park, the skyblue Plymouth gossiped with other, smaller cars. *Hslip Hslip Hsnooh-snah*. A big lady at a small ladies' party. Tailfins aflutter. (p.113)

Example 120, He had dim eyes and two button missing on his frayed maroon coat. His greyed undershirt showed. He had to wear his silly belltop's cap tilted sideways, its tight plastic strap sunk into his sagging dewlap. It seemed unnecessarily cruel to make an old man wear a cap sideways like that and arbitrarily reorder the way in which age chose to hang from his chin. (p.114)

Example 121, There were more red steps to climb. The same red carpet from the cinema hall was following them around. Magic flying carpet. [...] Mammachi said it was a sure sign of suppressed unhappiness. (p.114)

Example 122, Rahel Alone watched them walk down the hotel corridor like silent but substantial ghosts. Two big, one small, in beige and pointy shoes. The red carpet took away their feet sounds. Rahel stood in the hotel room doorway, full of sadness. [...] A singing wind blew across her dry, aching eyes. (p.115)

Example 123, His disgusting, after-sweet sweet. [...] He rang for room service, and a tired bearer came to take away the plates and bones. He tried to catch the dinner smells, but they escaped and climbed into the limp brown hotel curtains. A dinnerless niece and her dinnerfull uncle brushed their teeth together in the Hotel Sea Queen bathroom. She, a forlorn, stubby convict in striped pyjamas and a Fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo. He, in cotton vest and underpants. His vest, taut and stretched over his round stomach like a second skin, went slack over the depression of his belly-button. (p.116)

Example 124, Chacko lay in bed in the pool of light from his bedside lamp. A fat man on a dark stage. [...] Last seen when she was red and wrinkled. Barely human. [...] He memorized the brown down on her soft skull. The shape of her puckered, constantly moving mouth. [...] The baby clutched his index finger while he conducted his insane, broken, envious, torchlit study. Her belly botton protruded from her satiated satin stomach like a domed monument on a hill. (p.117)

Example 125, Chacko marveled at how someone so small and undefined, so vague in her resemblances, could so completely command the attention, the love, the sanity, of a grown man. [...] In Chacko's photograph, Sophie Mol was seven years old. White and blue. Rose-lipped, and Syrian Christian nowhere. (p.118)

Example 126, *Infinite Joy*. With a church sound to it. Like a sad fish with fins all over. A cold moth lifted a cold leg. The cigarette smoke curled into the night. And the fat man

and the little girl lay awake in silence. (p.119)

Example 127, Ammu was asleep and looked beautiful in the barred-blue streetlight that came in through the barred-blue window. She smiled a sleepsmile that dreamed of dolphins and a deep barred blue. [...] He vomited a clear, bitter, lemony, sparkling, fizzy liquid. (p.119)

Example 128, And the dull, sullen sound of the boatmen's bamboo poles as they thudded against the dark, oiled boatwood. It was warm, the water. Greygreen. Like ripped silk. With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it. When they grew tired of waiting, the dinner smells climbed off the curtains and drifted through the Sea Queen windows to dance the night away on the dinner-smelling sea. (p.123)

Example 129, Downriver, a saltwater barrage had been built, in exchange for votes from the influential paddy-farmer lobby. [...] Despite the fact that it was June, and raining, the river was no more than a swollen drain now. A thin ribbon of thick water that lapped wearily at the mud banks on either side, sequined with the occasional silver slant of a dead fish. It was choked with a succulent weed, whose furred brown roots waved like thin tentacles under water. Bronze-winged lily-trotters walked across it. Splay-footed, cautious. [...] It was just a slow, sludging green ribbon lawn that ferried fetid garbage on the sea. Bright plastic bags blew across its viscous, weedy surface like subtropical flying-flowers. The stone steps that had once led bathers right down to the water, and Fisher People to the fish, were entirely exposed and led from nowhere to nowhere, like an absurd corbelled monument that commemorated nothing. (p.124)

Example 130, On the other side of the river, the steep mud banks changed abruptly into low mud walls of shanty hutments. Children hung their bottoms over the edge and defecated directly onto the squelchy, sucking mud of the exposed river bed. [...] Eventually, by evening, the river would rouse itself to accept the day's offerings and sludge off to the sea, leaving wavy lines of thick white scum in its wake. Upstream, clean mothers washed clothes and pots in unadulterated factory effluents. People bathed. Severed torsos soaping themselves, arranged like dark busts on a thin, rocking, ribbon lawn. (p.125)

Example 131, The view from the hotel was beautiful, but here too the water was thick and toxic. [...] The trees were still green, the sky still blue, which counted for something. So they went ahead and plugged their smelly paradise. (p.125)

Example 132, It had become the centerpiece of an elaborate complex, crisscrossed with artificial canals and connecting bridges. Small boats bobbed in the water. The old colonial bungalow with its deep verandah and Doric columns, was surrounded by smaller, older, wooden houses-ancestral homes- that the hotel chain had bought from old families and transplanted in the Heart of Darkness. Toy Histories for rich tourists to play in. (p.126)

Example 133, The Hotel People liked to tell their guests that the oldest of the wooden

houses, with its air-tight, paneled storeroom which could hold enough rice to feed an army for a year, had been the ancestral home of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, 'Kerala's Mao Tse-tung,' they explained to the uninitiated. (p.126)

Example 134, Comrade Namboodiripad's house functioned as the hotel's dining room, where semi-suntanned tourists in bathing suits sipped tender coconut water (served in their shell), and old communists, who now worked as fawning bearers in colourful ethnic clothes, stooped slightly behind their trays of drinks. (p.126)

Example 135, While fathers played sublimated sexual games with their nubile teenaged daughters, Poothana suckled young Krishna at her poisoned breast. (p.127)

Example 136, And things that cannot-that sit on dusty shelves like stuffed birds with baleful, sideways staring eyes. (p.128)

Example 137, For some reason resorting to uncharacteristic, bookish language. 'Mostunfortunate.' (p.130)

Example 138, *Fine. Flat and honey coloured. He washed his clothes with crumbling soap.* (p.131)

Example 139, There was one of Lenin shaking hands with a very well-dressed, very pink man. (p.131)

Example 140, A feverish baby hiccupped on its mother's breast. The slow ceiling fan sliced the thick, frightened air into an unending spiral that spun slowly to the floor like the peeled skin of an endless potato. [...] From below the scanty curtain that was stretched across the doorway that led directly onto the street came the relentless slip-slap of disembodied feet in slippers. The noisy, carefree world of Those with Nothing Up Their Noses. (p.132)

Example 141, When that didn't work, Lenin, dressed like a taxi - yellow shirt, black stretchlon shorts - regained his mother's nylon lap (*and his packet of chiclets*). (p.132)

Example 142, She wielded strange weapons. A tiny vial. A rectangle of glass with blood smeared on it. A test tube of sparkling, back-lit urine. A stainless-steel tray of boiled needles. The hairs on her leg were pressed like coiled wires against her translucent white stockings. The box heels of her scuffed white sandals were worn away on the insides, and caused her feet to slope in, towards each other. Shiny black hairpins, like straightened snakes, clamped her starched nurse's cap to her oily head. (p.133)

Example 143, A little mauve bead in a glistening bed of slime. (p.133)

Example 144, She arrived on the Bombay-Cochin flight. Hatted, bell-bottomed and

Loved from the Beginning. (p.135)

Example 145, At Cochin Airport, Rahel's new knickers were polka-dotted and still crisp. [...] It was one of those baffling aberrations in Ammu's taste, a cloud of stiff yellow lace with tiny silver sequins and a bow on each shoulder. (p.136)

Example 146, Estha was wearing a long-sleeved red shirt with a pointed collar and black drainpipe trousers. His puff looked crisp and surprised. Like well-whipped eggwhite. [...] Chacko, who usually wore a mundu, was wearing a funny tight suit and a shining smile. Ammu straightened his tie, which was odd and sideways. (p.137)

Example 147, Red betel spit stains spattered their kangaroo stomachs like fresh wounds. Red-mouthed smiles the Airport Kangaroos had. And pink-edged ears. They looked as though if you pressed them they might say 'Ma-ma' in empty battery voices. (p. 138)

Example 148, In her stiff lace dress and her fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo, Rahel looked like an Airport Fairy with appalling taste. She was hemmed in by humid hips (as she would be once again, at a funeral in a yellow church) and grim eagerness. She had her grandfather's moth on her heart. She turned away from the screaming steel bird in the skyblue sky that had her cousin in it, and what she saw was this: red-mouthed roos with ruby smiles moved cemently across the airport floor. (p.139)

Example 149, He watched the bumpy landing with his tap-water Eagle flask slung around him, and a bottomless-bottomful feeling: (p.140)

Example 150, Her skin became a welt and hurt. When she licked it, it tasted of salt. The spit on her wrist was cool and comfortable. (p.141)

Example 151, Anybody could see that Chacko was a proud and happy man to have had a wife like Margaret. White. In a flowered, printed frock with legs underneath. And brown back-freckles on her back. And arm-freckles on her arms. But around her, the air was sad, somehow. And behind the smile in her eyes, the Grief was a fresh, shining blue. Because of a calamitous car crash. (p.143)

Example 152, She was taller than Estha. And bigger. Her eyes were bluegreyblue. Her pale skin was the colour of beach sand. But her hatted hair was beautiful, deep red-brown. And yes (oh yes!) she had Pappachi's nose waiting inside hers. An Imperial Entomologist's nose-within-a-nose. A moth-lover's nose. She carried her Made-in-England go-go bag that she loved. (p.143)

Example 153, Burdened with a number of small unmanageable packages and unabashed public adulation, he felt obliged to perform. [...] Estha laughed a high, delighted laugh. (p.143)

Example 154, Sophie Mol was puzzled. She regarded Baby Kochamma with a beady-

eyed interest. (p.144)

Example 155, Ambassador Rahel's giggle escaped in a blue-green bubble (the colour of a jackfruit fly) and burst in the hot airport air. (p.145)

Example 156, And Later became a horrible, menacing, goose-bumpy word.[...] Like a deep-sounding bell in a mossy well. Shivery, and furred. (p.146)

Example 157, Margaret Kochamma said in a kind-schoolteacher voice. [...]Rahel's mind was full of millstones with bluegreyblue eyes. (p.146)

Example 158, Negotiating optimistically the steep, slippery slopes of life. [...]He kissed her bluegreyblue eyes, her entomologist's nose, her hatted redbrown hair. (p.147)

Example 159, Estha saw how Baby Kochamma's neckmole licked its chops and throbbed with delicious anticipation. *Der-dhoom, der-dhoom*. It changed colour like a chameleon, Der-green, der-blueblack, der-mustardyellow. (p.147)

Example 160, Inside the curtain, Rahel closed her eyes and thought of the green river, of the quiet deep-swimming fish, and the gossamer wings of the dragonflies (that could see behind them) in the sun. She thought of her luckiest fishing rod that Velutha had made for her. Yellow bamboo with a float that dipped every time a foolish fish enquired. (p.148)

Example 161, Frightened eyes and a fountain looked back at Ammu. Sleepy eyes and a surprised puff looked back at Ammu. (p.149)

Example 162, In the doorway of the Arrivals Lounge, a shadowy, red-mouthed, roo-shaped silhouette waved a cemently paw only at Rahel. Cement kisses whirled through the air like small helicopters. (p.152)

Example 163, Shadows followed them. Silver jets in a blue church sky, like moths in a beam of light. (p.153)

Example 164, The Plymouth rushed through the green midday heat, promoting pickles on its roof and the skyblue sky in its tailfins. Just outside Ayemenem they drove into a cabbage-green butterfly (or perhaps it drove into them). (p.154)

Example 165, An old neon-green hula hoop hung from a wooden peg on the wall, a huge saint's discarded halo. A column, of shining black ants walked across a windowsill, their bottoms tilted upwards, like a line of mincing chorus girls in a Busby Berkeley musical. Silhouetted against the sun. Buffed and beautiful. (p.155)

Example 166, Rahel (on a stool, on top of a table) rummaged in a book cupboard with dull, dirty glass panes. Her bare footprints were, clear in the dust on the floor. (p.155)

Example 167, A smooth seashell and a spiky one. A plastic case for contact lenses. An

orange pipette. A silver crucifix on a string of beads. Baby Kochamma's rosary. She held it up against the light. Each greedy bead grabbed its share of sun. (p.156)

Example 168, The laboured form of each letter and the irregular space between words was full of the struggle for control over the errant, self-willed pencil. The sentiment, in contrast, was lucid (p.156)

Example 169, Estha never saw her like that. Wild. Sick. Sad. (p.159)

Example 170, She was swollen with cortisone, moonfaced, not the slender mother Rahel knew. Her skin was stretched over her puffy cheeks like shiny scar tissue that covers old vaccination marks. When she smiled, her dimples looked as though they hurt. Her curly hair had lost its sheen and hung around her swollen face like a dull curtain. She carried her breath in a glass inhaler in her tattered handbag. Brown Brovon fumes. Each breath she took was like a war won against the steely fist that was trying to squeeze the air from her lungs. Rahel watched her mother breathe. Each time she inhaled, the hollows near her collarbones grew steep and filled with shadows. (p.160)

Example 171, Over lunch she belched like a truck-driver and said, 'Excuse me,' in a deep, unnatural voice. Rahel noticed that she had new, thick hairs in her eyebrows, long-like palps. Ammu smiled at the silence around the table as she picked fried emperor fish off the bone. She said that she felt like a road sign with birds shitting on her. She had an odd, feverish glitter in her eyes. (p.161)

Example 172, She had woken up at night to escape from a familiar, recurrent dream in which policemen approached her with snicking scissors, wanting to hack off her hair. [...]Ammu always noticed them in the market, the women with vacant eyes and forcibly shaved heads in the land where long, oiled hair was only for the morally upright. (p.161)

Example 173, That night in the lodge, Ammu sat up in the strange bed in the strange room in the strange town. She didn't know where she was, she recognized nothing around her. Only her fear was familiar. The faraway man inside her began to shout. This time the steely fist never loosened its grip. Shadows gathered like bats in the steep hollows near her collarbone. (p.162)

Example 174, The steel door of the incinerator went up and the muted hum of the eternal fire became a red roaring. The heat lunged out at them like a famished beast. (p.163)

Example 175, The green—in the last moments of that strange, glowing, preshower light—was fierce. (p.164)

Example 176, It was a grand old house, the Ayemenem House, but alooflooking. As though it had little to do with the people that lived in it. Like an old man with rheumy eyes watching children play, seeing only transience in their shrill elation and their wholehearted commitment to life. The steep, tiled roof had grown dark and mossy with age and rain. (p.165)

Example 177, When the red cement floor was laid, the egg white from nearly nine hundred eggs went into it. It took a high polish. Below the stuffed, button-eyed bison head, with the portraits of her father-in-law and mother-in-law on either side, Mammachi sat in a low wicker chair at a wicker table on which stood a green glass vase with a single stem of purple orchids curving from it. The afternoon was still and hot. The Air was waiting. (p.166)

Example 178, Mammachi held a gleaming violin under her chin. Her opaque fifties sunglasses were black and slanty-eyed, with rhinestones on the corners of the frames. Her sari was starched and perfumed. Off-white and gold. Her diamond earrings shone in her ears like tiny chandeliers. Her ruby rings were loose. Her pale, fine skin was creased like cream on cooling milk and dusted with tiny red moles. She was beautiful. Old, unusual, regal. [...]A few years earlier, when her hair began to thin and silver, to give it body, she wore her jet-black bun pinned to her small, silver head. In her book this was perfectly acceptable, since all the hair was hers. At night, when she took off her bun, she allowed her grandchildren to plait her remaining hair into a tight, oiled, grey rat's tail with a rubber band at the end. One plaited her hair, while the other counted her uncountable moles. [...]On her scalp, carefully hidden by her scanty hair, Mammachi had raised, crescent-shaped ridges. (p.166)

Example 179, Inside her head, it was like a room with dark drapes drawn across a bright day. As she played, her mind wandered back over the years to her first batch of professional pickles. How beautiful they had looked! Bottled and sealed, standing on a table near the head of her bed, so they'd be the first thing she would touch in the morning when she woke up. (p.167)

Example 180, Then she thought of Margaret Kochamma and the languid, liquid notes of Handel's music grew shrill and angry. (p.167)

Example 181, From its perch on the well, an untidy coucal called *Hwoop Hwoop* and shuffled its rust-red wings. A crow stole some soap that bubbled in its beak. In the dark, smoky kitchen, short Kochu Maria stood on her toes and iced the tall, double-deckered WELCOME HOME OUR SOPHIE MOL cake. (p.169)

Example 182, Though even in those days most Syrian Christian women had started wearing saris, Kochu Maria still wore her spodess half-sleeved white chatta with a V-neck and her white mundu, which folded into a crisp cloth fan on her behind. Kochu Maria's fan was more or less hidden by the blue and white checked, frilled, absurdly incongruous housemaid's apron that Mammachi insisted she wear inside the house. She had short, thick forearms, fingers like cocktail sausages, and a broad fleshy nose with flared nostrils. Deep folds of skin connected her nose to either side of her chin, and separated that section of her face from the rest of it, like a snout. Her head was too large for 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. She kept damp cash in her bodice which she tied tightly around her chest to flatten her unchristian

breasts. Her kunukku earrings were thick and gold. Her earlobes had been distended into weighted loops that swung around her neck, her earrings sitting in them like gleeful children in a merry-go~(not all the way)round. (p.170) Endless coils of chocolate toothpaste on a pink Kochu Maria tongue. (p.171)

Example 183, Distant skyblue carsounds (past the bus stop, past the school, past the yellow church and up the bumpy red road through the rubber trees) sent a murmur through the dim, sooty premises of Paradise Pickles. (p.171)

Example 184, Vegetables were abandoned, half cut, on huge steel platters. Desolate bitter gourds, incomplete pineapples. Coloured rubber finger-guards (bright, like cheerful, thick condoms) were taken off. Pickled hands were washed and wiped on cobalt-blue aprons. Escaped wisps of hair were recaptured and returned to white headscarves. Mundus tucked up under aprons were let down. The gauze doors of the factory had sprung hinges, and closed noisily on their own. And on one side of the driveway, beside the old well, in the shade of the kodam puli tree, a silent blue-aproned army gathered in the greenheat to watch. Blue-aproned, white-capped, like a clot of smart blue and white flags. (p.172)

Example 185, The skyblue Plymouth turned in at the gate and crunched over the gravel driveway crushing small shells and shattering little red and yellow pebbles. Children tumbled out. Collapsed fountains. Flattened puffs. Crumpled yellow bellbottoms and a go-go bag that was loved. Jet-lagged and barely awake. Then the swollen-ankled adults. Slow from too much sitting. (p.172)

Example 186, As she spoke, the Waiting Melody that hung over her like a shimmering temple elephant's umbrella crumbled and gently fell about like dust. Chacko, in his What Happened to Our Man of the Masses? suit and well-fed tie, led Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol triumphantly up the nine red steps like a pair of tennis trophies that he had recently won. And once again, only the Small Things were said. The Big Things lurked unsaid inside. 'Hello, Mammachi,' Margaret Kochamma said in her kind-schoolteacher (that sometimes slapped) voice. 'Thank you for having us. We needed so much to get away.' Mammachi caught a whiff of inexpensive perfume soured at the edges by airline sweat. (She herself had a bottle of Dior in its soft green leather pouch locked away in her safe.) Margaret Kochamma took Mammachi's hand. The fingers were soft, the ruby rings were hard. [...]She spoke in a slow deliberate manner. [...]There was a short, Sad-Aboutjoe silence. (p.173)

Example 187, Sophie Mol was led to Mammachi. Mammachi pushed her dark sunglasses up into her hair. They looked up like slanting cat's eyes at the mouldy bison head. The mouldy bison said, 'No. *Absolutely Not.*' In Mouldy Bisonese. (p.174)

Example 188, A little way away, Velutha walked up the shortcut through the rubber trees. Barebodied. A coil of insulated electrical wire was looped over one shoulder. He wore his printed dark blue and black mundu loosely folded up above his knees. On his back, his lucky leaf from the birthmark tree (that made the monsoons come on time). His

autumn leaf at night. (p.174)

Example 189, She wondered at how his body had changed – so quietly, from a flatmuscled boy's body into a man's body. Contoured and hard. A swimmer's body. A swimmer-carpenter's body. Polished with a high-wax body polish. He had high cheekbones and a white, sudden smile. (p.175)

Example 190, She hoped that under his careful cloak of cheerfulness, he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against. Ammu recognized vaguely that her thoughts were shot with a delicate, purple tinge of envy. (p.176)

Example 191, That she had deep dimples when she smiled and that they stayed on long after her smile left her eyes. He saw that her brown arms were round and fine and perfect. [...] This knowing slid into him cleanly, like the sharp edge of a knife. Cold and hot at once. (p.177)

Example 192, The froth of her stiff frock pressed rough lace flowers into Velutha's back. Lace flowers and a lucky leaf bloomed on a black back. (p.178)

Example 193, 'What's she doing?' Sophie wanted to know, tender London hands clasped in calloused Ayemenem ones. 'Who's she and why's she smelling my hands?' 'She's the cook,' Chacko said. 'That's her way of kissing you.' 'Kissing?' Sophie Mol was unconvinced, but interested. [...] 'I think you owe my wife an apology, Ammu,' Chacko said, with a protective, proprietary air, (p.179)

Example 194, He worked hard on his public profile as a sophisticated, generous, moral man. But alone with his wife and children he turned into a monstrous, suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning. (p.180)

Example 195, Ammu ignored her mother's drawn, frightened face that appeared at the window. It took ten minutes for her beloved gumboots to be completely shredded. When the last strip of rubber had rippled to the floor, her father looked at her with cold, flat eyes, and rocked and rocked and rocked. Surrounded by a sea of twisting, rubber snakes. As she grew older, Ammu learned to live with this cold, calculating cruelty. She developed a lofty sense of injustice and the mulish, reckless streak that develops in Someone Small who has been bullied all their lives by Someone Big. (p.181)

Example 196, Mammachi played a Welcome Home, Our Sophie Mol melody on her violin. A cloying chocolate melody. Stickysweet, and meltybrown. Chocolate waves on a chocolate shore. (p.183)

Example 197, Rahel walked across to the old well where there were usually some ants to kill. Red ants that had a sour farty smell when they were squashed. [...] 'I don't know. You tell me,' Kochu Maria said, with a frilly apron and a vinegar heart. (p.185)

Example 198, Rahel found a whole column of juicy ants. They were on their way to

church. All dressed in red. They had to be killed before they got there. Squished and squashed with a stone. You can't have smelly ants in church. The ants made a faint crunchy sound as life left them. Like an elf eating toast, or a crisp biscuit. (p.185)

Example 199, Sophie Mol, hatted, bellbottomed and Loved from the Beginning, walked out of the Play to see what Rahel was doing behind the well. But the Play went with her. Walked when she walked, stopped when she stopped. Fond smiles followed her. Kochu Maria moved the caketray out of the way of her adoring downwards smile as Sophie squatted down in the well-squelch (yellow bottoms of bells muddy wet now). Sophie Mol inspected the smelly mayhem with clinical detachment. The stone was coated with crushed red carcasses and a few feebly waving legs. (p. 186)

Example 200, The green-for-the-day had seeped from the, trees. Dark palm leaves were splayed like drooping combs against the monsoon sky. The orange sun slid through their bent, grasping teeth. A squadron of fruit bats sped across the gloom. In the abandoned ornamental garden, Rahel, watched by lolling dwarves and a forsaken cherub, squatted by the stagnant pond and watched toads hop from stone to scummy stone. Beautiful Ugly Toads. Slimy. Warty. Croaking. Yearning, unkissed princes trapped inside them. Food for snakes that lurked in the long June grass. Rustle. Lunge. No more toad to hop from stone to scummy stone. (p.187)

Example 201, She looked back at the looming, gabled, house-shaped hole in the Universe and imagined living in the silver bowl that Baby Kochamrna had installed on the roof: [...]If they slept there, she and Estha, curled together like foetuses in a shallow steel womb, what would Hulk Hogan and Bam Bam Bigelow do? (p.188)

Example 202, Fat. Yellow. From stone to scummy stone. She touched one gently. It moved its eyelids upwards. Funnily self-assured. (p.188)

Example 203, Rahel went. Drawn by the memory of steep roofs and white walls. Of brass lamps lit and dark, oiled wood. She went in the hope of meeting an old elephant who wasn't electrocuted on the Kottayam-Cochin highway. [...]The floor under her shoes was slick with monsoon scum. A small, anxious bat flitted between the roof beams. The low cement pickle vats silhouetted in the gloom made the factory floor look like an indoor cemetery for the cylindrical dead. The earthly remains of Paradise Pickles & Preserves. Where long ago, on the day that Sophie Mol came, Ambassador E. Pelvis stirred a pot of scarlet jam and thought Two Thoughts. Where a red, tender-mango-shaped secret was pickled, sealed and put away. (p.192)

Example 204, While the Welcome Home, Our Sophie Mol Play was being performed in the front verandah and Kochu Maria distributed cake to a Blue Army in the green heat, Ambassador E. Pelvis/S. Pimpernel (with a puff) of the beige and pointy shoes, pushed open the gauze doors to the dank and pickle-smelling premises of Paradise Pickles. He walked among the giant cement pickle vats to find a place to Think in. (p.193)

Example 205, The place that he found to Think in was between the wall and the black iron cauldron in which a batch of freshly boiled (illegal) banana jam was slowly cooling.

The jam was still hot and on its sticky scarlet surface, thick pink froth was dying slowly. [...]With the long iron stirrer. Estha stirred the thick, fresh jam. The dying froth made dying frothly shapes. A crow with a crushed wing. A clenched chicken's claw. A Nowl (not Ousa) mired in sickly jam. A sadly swirl. (p.194)

Example 206, As the hot magenta jam went round, Estha became a Stirring Wizard with a spoiled puff and uneven teeth, and then the Witches of Macbeth. [...]Racing against time. The sound of their hammering echoing dully under the brooding, storm-coming sky. And nearby in the jungle, in the eerie, storm-coming light, animals queued up in pairs: (p.195)

Example 207, A gauze door creaked, and an Airport Fairy with hornbumps and yellow-rimmed red plastic sunglasses looked in with the sun behind her. The factory was Angry-coloured. The salted limes were red. The tender mangoes were red. The label cupboard was red. The dusty sunbeam (that Ousa never used) was red. The gauze door closed. Rahel stood in the empty factory with her Fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo. She heard a nun's voice singing the boatsong. A clear soprano wafting over vinegar fumes and pickle vats. She turned to Estha bent over the scarlet broth in the black cauldron. (p.197)

Example 208, A sickled smell, that bled clear, amber blood, and begged for cigars. Vellya Paapen never found the nutmeg tree, and had to buy himself a new sickle. But he had the satisfaction of knowing that his lightning-quick reflexes (despite his mortgaged eye) and his presence of mind had put an end to the bloodthirsty wanderings of a paedophile ghost. [...]And that inside, map-breath'd ancestors with tough toe-nails whispered to the lizards on the wall. (p.199)

Example 209, An in a single, fluid, athletic motion. (p.200)

Example 210, Outside, the Air was Alert and Bright and Hot. Rahel lay next to Ammu, wide awake in her matching airport knickers. She could see the pattern of the cross-stitch flowers from the blue cross-stitch counterpane on Ammu's cheek. She could hear the blue cross-stitch afternoon. The slow ceiling fan. The sun behind the curtains. The yellow wasp wasping against the windowpane in a dangerous dzzzz. A disbelieving lizard's blink. High-stepping chickens in the yard. The sound of the sun crinkling the washing. Crisping white bedsheets. Stiffening starched saris. Off-white and gold. Red ants on yellow stones. A hot cow feeling hot. *Amkoo*. In the distance. And the smell of a cunning Englishman ghost, sickled to a rubber tree, asking courteously for a cigar. (p.201)

Example 211, On what they always sat on under the mangosteen tree. Something grey and grizzled. [...]Through the kitchen, past Kochu Maria fast asleep. Thick wrinkled like a sudden rhinoceros in a frilly apron. (p.201)

Example 212, It *was* a boat. A tiny wooden vallom. The boat that Estha sat on and Rahel found. The boat that Ammu would use to cross the river. To love by night the man her children loved by day. So old a boat that it had taken root. Almost. A grey old boatplant with boatflowers and boatfruit And underneath, a boat-shaped patch of withered grass. A

scurrying, hurrying boatworld. Dark and dry and cool. Unroofed now. And blind. White termites on their way to work. White ladybirds on their way home. White beetle burrowing away from the light. White grasshoppers with whitewood violins. Sad white music. A white wasp. Dead. A brittlewhite snakeskin, preserved in darkness, crumbled in the sun. (p.202)

Example 213, The Meenachal. Greygreen. With fish in it. The sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it. When Pappachi was a boy, an old tamarind tree fell into it in a storm. It was still there. A smooth barkless tree, blackened by a surfeit of green water. Driftless driftwood. (p.203)

Example 214, They knew the smaller fish. The flat, foolish pallathi, the silver paral, the wily, whiskered koori, the sometimes karimeen. [...] Here they had learned to fish. To thread coiling purple earthworms onto hooks on the fishing rods that Velutha made from slender culms of yellow bamboo. (p.203)

Example 215, The second third was where the Really Deep began. Where the current was swift and certain (downstream when the tide was out, upstream, pushing up from the backwaters when the tide was in). The third third was shallow again. The water brown and murky. Full of weeds and darting eels and slow mud that oozed through toes like toothpaste. (p.203)

Example 216, Two happy hearts soared like coloured kites in a skyblue sky. But then, in a slow green whisper, the river (with fish in it, with the sky and trees in it), bubbled in. Slowly the old boat sank, and settled on the sixth step. And a pair of two-egg twin hearts sank and settled on the step above the sixth. The deep-swimming fish covered their mouths with their fins and laughed sideways at the spectacle. A white boat-spider floated up with the river in the boat, struggled briefly and drowned. Her white egg sac ruptured prematurely, and a hundred baby spiders (too light to drown, too small to swim), stippled the smooth surface of the green water, before being swept out to sea. (p.204)

Example 217, A small procession (a flag, a wasp and a boat-on-legs) wended its knowledgeable way down the little path through the undergrowth. It avoided the clumps of nettles, and side-stepped known ditches and anthills. It skirted the precipice of the deep pit from which laterite had been quarried, and was now a still lake with steep orange banks, the thick, viscous water covered with a luminous film of green scum. A verdant, treacherous lawn, in which mosquitoes bred and the fish were fat but inaccessible. (p.205)

Example 218, The boat-on-legs approached the hut. An unlit oil lamp hung on the wall beside the door, the patch of wall behind it was singed soot black. The door was ajar. It was dark inside. A black hen appeared in the doorway. She returned indoors, entirely indifferent to boat visits. (p.205)

Example 219, The voice shouted the same thing, over and over, and each time it climbed into a higher, more hysterical register. It was an appeal to an over-ripe guava threatening

to fall from its tree and make a mess on the ground. (p.207)

Example 220, '*AiyJo, Mon! Mol!* What must you be thinking? That Kuttappen's a basket case!' an embarrassed, disembodied voice said. It took the twins a while for their eyes to grow accustomed to the dark. Then the darkness dissolved and Kuttappen appeared on his bed, a glistening genie in the gloom. The whites of his eyes were dark yellow. The soles of his feet (soft from so much lying down) stuck out from under the cloth that covered his legs. They were still stained a pale orange from years of walking barefoot on red mud. He had grey callouses on his ankles from the chafing of the rope that Paravans tied around their feet when they climbed coconut trees. On the wall behind him there was a benign, mouse-haired calendar: Jesus with lipstick and rouge, and a lurid, jewelled heart glowing through his clothes. (p.208)

Example 221, Rich things in a poor house. A clock that didn't work, a flowered tin waste-paper basket. Pappachi's old riding boots (brown, with green mould) with the cobbler's trees still in them. Biscuit tins with sumptuous pictures of English castles and ladies with bustles and ringlets. A small poster (Baby Kochamma's, given away. because of a damp patch) hung next to Jesus. It was a picture of a blonde child writing a letter, with tears falling down her cheeks. Underneath it said: *I'm writing to say I Miss You*. She looked as though she'd had a haircut, and it was her cropped curls that were blowing around Velutha's backyard. A transparent plastic tube led from under the worn cotton sheet that covered Kuttappen to a bottle of yellow liquid that caught the shaft of light that came in through the door, and quelled a question that had been rising inside Rahel. She fetched him water in a steel tumbler from the clay koojah. She seemed to know her way around. Kuttappen lifted his head and drank. Some water dribbled down his chin. The twins squatted on their haunches, like professional adult gossips in the Ayemenem market. (p.209)

Example 222, But he didn't, because in the gloom beyond the oil lamp, in the shadows, there were metal folding chairs arranged in a ring and on the chairs there were people, with slanting rhinestone sunglasses, watching. They all held polished violins under their chins, the bows poised at identical angles. Beyond the circle of folding chairs was a beach littered with broken blue glass bottles. The silent waves brought new blue bottles to be broken, and dragged the old ones away in the undertow. There were jagged sounds of glass on glass. On a rock, out at sea, in a shaft of purple light, there was a mahogany and wicker rocking chair. Smashed. The sea was black, the spume vomit green. Fish fed on shattered glass. Night's elbows rested on the water and falling stars glanced off its brittle shards. [...] A powdery, coloured breeze lifted her hair and blew it like a rippled shawl around his armless shoulder, that ended abruptly, like a cliff. A thin red cow with a protruding pelvic bone appeared and swam straight out to sea without wetting her horns, without looking back. Ammu flew through her dream on heavy, shuddering wings, and stopped to rest, just under the skin of it. She had pressed roses from the blue cross-stitch counterpane on her cheek. She sensed her children's faces hanging over her dream, like two dark, worried moons, waiting to be let in. (p.215)

Example 223, In the blue cross-stitch darkness laced with edges of light, with cross-stitch roses on her sleepy cheek, Ammu and her twins (one on either side of her), sang softly with the tangerine radio. [...] Outside in the mittam, crisp saris lay in rows and crispened in the sun. Off-white and gold. Small pebbles nestled in their starched creases and had to be shaken out before the saris were folded and taken in to be ironed. [...] The electrocuted elephant (not Kochu Thomban) in Ettumanoor was cremated. A giant burning ghat was erected on the highway. [...] Eighty tins of pure ghee were poured over the elephant to feed the fire. The smoke rose in dense fumes and arranged itself in complex patterns against the sky. People crowded around at a safe distance, read meanings into them. (p.219)

Example 224, Ammu noticed that both her children were covered in a fine dust. Like two pieces of lightly sugar-dusted, unidentical cake. Rahel had a blonde curl lodged among her black ones. (p.220)

Example 225, Then Rahel put her mouth on Ammu's stomach and sucked at it, pulling the soft flesh into her mouth and drawing her head back to admire the shining oval of spit and the faint red imprint of her teeth on her mother's skin. Ammu wondered at the transparence of that kiss. It was a clear-as-glass kiss. (p.221)

Example 226, Ammu looked at herself in the long mirror on the bathroom door and the spectre of her future appeared in it to mock her. Pickled. Grey. Rheumy-eyed. Cross-stitch roses on a slack, sunken cheek. Withered breasts that hung like weighted socks. Dry as a bone between her legs, the hair feather white. Spare. As brittle as a pressed fern. (p.222)

Example 227, Like a medieval executioner peering through the tilted eye-slits of his peaked black hood at the executionee. A slender, naked executioner with dark nipples and deep dimples when she smiled. (p.223)

Example 228, The bedroom with blue curtains and yellow wasps that worried the windowpanes. The bedroom whose walls would soon learn their harrowing secrets. (p.224)

Example 229, Lay Ter. A deep-sounding bell in a mossy well. Shivery and furred like moth's feet. (p.225)

Example 230, Ammu would pack Estha's little trunk and khaki holdall: 12 sleeveless cotton vests, 12 half-sleeved cotton vests. *Estha* , *here's your name on them in ink*. His socks. His drainpipe trousers. His pointy collared shirts. His beige and pointy shoes. (from where the Angry Feelings came). [...] The sharp edge of his apprehensions blunted by this sudden wealth of worldly possessions. (p.226)

Example 231, The room to which, years later, Rahel would return and watch a silent stranger bathe. And wash his clothes with crumbling bright blue soap. Flatmuscled, and

honey coloured. Sea-secrets in his eyes. A silver raindrop on his ear. (p.227)

Example 232, The sound of the chenda mushroomed over the temple, accentuating the silence of the encompassing night. The lonely, wet road. The watching trees. Rahel, breathless, holding a coconut, stepped into the temple compound through the wooden doorway in the high white boundary wall. Inside, everything was white-walled, moss-tiled and moonlit. Everything smelled of recent rain. The thin priest was asleep on a mat in the raised stone verandah. A brass platter of coins lay near his pillow like a comic strip illustration of his dreams. The compound was littered with moons, one in each mud puddle. Kochu Thomban had finished his ceremonial rounds, and lay tethered to a wooden stake next to a steaming mound of his own dung. (p.228)

Example 233, A leathery wrinkle parted to reveal a liquid glint of elephant eye. Then it closed and long, sweeping lashes resummoned sleep. A tusk towards the stars. (p.228)

Example 234, That night Karna was stoned. His tattered skirt was darned. There were hollows in his crown where jewels used to be. His velvet blouse had grown bald with use. His heels were cracked. Tough. He stubbed his joints out on them. (p.231)

Example 235, The rose bowl dulled and sent down a warm grey drizzle. As Estha and Rahel stepped through the temple gateway, Comrade K. N. M. Pillai stepped in, slick from his oil bath. He had sandalwood paste on his forehead. Raindrops stood out on his oiled skin like studs. In his cupped palms he carried a small heap of fresh jasmine. 'Oho!' he said in his piping voice 'You are here! So still you are interested in your Indian culture? Goodgood. Very good.' The twins, not rude, not polite, said nothing. They walked home together. He and She. We and Us. (p.237)

Example 236, The walls were lined with books. A silver ceiling fan. A beige gecko, the colour of an undercooked biscuit, regarded her with interested eyes. She thought of Joe. Something shook inside her. She closed her eyes. The calm, chrome centre of the silver ceiling fan went round inside her head. (p.239)

Example 237, Her fingers were swollen and her wedding band looked uncomfortably tight. The flesh of her cheeks fell away on either side of her face, making her cheekbones look high and prominent, and pulling her mouth downwards into a mirthless smile that contained just a glimmer of teeth. She had tweezed her once bushy eyebrows into the currently fashionable, pencil-thin arcs which gave her a slightly surprised expression even in her sleep. The rest of her expressions were growing back in a nascent stubble. Her face was flushed. Her forehead glistened. Underneath the flush, there was a paleness. A staved-off sadness. The thin material of her dark blue and white flowered cotton-polyester dress had wilted and clung limply to the contours of her body, rising over her breasts, dipping along the line between her long, strong legs - as though it too was unaccustomed to the heat and needed a nap. (p.239)

Example 238, On the bedside table there was a silver-framed black-and-white wedding picture of Chacko and Margaret Kochamma taken outside the church in Oxford. [...] (p.239)

Example 239, He wore a white churidar and a black shervani. His shoulders were dusted with snow. There was a rose in his buttonhole, and the tip of his handkerchief: folded into a triangle, peeped out of his breast pocket. On his feet he wore polished black Oxfords. He looked as though he was laughing at himself and the way he was dressed. Like someone at a fancy-dress party. Margaret Kochamma wore a long, foaming gown and a cheap tiara on her cropped, curly hair. Her veil was lifted off her face. She was as tall as he was. They looked happy. Thin and young, scowling from the sun in their eyes. Her thick, dark eyebrows were knitted together and somehow made a lovely contrast to the frothy, bridal white. A scowling cloud with eyebrows. Behind them stood a large matronly woman with thick ankles and all the buttons done up on her long overcoat. Margaret Kochamma's mother. She had her two little granddaughters on either side of her, in pleated tartan skirts, stockings and identical fringes. (p.240)

Example 240, He was alone. His rumpled shirt was buttoned up wrong. His shoelaces were untied. His hair, carefully brushed and slicked down in front, stood up in a stiff halo of quills at the back. He looked like an untidy, beatified porcupine. He was tall, and underneath the mess of clothes (inappropriate tie, shabby coat), Margaret Kochamma could see that he was well-built. He had an amused air about him, and a way of narrowing his eyes as though he was trying to read a faraway sign and had forgotten to bring his glasses. His ears stuck out on either side of his head like teapot handles. There was something contradictory about his athletic build and his dishevelled appearance. The only sign that a fat man lurked inside him was his shining, happy cheeks. He had none of the vagueness or the apologetic awkwardness that one usually associates with untidy, absent-minded men. He looked cheerful, as though he was with an imaginary friend whose company he enjoyed. He took a seat by the window and sat down with an elbow on the table and his face cupped in the palm of his hand, smiling around the empty cafe as though he was considering striking up a conversation with the furniture. He ordered coffee with that same friendly smile, but without really appearing to notice the tall, bushy eyebrowed waitress who took his order. (p.241)

Example 241, Chacko, holding a fork and a knife in each hand, leaned back in his chair in the empty cafe, and laughed his high, hiccuppings, infectious, fat man's laugh till the tears poured down his cheeks. Margaret Kochamma, who had missed most of the joke, smiled. Then she began to laugh at his laugh. Their laughs fed each other and climbed to a hysterical pitch. When the owner of the cafe appeared, he saw a customer (not a particularly desirable one), and a waitress (an only averagely desirable one), locked in a spiral of hooting, helpless laughter. Meanwhile, another customer (a regular), had arrived unnoticed, and waited to be served. The owner cleaned some already-clean glasses clinking them together noisily, and clattered crockery on the counter to convey his displeasure to Margaret Kochamma. She tried to compose herself before she went to take the new order. But she had tears in her eyes, and had to stifle a fresh batch of giggles, which made the hungry man whose order she was taking look up from his menu card, his thin lips pursed in silent disapproval. She stole a glance at Chacko, who looked at her and smiled. It was an insanely friendly smile. (p. 243)

Example 242, Margaret Kochamma's tiny, ordered life relinquished itself to this truly

baroque bedlam with the quiet gasp of a warm body entering a chilly sea. She discovered that underneath the aspect of the Rumpled Porcupine, a tortured Marxist was at war with an impossible, incurable Romantic - who forgot the candles, who broke the wine glasses, who lost the ring. Who made love to her with a passion that took her breath away. She had always thought of herself as a somewhat uninteresting, thick-waisted, thick-ankled girl. Not bad-looking. Not special. [...] Being with Chacko made Margaret Kochamma feel as though her soul had escaped from the narrow confines of her island country into the vast, extravagant spaces of his. [...] She was perhaps too young to realize that what she assumed was her love for Chacko was actually a tentative, timorous acceptance of herself. (p.245)

Example 243, With the end to his rowing came a sudden, premature, middle-aged spread. [...] Within a year she was prepared to exchange the frog on the dissecting table for some small, practical concessions. [...] When they met, Margaret Kochamma was physically at her most attractive. Pregnancy had put colour in her cheeks and brought a shine to her thick, dark hair. (p.247)

Example 244, Joe was everything that Chacko wasn't. Steady. Solvent. Thin. (p.248)

Example 245, He wore cheap, printed Terylene bush shirts over his white mundus and the ugliest plastic sandals that were available in the market. If Mammachi had guests, relatives, or perhaps an old friend visiting from Delhi, Chacko would appear at her tastefully laid dining table - adorned with her exquisite orchid arrangements and best china - and worry an old scab, or scratch the large, black oblong calluses he had cultivated on his elbows. [...] In their presence Chacko would take off his sandals and air a revolting, pus-filled diabetic boil on his foot. (p.248)

Example 246, Margaret Kochamma wrote regularly, giving Chacko news of Sophie Mol. She assured him that Joe made a wonderful, caring father and that Sophie Mol loved him dearly - facts that gladdened and saddened Chacko in equal measure. Margaret Kochamma was happy with Joe. Happier perhaps than she would have been had she not had those wild, precarious years with Chacko. (p.249)

Example 247, She concealed her anguish under the brisk, practical mask of a schoolteacher. The stern, schoolteacher-shaped hole in the Universe (who sometimes slapped). (p.250)

Example 248, Green weed and river grime were woven into her beautiful redbrown hair. Her sunken eyelids were raw, nibbled at by fish. (O yes they do, the deepswimming fish. They sample everything.) Her mauve corduroy pinafore said Holiday! in a tilting, happy font. She was as wrinkled as a dhobi's thumb from being in water for too long. (p.251)

Example 249, A slow dread built up inside her as she began to make the obvious, logical and completely mistaken connections between the night's happenings and the missing children. (p.253)

Example 250, She ignored Vellya Paapen when he arrived at the kitchen door, drenched

and shaking. His real eye was bloodshot and he looked as though he had been drinking. (p.253)

Example 251, When Mammachi arrived in the kitchen, in her petticoat and pale pink dressing gown with rickrack edging. [...]His left eyelid drooped over his empty socket in an immutable, monstrous wink. As though everything that he was about to say was part of an elaborate prank. [...]She recoiled from its slippery hardness. Its slimy marbleness. (p.254)

Example 252, Mammachi's rage at the old one-eyed Paravan standing in the rain, drunk, dribbling and covered in mud was redirected into a cold contempt for her daughter and what she had done. She thought of her naked, coupling in the mud with a man who was nothing but a filthy coolie. (p.257)

Example 253, It is still quick and swollen from the previous night's rain. Something bobs past in the water and the colours catch his eye. Mauve. Red-brown. Beach sand. It moves with the current, swiftly towards the sea. He sends out his bamboo pole to stop it and draw it towards him. It's a wrinkled mermaid. A mer-child. A mere mer-child. With red-brown hair. (p. 258)

Example 254, By now Baby Kochamma sounded utterly convincing. Injured. Incredulous. (p. 260)

Example 255, The brassy, insolence in his voice that had so frightened her. That made her sure that his dismissal and the children's disappearance were not, could not possibly be, unconnected. (p.261)

Example 256, When Margaret Kochamma saw her little daughter's body, shock swelled in her like phantom applause in an empty auditorium. It overflowed in a wave of vomit and left her mute and empty eyed. [...]Her memory of the days that followed was fuzzy. Long, dim hours of thick, furry-tongued serenity (medically administered by Dr Verghese Verghese), lacerated by sharp, steely slashes of hysteria, as keen and cutting as the edge of a new razor blade. She was vaguely conscious of Chacko - concerned and gentlevoiced when he was by her side - otherwise incensed, blowing like an enraged wind through the Ayemenem House. (p.263)

Example 257, After all, Margaret Kochamma wasn't with the platoon of Touchable policemen when they crossed the swollen river. Their wide khaki shorts rigid with starch. The metallic clink of handcuffs in someone's heavy pocket. It is unreasonable to expect a person to remember what she didn't know had happened. (p.265)

Example 258, SORROW, HOWEVER, was still two weeks away on that blue cross-stitch afternoon, as Margaret Kochamma lay jet-lagged and still asleep. Chacko, on his way to see Comrade K. N. M. Pillai, drifted past the bedroom window like an anxious, stealthy whale intending to peep in to see whether his wife (*Ex-wife, Chacko.*) and daughter were awake and needed anything. (p.266)

Example 259, The sun had moved across the sky and cast a deep house-shadow across the, plantation; darkening the already dark-leaved trees. Beyond the shadow, the light was flat and gentle. There was a diagonal slash across the mottled bark of each tree through which milky rubber seeped like white blood from a wound, and dripped into the waiting half of a coconut shell that had been tied to the tree. (p.266)

Example 260, Comrade Pillai wasn't in when Chacko arrived. His wife, Kalyani, with fresh sandalwood paste on her forehead, made him sit down on a steel folding chair in their small front room and disappeared through the bright pink, nylon, lace-curtained doorway into a dark adjoining room where the small flame from a large brass oil lamp flickered. The cloying smell of incense drifted through the doorway, over which a small wooden placard said, *Work is Struggle. Struggle is Work*. Chacko was too big for the room. The blue walls crowded him. He glanced around, tense and a little uneasy. A towel dried on the bars of the small green window. The dining table was covered with a bright flowered plastic tablecloth. Midges whirled around a bunch of small bananas on a blue-rimmed white enamel plate. In one corner of the room there was a pile of green unhusked coconuts. A child's rubber slippers lay pigeon-toed in the bright parallelogram of barred sunlight on the floor. A glass-paned cupboard stood next to the table. It had printed curtains hanging on the inside, hiding its contents. (p.268)

Example 261, Comrade Pillai's mother, a minute old lady in a brown blouse and off-white mundu, sat on the edge of the high wooden bed that was pushed against the wall, her feet dangling high above the floor. She wore a thin white towel arranged diagonally over her chest and slung over one shoulder. A funnel of mosquitoes, like an inverted dunce cap, whined over her head. She sat with her cheek resting in the palm of her hand, bunching together all the wrinkles on that side of her face. Every inch of her, even her wrists and ankles, were wrinkled. Only the skin on her throat was taut and smooth, stretched over an enormous goitre. Her fountain of youth. She stared vacantly at the wall opposite her, rocking herself gently, grunting regular, rhythmic little grunts, like a bored passenger on a long bus journey. (p.269)

Example 262, The rotating table fan by the bed measured out its mechanical breeze in exemplary, democratic turns - first lifting what was left of Old Mrs Pillai's hair, then Chacko's. The mosquitoes dispersed and reassembled tirelessly. [...] Kalyani returned with a stainless-steel glass of filter coffee and a stainless-steel plate of banana chips (bright yellow with little black seeds in the centre) for Chacko. (p.269)

Example 263, She was a lush, beautiful woman with golden brown skin and huge eyes. Her long frizzy hair was damp and hung loose down her back, plaited only at the very end. It had wet the back of her tight, deep red blouse and stained it a tighter, deeper red. From where the sleeves ended, her soft arm-flesh swelled and dropped over her dimpled elbows in a sumptuous bulge. Her white mundu and kavani were crisp and ironed. She smelled of sandalwood and the crushed green gram that she used instead of soap. For the first time in years, Chacko watched her without the faintest stirring of sexual desire. He had a wife (*Ex-wife, Chacko.*) at home. With arm freckles and back freckles. With a blue dress and legs underneath. (p.270)

Example 264, A combative-looking young girl of about twelve or thirteen appeared through the lace curtain. She wore a long, printed skirt that reached all the way down to her ankles and a short, waist-length white blouse with darts that made room for future breasts. Her oiled hair was parted into two halves. Each of her tight, shining plaits was looped over and tied with ribbons so that they hung down on either side of her face like the outlines of large, drooping ears that hadn't been coloured in yet. (p. 271)

Example 265, Comrade Pillai arrived mid-poem, a sheen of sweat glazed his skin, his mundu was folded up over his knees, dark sweatstains spread under his Terylene armpits. In his late thirties, he was an unathletic, sallow little man. His legs were already spindly and his taut, distended belly, like his tiny mother's goitre, was completely at odds with the rest of his thin, narrow body and alert face. As though something in their family genes had bestowed on them compulsory bumps that appeared randomly in different parts of their bodies. (p.272)

Example 266, It was past midnight. The river had risen, its waters quick and black, snaking towards the sea, carrying with it cloudy night skies, a whole palm frond, part of a thatched fence, and other gifts the wind had given it. [...]A weak, watery moon filtered through the clouds and revealed a young man sitting on the topmost of thirteen stone steps that led into the water. He was very still, very wet. Very young. In a while he stood up, took off the white mundu he was wearing, squeezed the water from it and twisted it around his head like a turban. Naked now, he walked down the thirteen stone steps into the water and further, until the river was chest high. Then he began to swim with easy, powerful strokes, striking out towards where the current was swift and certain, where the Really Deep began. The moonlit river fell from his swimming arms like sleeves of silver. It took him only a few minutes to make the crossing. When he reached the other side he emerged gleaming and pulled himself ashore, black as the night that surrounded him, black as the water he had crossed. (p.289)

Example 267, Rahel said to Sophie Mol and was met with silence. A rushing, rolling, fishswimming silence. (p.293)

Example 268, But she was gone. Carried away on the muffled highway. Greygreen. With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night the broken yellow moon in it. [...]Just a quiet handing over ceremony. A boat spilling its cargo. A river accepting the offering. One small life. A brief sunbeam. (p.293)

Example 269, In his clean room in the dirty Ayemenem House, Estha (not old, not young) sat on his bed in the dark. He sat very straight. Shoulders squared. (p.295)

Example 270, In the side mittam, by the separate 'Men's Needs' entrance, the chrome tailfins of the old Plymouth gleamed momentarily in the lightning. [...]With every monsoon, the old car settled more firmly into the ground. Like an angular, arthritic hen settling stiffly on her clutch of eggs. With no intention of ever getting up. Grass grew around its flat tyres. The Paradise Pickles & Preserves signboard rotted and fell inwards like a collapsed crown. (p.295)

Example 271, She didn't hesitate. Tangy Taste. Fresh Breath. She had learned the smart, snappy language of television commercials. (p.297)

Example 272, The women were all in white with their sari palloos drawn over their heads. Father Mulligan was in saffron. A yolk addressing a sea of boiled eggs. His white beard and hair were long, but combed and groomed. A saffron Santa with votive ash on his forehead. (p.298)

Example 273, Once he was dead, Baby Kochamma stripped Father Mulligan of his ridiculous saffron robes and reclothed him in the Coca Cola cassock she so loved. (Her senses feasted, between changes, on that lean, concave, Christ-like body.) She snatched away his begging bowl, pedicured his horny Hindu soles and gave him back his comfortable sandals. She reconverted him into the high-stepping camel that came to lunch on Thursdays. (p.298)

Example 274, Rahel was lying on Estha's bed. She looked thinner lying down. Younger. Smaller. Her face was turned towards the window beside the bed. Slanting rain hit the bars of the window-grill and shattered into a fine spray over her face and her smooth bate arm. Her soft, sleeveless T-shirt was a glowing yellow in the dark. The bottom half of her, in blue jeans, melted into the darkness. It was a little cold. A little wet. A little quiet. The Air. (p.299)

Example 275, From where he sat, at the end of the bed, Estha, without turning his head, could see her. Faintly outlined. The sharp line of her jaw. Her collarbones like wings that spread from the base of her throat to the ends of her shoulders. A bird held down by skin.[...] She was lovely to him. Her hair. Her cheeks. Her small, clever-looking hands. (p.299)

Example 276, The liquid glint of her eyes in the dark. Her small straight nose. Her mouth, full lipped. Something wounded-looking about it. As though it was flinching from something. As though long ago someone - a man with rings - had hit her across it. A beautiful, hurt mouth. [...] Ammu's trying-not-to-cry mouth. (p.300)

Example 277, Her skin grey, wan, robbed of its luminous sheen by the neon station light. Daylight stopped by trains on either side. Long corks that kept the darkness bottled in. [...] Around them the hostling-jostling crowd. (p.300)

Example 278, Gaunt children, blonde with malnutrition, selling smutty magazines and food they couldn't afford to eat themselves. Melted chocolates. Pink-skinned dolls. Rattles. Love-in-Tokyos. Hollow plastic parakeets full of sweets with heads you could unscrew. Yellow-rimmed red sunglasses. Toy watches with the time painted on them. A cartful of defective toothbrushes. [...] A blind man without eyelids and eyes as blue as faded jeans, his skin pitted with smallpox scars, chatted to a leper without fingers, taking dexterous drags from scavenged cigarette stubs that lay beside him in a heap. (p.301)

Example 279, A man sitting on a red weighing machine unstrapped his artificial leg

(knee downwards) with a black boot and nice white sock painted on it. The hollow, knobbed calf was pink, like proper calves should be. [...]His real foot was bare. (p.301)

Example 280, A thick-lipped man with rings, cool in white, bought Scissors cigarettes from a platform vendor. (p.302)

Example 281, The one in which a posse of Touchable Policemen crossed the Meenachal river, sluggish and swollen with recent rain, and picked their way through the wet undergrowth, clumping into the Heart of Darkness. (p.303)

Example 282, A posse of Touchable Policemen crossed the Meenachal river, sluggish and swollen with recent rain, and picked their way through the wet undergrowth, the clink of handcuffs in someone's heavy pocket. Their wide khaki shorts were rigid with starch, and bobbed over the tall grass like a row of stiff skirts, quite independent of the limbs that moved inside them. (p.304)

Example 283, The Kottayam Police. A cartoonplatoon. New-Age princes in funny pointed helmets. Cardboard lined with cotton. Hairoil stained. Their shabby khaki crowns. Dark of Heart. Deadlypurposed. They lifted their thin legs high, clumping through tall grass. Ground creepers snagged in their dewdamp leghair. Burrs and grass flowers enhanced their dull socks. Brown millipedes slept in the soles of their steel-tipped, Touchable boots. Rough grass left their legskin raw, crisscrossed with cuts. Wet mud farted under their feet as they squelched through the swamp. (p.305)

Example 284, Beyond the swamp that smelled of still water, they 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 had withstood the rain and spread like whispered gossip from tree to tree. A banana flower sheathed in claret bracts hung from a scruffy, torn-leafed tree. A gem held out by a grubby schoolboy. A jewel in the velvet jungle. Crimson dragonflies mated in the air. Doubledeckered. Deft. One admiring policeman watched and wondered briefly about the dynamics of dragonfly sex, and what went into what. Then his mind clicked to attention and Police Thoughts returned. Onwards. Past tall anthills congealed in the rain. Slumped like drugged sentries asleep at the gates of Paradise. Past butterflies drifting through the air like happy messages. Huge ferns. A chameleon. A startling shoeflower. The scurry of grey jungle fowl running for cover. The nutmeg tree that Vellya Paapen hadn't found. A forked canal. Still. Choked with duckweed. Like a dead green snake. A tree trunk fallen over it. The Touchable policemen minced across. Twirling polished bamboo batons. Hairy fairies with lethal wands. Then the sunlight was fractured by thin trunks of tilting trees. Dark of Heartness tiptoed into the Heart of Darkness. The sound of stridulating crickets swelled. Grey squirrels streaked down mottled trunks of rubber trees that slanted towards the sun. Old scars slashed across their bark. Sealed. Healed. Untapped. Acres of this, and then, a grassy clearing. A house. The History House. Whose doors were locked and windows open. With cold stone floors and billowing, ship-shaped shadows on the walls. Where waxy ancestors with tough toe-nails and breath that smelled of yellow maps whispered papery whispers. Where translucent lizards lived behind old paintings. Where dreams were captured and re-dreamed. Where an old Englishman ghost, sickled

to a tree, was abrogated by a pair of two-egg twins - a Mobile- Republic with a Puff who had planted a Marxist flag in the earth beside him. As the platoon of policemen minced past they didn't hear him beg. In his kind-missionary voice. (p.305)

Example 285, It was a beautiful house. White-walled once. Red-roofed. But painted in weather colours now. With brushes dipped in nature's palette. Mossgreen. Earthbrown. Crumbleblack. Making it look older than it really was. Like sunken treasure dredged up from the ocean bed. Whale-kissed and barnacled. Swaddled in silence. Breathing bubbles through its broken windows. A deep verandah ran all around. The rooms themselves were recessed, buried in shadow. The tiled roof swept down like the sides of an immense, upside-down boat. Rotting beams supported on once-white pillars had buckled at the centre, leaving a yawning, gaping hole. A History hole. A History-shaped hole in the Universe through which, at twilight, dense clouds of silent bats billowed like factory smoke and drifted into the night. (p.306)

Example 286, They positioned themselves strategically. Crouching by the broken, low stone boundary wall. [...]A Spoiled Puff. A Fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo. And in another corner (as lonely as a wolf) - a carpenter with blood-red nails. (p.307)

Example 287, They heard the thud of wood on flesh. Boot on bone. On teeth. The muffled grunt when a stomach is kicked in. The muted crunch of skull on cement. The gurgle of blood on a man's breath when his lung is tom by the jagged end of a broken rib. Blue-lipped and dinner-plate-eyed, they watched, mesmerized by something that they sensed but didn't understand: the absence of caprice in what the policemen did. The abyss where anger should have been. The sober, steady brutality, the economy of it all. (p.308)

Example 288, Impelled by feelings that were primal yet paradoxically wholly impersonal. Feelings of contempt born of inchoate, unacknowledged fear - civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness. Man's subliminal urge to destroy what he could neither subdue nor deify. (p.308)

Example 289, Unwilling to seek refuge in fiction, Estha said nothing. Someone was speaking to them. A kind Touchable policeman. Kind to his kind. (p.311)

Example 290, So once again, in the space of two weeks, bottled Fear for Estha. Chilled. Fizzed. Sometimes Things went worse with Coca-Cola. [...]Gradually, in a fractured, disjointed fashion, things began to fall into place. (p.313)

Example 291, Knowing him to be the more practical of the two. The more tractable. The more farsighted. The more responsible. [...]Ambassador E. Pelvis. With saucer-eyes and a spoiled puff. A short ambassador flanked by tall policemen, on a terrible mission deep into the bowels of the Kottayam police station. Their footsteps echoing on the flagstone floor. (p.319)

Example 292, The lockup was pitch-dark. Estha could see nothing, but he could hear

the sound of rasping, laboured breathing. The smell of shit made him retch. Someone switched on the light. Bright. Blinding. Velutha appeared on the scummy, slippery floor. A mangled genie invoked by a modern lamp. He was naked, his soiled mundu had come undone. Blood spilled from his skull like a secret. His face was swollen and his head look liked a pumpkin, too large and heavy for the slender stem it grew from. A pumpkin with a monstrous upside-down smile. Police boots stepped back from the rim of a pool of urine spreading from him, the bright, bare electric bulb reflected in it. (p.319)

Example 293, A millstone with a puff: And a green-wavy, thick-watery, lumpy, sea weedy, floaty, bottomless-bottomful feeling. [...]Every First Class train thing was green. The seats green. The berths green. The floor green. The chains green. Darkgreen Lightgreen. (p.323)

Example 294, His eye on the main chance. Free bus rides. Free funerals. Free education. (p.325)

Example 295, Little Elvis the Pelvis with a spoiled, special-outing puff. And beige and pointy shoes. (p.326)

Example 296, TWENTY-THREE YEARS LATER, Rahel, dark woman in a yellow T-shirt, turns to Estha in the dark. (p.327)

Example 297, Only that Quietness and Emptiness fitted together like stacked spoons. Only that there was a snuffling in the hollows at the base of a lovely throat. Only that a hard honey-coloured shoulder had a semi-circle of teethmarks on it. (p.328)

Example 298, On the roof of the abandoned factory, the lonely drummer drummed. A gauze door slammed. A mouse rushed across the factory floor. Cobwebs sealed old pickle vats. Empty, all but one - in which a small heap of congealed white dust lay. Bone dust from a Bar Nowl. Long dead. Pickledowl. (p.328)

Example 299, Sophie Mol, with her back to the grown ups, made gruesome faces at the food. Every mouthful she ate was displayed to her admiring younger cousins, half-chewed, mulched, lying on her tongue like fresh vomit. (p.329)

Example 300, If she had to endure another minute of Chacko's proud, tennis-trophy smile. Or the undercurrent of sexual jealousy that emanated from Mammachi. (p.329)

Example 301, The cheerful one-armed man with salty skin and a shoulder that ended abruptly like a cliff emerged from the shadows of the jagged beach and walked towards her. (p.330)

Example 302, Then she sat on the wicker chair below the mouldy, button-eyed bison head and the portraits of the Little Blessed One and Aleyooty Ammachi that hung on either side of it. [...]A lonely, lambent woman looking out at her embittered aunt's

ornamental garden, listening to a tangerine. (p.331)

Example 303, She couldn't believe it. The cheap coincidence of those words. She stared fiercely out at the garden. Qusa the Bar Nowl flew past on a silent nocturnal patrol. The fleshy anthuriums gleamed like gunmetal. (p.332)

Example 304, His paralysed brother and his one-eyed father had eaten the dinner he had cooked them and were asleep. So he was free to lie in the river and drift slowly with the current. A log. A serene crocodile. Coconut trees bent into the river and watched him float by. Yellow bamboo wept. Small fish took coquettish liberties with him. Pecked him. (p.333)

Example 305, He wore a thin white cloth around his loins, looped between his dark legs. He shook the water from his hair. She could see his smile in the dark. His white, sudden smile that he had carried with him from boyhood into manhood. His only luggage. (p.334)

Example 306, Her nut-brown breasts (that wouldn't support a toothbrush) against his smooth ebony chest. [...]She could feel the skin on his palms. Rough. Calloused. Sandpaper. (p.335)

Example 307, Behind them the river pulsed through the darkness, shimmering like wild silk. Yellow bamboo wept. [...]They lay under the mangosteen tree, .where only recently a grey old boatplant with boatflowers and boatfruit had been uprooted by a Mobile Republic. [...]The scurrying, hurrying, boatworld was already gone. The White termites on their way to work. The White ladybirds on their way home. The White beetles burrowing away from the light. The White grasshoppers with white violins. The sad white music. Leaving a boat-shaped patch of bare dry earth, cleared and ready for love. (p.335)

Example 308, Clouded eyes held clouded eyes in a steady gaze and a luminous woman opened herself to a luminous man. She was as wide and deep as a river in spate. He sailed on her waters. She could feel him moving deeper and deeper into her. Frantic. Frenzied. Asking to be let in further. Further. Stopped only by the shape of her. The shape of him. And when he was refused, when he had touched the deepest depths of her, with a sobbing, shuddering sigh, he drowned. She lay against him. Their bodies slick with sweat. She felt his body drop away from her. His breath become more regular. She saw his eyes clear. He stroked her hair, sensing that the knot that had eased in him was still tight and quivering in her. Gently he turned her over on her back. He wiped the sweat and grit from her with his wet cloth. He lay over her, careful not to put his weight on her. Small stones pressed into the skin of his forearms. He kissed her eyes. Her ears. Her breasts. Her belly. Her seven silver stretchmarks from her twins. The line of down that led from her navel to her dark triangle, that told him where she wanted him to go. The inside of her legs, where her skin was softest. Then carpenter's hands lifted her hips and an untouchable tongue touched the innermost part of her. Drank long and deep from the bowl of her. She danced for him. On that boat-shaped piece of earth. She lived. He held her against him, resting his back against the mangosteen tree, while she cried and

laughed at once. Then, for what seemed like an eternity, but was really no more than five minutes, she slept leaning against him, her back against his chest. Seven years of oblivion lifted off her and flew into the shadows on weighty, quaking wings. Like a dull, steel peahen. And on Ammu's Road (to Age and Death) a small, sunny meadow appeared. Copper grass spangled with blue butterflies. Beyond it, an abyss. (p.336)

Example 309, As though it was searching for a way out. For that movable rib. A secret sliding-folding panel. His arms were still around her, she could feel the muscles move while his hands played with a dry palm frond. (p.337)

Example 310, One night they contributed to his wardrobe - a flake of garlic skin - and were deeply offended when he rejected it along with the rest of his armour from which he emerged - disgruntled, naked, snot-coloured. As though he deplored their taste in clothes. For a few days he remained in this suicidal state of disdainful undress. The rejected shell of garbage stayed standing, like an outmoded world-view. An antiquated philosophy. Then it crumbled. [...]His seemingly self-destructive pride. They grew to love his eclectic taste. His shambling dignity. (p.339)

Example 311, Like flat chalk on a blackboard. Like breeze in a paddyfield. Like jet-streaks in a blue church sky. (p.339)

Complete List of Examples on Grammar

Roy Style Marker: High Frequency of Minor Sentences

Example 1, Born from separate but simultaneously fertilized eggs. (p.2)

Example 2, And these are only the small things. [...] Ever. [...] Short creatures with long shadows, patrolling the Blurry End. [...]Thirty-one. Not old. Not young. But a viable die-able age. (p.3)

Example 3, Freefunerals.[...]Satin-lined. Brass handle shined. (p.4)

Example 4, Lying broken on the hot church floor, dark blood spilling from his skull like a secret. [...]Sicksweet. Like old roses on a breeze. (p.6)

Example 5, But you can't hear screams through earth and stone. (p.7)

Example 6, Gently. *Tap, tap*. As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket. Pointing out the ones that he wanted packed and delivered. (p.8)

Example 7, When they left the police station Ammu was crying, so Estha and Rahel didn't ask her what *veshya* meant. Or for that matter, *illegitimate*. (p.8)

Example 8, Or at least the name was. (p.9)

Example 9, It had been a gradual winding down and closing stop. A barely noticeable quietening. As though he had simply run out of conversation and had nothing left to say. Yet Estha's silence was never awkward. Never intrusive. Never noisy. (p.10)

Example 10, *Does not participate in Group Activities* was another recurring complaint. Though what exactly they meant by 'Group Activities' they never said. [...] Instead, much to the initial embarrassment of his father and stepmother, he began to do the housework. As though in his own way he was trying to earn his keep. [...] Estha carried them home in the crowded tram. A quiet bubble floating on a sea of noise. (p.11)

Example 11, It stripped his thoughts of the words that described them and left them pared and naked. Unspeakable. Numb. And to an observer therefore, perhaps barely there. [...] As Khubchand lay dying on his cushion, Estha could see the bedroom window reflected in his smooth, purple balls. And the sky beyond. And once a bird that flew across. (p.12)

Example 12, People got used to seeing him on the road. A well-dressed man with a quiet walk. His face grew dark and outdoorsy. Rugged. Wrinkled by the sun. He began to look wiser than he really was. Like a fisherman in a city. With sea-secrets in him. (p.13)

Example 13, Other days he walked down the road. Past the new, freshly baked, iced, Gulf-money houses built by nurses, masons, wire-benders and bank clerks who worked hard and unhappily in faraway places. Past the resentful older houses tinged green with envy, cowering in their private driveways among their private rubber trees. Each a tottering fiefdom with an epic of its own. [...] He walked past the village school that his great-grandfather built for Untouchable children. Past Sophie Mol's yellow church. Past the Ayemenem Youth. Kung Fu Club. Past the Tender Buds Nursery School (for Touchables), past the ration shop that sold rice, sugar, and bananas that hung in yellow bunches from the roof: Cheap soft-porn magazines about fictitious South Indian sex fiends were clipped with clothes pegs to ropes that hung from the ceiling. (p.13)

Example 14, Estha would walk past, not rude, not polite. Just quiet. (p.14)

Example 15, But then, Comrade K. N. M. Pillai was essentially a political man. A professional omeletteer. He walked through the world like a chameleon. Never revealing himself never appearing not to. Emerging through chaos unscathed. (p.14)

Example 16, He wondered what had brought her back. After all these years. (p.14)

Example 17, The world, locked out for years, suddenly flooded in, and now Estha couldn't hear himself for the noise. Trains. Traffic. Music. The Stock Market. A dam had burst and savage waters swept everything up in a swirling. Comets, violins, parades, loneliness, clouds, beards, bigots, lists, flags, earthquakes, despair were all swept up in a scrambled swirling. (p.15)

Example 18, As for Rahel. After Ammu died (after the last time she came back to Ayemenem, swollen with cortisone and a rattle in her chest that sounded like a faraway man shouting), Rahel drifted. From school to school. (p.15)

Example 19, It hid in books and food. In Mammachi's violin case. In the scabs of the sores on Cbacko's shins that he constantly worried. In his slack, womanish legs. (p.16)

Example 20, Like a fruit in season. Every season. As permanent as a Government job. (p.16)

Example 21, Rahel grew up without a brief: Without anybody to arrange a marriage for her. Without anybody who would pay her a dowry and therefore without an obligatory husband looming on her horizon.

So as long as she wasn't noisy about it, she remained free to make her own enquiries: into breasts and how much they hurt. Into false hair buns and how well they burned. Into life and how it ought to be lived. [...] It wasn't the outcome of any serious interest in Architecture. Nor even, in fact, of a superficial one. (p.17)

Example 22, She occasionally wrote to Chacko and Mammachi, but never returned to Ayemenem. Not when Mammachi died. Not when Chacko emigrated to Canada. (p.18)

Example 23, Rahel drifted into marriage like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge. With a Sitting Down sense. (p.18)

Example 24, He held her as though she was a gift. Given to him in love. Something still and small. Unbearably precious.

But when they made love he was offended by her eyes. They behaved as though 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. (p.19)

Example 25, He didn't know that in some places, like the country that Rahel came from, various kinds of despair competed for primacy. And that *personal* despair could never be desperate enough. That something happened when personal turmoil dropped by at the wayside shrine of the vast, violent, circling, driving, ridiculous, insane, unfeasible, public turmoil of a nation. (p.19)

Example 26, And the less it mattered, the less it mattered. [...] So Small God laughed a hollow laugh, and skipped away cheerfully. (p.19)

Example 27, What Larry McCaslin saw in Rahel's eyes was not despair at all, but a sort of enforced optimism. And a hollow where Estha's words had been. He couldn't be expected to understand that. That the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other. That the two things fitted together. Like stacked spoons. Like familiar lovers' bodies.

(p.19)

Example 28, After they were divorced, Rahel worked for a few months as a waitress in an Indian restaurant in New York. And then for several years as a night clerk in a bullet-proof cabin at a gas station outside Washington, where drunks occasionally vomited into the money tray, and pimps propositioned her with more lucrative job offers. Twice she saw men being shot through their car windows. And once a man who had been stabbed, ejected from a moving car with a knife in his back. (p.20)

Example 29, Rahel gave up her job at the gas station and left America gladly. To return to Ayemenem. To Estha in the rain. (p.20)

Example 30, She was delighted that Estha had not spoken to Rahel. That he had looked at her and walked straight past. Into the rain. As he did with everyone else. (p.20)

Example 31, The silence sat between grand-niece and baby grand aunt like a third person. A stranger. Swollen. Noxious. (p.21)

Example 32, Rahel noticed that she had started wearing makeup. Lipstick. Kohl. A sly touch of rouge. And because the house was locked and dark, and because she only believed in 40-watt bulbs, her lipstick mouth had shifted slightly off her real mouth. (p.21)

Example 33, She was wearing a lot of jewellery. Rahel's dead grandmother's jewellery. All of it. Winking rings. Diamond earrings. Gold bangles and a beautifully crafted flat gold chain that she touched from time to time reassuring herself that it was there and that it was hers. Like a young bride who couldn't believe her good fortune. (p.22)

Example 34, He had young Baby Kochamma's aching heart on a leash, bumping behind him, lurching over leaves and small stones. Bruised and almost broken. [...]That was all she wanted. All she ever dared to hope for. Just to be near him. Close enough to smell his beard. To see the coarse weave of his cassock. To love him just by looking at him. (p.24)

Example 35, He decided that since she couldn't have a husband there was no harm in her having an education. So he made arrangements for her to attend a course of study at the University of Rochester in America. (p 26)

Example 36, Their prominent, stippled spadices always yellow. [...]Baby Kochamma spent her afternoons in her garden. In sari and gumboots. She wielded an enormous pair of hedge shears in her bright orange gardening gloves. Like a lion-tamer she tamed twisting vines and nurtured bristling cacti. (p.26)

Example 37, One's hair snow white, the other's dyed coal black. (p.28)

Example 38, She used her windows for specific purposes. For a Breath of Fresh Air. To Pay for the Milk. To Let Out a Trapped Wasp (which Kochu Maria was made to chase around the house with a towel). (p.28)

Example 39, She even locked her sad, paint-flaking fridge where she kept her week's supply of cream buns that Kochu Maria brought her from Bestbakery in Kottayam. And the two bottles of rice water that she drank instead of ordinary water. (p.29)

Example 40, She deemed them Capable of Anything. Anything at all. *They might even steal their present back*, she thought, and realized with a pang how quickly she had reverted to thinking of them as though they were a single unit once again. After all those years. Determined not to let the past creep up on her she altered her thought at once. *She. She might steal her present back*. (p.29)

Example 41, It came out jagged. Like a piece of tin. She walked to the window and opened it. For a Breath of Fresh Air. (p.29)

Example 42, Aleyooty Ammachi looked more hesitant. As though she would have liked to turn around but couldn't. Perhaps it wasn't as easy for her to abandon the river. With her eyes she looked in the direction that her husband looked. With her heart she looked away. Her heavy, dull gold kunukku earrings (tokens of the Little Blessed One's Goodness) had stretched her earlobes and hung all the way down to her shoulders. Through the holes in her ears you could see the hot river and the dark trees that bent into it. And the fishermen in their boats. And the fish. [...]A rushing, rolling, fishswimming sense. (p.30)

Example 43, Paradise Pickles & Preserves. [...]They used to make pickles, squashes, jams, curry powders and canned pineapples. And banana jam (illegally) after the FPO (Food Products Organization) banned it because according to their specifications it was neither jam nor jelly. Too thin for jelly and too thick for jam. An ambiguous, unclassifiable consistency, they said. As per their books. (p.30)

Example 44, Perhaps, Ammu, Estha and she were the worst transgressors. But it wasn't just them. It was the others too. (p.31)

Example 45, His arms had goosebumps where the handcuffs touched his skin. Cold handcuffs with a sourmetal smell. Like steel bus rails and the smell of the bus conductor's hands from holding them. (p.31)

Example 46, As though she had had nothing to do with the Sowing and the Reaping. She returned on her small feet to her cross-stitch embroidery. (p.31)

Example 47, Nothing out of the ordinary. And so Estha was Returned in a train with his tin trunk and his beige and pointy shoes rolled into his khaki holdall. First class, overnight on the Madras Mail to Madras and then with a friend of their father's from Madras to Calcutta. He had a tiffin carrier with tomato sandwiches. And an Eagle flask with an eagle. He had terrible pictures in his head. Rain. Rushing, inky water. And a smell. Sicksweet. Like old roses on a breeze. (p.32)

Example 48, The memory of a swollen face and a smashed, upside-down smile. Of a spreading pool of clear liquid with a bare bulb reflected in it. Of a bloodshot eye that had opened, wandered and then fixed its gaze on him. Estha. And what had Estha done? He had looked into that beloved face and said: Yes. (p.32)

Example 49, Perhaps it's true that things can change in a day. That a few dozen hours can affect the outcome of whole lifetimes. And that when they do, those few dozen hours, like the salvaged remains of a burned house - the charred clock, the singed photograph, the scorched furniture - must be resurrected from the ruins and examined. Preserved. Accounted for. (p.32)

Example 50, Little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted. Imbued with new meaning. (p.33)

Example 51, Equally, it could be argued that it actually began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch Ascendency, before Vasco da Gama arrived, before the Zamorin's conquest of Calicut. Before three purple-robed Syrian Bishops murdered by the Portuguese were found floating in the sea, with coiled sea serpents riding on their chests and oysters knotted in their tangled beards. It could be argued that it began long before Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into Kerala like tea from a teabag. That it really began in the days when the Love Laws were made. The laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much. (p.33)

Example 52, It was the kind of time in the life of a family when something happens to nudge its hidden morality from its resting place and make it bubble to the surface and float for a while. In clear view. For everyone to see. (p.35)

Example 53, He said that he couldn't bear to think of them spending a lonely, desolate Christmas in England. In a house full of memories. (p.36)

Example 54, They'd heard a lot about her, though, that last week. From Baby Kochamma, from Kochu Maria, and even Mammachi. [...] That whole week Baby Kochamma eavesdropped relentlessly on the twins' private conversations, and whenever she caught them speaking in Malayalam, she levied a small fine which was deducted at source. From their pocket money. She made them write lines – 'impositions' she called them - *I will always speak in English, I will always speak in English*. A hundred times each. (p.36)

Example 55, Estha was wearing his beige and pointy shoes and his Elvis puff. His Special Outing Puff. [...] In Kerala Love-in-Tokyos have withstood the test of time, and even today if you were to ask for one at any respectable A- I Ladies' Store, that's what you'd get. Two beads on a rubber band. Rahel's toy wristwatch had the time painted on it. Ten to two. (p.37)

Example 56, He had read them all and quoted long passages from them for no apparent reason. Or at least none that anyone else could fathom. [...] Of course that was then. Before the Terror. (p.38)

Example 57, He was a small man, but well-built. Pleasant-looking. [...] Later, looking back on the day, Ammu realized that the slightly feverish glitter in her bridegroom's eyes had not been love, or even excitement at the prospect of carnal bliss, but approximately eight large pegs of whisky. Straight. Neat. (p.39)

Example 58, His cremation was attended by all the boxers in Bengal. A congregation of mourners with lantern jaws and broken noses. (p.40)

Example 59, They emerged without much fuss, within eighteen minutes of each other. Two little ones, instead of one big one. Twin seals, slick with their mother's juices. Wrinkled with the effort of being born. (p.40)

Example 60, He allowed the pitiful man sitting across the table to begin to shake. To weep. Then Hollick spoke again. [...]Over coffee, Mr Hollick proposed that Baba go away for a while. For a holiday. To a clinic perhaps, for treatment. For as long as it took him to get better. And for the period of time that he was away, Mr Hollick suggested that Ammu be sent to his bungalow to be 'looked after'. (p.41)

Example 61, Ammu took down the heaviest book she could find in the bookshelf - *The Reader's Digest World Atlas* - and hit him with it as hard as she could. On his head. His legs. His back and shoulders. [...]Ammu left her husband and returned, unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenem. To everything that she had fled from only a few years ago. Except that now she had two young children. And no more dreams. (p.42)

Example 62, To Ammu her twins seemed like a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each other's company, lolloping arm in arm down a highway full of hurtling traffic. Entirely oblivious of what trucks can do to frogs. (p.43)

Example 63, There was only Ayemenem now. A front verandah and a back verandah. A hot river and a pickle factory. And in the background, the constant, high, whining mewl of local disapproval. (p.43)

Example 64, They squeezed her knee and gloated. She fought off the urge to slap them. Or twiddle their nipples. With a spanner. Like Chaplin in *Modern Times*. (p.43)

Example 65, Ammu felt the woman that looked back at her was someone else. A foolish jeweled bride. Her silk sunset-coloured sari shot with gold. Rings on every finger. White dots of sandalwood paste over her arched eyebrows. [...]It seemed so absurd. So futile. Like polishing firewood. (p.43)

Example 66, 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. (p.44)

Example 67, On days like this, there was something restless and untamed about her. As though she had temporarily set aside the morality of motherhood and divorcehood. (p.44)

Example 68, It was what she had battling inside her. An unmixable mix. The infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber. It was this that grew inside her, and eventually led her to love by night the man her children loved by day. To use by night the boat that her children used by day. The boat that Estha sat on, and Rahel found. (p.44)

Example 69, They sensed somehow that she lived in the penumbral shadows between two worlds, just beyond the grasp of their power. That a woman that they had already damned, now had little left to lose, and could therefore be dangerous. [...]Sometimes she was the most beautiful woman that Estha and Rahel had ever seen. And sometimes she wasn't. (p.44)

Example 70, Baby Kochamma resented Ammu, because she saw her quarrelling with a fate that she, Baby Kochamma herself, felt she had graciously accepted. The fate of the wretched Man-less woman. The sad, Father Mulligan-less Baby Kochamma. (p.45)

Example 71, She expected from them some token unhappiness. At the very least. (p.46)

Example 72, There would be two flasks of water. Boiled water for Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol, tap water for everybody else. (p.46)

Example 73, *Sturdy* was a terrible word. Like a dwarf's name. *Sturdy Koshy Oommen* - a pleasant, middle-class, God-fearing dwarf with low knees and a side parting. (p.46)

Example 74, Ammu said that the billboard made them look ridiculous. Like a travelling circus. With tailfins. (p.47)

Example 75, Then he caught the first train back to Delhi. To taxonomic attention and, he hoped, fame. (p.49)

Example 76, Chacko said that in Pappachi's case it meant (2) *Bring mind into certain state*. Which, Chacko said, meant that Pappachi's mind had been *brought into a state* which made him like the English.

Example 77, They were a *family* of Anglophiles. Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history, and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away. He explained to them that history was like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside. 'To understand history,' Chacko said, 'we have to go inside and listen to what they're saying. And look at the books and the pictures on the wall. And smell the smells.' (p.52)

Example 78, Kari Saipu's house. The Black Sahib. The Englishman who had 'gone native'. Who spoke Malayalam and wore mundus. Ayemenem's own Kurtz. Ayemenem his private Heart of Darkness. (p.52)

Example 79, Very few people had seen it. But the twins could picture it. The History House. With cool stone floors and dim walls and billowing ship-shaped shadows. (p.53)

Example 80, 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. [...] Our lives never important enough. To matter. (p.53)

Example 81, It had taken the whole of the Earth Woman's life for the earth to become what it was. For the oceans to part. For the mountains to rise. (p.54)

Example 82, They thought about it often. The house on the other side of the river. Looming in the Heart of Darkness. A house they couldn't enter, full of whispers they

couldn't understand. They didn't know then, that soon they *would* go in. That they would cross the river and be where they weren't supposed to be, with a man they weren't supposed to love. That they would watch with dinner-plate eyes as history revealed itself to them in the back verandah. (p.55)

Example 83, They smelled its smell and never forgot it. History's smell. Like old roses on a breeze. It would lurk for ever in ordinary things. In coat-hangers. Tomatoes. In the tar on the roads. In certain colours. In the plates at a restaurant. In the absence of words. And the emptiness in eyes. (p.55)

Example 84, They would try to tell themselves that in terms of geological time it was an insignificant event. Just a blink of the Earth Woman's eye. That Worse Things had happened. That Worse Things kept happening. But they would find no comfort in the thought. (p.55)

Example 85, Month after month, Chako's carefully constructed planes crashed in the slushgreen paddy fields into which Estha and Rahel would spurt, like trained retrievers, to salvage the remains. A tail, a tank, a wing. A wounded machine. (p.56)

Example 86, He had a surprisingly high laugh for a man of his size and fatness. And when he laughed, he shook all over. without appearing to move. [...]Sosha was Mammachi's first name. Soshamma. (p.58)

Example 87, As she read, Ammu could make her voice gravelly, like Shere Khan's. Or whining, like Tabaqui's. (p.59)

Example 88, They were made to write *In future we will not read backwards. In the future we will not read backwards*. A hundred times. Forwards. (p.60)

Example 89, The buses all had girls' names. Lucykutty, Mollykutty, Beena Mol. (p.60)

Example 90, Chacko said that Estha and Rahel were indecendy healthy. And so was Sophie Mol. He said it was because they didn't suffer from Inbreeding like most Syrian Christians. And Parsees. [...]She meant having parents who were divorced. As though these were the only choices available to people: Inbreeding or Divorce. (p.61)

Example 91, With a desultory nod of his bored and sleepy head, the Level Crossing Divinity conjured up beggars with bandages, men with trays selling pieces of fresh coconut, parippu vadas on banana leaves. And cold drinks. Coca-Cola, Fanta, Rosemilk. (p.61)

Example 92, Rahel and Estha squashed their noses against the Plymouth's quarter-windows. Yearning marshmallows with cloudy children behind them. (p.62)

Example 93, Murlidharan had no home, no doors to lock, but he had his old keys tied carefully around his waist. In a shining bunch. His mind was full of cupboards, cluttered with secret pleasures. An alarm clock. A red car with a musical horn. A red mug for the

bathroom. A wife with a diamond. A briefcase with important papers. A coming home from the office. And *I'm sorry, Colonel Sabhapathy, but I'm afraid I've said my say*. And crisp banana chips for the children. [...]He sat on the burning milestone with his matted hair and eyes like windows, and was glad to be able to look away sometimes. To have his keys to count and countercheck. (p.63)

Example 94, Within minutes there was no one on the road. Except Murlidharan. Perched with his bum on the burning milestone. Unperturbed and only mildly curious. There was hustle-bustle. And police whistles. (p.64)

Example 95, Ammu said it was all hogwash. Just a case of a spoiled princeling playing *Comrade! Comrade!* An Oxford avatar of the old zamindar mentality - a landlord forcing his attentions on women who depended on him for their livelihood. (p.65)

Example 96, Suddenly the skyblue Plymouth looked absurdly opulent on the narrow, pitted road. Like a wide lady squeezing down a narrow corridor. Like Baby Kochamma in church, on her way to the bread and wine. [...]Within minutes, the road was swamped by thousands of marching people. Automobile islands in a river of people. (p.65)

Example 97, Replace God with Marx, Satan with the bourgeoisie, Heaven with a classless society, the Church with the Party, and the form and purpose of the journey remained similar. An obstacle race, with a prize at the end. [...]A second theory claimed that it had to do with the comparatively high level of literacy in the state. Perhaps. Except that the high literacy level was largely *because* of the communist movement. (p.66)

Example 98, It was hard to tell in black and white. In the grey predawn light. [...]The marchers that day were party workers, students, and the labourers themselves. Touchables and Untouchables. (p.69)

Example 99, Through the Plymouth window, Rahel could see that the loudest word they said was *Zindabad*. And that the veins stood out in their necks when they said it. And that the arms that held the flags and banners were knotted and hard. (p.70)

Example 100, Hers, too, was an ancient, age-old fear. The fear of being dispossessed. (p.70)

Example 101, The Plymouth looked like an angular blue animal in a zoo asking to be fed. A bun. A banana. (p.70)

Example 102, This was the trouble with families. Like invidious doctors, they knew just where it hurt. (p.70)

Example 103, Just then Rahel saw Velutha. Vellya Paapen's son, Velutha. Her most beloved friend Velutha. Velutha marching with a red flag. In a white shirt and mundu with angry veins in his neck. [...]Rahel, standing on the car seat, had grown out of the Plymouth window like the loose, flailing horn of a car-shaped herbivore. With a fountain

in a Love-in-Tokyo and yellow-rimmed red plastic sunglasses. (p.71)

Example 104, She slapped at Rahel's calves, which were the only part of her left in the car to slap. Calves and brown feet in Bata sandals. [...]The flag had seemed to her a most impressive piece of equipment. The right thing for a friend to have. (p.71)

Example 105, Rahel saw that Ammu had a film of perspiration on her forehead and upper lip, and that her eyes had become hard, like marbles. Like Pappachi's in the Vienna studio photograph. [...]That expression on Ammu's face. Like a rogue piece in a puzzle. Like a question mark that drifted through the pages of a book and never settled at the end of a sentence.

That hard marble look in Ammu's eyes. The glisten of perspiration on her upper lip. And the chill of that sudden, hurt silence. (p.72)

Example 106, The smell of smoke. A windscreen wiper. A mother's marble eyes. Quite sane in the way she left huge tracts of darkness veiled. Unremembered. Her co-passenger's madness comforted Rahel. It drew her closer into New York's deranged womb. Away from the other, more terrible thing that haunted her. *A sourmetal smell, like steel bus-rails, and the smell of the bus conductor's hands from holding them. A young man with an old man's mouth.* (p.72)

Example 106, She'd been carried on it. More times than she could count. It had a light brown birthmark, shaped like a pointed dry leaf. He said it was a lucky leaf that made the monsoons come on time. A brown leaf on a black back. An autumn leaf at night. A lucky leaf that wasn't lucky enough. (p.73)

Example 107, His father, Vellya Paapen, was a Paravan. A toddy tapper. [...]They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched. Caste Hindus and Caste Christians. (p.73)

Example 108, It was a little like having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse, not being *allowed* to leave footprints at all. (p.74)

Example 109, It was nothing that he had said. Or done. It was not *what* he said, but the *way* he said it. Not *what* he did, but the *way* he did it. Perhaps it was just a lack of hesitation. An unwarranted assurance. In the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way he offered suggestions without being asked. Or the quiet way in which he disregarded suggestions without appearing to rebel. [...]And more recently, the inevitable rumour that he had become a Naxalite. That he had been to prison. (p.76)

Example 110, When he returned to Ayemenem after his years away from home, Velutha still had about him the same quickness. The sureness. And Vellya Paapen feared for him now more than ever. But this time he held his peace. He said nothing. [...]At least not until the Terror took hold of him. Not until he saw, night after night, a little boat being rowed across the river. Not until he saw it return at dawn. Not until he saw what his Untouchable son had touched. More than touched. Entered. Loved. (p.78)

Example 111, Mammachi ordered him to stop it but he couldn't, because you can't order fear around. Not even a Paravan's. Vellya Paapen told Mammachi' what he had seen. He asked God's forgiveness for having spawned a monster. He offered to kill his son with his own bare hands. To destroy what he had created. [...]She preferred an Irish-Jesuit smell to a particular Paravan smell.

By far. By far. (p.78)

Example 112, Velutha, Vellya Paapen and Kuttappen lived in a little laterite hut, downriver from the Ayemenem house. A three-minute run through the coconut trees for Esthappen and Rahel. [...]His house (on a good day) smelled of fresh wood shavings and the sun. Of red fish curry cooked with black tamarind. The best fish curry, according to Estha, in the whole world. (p.78)

Example 113, In their hooded yellow eyes there was a road and red flags marching. And a white shirt over a black back with a birthmark. Marching.(p.79)

Example 114, Rahel smiled back at him, pleased to have Chacko mistaken for her father. Like a normal family. (p.79)

Example 115, She was looking down at the floor of the car. Like a coy, frightened bride who had been married off to a stranger. (p.80)

Example 116, In her mind he grew to represent the march. And the man who had forced her to wave the Marxist Party flag. And the man who christened her Modalali Mariakutty. And all the men who had laughed at her. (p.82)

Example 117, There were so many stains on the road. Squashed Miss Mitten-shaped stains in the Universe. Squashed frog-shaped stains in the Universe. Squashed crows that had tried to eat the squashed frog-shaped stains in the Universe. Squashed dogs that ate the squashed crow-shaped stains in the Universe. Feathers. Mangoes. Spit. All the way to Cochin. (p.82)

Example 118, A transparent spotted snake with a forked tongue floated across the sky. Then a transparent Roman soldier on a spotted horse. [...]It didn't make any sense at all. Weatherwise or otherwise. (p.83)

Example 119, Ammu hated them blowing spit-bubbles. She said it reminded her of Baba. Their father. [...]Aristocrats were people who didn't blow spit-bubbles or shiver their legs. Or gobble. (p.84)

Example 120, They remembered his anger. And Ammu's. [...]He looked like a handsome, studious cricketer. With one arm he held Estha on his shoulders. (p.84)

Example 121, Rahel had two bumps on her forehead that Estha said would grow into horns. At least one of them would because she was half-Hindu. She hadn't been quick enough to ask him about *his* horns. Because whatever She was, He was too. (p.86)

Example 122, A pale daymoon hung hugely in the sky and went where they went. As big as the belly of a beer-drinking man. (p.87)

Example 123, Big Man the Lantern. Small man the Tallow-stick. *Huge man the Strobe lights*, he omitted to say. And *Small Man the Subway Station*. (p.89)

Example 124, She had the air of a game warden pointing out an animal in the grass. Taking pride in her ability to predict its movements. Her superior knowledge of its habits and predilections. (p.90)

Example 125, Rahel followed Estha to his room. Ammu's room. Once. (p.91)

Example 126, It gave nothing away. Not in the disarray of rumpled sheets, nor the untidiness of a kicked off shoe, or a wet towel hung over the back of a chair. Or a half-read book. It was like a room in a hospital after the nurse had just been. The floor was clean, the walls white. The cupboard closed. Shoes arranged. The dustbin empty. The obsessive cleanliness of the room was the only positive sign of volition from Estha. The only faint suggestion that he had, perhaps, some Design for Life. Just the whisper of an unwillingness to subsist on scraps offered by others. (p.91)

Example 127, The terrible ghosts of impossible-to-forget toys clustered on the blades of the ceiling fan. A catapult. A Qantas koala (from Miss Mitten) with loosened button eyes. An inflatable goose (that had been burst with a policeman's cigarette). Two ballpoint pens with silent streetscapes and red London buses that floated up and down in them. (p.91)

Example 128, He stepped out of his sodden jeans. Stiff. Dark blue. Difficult to get out of. (p.91)

Example 129, His arms too were double-coloured. Paler where his shirtsleeves ended. A dark brown man in pale honey clothes. Chocolate with a twist of coffee. High cheekbones and hunted eyes. A fisherman in a white-tiled bathroom, with sea-secrets in his eyes. (p.92)

Example 130, Now they were. Old enough. *Old*. A viable die-able age. (p.92)

Example 131, Rahel at the bathroom door. Slim-hipped. A lizard on a map on her faded T-shirt. Long wild hair with a glint of deep henna-red, sent unruly fingers down into the small of her back. The diamond in her nostril flashed. Sometimes. And sometimes not. A thin, gold, serpent-headed bangle glowed like a circle of orange light around her wrist. Slim snakes whispering to each other, head to head. Her mother's melted wedding ring. Down softened the sharp lines of her thin, angular arms. At first glance she appeared to have grown into the skin of her mother. High cheekbones. Deep dimples when she smiled. But she was longer, harder, flatter, more angular than Ammu had been. Less lovely perhaps to those who liked roundness and softness in women. Only her eyes were incontestably more beautiful. Large. Luminous. *Drownable in*, as tarry McCaslin had said and discovered to his cost. (p.92)

Example 132, Rahel searched her brother's nakedness for signs of herself: In the shape of his knees. The arch of his instep. The slope of his shoulders. The angle at which the rest of his arm met his elbow. The way his toe-nails tipped upwards at the ends. The sculpted hollows on either side of his taut, beautiful buns. Tight plums. Men's bums never grow up. Like school satchels, they evoke in an instant memories of childhood. (p.93)

Example 133, Rahel watched Estha with the curiosity of a mother watching her wet child. A sister a brother. A woman a man. A twin a twin. [...] He was the one that she had known before Life began. The one who had once led her (swimming) through their lovely mother's cunt. Both things unbearable in their polarity. In their irreconcilable far-apartness. (p.93)

Example 134, A raindrop glistened on the end of Estha's earlobe. Thick, silver in the light, like a heavy bead of mercury. [...] He retreated into further stillness. As though his body had the power to snatch its senses inwards (knotted, egg-shaped), away from the surface of his skin, into some, deeper more inaccessible recess. (p.93)

Example 135, She said that Public Pots were Dirty. Like Money was. You never knew who'd touched it. Lepers. Butchers. Car Mechanics. (pus. Blood. Grease.) [...] She put the money into her bodice. Meat-smelling blood money. (p.94)

Example 136, Her feet pigeon-toed in Bata sandals. High in the air with her knickers down. [...] Sssss for the sound of Soo-soo. Mmmmm for the Sound of Myooozick. (p.95)

Example 137, Baby Kochamma balanced like a big bird over a public pot. Blue veins like lumpy knitting running up her translucent shins. Fat knees dimpled. Hair on them. Poor little tiny feet to carry such a load!) Baby Kochamma waited for half of half a moment. Head thrust forward. Silly smile. Bosom swinging low. Melons in a blouse. Bottom up and out. (p.95)

Example 138, Rahel liked this. Holding the handbag. Everyone pissing in front of everyone. Like friends. She knew nothing then, of how precious a feeling this was. *Like friends*. They would never be together like this again. Ammu, Baby Kochamma and she. (p.95)

Example 139, She thought of Slow being a person. Slow Kurien. Slow Kutty. Slow Mol. Slow Kochamma. *Slow Kutty. Fast Verghese. And Kuriakose. Three brothers with danduff.* (p.96)

Example 140, Ammu did hers in a whisper. Against the side of the pot so you couldn't hear. Her father's hardness had left her eyes and they were Ammu-eyes again. She had deep dimples in her smile and didn't seem angry any more. About Velutha or the spit-bubble. (p.96)

Example 141, A dirty broom, a squash bottle half-full of a milky liquid (phenyl) with

Hoaty black things in it. A limp floorswab, and two rusty tin cans of nothing. They could have been Paradise Pickle products. Pineapple chunks in syrup. Or slices. Pineapple slices. [...]He stood on them, one foot on each, and pissed carefully, with minimal wobble. Like a Man. The cigarette stubs, soggy then, were wet now, and swirly. Hard to light. [...]He bowed to them all. The whole shooting match. The bottle, the broom, the cans, the limp floorswab. [...] Estha Alone of the uneven teeth. (p.97)

Example 142, They had to rush up the red steps with the old red carpet. Red staircase with red spit stains in the red corner. [...]So they'd missed the beginning. Missed the rippled velvet curtain going up, with lightbulbs in the clustered yellow tassels. Slowly up, and the music would have been *Baby Elephant Walk* from *Hatari*. Or *Colonel Bogey's March*. (p.97)

Example 143, Rahel was like an excited mosquito on a leash. Flying. Weightless. Up two steps. Down two. Up one. She climbed five flights of red stairs for Baby Kochamma's one. [...] Up two. Down two. Up one. Jump, jump. (p.98)

Example 144, They walked past the Refreshment Counter where the orangedrinks were waiting. And the lemondinks were waiting. The orange too orange. The lemon too lemon. The chocolates too melty. (p.98)

Example 145, It smelled of breathing people and hairoil. And old carpets. A magical, *Sound of Music* smell that Rahel remembered and treasured. Smells, like music, hold memories. (p.99)

Example 146, Estha had the tickets. Little Man. He lived in a cara-van. Dum dum. The Torch Man shone his light on the pink tickets. Row J. Numbers 17, 18, 19,20. Estha, Ammu, Rahel, Baby Kochamma. [...]She wasn't heavy enough, so the chair folded her into itself like sandwich stuffing, and she watched from between her knees. Two knees and a fountain. (p.99)

Example 147, Off with the torch. On with the World Hit. [...]Nuns walked across it. Like slow cigars. [...]Cigars around a Queen Cigar. No hair on their knees. No melons in their blouses. And their breath like peppermint. They had complaints to make to their Reverend Mother. Sweetsinging complaints. About Julie Andrews, who was still up in the hills, singing *The Hills Are Alive with the Sound of Music* and was, once again, late for mass. (p.99)

Example 148, Hissing mouths with teeth like sharks. Many of them. Like stickers on a card. (p.100)

Example 149, It was Estha who was singing. A nun with a puff. An Elvis Pelvis Nun. He couldn't help it. [...]Shutup or Getout. Getout or Shutup. (p.100)

Example 150, He got up to go. Past angry Ammu. Past Rahel concentrating through her knees. Past Baby Kochamma. Past the Audience that had to move its legs again. Thiswayandthat. (p.101)

Example 151, Estha Alone sat on the electric blue foamleather car-sofa, in the Abhilash Talkies Princess Circle lobby, and sang. In a nun's voice, as clear as clean water. (p.101)

Example 152, He saw, with gummy eyes, Estha Alone in his beige and pointy shoes. And his spoiled puff: The Man wiped his marble counter with a dirtcoloured rag. And he waited. And waiting he wiped. And wiping he waited. And watched Estha sing. (p.102)

Example 153, Behind him there were mirrors for people to look at themselves in while they bought cold drinks and refreshments. To reorganize their puffs and settle their buns. The mirrors watched Estha. (p.102)

Example 154, Estha went. Drawn by yellow teeth. [...]He saw the three high stools arranged in a row for the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man to sleep on. The wood shiny from his sitting. [...]So he held a bottle in one hand and a penis in the other. Hard, hot, veiny. Not a moonbeam. [...]He moved Estha's hand up and down. First slowly. Then fastly. The lemondink was cold and sweet. The penis hot and hard. (p.103)

Example 155, His hand closed tighter over Estha's. Tight and sweaty. And faster still. [...]Blowing through the straw (while his other hand moved), Estha blew bubbles into the bottle. Stickysweet lemon bubbles of the drink he couldn't drink. [...]It had egg white on it. White egg white. Quarter-boiled. [...]Now finish your drink,' he said, and affectionately squished a cheek of Estha's bottom. Tight plums in drainpipes. And beige and pointy shoes. [...] His lemontoo lemon, too cold. Too sweet. (p.104)

Example 156, And there was Captain von Clapp- Trapp. Christopher Plummer. Arrogant. Hardhearted. With a mouth like a slit. And a steelshrill police whistle. A captain with seven children. Clean children, like a packet of peppermints. (p.105)

Example 157, Past the Audience again (Legs thiswayandthat). Last time to sing. This time to try and vomit. (p.107)

Example 158, Ammu moonwalked him to the Princess Circle bathroom. HERS. He was held up, wedged between the notclean basin and Ammu's body. Legs dangling. The basin had steel taps, and rust stains. And a brownwebbed mesh of hairline cracks, like - the roadmap of some great, intricate city. Estha convulsed, but nothing came. Just thoughts. (p.108)

Example 159, Dreadful, dreaded question. 'No thank you.' Estha looked at Ammu. Greenwavy, seaweedy, bottomless-bottomful. [...] 'No. Not for me. Thank you,' Ammu said. Deep-dimpled, luminous woman. (p.109)

Example 160, A new respect gleamed in Uncle's eyes. For a family with London connections. (p.110)

Example 161, The back-inside smell. Fan shadows. Backs of heads. Necks. Collars. Hair.

Buns. Plaits. Ponytails. A fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo. A little girl and an ex-nun. Captain von Trapp's seven peppermint children had had their peppermint baths, and were standing in a peppermint line with their hair slicked down, singing in obedient peppermint voices to the woman' the Captain nearly married. The blonde Baroness who shone like a diamond. (p.110)

Example 162, Outside, Uncle was reorganizing his dim bottles. Wiping with his dirtcoloured rag the ring-shaped water-stains they had left on his marble Refreshments Counter. Preparing for the Interval. (p.111)

Example 163, 'Take mine!' Estha said quickly, not wanting Rahel to go near the man. But Rahel had already started towards him. [...]So, the redsteps once again. This time Rahel lagging. Slow. No I don't want to go. A ton of bricks on a leash. (p.111)

Example 164, Where its icy legs touched her, she got goose bumps. Six goose bumps on her careless heart. [...]And so, out the gate, up the road, and to the left. The taxi stand. A hurt mother, an ex-nun, a hot child and a cold one. Six goose bumps and a moth. (p.112)

Example 165, The taxi smelled of sleep. Old clothes rolled up. Damp towels. Armpits. [...] The seat had been killed. Ripped. [...]He drove fast, pugnaciously, darting into empty spaces, nudging other cars out of their lanes. Accelerating at zebra crossings. Jumping lights. (p.112)

Example 166, He knew that if Ammu found out about what he had done with the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, she'd love him less as well. Very much less. [...]He longed for the river. Because water always helps. (p.113)

Example 167, In the Hotel Sea Queen car park, the skyblue Plymouth gossiped with other, smaller cars. *Hslip Hslip Hsnooh-snah*. A big lady at a small ladies' party. Tailfins aflutter. (p.113)

Example 168, The same red carpet from the cinema hall was following them around. Magic flying carpet. Chacko was in his room. Caught feasting. Roast chicken, finger chips, sweetcorn and chicken. soup, two parathas and vanilla ice cream with chocolate sauce. Sauce in a sauceboat. (p.114)

Example 169, Two clicks to close the suitcase. Click. And click. [...]She was keen to exchange punishments. No dinner, in exchange for Ammu loving her the same as before. (p.114)

Example 170, 'Some things come with their own punishments,' Baby Kochamma said. As though she was explaining a sum that Rahel couldn't understand. Some things come with their own punishments. Like bedrooms with built-in cupboards. They would all learn more about punishments soon. That they came in different sizes. That some were so big they were like cupboards with built-in bedrooms. (p.115)

Example 171, Rahel Alone watched them walk down the hotel corridor like silent but

substantial ghosts. Two big, one small, in beige and pointy shoes. (p.115)

Example 172, She had in her the sadness of Sophie Mol coming. The sadness of Ammu's loving her a little less. And the sadness of whatever the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man had done to Estha in Abhilash Talkies. (p.115)

Example 173, He was mopping the last of the chocolate sauce from the sauceboat with a piece of paratha. His disgusting, after-sweet sweet. [...]A dinnerless niece and her dinnerfull uncle brushed their teeth together in the Hotel Sea Queen bathroom. She, a forlorn, stubby convict in striped pyjamas and a Fountain in a Love-inTokyo. He, in his cotton vest and underpants. (p.116)

Example 174, What colours and strange creatures had been ejected from the spaces between her teeth? None tonight. Nothing unusual. Just Binaca bubbles. (p.116)

Example 175, Chacko lay in bed in the pool of light from his bedside lamp. A fat man on a dark stage. [...]Rahel watched him and her cold moth spread its wings again. Slow out. Slow in. A predator's lazy blink. (p.117)

Example 176, Into the night he lit a Charminar and wondered what his daughter looked like now. Nine years old. Last seen when she was red and wrinkled. Barely human. [...]Margaret told Chacko. that she couldn't live with him any more. She told him that she needed her own space. As though Chacko had been using *her* shelves for *his* clothes. Which, knowing him, he probably had. (p.117)

Example 177, Those last few tortured nights before he left her, Chacko would slip out of bed with a torch and look at his sleeping child. To learn her. Imprint her on his memory. To ensure that when he thought of her, the child that he invoked would be accurate. He memorized the brown down on her soft skull. The shape of her puckered, constantly moving mouth. The spaces between her toes. The suggestion of a mole. [...]Chacko laid his ear against it and listened with wonder at the rumblings from within. Messages being sent from here to there. New organs getting used to each other. A new government setting up its systems. Organizing the division of labour, deciding who would do what. (p.117)

Example 178, When he left, he felt that something had been torn out of him. Something big. But Joe was dead now. Killed in a car crash. Dead as a doorknob. A Joe-shaped hole in the universe.

In Chacko's photograph, Sophie Mol was seven years old. White and blue. Rose-lipped, and Syrian Christian nowhere. (p.118)

Example 179, Chacko said in his Reading Aloud voice. Talking to the darkness now, suddenly insensitive to his little fountain-haired niece. (p.118)

Example 180, *Infinnate Joy*. With a church sound to it. Like a sad fish with fins all over. A cold moth lifted a cold leg. (p.118)

Example 181, He vomited a clear, bitter, lemony, sparkling, fizzy liquid. The acrid aftertaste of a Little Man's first encounter with Fear. Dum dum. (p.119)

Example 182, His expulsion from the Party created a vacuum that a number of hopefuls were jockeying to fill. Among them Comrade K. N. M. Pillai. (p.120)

Example 183, Whenever he referred to him in his speeches he was careful to strip him of any human attributes and present him as an abstract functionary in some larger scheme. A theoretical construct. A pawn in the monstrous bourgeois plot to subvert the Revolution. He never referred to him by name, but always as 'the Management'. As though Chacko was many people. [...]He told himself that Chacko-the-client and Chacko-the-Management were two different people. Quite separate of course from Chacko-theComrade. (p.121)

Example 184, On the next bed, his niece and nephew slept with their arms around each other. A hot twin and a cold one. He and She. We and Us. Somehow, not wholly unaware of the hint of doom and all that waited in the wings for them. They dreamed of their river. Of the coconut trees that bent into it and watched, with coconut eyes, the boats slide by. Upstream in the mornings. Downstream in the evenings. And the dull, sullen sound of the boatmen's bamboo poles as they thudded against the dark, oiled boatwood. It was warm, the water. Greygreen. Like rippled silk. With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it. (p.123)

Example 185, It had shrunk. And she had grown. [...]So now they had two harvests a year instead of one. More rice, for the price of a river. Despite the fact that it was June, and raining, the river was no more than a swollen drain now. A thin ribbon of thick water that lapped wearily at the mud banks on either side, sequinned with the occasional silver slant of a dead fish. [...]Bronze-winged lily-trotters walked across it. Splay-footed, cautious. (p.124)

Example 186, Once it had had the power to evoke fear. To change lives. But now its teeth were drawn, its spirit spent. (p.124)

Example 187, But they had a swimming pool for swimming. And fresh tandoori pomfret and crepe suzette on their menu. The trees were still green, the sky still blue, which counted for something. So they went ahead and plugged their smelly paradise - 'God's Own Country' they called it in their brochures- because they knew, those clever Hotel People, that smelliness, like other people's poverty, was merely a matter of getting used to. A question of discipline. Of Rigour and Air-conditioning. Nothing more. (p.125)

Example 188, The old colonial bungalow with its deep verandah and Doric columns, was surrounded by smaller, older, wooden houses - ancestral homes - that the hotel chain had bought from old families and transplanted in the Heart of Darkness. Toy Histories for rich tourists to play in. Like the sheaves of rice in Joseph's dream, like a press of eager natives petitioning an English magistrate, the old houses had been arranged around the History House in attitudes of deference. (p.126)

Example 189, The furniture and knick-knacks that came with the house were on display. A reed umbrella, a wicker couch. A wooden dowry box. (p.126)

Example 190, So there it was then, History and Literature enlisted by commerce. Kurtz and Karl Marx joining palms to greet rich guests as they stepped off the boat. (p.126)

Example 191, The Terror was past. Overcome by the smell of food. Silenced by the humming of cooks. The cheerful chop-chop-chopping of ginger and garlic. The disembowelling of lesser mammals - pigs, goats. The dicing of meat. The scaling of fish. Something lay buried in the ground. Under grass. Under twenty-three years of June rain. A small forgotten thing. Nothing that the world would miss. A child's plastic wristwatch with the time painted on it. Ten to two it said. (p.127)

Example 192, Behind the fragile facade of greenery lived a press of people who could gather at a moment's notice. To beat to death a careless bus driver. To smash the windscreen of a car that dared to venture out on the day of an Opposition bandh. To steal Baby Kochamma's imported insulin and her cream buns that came all the way from Bestbakery in Kottayam. (p.128)

Example 193, Both she and he knew that there are things that can be forgotten. And things that cannot - that sit on dusty shelves like stuffed birds with baleful, sideways staring eyes. (p.129)

Example 194, He was clearly a stranger. And not a pickle-eater. (p.129)

Example 195, He was the kind of man whom it was hard to imagine had once been a boy. Or a baby. He looked as though he had been *born* middle-aged. With a receding hairline. [...] Comrade Pillai nodded as though he agreed with it. As though given a choice, it was the very one he would have picked. (p.130)

Example 196, 'That is most unfortunate,' he said, when he had recovered. For some reason resorting to uncharacteristic, bookish language. (p.130)

Example 197, They were mostly photographs of Lenin and his family. His wife, his child, his new Bajaj scooter. [...] They looked cheerful in the photographs, Lenin and his wife. As though they had a new refrigerator in their drawing room, and a down payment on a DDA flat. (p.131)

Example 198, She, the granddaughter of an Imperial Entomologist, he the son of a grass-roots Marxist Party worker. So, she a glass bead, and he a green gram. (p.132)

Example 199, From below the scanty curtain that was stretched across the doorway that led directly onto the street came the relentless slip-slap of disembodied feet in slippers. The noisy, carefree world of Those with Nothing Up Their Noses. (p.132)

Example 200, She wielded strange weapons. A tiny vial. A rectangle of glass with blood

smeared on it. A test tube of sparkling, back-lit urine. A stainless-steel tray of boiled needles. [...]Shiny black hairpins, like straightened snakes, clamped her starched nurse's cap to her oily head. (p.133)

Example 201, And in a rush of snot and relief: it emerged. A little mauve bead in a glistening bed of slime. As proud as a pearl in an oyster. (p.133)

Example 202, Now he had a house and a Bajaj scooter. A wife and an *issue*. [...]It was an old black and white picture. One that Chacko took with the Rolleiflex camera that Margaret Kochamma had brought him as a Christmas present. (p.134)

Example 203, Lenin, Rahel and Estha looked like frightened animals that had been caught in the headlights of a car. Knees pressed together, smiles frozen on their faces, arms pinned to their sides, chests swivelled to face the photograph. As though standing sideways was a sin. (p.135)

Example 204, That was only days before she died. Sophie Mol. *Thimble-drinker. Coffin-cartwheeler*. She arrived on the Bombay-Cochin flight. Hatted, bell-bottomed and Loved from the Beginning. (p.135)

Example 205, It was the Day of the Play. The culmination of the *What Will SophieMol Think?* week. (p.136)

Example 206, Vacuum Eagles, the twins believed, watched the world all day and flew around their flasks all night. As silently as owls they flew, with the moon on their wings. (p.137)

Example 207, His puff looked crisp and surprised. Like well-whipped eggwhite. (p.137)

Example 208, But she said it with her dimples, because Chacko was so bursty. So very happy. Chacko didn't slap her. So she didn't slap him back. From the Sea Queen florist Chacko had bought two red roses which he held carefully. Fatly. Fondly. (p.138)

Example 209, Red-mouthed smiles the Airport Kangaroos had. And pink-edged ears. [...]Their families had come to meet them. From all over Kerala. On long bus journeys. From Ranni, from Kumili, from Vizhin jam, from Uzhavoor. Some of them had camped at the airport overnight, and had brought their food with them. And tapioca chips and chakka velaichathu for the way back. (p. 138)

Example 210, They were all there - the deaf ammoomas, the cantankerous, arthritic appoopans, the pining wives, scheming uncles, children with the runs. The fiancées to be reassessed. The teacher's husband still waiting for his Saudi visa. The teacher's husband's sisters waiting for their dowries. The wire-bender's pregnant wife. (p.138)

Example 211, 'Sssss . . .' his mother hissed. First persuasively, then savagely. But her baby thought he was the Pope. He smiled and waved and smiled and waved. With his penis in a bottle. (p.139)

Example 212, Two-egg Twin Ambassadors. Their Excellencies Ambassador E(lvis). Pelvis, and Ambassador S(tick). Insect. [...]Long flatfeet. Airport garbage in their baby bins. (p.139)

Example 213, Ambassador Estha wouldn't. Didn't want to. He watched the bumpy landing with his tap-water Eagle flask slung around him, and a bottomless-bottomful feeling: the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man knew where to find him. In the factory in Ayemenem. On the banks of the Meenachal. Ammu watched with her handbag. Chacko with his roses. Baby Kochamma with her sticking out neckmole. (p.140)

Example 214, Then the Bombay-Cochin people came out. From the cool air into the hot air. Crumpled people uncrumpled on their way to the Arrivals Lounge. And there they were, the Foreign Returnees, in wash'n'wear suits and rainbow sunglasses. With an end to grinding poverty in their Aristocrat suitcases. With cement roofs for their thatched houses, and geysers for their parents' bathrooms. With sewage systems and septic tanks. Maxis and high heels. Puff sleeves and lipstick. Mixy-grinders and automatic flashes for their cameras. With keys to count, and cupboards to lock. With a hunger for kappa and meen vevichathu that they hadn't eaten for so long. With love and a lick of shame that their families who had come to meet them were so ... so ... gawkish. [...]And the airport itself! More like the local bus depot! The birdshit on the building! Oh the spitstains on the kangeroos! (p.140)

Example 215, Long hair floated out from under her straw hat. One hand in her mother's. The other swinging like a soldier's (lef, lef, lefrightlef). [...]Margaret Kochamma told her to Stoppit. So she Stoppited. (p.141)

Example 216, Chacko said he couldn't take Rahel on his shoulders because he was already carrying something. Two roses red. Fatly. Fondly. (p.141)

Example 217, When Sophie Mol walked into the Arrivals Lounge, Rahel, overcome by excitement and resentment, pinched Estha hard. His skin between her nails. (p.142)

Example 218, And the Air was full of Thoughts and Things to Say. But at times like these, only the Small Things are ever said. The Big Things lurk unsaid inside. (p.142)

Example 219, Anybody could see that Chacko was a proud and happy man to have had a wife like Margaret. White. In a flowered, printed frock with legs underneath. And brown back-freckles on her back. And arm-freckles on her arms. But around her, the air was sad, somehow. And behind the smile in her eyes, the Grief was a fresh, shining blue. Because of a calamitous car crash. Because of a Joe-shaped hole in the Universe. (p.143)

Example 220, But she didn't. It was an easy-to-understand laugh. Not like the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man's laugh that Estha hadn't understood. [...]She was taller than Estha. And bigger. Her eyes were bluegreyblue. Her pale skin was the colour of beach sand. But her hatted hair was beautiful, deep red-brown. And yes (oh yes!) she had Pappachi's nose waiting inside hers. An Imperial Entomologist's nose-within-a-nose.

A moth-lover's nose. (p.143)

Example 221, Baby Kochamma said, and resolutely refused to have her attention attracted. But Baby Kochamma was wrong. Adoor Basi *wasn't* trying to attract attention. (p.144)

Example 222, She knew of cow babies and dog babies. Bear babies - yes. (She would soon point out to Rahel a bat baby.) But *aunt* babies confounded her. [...]She said Sophie Mol was so beautiful that she reminded her of a wood-sprite. Of Ariel. [...]All this was of course primarily to announce her credentials to Margaret Kochamma. To set herself apart from the Sweeper Class. (p.144)

Example 223, 'Esthappen!' Ammu said. And an angry feeling rose in her and stopped around her heart. A Far More Angry Than Necessary feeling. She felt somehow humiliated by this public revolt in her area of jurisdiction. She had wanted a smooth performance. A prize for her children in the Indo- British Behaviour Competition. Chacko said to Ammu in Malayalam, 'Please. Later. Not now.' And Ammu's angry eyes on Estha said, *All right. Later.* And Later became a horrible, menacing, goose-bumpy word. Lay.Ter. Like a deep-sounding bell in a mossy well. Shivery, and furred. Like moth's feet. The Play had gone bad. Like pickle in the monsoon. (p.145)

Example 224, Ambassador Rahel, unable to cope with see-sawing changes in her life, had ravelled herself like a sausage into the dirty airport curtain, and wouldn't unravel. A sausage with Bata sandals. (p.146)

Example 225, Margaret Kochamma said in a kind-schoolteacher voice. (Like Miss Mitten's before she saw Satan in their eyes.) (p.146)

Example 226, She couldn't because she couldn't. Because Everything was wrong. And soon there would be a Lay Ter for both her and Estha. Full of furred moths and icy butterflies. And deep-sounding bells. And moss. And a Nowl. (p.146)

Example 227, Ammu loved her even less now. And it had come down to Brass Tacks with Chacko. (p.146)

Example 228, Because of the size of his stomach, Chacko carried himself in a way that made him appear to be walking uphill all the time. Negotiating optimistically the steep, slippery slopes of life. He walked on this side of the railing, Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol on that. (p.147)

Example 229, So Chacko put her down. Ambassador Estha saw (with stubborn eyes) that Chacko's suit was suddenly looser, less bursty. And while Chacko got the bags, at the dirty-curtained window Lay Ter became Now. (p.147)

Example 230, She thought of her luckiest fishing rod that Velutha had made for her. Yellow bamboo with a float that dipped every time a foolish fish enquired. (p.148)

Example 231, 'So,' Ammu said. And it was really a question. So? And it hadn't an answer. [...] Ambassador Rahel looked down and saw that in her Data sandals her toes were trying to disconnect themselves. Twitching to join someone else's feet. And that she couldn't stop them. (p.148)

Example 232, Yes. It's. Clear. But Baby Kochamma was dissatisfied with the fizzling out of a situation that had been so full of potential. [...] '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.' [...] Rahel was frightened by the way Ammu said CLEAN and DIRTY so loudly. As though she was talking to a deaf person. (p.149)

Example 233, *Lucky rich boy with porketmunny. And a grandmother's factory to inherit.* [...] They walked past the Class III Airport Workers' Union token one-day hunger strike. And past the people watching the Class III Airport Workers' Union token one-day hunger strike. And past the people watching the people watching the people. (p.150)

Example 234, And the three of them, led by Sophie Mol, sashayed across the airport car park, swaying like fashion models, Eagle flasks and Made-in-England go-go bags bumping around their hips. Damp dwarves walking tall. (p.152)

Example 235, The skyblue Plymouth with tailfins had a smile for Sophie Mol. A chromebumpered sharksmile. A Paradise Pickles carsmile. (p.153)

Example 236, Sophie Mol sat in front between Chacko and Margaret Kochamma, just her hat peeping over the car seat. Because she was their daughter. (p.153)

Example 237, They had to be careful because the decision would serve as precedent for all future Government Pachyderm Carcass Disposals. Not a matter to be treated lightly. (p.153)

Example 238, Estha and Rahel had to sing in English in obedient voices. Breezily. As though they hadn't been made to rehearse it all week long. Ambassador E. Pelvis and Ambassador S. Insect. (p.154)

Example 239, In Pappachi's study, mounted butterflies and moths had disintegrated into small heaps of iridescent dust that powdered the bottom of their glass display cases, leaving the pins that had impaled them naked. Cruel. The room was rank with fungus and disuse. An old neon-green hula hoop hung from a wooden peg on the wall, a huge saint's discarded halo. A column, of shining black ants walked across a windowsill, their bottoms tilted upwards, like a line of mincing chorus girls in a Busby Berkeley musical. Silhouetted against the sun. Buffed and beautiful. (p.155)

Example 240, Rahel groped behind the row of books and brought out hidden things. A smooth seashell and a spiky one. A plastic case for contact lenses. An orange pipette. A silver crucifix on a string of beads. Baby Kochamma's rosary. (p.155)

Example 241, That word slipped out easily. *Returned*. As though that was what twins were meant for. To be borrowed and returned. Like library books. Estha wouldn't look up. His mind was full of trains. He blocked the light from the door. An Estha-shaped hole in the Universe. (p.156)

Example 242, Esthappen Un-known. (His surname postponed for the Time Being, while Ammu, chose between her husband's name and her father's.) (p.157)

Example 243, In joint handwriting. The tails of the Y sand Gs were curled and looped. (p.158)

Example 244, Little Ammu. Who never completed *her* corrections. Who had to pack her bags and leave. Because she had no Locusts Stand I. Because Chacko said she had destroyed enough already. Who came back to Ayemenem with asthma and a rattle in her chest that sounded like a faraway man shouting. Estha never saw her like that. Wild. Sick. Sad. (p.159)

Example 245, With the last of her meagre salary she had bought her daughter small presents wrapped in brown paper with coloured paper hearts pasted on. A packet of cigarette sweets, a tin Phantom pencil box and *Paul Bunyan* -- a Junior Classics Illustrated comic. They were presents for a seven-year-old; Rahel was nearly eleven. It was as though Ammu believed that if she refused to acknowledge the passage of time, if she willed it to stand still in the lives of her twins, it would. As though sheer willpower was enough to suspend her children's childhoods until she could afford to have them living with her. (p.159)

Example 246, She carried her breath in a glass inhaler in her tattered handbag. Brown Brovon fumes. [...] Ammu got up from the table and left without saying a word. Not even goodbye. [...] She died alone. With a noisy ceiling fan for company and no Estha to lie at the back of her and talk to her. She was thirty-one. Not old, not young, but a viable, die-able age. (p.161)

Example 247, They did that in Kottayam to prostitutes whom they'd caught in the bazaar - branded them so that everybody would know them for what they were. *Veslgas*. So that new policemen on the beat would have no trouble identifying whom to harass. (p.161)

Example 248, She had a deep blue sac under one eye that was bloated like a bubble. As though her eye had tried to do what her lungs couldn't. [...] The church refused to bury Ammu. On several counts. So Chacko hired a van to transport the body to the electric crematorium. [...] Real life was inside the van. Where real death was. (p.162)

Example 249, The crematorium had the same rotten, run-down air of a railway station, except that it was deserted. No trains, no crowds. Nobody except beggars, derelicts and the police-custody dead were cremated there. People who died with nobody to lie at the back of them and talk to them. (p.162)

Example 250, Then Rahel's Ammu was fed to it. Her hair, her skin, her smile. Her voice.

The way she used Kipling to love her children before putting them to bed: *We be of one blood, ye and I* Her good night kiss. The way she held their faces steady with one hand (squashed-cheeked, fishmouthed) while she parted and combed their hair with the other. The way she held knickers out for Rahel to climb into. *Left leg, right leg*. All this was fed to the beast, and it was satisfied. [...]That's how long Chacko and Rahel had to wait for the pink receipt that would entitle them to collect Ammu's remains. Her ashes. The grit from her bones. The teeth from her smile. The whole of her crammed into a little clay pot. Receipt No. Q498673. (p.163)

Example 251, He was the Keeper of Records. The natural custodian of bus tickets, bank receipts, cash memos, cheque book stubs. Little Man. He lived in a Cara-van. Dum dum. But Estha wasn't with them. (p.163)

Example 252, There are things that you can't do - like writing letters to a part of yourself. To your feet or hair. Or heart. (p.164)

Example 253, A cock crowed in the distance and its voice separated into two. Like a sole peeling off an old shoe. (p.164)

Example 254, It was a grand old house, the Ayemenem House, but alooflooking. As though it had little to do with the people that lived in it. Like an old man with rheumy eyes watching children play, seeing only transience in their shrill elation and their wholehearted commitment to life. (p.165)

Example 255, The triangular wooden frames fitted into the gables were intricately carved, the light that slanted through them and fell in patterns on the floor was full of secrets. Wolves. Flowers. Iguanas. Changing shape as the sun moved through the sky. Dying punctually, at dusk. (p.165)

Example 256, The doors had not two, but four shutters of panelled teak so that in the old days, ladies could keep the bottom half closed, lean their elbows on the ledge and bargain with visiting vendors Without betraying themselves below the waist. Technically, they could buy carpets, or bangles, with their breasts covered and their bottoms bare. Technically. (p.165)

Example 257, Her sari was starched and perfumed. Off-white and gold. [...]She was beautiful. Old, unusual, regal. Blind Mother Widow with a violin. [...]On her scalp, carefully hidden by her scanty hair, Mammachi had raised, crescent-shaped ridges. Scars of old beatings from an old maniage. Her brass vase scars. (p.166)

Example 258, There was oil everywhere. In a ring under her vacuum flask. Under her Bible. All over her bedside table. [...]He suggested that she increase the proportion of preservative that she used. And the salt. That had helped, but didn't solve the problem entirely. [...]Mammachi wondered whether she would ever master the art of perfect preservation, and whether Sophie Mol would like some iced grape crush. Some cold purple juice in a glass. (p.167)

Example 259, Mammachi had never met Margaret Kochamma. But she despised her anyway. [...]She hated her for leaving him. But would have hated her even more had she stayed. (p.168)

Example 260, From then onwards he became the repository of all her womanly feelings. Her Man. Her only Love. (p.168)

Example 261, They had young children and old parents. Or husbands who spent all their earnings in toddy bars. The arrangement suited Mammachi, because in her mind, a fee *clarified* things. Disjuncted sex from love. Needs from Feelings. (p.169)

Example 262, Kochu Maria couldn't stop wearing her kunukku because if she did, how would people know that despite her lowly cook's job (seventy-five rupees a month) she was a Syrian Christian, Mar Thomite? Not a Pelaya, or a Pulaya, or a Paravan. But a Touchable, upper-caste Christian (into whom Christianity had seeped like tea from a teabag). Split lobes stitched back were a better option by far. [...]Kochu Maria hadn't yet made her acquaintance with the television addict waiting inside her. The Hulk Hogan addict. (p.170)

Example 263, A few months ago, in July, when Rahel told her that an American astronaut called Neil Armstrong had walked on the moon, she laughed sarcastically and said that a Malayali acrobat called O. Muthachen had done handsprings on the sun. With pencils up his nose. [...]Then she tipped her head back and squeezed the leftover icing on to her tongue. Endless coils of chocolate toothpaste on a pink Kochu Maria tongue. (p.171)

Example 264, Chopping knives were put down. Vegetables were abandoned, half cut, on huge steel platters. Desolate bitter gourds, incomplete pineapples. [...]Blue-aproned, white-capped, like a clot of smart blue and white flags. Achoo, Jose, Yako, Anian, Elayan, Kuttan, Vijayan, Vawa, Joy, Sumathi, Ammal, Annamma, Kanakamma, Latha, Sushila, Vijayamma, Jollykutty, Mollykutty, Lucykutty, Beena Mol (girls with bus names). The early rumblings of discontent, concealed under a thick layer of loyalty. (p.172)

Example 265, Children tumbled out. Collapsed fountains. Flattened puffs. Crumpled yellow bellbottoms and a go-go bag that was loved. Jet-lagged and barely awake. Then the swollen-ankled adults. Slow from too much sitting. (p.172)

Example 266, Ammu touched her daughter gently. On her shoulder. And her touch meant *Shhh* . . . Rahel looked around her and saw that she was in a Play. But she had only a small part. She was just the landscape. A flower perhaps. Or a tree. A face in the crowd. A townspeople.

Nobody said Hello to Rahel. Not even the Blue Army in the greenheat. (p.172)

Example 267, She sounded only a little sorry. Not very sorry. (p.173)

Example 268, The mouldy bison said, '*No. Absolutely Not.*' In Mouldy Bisonese. [...]If

somebody was standing in the doorway, she could tell that someone was standing in the doorway. But not who it was. [...]She would then hold it steady, and move her eye along it. Wheeling it from word to word. The Townspeople (in her fairy frock) saw Marilmachi draw Sophie Mol close to her eyes to look at her. To read her like a cheque. To check her like a bank note. (p.174)

Example 269, A little way away, Velutha walked up the shortcut through the rubber trees. Barebodied. A coil of insulated electrical wire was looped over one shoulder. He wore his printed dark blue and black mundu loosely folded up above his knees. On his back, his lucky leaf from the birthmark tree (that made the monsoons come on time). His autumn leaf at night. (p.174)

Example 270, She wondered at how his body had changed – so quietly, from a flatmuscle boy's body into a man's body. Contoured and hard. A swimmer's body. A swimmer-carpenter's body. Polished with a high-wax body polish. (p.175)

Example 271, It was his smile that reminded Ammu of Velutha as a little boy. Helping Vellya Paapen to count coconuts. Holding out little gifts he had made for her, flat on the palm of his hand so that she could take them without touching him. Boats, boxes, small windmills. Calling her Ammukutty. Little Ammu. Though she was so much less little than he was. (p.175)

Example 272, She was surprised at the extent of her daughter's physical ease with him. Surprised that her child seemed to have a subworld that excluded *her* entirely. A tactile world of smiles and laughter that she, her mother, had no part in. [...]She didn't allow herself to consider whom it was that she envied. The man or her own child. Or just their world of hooked fingers and sudden smiles. (p.176)

Example 273, History was wrong-footed, caught off guard. Sloughed off like an old snakeskin. [...]In its absence it left an aura, a palpable shimmering that was as plain to see as the water in a river or the sun in the sky. As plain to feel as the heat on a hot day, or the tug of a fish on a taut line. So obvious that no one noticed. (p.176)

Example 274, In that brief moment, Velutha looked up and saw things that he hadn't seen before. Things that had been out of bounds so far, obscured by history's blinkers. Simple things. (p.176)

Example 275, For instance, he saw that Rahel's mother was a woman. That she had deep dimples when she smiled and that they stayed on long after her smile left her eyes. He saw that her brown arms were round and fine and perfect. That her shoulders shone, but her eyes were somewhere else. He saw that when he gave her gifts they no longer needed to be offered flat on the palms of his hands so that she wouldn't have to touch him. His boats and boxes. His little windmills. He saw too that he was not necessarily the only giver of gifts. That *she* had gifts to give him too. (p.176)

Example 276, History's fiends returned to claim them. To rewrap them in its old, scarred

pelt and drag them back to where they really lived. Where the Love Laws lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much. Ammu walked up to the verandah, back into the Play. Shaking. [...]He put her down. Shaking too. (p.177)

Example 277, The froth of her stiff frock pressed rough lace flowers into Velutha's back. Lace flowers and a lucky leaf bloomed on a black back. But when Rahel searched the Play for Estha, she saw that he wasn't there. (p.178)

Example 278, She was exactly Sophie's height. More short than Syrian Christian, despite her best efforts. (p.179)

Example 279, Littledemons were mudbrown in Airport Fairy frocks with forehead bumps that might turn into horns. With Fountains in Love-in- Tokyos. And backward-reading habits. And if you cared to look, you could see Satan in their eyes. (p.179)

Example 280, She hadn't meant it to sound quite like that, and she blushed. An embarrassed schoolteacher-shaped hole in the Universe. [...]Chacko didn't slap her. So she didn't slap him back. But the Waiting Air grew Angry. (p.179)

Example 281, In the angry quietness of the Play (the Blue Army in the greenheat still watching), Ammu walked back to the Plymouth, took out her suitcase, slammed the door, and walked away to her room, her shoulders shining. Leaving everybody to wonder where she had learned her effrontery from. And truth be told, it was no small wondering matter. Because Ammu had not had the kind of education, nor read the sorts of books, nor met the sorts of people, that might have influenced her to think the way she did. (p.180)

Example 282, He worked hard on his public profile as a sophisticated, generous, moral man. But alone with his wife and children he turned into a monstrous, suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning. (p.180)

Example 283, Mammachi played a *Welcome Home, Our Sophie Mol* melody on her violin. A cloying chocolate melody. Stickysweet, and meltybrown. Chocolate waves on a chocolate shore. [...]Enough's enough,' Mammachi murmured to herself: 'I think I'll stop now.' As though the idea had suddenly occurred to her. She put her violin away into its black, violin-shaped box. It closed like a suitcase. And the music closed with it. Click. And click. Mammachi put her dark glasses on again. And drew the drapes across the hot day. (p.183)

Example 284, Rahel's heart sank. Afternoon Gnap. She hated those. (p.183)

Example 285, Rahel walked across to the old well where there were usually some ants to kill. Red ants that had a sour farty smell when they were squashed. (p.185)

Example 286, They were on their way to. church. All dressed in red. They had to be killed before they got there. Squished and squashed with a stone. You can't have smelly

ants in church. The ants made a faint crunchy sound as life left them. Like an elf eating toast, or a crisp biscuit. (p.185)

Example 287, Sophie Mol, hatted, bellbottomed and Loved from the Beginning, walked out of the Play to see what Rahel was doing behind the well. But the Play went with her. Walked when she walked, stopped when she stopped. [...]The Fond Smiles watched Fondly. Little Girls Playing. Sweet. One beach-coloured. One brown. One Loved. One Loved a Little Less. (p.186)

Example 288, In the abandoned ornamental garden, Rahel, watched by lolling dwarves and a forsaken cherub, squatted by the stagnant pond and watched toads hop from stone to scummy stone. Beautiful Ugly Toads. Slimy. Warty. Croaking. Yearning, unknissed princes trapped inside them. Food for snakes that lurked in the long June grass. Rustle. Lunge. No more toad to hop from stone to scummy stone. No more prince to kiss. (p.187)

Example 289, She owned seven hundred dollars. And a gold bangle with snakeheads. But Baby Kochamma had already asked her how much longer she planned to stay. And what she planned to do about Estha. She had no plans. No plans. No Locusts Stand 1. (p.187)

Example 290, If you wore special glasses you could see them spinning through the sky among the bats and homing birds - blondes, wars, famines, football, food shows, coups d'etat, hairstyles stiff with hairspray. Designer pectorals. Gliding towards Ayemenem like skydivers. Making patterns in the sky. Wheels. Windmills. Flowers blooming and unblooming. [...]Rahel returned to contemplating toads. Fat. Yellow. From stone to scummy stone. She touched one gently. It moved its eyelids upwards. Funnily self-assured. *Nictitating membrane*, she remembered she and Estha once spent a whole day saying. She and Estha and Sophie Mol. (p.188)

Example 291, He pleated Sophie Mol's pleats. Organized Rahel's pallu and settled his own. (p.189)

Example 292, He chatted to them about the weather. The river. The fact that in his opinion coconut trees were getting shorter by the year. As were the ladies in Ayemenem. He introduced them to his surly hen. (p.190)

Example 293, A grown man entertaining three raccoons, treating them like real ladies. Instinctively colluding in the conspiracy of their fiction, taking care not to decimate it with adult carelessness. Or affection. It is after all so easy to shatter a story. To break a chain of thought. To ruin a fragment of a dream being carried around carefully like a piece of porcelain. (p.190)

Example 294, That's the way he was the day History visited them in the back verandah. A carpenter with gaudy nails. [...]Another lifted his boot with a millipede curled into the ridges of its sole. Deep rust brown. A million legs. (p.190)

Example 295, Gloom swallowed the garden. Whole. Like a python. (p.191)

Example 296, A pair of actors trapped in a recondite play with no hint of plot or narrative. Stumbling through their parts, nursing someone else's sorrow. Grieving someone else's grief. Unable, somehow, to change plays. Or purchase, for a fee, some cheap brand of exorcism from a counsellor with a fancy degree, who would sit them down and say, in one of many ways: 'You're not the Sinners. You're the Sinned Against. You were only children. You had no control. You are the *victims*, not the perpetrators.' (p.191)

Example 297, Then they would have been able to put a face on it, and conjure up fury at what had happened. Or seek redress. And eventually, perhaps, exorcize the memories that haunted them. But anger wasn't available to them and there was no face to put on this Other Thing that they held in their sticky Other Hands, like an imaginary orange. [...]It would have to be held. Carefully and for ever. [...] Esthappen and Rahel both knew that there were several perpetrators (besides themselves) that day. But only one victim. (p.191)

Example 298, He left behind a hole in the Universe through which darkness poured like liquid tar. Through which their mother followed without even turning to wave goodbye. (p.191)

Example 299, The garden reappeared. Regurgitated whole. With Rahel sitting in it. The direction of the breeze changed and brought her the sound of drums. A gift. The promise of a story. (p.192)

Example 300, Rahel went. Drawn by the memory of steep roofs and white walls. Of brass lamps lit and dark, oiled wood. She went in the hope of meeting an old elephant who wasn't electrocuted on the Kottayam-Cochin highway. (p.192)

Example 301, The earthly remains of Paradise Pickles & Preserves. Where long ago, on the day that Sophie Mol came, Ambassador E. Pelvis stirred a pot of scarlet jam and thought Two Thoughts. Where a red, tender-mango-shaped secret was pickled, sealed and put away. (p.192)

Example 302, Past floating yellow limes in brine that needed prodding from time to time (or else islands of black fungus formed like frilled mushrooms in a clear soup). Past green mangoes, cut and stuffed with turmeric and chilli powder and tied together with twine. (They needed no attention for a while.) Past glass casks of vinegar with corks. Past shelves of pectin and preservatives. Past trays of bitter gourd, with knives and coloured fingerguards. Past gunny bags bulging with garlic and small onions. Past mounds of fresh green peppercorns. Past a heap of banana peels on the floor (preserved for the pigs' dinner). Past the label cupboard full of labels. Past the glue. Past the glue-brush. Past an iron tub of empty bottles floating in soapbubbled water. Past the lemon squash. The grape-crush. And back. (p.193)

Example 303, The jam was still hot and on its sticky scarlet surface, thick pink froth was dying slowly. Little banana bubbles drowning deep in jam and nobody to help them.

(p.194)

Example 304, And Ammu would offer him a cup of tea. Or pineapple squash perhaps. With ice. Yellow in a glass. With the long iron stirrer. [...]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. (p.194)

Example 305, Fire burn, banana bubble. (p.195)

Example 306, He imagined them building a wooden ship in failing light and a drizzle. Like Noah's sons. He could see them clearly in his mind. Racing against time. The sound of their hammering echoing dully under the brooding, storm-coming sky. (p.195)

Example 307, The rest of the recipe was in Estha's new best handwriting. Angular, spiky. (p.196)

Example 308, The Other Side. A boat to carry Provisions. Matches. Clothes. Pots and pans. Things they would need and couldn't swim with. [...]The round and round became a back and forth. Across a sticky scarlet river. (p.196)

Example 309, She heard a nun's voice singing the boatsong. A clear soprano wafting over vinegar fumes and pickle vats. [...]The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man could just walk in through the gauze doors. If he wanted to. And Ammu would offer him pineapple juice. With ice. (p.197)

Example 310, Rahel got up to go. For her Afternoon Gnap. [...]Rahel took off her new fingers, and had her old fingercoloured fingers back. Not yellow, not green, not blue, not red. Not yellow. (p.198)

Example 311, Rahel stopped and turned around, and on her heart a drab moth with unusually dense dorsal tufts unfurled its predatory wings. Slow out. Slow in. (p.198)

Example 312, A sickled smell, that bled clear, amber blood, and begged for cigars. [...]He pinned the ghost to the trunk of a rubber tree, where, according to Vellya Paapen, it still remained. A sickled smell, that bled clear, amber blood, and begged for cigars. [...]But he had the satisfaction of knowing that his lightning-quick reflexes (despite his mortgaged eye) and his presence of mind had put an end to the bloodthirsty wanderings of a paedophile ghost. As long as no one succumbed to its artifice and unsickled it with a cigar. (p.199)

Example 313, What Vellya Paapen (who knew most things) *didn't* know was that Kari Saipu's house was the History House (whose doors were locked and windows open). And that inside, map-breath'd ancestors with tough toe-nails whispered to the lizards on the wall. That History used the back verandah to negotiate its terms and collect its dues. That default led to dire consequences. That on the day History picked to square its books, Estha would keep the receipt for the dues that Velutha paid. Vellya Paapen had no idea that Kari Saipu it was who captured dreams and redreamed them. That he plucked them

from the minds of passers-by the way children pick currants from a cake. That the ones he craved most of all, the dreams he loved redreaming, were the tender dreams of two-egg twins. (p.199)

Example 314, Poor old Vellya Paapen, had he known then that History would choose him for its deputy, that it would be *his* tears that set the Terror rolling, perhaps he would not have strutted like a young cockerel in the Ayemenem bazaar, bragging of how he swam the river with his sickle in his mouth (sour, the taste of iron on his tongue). How he put it down for just one moment while he kneeled to wash the river-grit out of his mortgaged eye (there was grit in the river sometimes, particularly in the rainy months) when he caught the first whiff of cigar smoke. How he picked up his sickle, whirled around and sickled the smell that fixed the ghost for ever. An in a single, fluid, athletic motion. (p.200)

Example 315, In the factory the silence swooped down once more and tightened around the twins. But this time it was a different kind of silence. An old river silence. The silence of fisher People and waxy mermaids. [...] Their conversations surfaced and dipped like mountain streams. Sometimes audible to other people. Sometimes not. 'Are we going to become a communist?' Rahel asked. 'Might have to.' Estha-the-Practical. [...] It was pickled, sealed and put away. A red, tender mango-shaped secret in a vat. Presided over by a Nowl. (p.200)

Example 316, She could hear the blue cross-stitch afternoon. The slow ceiling fan. The sun behind the curtains. The yellow wasp wasping against the windowpane In a dangerous dzzzz. A disbelieving lizard's blink. High-stepping chickens in the yard. The sound of the sun crinkling the washing. Crisping white bedsheets. Stiffening starched saris. Off-white and gold. Red ants on yellow stones. A hot cow feeling hot. *Amhoo*. In the distance. And the smell of a cunning Englishman ghost, sickled to a rubber tree, asking courteously for a cigar. 'Umm . . . excuse me? You wouldn't happen to have an umm...cigar, would you?' In a kind-schoolteacherly voice. Oh *dear*. (p.201)

Example 317, What was Estha sitting on? On what they always sat on under the mangosteen tree. Something grey and grizzled. Covered in moss and lichen, smothered in ferns. Something that the earth had claimed. Not a log. Not a rock...Before she completed the thought, Rahel was up and running. Through the kitchen, past Kochu Maria fast asleep. Thick wrinkled like a sudden rhinoceros in a frilly apron. Past the factory. Tumbling barefoot through the greenheat, followed by a yellow wasp. (p.201)

Example 318, Comrade Estha was there. Under the mangosteen tree. With the red flag planted in the earth ,beside him. A Mobile Republic. A Twin Revolution with a Puff. And what was he sitting on? Something covered with moss, hidden by ferns. [...] There was a sweaty grappling for an edge to hold on to. And a One Two and. Things can change in a day. (p.202)

Example 319, It *was* a boat. A tiny wooden vallom. The boat that Estha sat on and Rahel found. The boat that Ammu would use to cross the river. To love by night the man her children loved by day. So old a boat that it had taken root. Almost. A grey old boatplant

with boatflowers and boatfruit. And underneath, a boat-shaped patch of withered grass. A scurrying, hurrying boatworld. Dark and dry and cool. Unroofed now. And blind. White termites on their way to work. White ladybirds on their way home. White beetles burrowing away from the light. White grasshoppers with whitewood violins. Sad white music. A white wasp. Dead. A brittlewhite snakeskin, preserved in darkness, crumbled in the sun. (p.202)

Example 320, Two-egg twins looked out across their river. The Meenachal. Greygreen. With fish in it. The sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it. When Pappachi was a boy, an old tamarind tree fell into it in a storm. It was still there. A smooth barkless tree, blackened by a surfeit of green water. Driftless driftwood. [...] The first third of the river was their friend. Before the Really Deep began. [...] They knew the smaller fish. The flat, foolish pallathi, the silver paral, the wily, whiskered koori, the sometimes karimeen. (p.203)

Example 321, Here they had learned to fish. To thread coiling purple earthworms onto hooks on the fishing rods that Velutha made from slender culms of yellow bamboo. [...] Here they learned to Wait. To Watch. To think thoughts and not voice them. To move like lightning when the bendy yellow bamboo arced downwards. So this 'first third of the river they knew well. The next two thirds less so. The second third was where the Really Deep began. Where the current was swift and certain (downstream when the tide was out, upstream, pushing up from the backwaters when the tide was in). The third third was shallow again. The water brown and murky. Full of weeds and darting eels and slow mud that oozed through toes like toothpaste. (p.203)

Example 322, But the middle of a respectable river, or the Other Side, was no place for children to Linger, Loll or Learn Things. (p.204)

Example 323, It looked surprised, like a grizzled fish that had surfaced from the deep. In dire need of sunlight. [...] Her white egg sac ruptured prematurely, and a hundred baby spiders (too light to drown, too small to swim), stippled the smooth surface of the green water, before being swept out to sea. To Madagascar, to start a new phylum of Malayali Swimming Spiders. (p.204)

Example 324, When it was clean, they turned it upside down and hoisted it onto their heads. Like a combined hat that dripped. [...] A verdant, treacherous lawn, in which mosquitoes bred and the fish were fat but inaccessible. (p.205)

Example 325, Velutha wasn't home. Nor Vellya Paapen. But someone was. (p.205)

Example 326, One corner for cooking, one for clothes, one for bedding rolls, one for dying in. [...] He would learn otherwise. Soon. Too soon. [...] His lower body lay like lead, as though it belonged to someone else. Someone dead whose spirit was trapped and couldn't get away. (p.207)

Example 327, Heat cleaved to things like a low fever. But the mud floor was cool under

Rahel's bare feet. (p.208)

Example 328, Jesus in a mini. Twelve layers of petticoats for the twelve months of the year. None had been tom out. [...]Rich things in a poor house. A clock that didn't work, a flowered tin waste-paper basket. Pappachi's old riding boots (brown, with green mould) with the cobbler's trees still in them. Biscuit tins with sumptuous pictures of English castles and ladies with bustles and ringlets. A small poster (Baby Kochamma's, given away. because of a damp patch) hung next to Jesus. (p.209)

Example 329, The twins climbed into the vallom and rowed across vast, choppy waters. With a *Thaiy thaiy thaka thaiy thaiy thome*. And a jewelled Jesus watching. He walked on water. Perhaps. But could He have *swum* on land? In matching knickers and dark glasses? With His Fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo? In pointy shoes and a puff? Would He have had the imagination? (p.211)

Example 330, From a distance he heard the raucous singing. Young voices, underlining with delight the scatology. (p.211)

Example 331, Fear sank and settled at the bottom of the deep water. Sleeping a dog's sleep. Ready to rise and murk things at a moment's notice. (p.212)

Example 332, He had to bend low in order to enter his home. A tropical Eskimo. [...]He loved them without knowing it. But it was different suddenly. Now. After History had slipped up so badly. [...]Her children, an insane whisper whispered to him. Her eyes, her mouth. Her teeth. Her soft, lambent skin. He drove the thought away angrily. It returned and sat outside his skull. Like a dog. (p.212)

Example 333, It was shaken in greeting. Hers, then Estha's. (p.212)

Example 334, Boat-dust flew around the room and settled on hair and eyebrows. On Kuttappen like a cloud, on Jesus like an offering. [...]The boat that Estha sat on, and Rahel found. (p.213)

Example 335, Velutha shrugged and took the towel away to wash. And rinse. And beat. And wring. As though it was his ridiculous, disobedient brain. [...]An hour into the sandpapering, Rahel remembered her Afternoon Gnap. And she was up. and running. Tumbling through the green afternoon heat. Followed by her brother and a yellow wasp. Hoping, praying, that Ammu hadn't woken up and found her gone. (p.214)

Example 336, He had no other arm with which to fight the shadows that flickered around him on the floor. Shadows that only he could see. (p.215)

Example 337, Some of them had newspapers. Some didn't. Some of them blew spit-bubbles. Some didn't. But they all had the flickering reflection of an oil lamp on each lens. (p.216)

Example 338, They just stood together. Still. Skin to skin. (p.216)

Example 339, They moved shoes. And found a cupboard door that creaked. (p.217)

Example 340, The folding chairs were folded. The black sea smoothed. The creased waves ironed. The spume rebottled. The bottle corked. The night postponed till further notice. (p.218)

Example 341, Because the truth is, that only what *counts* counts. The simple, unswerving wisdom of children. (p.218)

Example 342, So everybody dies. The fisherman, his wife, her lover, and a shark that has no part in the story, but dies anyway. [...]Outside in the mittam, crisp saris lay in rows and crispened in the sun. Off-white and gold. (p.219)

Example 343, A giant burning ghat was erected on the highway. The engineers of the concerned municipality sawed off the tusks and shared them unofficially. Unequally. [...]They hoped, not without reason, for pickings of giant innards. An enormous gall bladder, perhaps. Or a charred, gigantic spleen. They weren't disappointed. Nor wholly satisfied. (p.220)

Example 344, Ammu noticed that both her children were covered in a fine dust. Like two pieces of lightly sugar-dusted, unidentical cake. Rahel had a blonde curl lodged among her black ones. A curl from Velutha's backyard. Ammu picked it out. (p.220)

Example 345, In the afternoon silence (laced with edges of light), her children curled into the warmth of her. The smell of her. [...]They summoned her back now with the palms of their small hands laid flat against the bare skin of her midriff Between her petticoat and her blouse. (p.220)

Example 346, It was a clear-as-glass kiss. Unclouded by passion or desire - that pair of dogs that sleeps so soundly inside children, waiting for them to grow up. It was a kiss that demanded no kiss-back. Not a cloudy kiss full of questions that wanted answers. Like the kisses of cheerful one-armed men in dreams. (p.221)

Example 347, The twins heard the lock turning in Ammu's bathroom door. Click. Ammu looked at herself in the long mirror on the bathroom door and the spectre of her future appeared in it to mock her. Pickled. Grey. Rheumy-eyed. Cross-stitch roses on a slack, sunken cheek. Withered breasts that hung like weighted socks. Dry as a bone between her legs, the hair feather white. Spare. As brittle as a pressed fern. Skin that flaked and shed like snow. With that cold feeling on a hot afternoon that Life had been Lived. That her cup was full of dust. That the air, the sky, the trees, the sun, the rain, the light and darkness were all slowly turning to sand. That sand would fill her nostrils, her lungs, her mouth. Would pull her down, leaving on the surface a spinning swirl like crabs leave when they burrow downwards on a beach. [...]The thin line of down from her belly button led over the gentle curve of the base of her belly, to her dark triangle. Like an arrow directing a lost traveller. An inexperienced lover. (p.222)

Example 348, She looked a little critically at her round, heavy behind. Not big in itself. Not big *per se* (as Chacko-of-Oxford would no doubt have put it). Big only because the rest of her was so slender. [...]She had to admit that they would happily support a toothbrush apiece. Perhaps two. (p.223)

Example 349, Ammu gathered up her heavy hair, wrapped it around her face, and peered down the road to Age and Death through its parted strands. Like a medieval executioner peering through the tilted eye-slits of his peaked black hood at the executionee. A slender, naked executioner with dark nipples and deep dimples when she smiled. With seven silver stretchmarks from her two-egg twins, born to her by candlelight amidst news of a lost war. (p.223)

Example 350, Ten years on. Not to know which way her road might turn and what lay beyond the bend. And Ammu knew. Or *thought* she knew, which was really just as bad (because if in a dream you've eaten fish, it means you've eaten fish). And what Ammu knew (or thought she knew), smelled of the vapid, vinegary fumes that rose from the cement vats of Paradise Pickles. Fumes that wrinkled youth and pickled futures. (p.224)

Example 351, Hooded in her own hair, Ammu leaned against herself in the bathroom mirror and tried to weep. For herself. For the God of Small Things. For the sugar-dusted twin midwives of her dream. (p.224)

Example 352, The bedroom with blue curtains and yellow wasps that worried the windowpanes. The bedroom whose walls would soon learn their harrowing secrets. The bedroom into which Ammu would first be locked and then lock herself. Whose door, Chacko, crazed by grief; four days after Sophie Mol's funeral, would batter down. (p.225)

Example 353, After that for years Rahel would dream this dream: a fat man, faceless, kneeling beside a woman's corpse. Hacking its hair off Breaking every bone in its body. Snapping even the little ones. The fingers. The ear bones cracked like twigs. *Snapsnap* the softsound of breaking bones. A pianist killing the piano keys. Even the black ones. And Rahel (though years later, in the Electric Crematorium, she would use the slipperiness of sweat to slither out of Chacko's grasp), loved them both. The player and the piano. The killer and the corpse. (p.225)

Example 354, 'Promise,' Estha and Rahel would say. Not finding words with which to tell her that for them there *was* no Each, no Other. Twin millstones and their mother. Numb millstones. What they had done would return to empty them. But that would be Later. Lay. Ter. A deep-sounding bell in a mossy well. Shivery and furred like moth's feet. (p.225)

Example 355, At the time, there would only be incoherence. As though meaning had slunk out of things and left them fragmented. Disconnected. The glint of Ammu's needle. The colour of a ribbon. The weave of the cross-stitch counterpane. A door slowly breaking. Isolated things that didn't *mean* anything. As though the intelligence that decodes life's hidden patterns – that connects reflections to images, glints to light, weaves to fabrics, needles to thread, walls to rooms, love to fear to anger to remorse—

was suddenly lost. (p.225)

Example 356, 'Pack your things and go,' Chacko would say, stepping over the debris. Looming over them. A chrome door handle in his hand. Suddenly strangely calm. Surprised at his own strength. His bigness. His bullying power. The enormity of his own terrible grief. Red the colour of splintered doorwood. (p.226)

Example 357, The same room in which (after the Twin Expert from Hyderabad had replied), Ammu would pack Estha's little trunk and khaki holdall: 12 sleeveless cotton vests, 12 half-sleeved cotton vests. *Estha , here's your name on them in ink.* His socks. His drainpipe trousers. His pointy collared shirts. His beige and pointy shoes. (from where the Angry Feelings came). His Elvis records. His calcium tablets and VydaLin syrup. His Free Giraffe (that came with the VydaLin). His Books of Knowledge Vols. 1-4. *No, sweetheart, there won't be a river there to fish in.* His white leather zip-up Bible with an Imperial Entomologist's amethyst cuff-link on the zip. His mug. His soap. His Advance Birthday Present that he *mustn't* open. Forty green inland letter forms. (p.226)

Example 358, *Promise*, Estha would say. Not wholly cognizant of his situation. The sharp edge of his apprehensions blunted by this sudden wealth of worldly possessions. They were His. And had his name on them in ink. (p.226)

Example 359, The room to which, years later, Rahel would return and watch a silent stranger bathe. And wash his clothes with crumbling bright blue soap. Flatmuscle, and honey coloured. Sea-secrets in his eyes. A silver raindrop on his ear. *Esthapappychachen Kuttappen Peter Mon.* (p.227)

Example 360, The sound of the chenda mushroomed over the temple, accentuating the silence of the encompassing night. The lonely, wet road. The watching trees. (p.228)

Example 361, He was *Vellya* Thomban now. The Big Tusker. [...] A tusk towards the stars. (p.228)

Example 362, On their way back from the Heart of Darkness, they stopped at the temple to ask pardon of their gods. To apologize for corrupting their stories. For encasing their identities. Misappropriating their lives. (p.229)

Example 363, The Great Stories are the ones you have heard and want to hear again. The ones you can enter anywhere and inhabit comfortably. [...] They are as familiar as the house you live in. Or the smell of your lover's skin. You know how they end, yet you listen as though you don't. In the way that although you know that one day you will die, you live as though you won't. In the Great Stories you know who lives, who dies, who finds love, who doesn't. And yet you want to know again. (p.229)

Example 364, He can fly you across whole worlds in minutes, he can stop for hours to examine a wilting leaf. Or play with a sleeping monkey's tail. He can turn effortlessly from the carnage of war into the felicity of a woman washing her hair in a mountain stream. From the crafty ebullience of a rakshasa with a new idea into a gossip Malayali

with a scandal to spread. From the sensuousness of a woman with a baby at her breast into the seductive mischief of Krishna's smile. He can reveal the nugget of sorrow that happiness contains. The hidden fish of shame in a sea of glory. (p.230)

Example 365, The Kathakali Man is the most beautiful of men. Because his body *is* his soul. His only instrument. [...]But these days he has become unviable. Unfeasible. Condemned goods. [...]He has watched them grow up to become clerks and bus conductors. Class IV non-gazetted officers. With unions of their own. [...]He hawks the only thing he owns. The stories that his body can tell. (p.230)

Example 366, Good Kerala grass. It makes him laugh. (p.231)

Example 367, Karna, melancholy son of Surya, God of Day. Karna the Generous. Karna the abandoned child. Karna the most revered warrior of them all. [...]His heels were cracked. Tough. He stubbed his joints out on them. But if he had had a fleet of make-up men waiting in the wings, an agent, a contract, a percentage of the profits - what then would he be? An impostor. A rich pretender. An actor playing a part. [...]This man tonight is dangerous. His despair complete. [...]It gives him shape. Structure. It harnesses him. It contains him. His Love. His Madness. His Hope. His Infinite Joy. (p.231)

Example 368, Karna Alone. Condemned goods. A prince raised in poverty. Born to die unfairly, unarmed and alone at the hands of his brother. Majestic in his complete despair. Praying on the banks of the Ganga. Stoned out of his skull. (p.232)

Example 369, Her movements were fluid. Full of woman. Kunti, too, was stoned. High on the same shared joints. (p.232)

Example 370, She told him of a young woman who had been granted a boon. A secret mantra that she could use to choose a lover from among the gods. (p.232)

Example 371, The ecstasy of that kiss. He dispatched it to the ends of his body. To his toes. His fingertips. His lovely mother's kiss. (p.233)

Example 372, But Karna the Generous could not refuse his mother what she asked of him. So he modified the promise. Equivocated. Made a small adjustment, took a somewhat altered oath. (p.233)

Example 373, Estha settled against a distant pillar and they sat through the performance like this, separated by the breadth of the kuthambalam, but joined by a story. And the memory of another mother. The air grew warmer. Less damp. (p.234)

Example 374, In Ayemenem the men danced as though they couldn't stop. Like children in a warm house sheltering from a storm. Refusing to emerge and acknowledge the weather. The wind and thunder. The rats racing across the ruined landscape with dollar signs in their eyes. The world crashing around them. (p.234)

Example 375, It was almost four in the morning when Bhima hunted down vile Dushasana. The man who had tried publicly to undress the Pandavas' wife, Draupadi, after the Kauravas had won her in a game of dice. (p.234)

Example 376, Two men in ballooning skirts and balding velvet blouses, vaulting over littered moons and mounds of dung, circling around the hulk of a sleeping elephant. Dushasana full of bravado one minute. Cringing the next. Bhima toying with him. Both stoned. (p.235)

Example 377, An ironsmith flattening a sheet of recalcitrant metal. Systematically smoothing every pit and bulge. He continued to kill him long after he was dead. (p.235)

Example 378, Gurgling blood-bubbles pale pink between his teeth. Dribbling down his painted face, his neck and chin. [...]There was madness there that morning. Under the rose bowl. [...]They had seen its work before. Another morning. Another stage. Another kind of frenzy (with millipedes on the soles of its shoes). The brutal extravagance of this matched by the savage economy of that. (p.235)

Example 379, They sat there, Quietness and Emptiness, frozen two-egg fossils, with hornbumps that hadn't grown into horns. Separated by the breadth of a kuthambalam. Trapped in the bog of a story that was and wasn't theirs. That had set out with the semblance of structure and order, then bolted like a frightened horse into anarchy. [...]The Kathakali Men took off their make-up and went home to beat their wives. Even Kunti, the soft one with breasts. (p.236)

Example 380, An old man woke and staggered to the stove to warm his peppered coconut oil. Comrade Pillai. Ayemenem's egg-breaker and professional omletteer. (p.236)

Example 381, They walked home together. He and She. We and Us. (p.237)

Example 382, She looked around the room. Not moving, just swivelling her eyeballs. A captured spy in enemy territory, plotting her spectacular escape. (p.238)

Example 383, A glass-paned cupboard was crammed with damaged balsa airplanes. Broken butterflies with imploring eyes. A wicked king's wooden wives languishing under an evil wooden spell. *Trapped*. (p.239)

Example 384, Underneath the flush, there was a paleness. A staved-off sadness. (p.239)

Example 385, He looked as though he was laughing at himself and the way he was dressed. Like someone at a fancy-dress party. [...]They looked happy. Thin and young, scowling from the sun in their eyes. Her thick, dark eyebrows were knitted together and somehow made a lovely contrast to the frothy, bridal white. A scowling cloud with eyebrows. Behind them stood a large matronly woman with thick ankles and all the buttons done up on her long overcoat. Margaret Kochamma's mother. (p.240)

Example 386, In Oxford she shared a small flat with a friend. Another waitress in

another cafe. [...]So even up at Oxford, other than playing her gramophone a little louder than she was permitted at home, she continued to lead the same small, tight life that she imagined she had escaped. Until Chacko walked into the cafe one morning. (p.241)

Example 387, Then he asked for fried eggs on toast. More coffee, and strawberry jam. (p.242)

Example 388, She tried to compose herself before she went to take the new order. But she had tears in her eyes, and had to stifle a fresh batch of giggles, which made the hungry man whose order she was taking look up from his menu card, his thin lips pursed in silent disapproval. (p.243)

Example 389, Margaret Kochamma found herself looking forward to the Rumped Porcupine's visits. Without anxiety, but with a sort of creeping affection. She learned that he was a Rhodes Scholar from India. That he read Classics. And rowed for Balliol. (p.243)

Example 390, She discovered that underneath the aspect of the Rumped Porcupine, a tortured Marxist was at war with an impossible, incurable Romantic - who forgot the candles, who broke the wine glasses, who lost the ring. Who made love to her with a passion that took her breath away. She had always thought of herself as a somewhat uninteresting, thick-waisted, thick-ankled girl. Not bad-looking. Not special. But when she was with Chacko, old limits were pushed back. Horizons expanded. (p.245)

Example 391, As for Chacko, Margaret Kochamma was the first female friend he had ever had. Not just the first woman that he had slept with, but his first real companion. [...]He loved the fact that Margaret Kochamma didn't cling to him. That she was uncertain about her feelings for him. That he never knew till the last day whether or not she would marry him. (p.245)

Example 392, He was grateful to her for not wanting to look after him. For not offering to tidy his room. For not being his cloying mother. (p.246)

Example 393, Too much was happening in his life and Ayemenem seemed so far away. The river too small. The fish too few. (p.246)

Example 394, The winter after he came down from Balliol (he did badly in his exams), Margaret Kochamma and Chacko were married. Without her family's consent. Without his family's knowledge. (p.246)

Example 395, It no longer amused her that while she went to work, the flat remained in the same filthy mess that she had left it in. That it was impossible for him even to consider making the bed, or washing clothes or dishes. That he didn't apologize for the cigarette bums in the new sofa. That he seemed incapable of buttoning up his shirt, knotting his tie *and* tying his shoe laces before presenting himself for a job interview. Within a year she was prepared to exchange the frog on the dissecting table for some

small, practical concessions. Such as a job for her husband and a clean home. (p.247)

Example 396, Hoping that this would lead to - other things, Chacko and Margaret moved to London. To even smaller, more dismal rooms. (p.247)

Example 397, Joe was everything that Chacko wasn't. Steady. Solvent. Thin. (p.248)

Example 398, He spoke of her often and with a peculiar pride. As though he admired her for having divorced him. [...]When she told him about Joe he had left sadly, but quietly. With his invisible companion and his friendly smile. (p.249)

Example 399, She concealed her anguish under the brisk, practical mask of a schoolteacher. The stern, schoolteacher-shaped hole in the Universe (who sometimes slapped). But when Chacko wrote inviting her to Ayemenem, something inside her sighed and sat down. (p.250)

Example 400, Even from a distance, it was obvious that she was dead. Not ill or asleep. It was something to do with the way she lay. The angle of her limbs. Something to do with Death's authority. Its terrible stillness. [...]A spongy mermaid who had forgotten how to swim. A silver thimble clenched, for luck, in her little fist. *Thimble-drinker. Coffin-cartwheeler.* Margaret Kochamma never forgave herself for taking Sophie Mol to Ayemenem. For leaving her there alone over the weekend while she and Chacko went to Cochin to confirm their return tickets. (p.251)

Example 401, She couldn't see them crouched against the door. A Surprised Puff and a Fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo. Bewildered Twin Ambassadors of God-knows-what. Their Excellencies Ambassadors E. Pelvis and S. Insect. (p.253)

Example 402, *Cyclonic disturbance*, the newspapers called it the next day. But by then nobody was in any condition to read the papers. [...]To a drunk superstitious man, it could have seemed like the beginning of the end of the world. Which, in a way, it was. [...]His left eyelid drooped over his empty socket in an immutable, monstrous wink. As though everything that he was about to say was part of an elaborate prank. (p.254)

Example 403, She recoiled from its slippery hardness. Its slimy marbleness. (p.255)

Example 404, He started by recounting to Mammachi how much her family had done for his. Generation for generation. How, long before the communists thought of it, Reverend E. John Ipe had given his father, Kelan, tide to the land on which their hut now stood. How Mammachi had paid for his eye. How she had organized for Velutha to be educated and given him a job...[...] Tears welled up in his real eye and shone on his black cheek. With his other eye he stared stonily ahead. An old Paravan, who had seen the Walking Backwards days, torn between Loyalty and Love. [...]He told Mammachi what he had seen. The story of the little boat that crossed the river night after night, and who was in it. The story of a man and woman, standing together in the moonlight. Skin to skin. (p.255)

Example 405, He had seen it there. Every night. Rocking on the water. Empty. Waiting

for the lovers to return. [...]The lovers. Sprung from his loins and hers. His son and her daughter.[...] Vellya Paapen kept talking. Weeping. Retching. Moving his mouth. (p.256)

Example 406, He was taken completely by surprise. Part of the taboo of being an Untouchable was expecting not to be touched. At least not in these circumstances. Of being locked into a physically impregnable cocoon. [...]She found Mammachi spitting into the rain, THOO! THOO! THOO! and Vellya Paapen lying in the slush, wet, weeping, grovelling. Offering to kill his son. To tear him limb from limb. (p.256)

Example 407, A ship of goodness ploughing through a sea of sin. (p.257)

Example 408, She imagined it in vivid detail: a Paravan's coarse black hand on her daughter's breast. His mouth on hers. His black hips jerking between her parted legs. The sound of their breathing. His particular Paravan smell. *Like animals*, Mammachi thought and nearly vomited. *Like a dog with a bitch on heat*. (p.257)

Example 409, For generations to come, *for ever* now, people would point at them at weddings and funerals. At baptisms and birthday parties. (p.258)

Example 410, Mammachi provided the passion. Baby Kochamma the Plan. Kochu Maria was their midget lieutenant. (p.258)

Example 411, Something bobs past in the water and the colours catch his eye. Mauve. Red-brown. Beach sand. [...]It's a wrinkled mermaid. A mer-child. A mere mer-child. With red-brown hair. With an Imperial Entomologist's nose, and a silver thimble clenched for luck in her fist. (p.258)

Example 412, No one knows what it may snatch or suddenly yield. Or when. (p.259)

Example 413, A Paravan. A few days ago he had tried to, to . . . to force himself on her niece, she said. A divorcee with two children. (p.259)

Example 414, It was a premeditated gesture, calculated to humiliate and terrorize her. An attempt to instill order into a world gone wrong. [...]By now Baby Kochamma sounded utterly convincing. Injured. Incredulous. She didn't describe how Mammachi had lost control. How she had gone up to Velutha and spat right into his face. The things she had said to him. The names she had called him. (p.260)

Example 415, His complete lack of remorse, which was what had shocked her most. As though he was actually *proud* of what he had done. Without realizing it herself, she grafted the manner of the man who had humiliated her during the march onto Velutha. She described the sneering fury in his face. The brassy, insolence in his voice that had so frightened her. That made her sure that his dismissal and the children's disappearance were not, could not possibly be, unconnected. (p.261)

Example 416, The two men had a conversation. Brief, cryptic, to the point. As though they had exchanged numbers and not words. [...]They were not friends, Comrade Pillai

and Inspector Thomas Mathew, and they didn't trust each other. But they understood each other perfectly. They were both men whom childhood had abandoned without a trace. Men without curiosity. Without doubt. Both in their own way truly, terrifyingly adult. [...]He merely assured Inspector Thomas Mathew that as far as he was concerned Velutha did not have the patron age or the protection of the Communist Party. That he was on his own. (p.262)

Example 417, Her memory of the days that followed was fuzzy. Long, dim hours of thick, furry-tongued serenity (medically administered by Dr Verghese Verghese), lacerated by sharp, steely slashes of hysteria, as keen and cutting as the edge of a new razor blade. [...]She remembered faintly the funeral in the yellow church. The sad singing. A bat that had bothered someone. (p.263)

Example 418, Odd, considering that Margaret Kochamma didn't know that it was Estha-Stirring Wizard with a Puff who had rowed jam and thought Two Thoughts-Estha who had broken rules and rowed Sophie Mol and Rahel across the river in the afternoons in a little boat, Estha who had abrogated a sickled smell, by waving a Marxist flag at it. Estha who had made the back verandah of the History House their home away from home, furnished with a grass mat and most of their toys - a catapult, an inflatable goose, a Qantas koala with loosened button eyes. And finally, on that dreadful night, Estha who had decided that though it was dark and raining, the Time Had Come for them to run away, because Ammu didn't want them any more. (p.264)

Example 419, Of him she had no memory at all. Not even what he looked like. Perhaps this was because she never really knew him, nor ever heard what happened to him. The God of Loss. The God of Small Things. [...]After all, Margaret Kochamma wasn't with the platoon of Touchable policemen when they crossed the swollen river. Their wide khaki shorts rigid with starch. The metallic clink of handcuffs in someone's heavy pocket. (p.265)

Example 420, Sophie Mol eventually found what she had been looking for. Presents for her cousins. Triangular towers of Toblerone chocolate (soft and slanting in the heat). Socks with separate multi-coloured toes. And two ballpoint pens - the top halves filled with water in which a cut-out, collage of a London streetscape was suspended. Buckingham Palace and Big Ben. Shops and people. A red double-decker bus propelled by an air-bubble floated up and down the silent street. [...]Sophie Mol put the presents into her go-go bag, and went forth into the world. To drive a hard bargain. To negotiate a friendship. A friendship that, unfortunately, would be left dangling. Incomplete. Flailing in the air with no foothold. A friendship that never circled around into a story, which is why, far more quickly than ever should have happened, Sophie Mol became a Memory, while The Loss of Sophie Mol grew robust and alive. Like a fruit in season. Every season. (p.267)

Example 421, He had a wife (*Ex-wife, Chacko.*) at home. With arm freckles and back freckles. With a blue dress and legs underneath. (p.268)

Example 422, His legs were already spindly and his taut, distended belly, like his tiny

mother's goitre, was completely at odds with the rest of his thin, narrow body and alert face. As though something in their family genes had bestowed on them compulsory bumps that appeared randomly in different parts of their bodies. (p.270)

Example 423, When he finished, Kalyani took it from him and held it as though it was a gift. A bouquet of flowers. (p.270)

Example 424, Remarkable, considering he was only six and didn't understand a word of what he was saying. (p.275)

Example 425, Chacko, on the other hand, from the moment he had entered the house, or perhaps from the moment Comrade Pillai had arrived, had undergone a curious process of invalidation. Like a general who had been stripped of his stars, he limited his smile. Contained his expansiveness. Anybody meeting him there for the first time might have thought him reticent. Almost timid. (p.275)

Example 426, Velutha was a topic he had planned to broach with Chacko. Some day. Eventually. But not this straightforwardly. (p.277)

Example 427, There was something reassuring about the rhythm of the grunts. Like the ticking of a clock. A sound you hardly noticed, but would miss if it stopped. (p.277)

Example 428, He scratched his head for a long time, with both his hands. Moving his whole scalp up and down. (p.277)

Example 429, They sat beside each other on steel folding chairs, on the afternoon of the Day that Sophie Mol Came, sipping coffee and crunching banana chips. Dislodging with their tongues the sodden yellow mulch that stuck to the roofs of their mouths. The Small Thin Man and the Big Fat Man. Comic book adversaries in a still-to-come war. (p.280)

Example 430, Even Chacko who knew that the fervent, high-pitched speeches about Rights of Untouchables ('Caste is Class, comrades') delivered by Comrade Pillai during the Marxist Party siege of Paradise Pickles, were pharisaic - never learned the whole *story*. Not that he cared to find out. (p.281)

Example 431, The last betrayal that sent Velutha across the river, swimming against the current, in the dark and rain, well in time for his blind date with history. (p.282)

Example 432, Velutha had no idea what had happened and was completely unaware of his father's drunken visit to the Ayemenem House. Nor did he know that Vellya Paapen had been sitting for hours at the door of their hut, still drunk, his glass eye and the edge of his axe glittering in the lamplight, waiting for Velutha to return. Nor that poor paralysed Kuttappen, numb with apprehension, had been talking to his father continuously for two hours, trying to calm him down, all the time straining his ears for the sound of a footstep or the rustle of undergrowth so that he could shout a warning to his unsuspecting brother. (p.283)

Example 433, She said nothing, but used her hands to modulate Mammachi's fury, to stoke it anew. An encouraging pat on the back. A reassuring arm around the shoulders. (p.284)

Example 434, Mammachi spat into Velutha's face. Thick spit. It splattered across his skin. His mouth and eyes. He just stood there. Stunned. Then he turned and left. As he walked away from the house, he felt his senses had been honed and heightened. As though everything around him had been flattened into a neat illustration. A machine drawing with an instruction manual that told him what to do. (p.284)

Example 435, He noticed everything. Each leaf. Each tree. Each cloud in the starless sky. Each step he took. [...]That was the first lesson he had learned in school. A poem about a train. He began to count. Something. Anything. [...]The machine drawing began to blur. The clear lines to smudge. The instructions no longer made sense. The road rose to meet him and the darkness grew dense. Glutinous. Pushing through it became an effort. Like swimming underwater. (p.285)

Example 436, Sleep and wake up in another world. *With the smell of her skin in the air that he breathed. Her body on his.* (p.286)

Example 437, Though the rain washed Mammachi's spit off his face, it didn't stop the feeling that somebody had lifted off his head and vomited into his body. Lumpy vomit dribbling down his insides. Over his heart. His lungs. The slow thick drip into the pit of his stomach. All his organs awash in vomit. (p.286)

Example 438, He wanted to touch her breast immediately. But he had curd on his fingers and there was someone at the door. (p.286)

Example 439, His feet walked him to the river. As though they were the leash and he were the dog. History walking the dog. (p.288)

Example 440, He was very still, very wet. Very young. [...]He left no ripples in the water. No footprints on the shore. He was walking swiftly now, towards the Heart of Darkness. As lonely as a wolf. The God of Loss. The God of Small Things. Naked but for his nail varnish. (p.290)

Example 441, Three children on the river bank. A pair of twins and another, whose mauve corduroy pinafore said *Holiday!* in a tilting, happy font. (p.291)

Example 442, The river itself was dark and quiet. An absence rather than a presence, betraying no sign of how high and strong it really was. Estha and Rahel dragged the boat out of the bushes where they usually hid it. The paddles that Velutha had made were hidden in a hollow tree. (p.291)

Example 443, She had a cloth bag with food purloined from the fridge slung across her chest. Bread, cake, biscuits. (p.291)

Example 444, Estha-the-Compassionate. Sophie Mol had convinced the twins that it was *essential* that she go along too. That the absence of children, *all* children, would heighten the adults' remorse. [...]They would search everywhere and just when they were sure that all three of them were dead, they would return home in triumph. Valued, loved, and needed more than ever. (p.292)

Example 445, In the dark they couldn't see that they were in the wrong lane on a silent highway full of muffled traffic. That branches, logs, parts of trees; were motoring towards them at some speed. (p.292)

Example 446, It took them a few minutes to catch their breath and register the loss of the boat. To mourn its passing. [...] 'And all our food is spoiled,' Rahel said to Sophie Mol and was met with silence. A rushing, rolling, fishswimming silence. [...] Nothing. On Rahel's heart Pappachi's moth snapped open its somber wings. Out. In. And lifted its legs. Up. Down. They ran along the bank calling out to her. But she was gone. Carried away on the muffled highway. Greygreen. With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night the broken yellow moon in it. There was no storm-music. No whirlpool spun up from the inky depths of the Meenachal. No shark supervised the tragedy. Just a quiet handing over ceremony. A boat spilling its cargo. A river accepting the offering. One small life. A brief sunbeam. With a silver thimble clenched for luck in its little fist. (p.293)

Example 447, It was four in the morning, still dark, when the twins, exhausted, distraught and covered in mud, made their way through the swamp and approached the History House. Hansel and Gretel in a ghastly fairy tale in which their dreams would be captured and redreamed. They lay down in the back verandah on a grass mat with an inflatable goose and a Qantas koala bear. A pair of damp dwarves, numb with fear, waiting for the world to end. (p.293)

Example 448, He Jolly Well knew. Little Man. He lived in a caravan. Dum dum. They didn't see someone else lying asleep in the shadows. As lonely as a wolf: A brown leaf on his black back. That made the monsoons come on time. (p.294)

Example 449, He sat very straight. Shoulders squared. Hands in his lap. As though he was next in line for some sort of inspection. Or waiting to be arrested. [...] It was raining steadily. Night rain. That lonely drummer practising his roll long after the rest of the band has gone to bed. (p.295)

Example 450, When she took up television, Baby Kochamma dropped the car and the garden simultaneously. Tutti-frutti. With every monsoon, the old car settled more firmly into the ground. Like an angular, arthritic hen settling stiffly on her clutch of eggs. With no intention of ever getting up. (p.295)

Example 451, She died on the back seat, with her legs in the air. Like a joke. (p.296)

Example 452, Fifteen years ago, Father Mulligan became a Vaishnava. A devotee of Lord Vishnu. The women were all in white with their sari palloos drawn over their heads.

Father Mulligan was in saffron. A yolk addressing a sea of boiled eggs. His white beard and hair were long, but combed and groomed. A saffron Santa with votive ash on his forehead. [...]She was offended by the fact that he had actually, eventually, renounced his vows, but not for her. For other vows. (p.297)

Example 453, At least her memory of him was *hers*. Wholly hers. Savagely, fiercely, hers. Not to be shared with Faith, far less with competing co-nuns, and co-sadhus or whatever it was they called themselves. Co-swamis. [...]In her memory of him, he embraced her. Just her. In the way a man embraces a woman. (p.298)

Example 454, Her nightcap. A clenched-smile soda. Tangy teeth in the morning. [...]Clearly they had spent the whole night out. Together. (p.299)

Example 455, She looked thinner lying down. Younger. Smaller. [...]It was a little cold. A little wet. A little quiet. The Air. But what was there to say? From where he sat, at the end of the bed, Estha, without turning his head, could see her. Faintly outlined. The sharp line of her jaw. Her collarbones like wings that spread from the base of her throat to the ends of her shoulders. A bird held down by skin. (p.299)

Example 456, She turned her head and looked at him. He sat very straight. Waiting for the inspection. He had finished the ironing. She was lovely to him. Her hair. Her cheeks. Her small, clever-looking hands. His sister. (p.299)

Example 457, A nagging sound started up in his head. The sound of passing trains. The light and shade and light and shade that falls on you if you have a window seat. He sat even straighter. Still, he could see her. Grown into their mother's skin. The liquid glint of her eyes in the dark. Her small straight nose. Her mouth, full lipped. Something wounded-looking about it. As though it was flinching from something. As though long ago someone - a man with rings - had hit her across it. A beautiful, hurt mouth. Their beautiful mother's mouth, Estha thought. Ammu's mouth. That had kissed his hand through the barred train window. First class, on the Madras Mail to Madras. 'Bye, *Estha*. *God bless*, Ammu's mouth had said. Ammu's trying-not-to-cry mouth. The last time he had seen her. (p.300)

Example 458, Her skin grey, wan, robbed of its luminous sheen by the neon station light. Daylight stopped by trains on either side. Long corks that kept the darkness bottled in. The Madras Mail. The Flying Rani. Rahel held by Ammu's hand. A mosquito on a leash. A Refugee Stick Insect in Bata sandals. An Airport Fairy at a railway station. Stamping her feet on the platform, unsettling clouds of settled station-filth. Until Ammu shook her and told her to Stop it and she Stopped. Around them the hostling-jostling crowd. (p.300)

Example 459, Echoing stationsounds. Hawkers selling coffee. Tea. Gaunt children, blonde with malnutrition, selling smutty magazines and food they couldn't afford to eat themselves. Melted chocolates. Cigarette sweets. Orangedrinks. Lemondrinks. CocaColaFantaicecreamrose milk. Pink-skinned dolls. Rattles. Love-in-Tokyo. Hollow plastic parakeets full of sweets with heads you could unscrew. Yellow-rimmed red

sunglasses. Toy watches with the time painted on them. A cartful of defective toothbrushes. The Cochin Harbour Terminus. Grey in the stationlight. Hollow people. Homeless. Hungry. Still touched by last year's famine. Their revolution postponed for the Time Being by Comrade E. M. S. Namboodiripad (*Soviet Stooge, Running Dog*). The former apple of Peking's eye. (p.301)

Example 460, As though they had had a choice. As though. they had *picked* this for their home from a vast array of posh housing estates listed in a glossy pamphlet. [...]Inside it he stored his ticket. His towel. His stainless-steel tumbler. His smells. His secrets. His love. His madness. His hope. His inffinate joy. (p.301)

Example 461, An old lady vomited. A lumpy pool. And went on with her life. The Stationworld. Society's circus. Where, with the rush of commerce, despair came home to roost and hardened slowly into resignation. But this time, for Ammu and her two-egg twins, there was no Plymouth window to watch it through. No net to save them as they vaulted through the circus air. (p.302)

Example 462, *Pack your things and leave*, Chacko had said. Stepping over a broken door. A handle in his hand. And Ammu, though her hands were trembling, hadn't looked up from her unnecessary hemming. A tin of ribbons lay open on her lap. But Rahel had. Looked up. And seen that Chacko had disappeared and left a monster in his place. (p.302)

Example 463, A thick-lipped man with rings, cool in white, bought Scissors cigarettes from a platform vendor. Three packs. To smoke in the train corridor. He was Estha's escort. A Family Friend who happened to be going to Madras. Mr Kurien Maathen. (p.302)

Example 464, She too had to pack her things and leave. To start a new life, in which she could afford to keep her children. Until then, it had been decided that one twin could stay in Ayemenem. Not both. (p.302)

Example 465, He knew that a hellish-angel hovered over them. Went where they went. Stopped where they stopped. Dripping wax from a bent candle. [...]All that had been in the papers. The Official Version. Of course the thick-lipped man with rings had no idea about the other version. The one in which a posse of Touchable Policemen crossed the Meenachal river, sluggish and swollen with recent rain, and picked their way through the wet undergrowth, clumping into the Heart of Darkness. (p.303)

Example 466, There were six of them. Servants of the State. The Kottayam Police. A cartoonplatoon. New-Age princes in funny pointed helmets. Cardboard lined with cotton. Hairoil stained. Their shabby khaki crowns. Dark of Heart. Deadlypurposed. (p.304)

Example 467, They trudged past darter birds on the tops of trees, drying their sodden wings spread out like laundry against the sky. Past egrets. Cormorants. Adjutant storks. Sarus cranes looking for space to dance. Purple herons with pitiless eyes. Deafening, their *wraark wraark wraark*. Motherbirds and their eggs. (p.305)

Example 468, Beyond the swamp that smelled of still water, they 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 had withstood the rain and spread like whispered gossip from tree to tree. A banana flower sheathed in claret bracts hung from a scruffy, torn-leaved tree. A gem held out by a grubby schoolboy. A jewel in the velvet jungle. Crimson dragonflies mated in the air. Doubledeckered. Deft. [...]Onwards. Past tall anthills congealed in the rain. Slumped like drugged sentries asleep at the gates of Paradise. Past butterflies drifting through the air like happy messages. Huge ferns. A chameleon. A starding shoeflower. The scurry of grey jungle fowl running for cover. The nutmeg tree that Vellya Paapen hadn't found. A forked canal. Still. Choked with duckweed. Like a dead green snake. A tree trunk fallen over it. The Touchable policemen minced across. Twirling polished bamboo batons. Hairy fairies with lethal wands. (p.305)

Example 469, Old scars slashed across their bark. Sealed. Healed. Untapped. Acres of this, and then, a grassy clearing. A house. The History House. Whose doors were locked and windows open. With cold stone floors and billowing, ship-shaped shadows on the walls. Where waxy ancestors with tough toe-nails and breath that smelled of yellow maps whispered papery whispers. Where translucent lizards lived behind old paintings. Where dreams were captured and re-dreamed. Where an old Englishman ghost, sickled to a tree, was abrogated by a pair of two-egg twins - a Mobile- Republic with a Puff who had planted a Marxist flag in the earth beside him. As the platoon of policemen minced past they didn't hear him beg. In his kind-missionary voice. *Excuse me, would you, umm. . .you wouldn't happen. to umm . . . I don't suppose you'd have a cigar on you? No? . . . No, I didn't think so.* The History House. Where, in the years that followed, the Terror (still-to-come) would be buried in a shallow grave. Hidden under the happy humming of hotel cooks. The humbling of old communists. The slow death of dancers. The toy histories that rich tourists came to play with. (p.306)

Example 470, It was a beautiful house. White-walled once. Red-roofed. But painted in weather colours now. With brushes dipped in nature's palette. Mossgreen. Earthbrown. Crumbleblack. Making it look older than it really was. Like sunken treasure dredged up from the ocean bed. Whale-kissed and barnacled. Swaddled in silence. Breathing bubbles through its broken windows. (p.307)

Example 471, Rotting beams supported on once-white pillars had buckled at the centre, leaving a yawning, gaping hole. A History hole. A History-shaped hole in the Universe through which, at twilight, dense clouds of silent bats billowed like factory smoke and drifted into the night. They returned at dawn with news of the world. A grey haze in the rosy distance that suddenly coalesced and blackened over the house before it plummeted through the History- hole like smoke in a film running backwards. All day they slept, the bats. Lining the roof like fur. Spattering the floors with shit. (p.307)

Example 472, They positioned themselves strategically. Crouching by the broken, low stone boundary wall. *Quick Piss. Hotfoam on warmstone. Police-piss. Drowned ants in yellow bubbly. Deep breaths.* Then together, on their knees and elbows, they crept towards the house. Like Film-policemen. Softly, softly through the grass. Batons in their

hands. Machine-guns in their minds. Responsibility for the Touchable future on their thin but able shoulders. They found their quarry in the back verandah. A Spoiled Puff. A Fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo. And in another corner (as lonely as a wolf) - a carpenter with blood-red nails. Asleep. Making nonsense of all that Touchable cunning. The Surpriseswoop. The Headlines in their heads. DESPERADO CAUGHT IN POLICE DRAGNET. For this insolence, this spoiling-the-fun, their quarry paid. Oh yes. (p.307)

Example 473, Screams died in them and floated belly up, like dead fish. Cowering on the floor, rocking between dread and disbelief they realized that the man being beaten was Velutha. [...]They heard the thud of wood on flesh. Boot on bone. On teeth. The muffled grunt when a stomach is kicked in. The muted crunch of skull on cement. The gurgle of blood on a man's breath when his lung is tom by the jagged end of a broken rib. [...]The abyss where anger should have been. The sober, steady brutality, the economy of it all. They were opening a bottle. Or shutting a tap. Cracking an egg to make an omelette. (p.308)

Example 474, The twins were too young to know that these were only history's henchmen. Sent to square the books and collect the dues from those who broke its laws. Impelled by feelings that were primal yet paradoxically wholly impersonal. Feelings of contempt born of inchoate, unacknowledged fear - civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness. Man's subliminal urge to destroy what he could neither subdue nor deify. Men's Needs. (p.308)

Example 475, What Esthappen and Rahel witnessed that morning, though they didn't know it then, was a clinical demonstration in controlled conditions (this was not war after all, or genocide) of human nature's pursuit of ascendancy. Structure. Order. Complete monopoly. [...]There was nothing accidental about what happened that morning. Nothing *incidental*. [...]This was an era imprinting itself on those who lived in it. History in live performance. (p.309)

Example 476, They had no instrument to calibrate how much punishment he could take. No means of gauging how much or how permanently they had damaged him. Unlike the custom of rampaging religious mobs or conquering armies running riot, that morning in the Heart of Darkness the posse of Touchable Policemen acted with economy, not frenzy. Efficiency, not anarchy. Responsibility, not hysteria. [...]They didn't rape him. Or behead him. (p.309)

Example 477, They stepped away from him. Craftsmen assessing their work. Seeking aesthetic distance. [...]The blood on his breath bright red. Fresh. Frothy. [...]Still they brought out the handcuffs. Cold. With the sourmetal smell. Like steel bus-rails and the bus conductor's hands from holding them. That was when they noticed his painted nails. (p.310)

Example 478, They locked his arms across his back. Click. And click. Below a Lucky Leaf. An autumn leaf at night. That made the monsoons come on time. (p.311)

Example 479, Someone was speaking to them. A kind Touchable policeman. Kind to his

kind. [...]Then the policemen looked around and saw the grass mat. The pots and pans. The inflatable goose. The Qantas koala with loosened button eyes. The ballpoint pens with London's streets in them. Socks with separate coloured toes. Yellow-rimmed red plastic sunglasses. A watch with the time painted on it. 'Whose are these? Where did they come from? Who brought them?' An edge of worry in the voice. (p.311)

Example 480, The Qantas koala they took for their children. And the pens and socks. Police children with multi-coloured toes. They burst the goose with a cigarette. *Bang*. And buried the rubber scraps. Yooseless goose. Too recognizable. The glasses one of them wore. The others laughed so he kept them on for a while. The watch they all forgot. It stayed behind in the History House. In the back verandah. A faulty record of the time. Ten to two. They left. Six princes, their pockets stuffed with toys. A pair of two-egg twins. And the God of Loss. (p.312)

Example 481, At the police station, Inspector Thomas Mathew sent for two Coca-Colas. With straws. [...] So once again, in the space of two weeks, bottled Fear for Estha. Chilled. Fizzed. [...]She blew through her straw till the drink bubbled over onto her dress. All over the floor. (p.313)

Example 482, He had seen it all before. . . the human mind's escape valve. Its way of managing trauma. He made allowances for that, and couched his questions cleverly. Innocuously. Between 'When is your birthday, Mon?' and 'What's your favourite colour,. Mol?' (p.313)

Example 483, His men had briefed him about the pots and pans. The grass mat. The impossible-to-forget toys. (p.314)

Example 484, From the look in his eyes and the tone of his voice, Baby Kochamma realized that she was dealing with a different person this time. Not the accommodating police officer of their previous meeting. [...]The Inspector's tone was belligerent. Almost hostile. (p.314)

Example 485, Estha and Rahel were ushered in. Caked with mud. Drenched in Coca-Cola. (p.315)

Example 486, Outside Rahel could see Jeeps parked. And walking people. [...]Four saucers stared back at her. Fascinated by the story she was telling them. (p.316)

Example 487, She drew (from her imagination) vivid pictures of prison life. The cockroach-crrisp food. The *chhi-chhi* piled in the toilets like soft brown mountains. The bedbugs. The beatings. [...]God would never forgive them for what they had done, but here on Earth there was a way of undoing some of the damage. Of saving their mother from humiliation and suffering on their account. (p.317)

Example 488, Estha could see them. A waltzing man and a waltzing woman. [...]Maybe they were getting married. She in her white dress. He in his black suit and bow-tie. (p.317)

Example 489, As though she was offering them a choice of two treats. Fishing or Bathing the pigs? Bathing the pigs or fishing? [...]In the years to come they would replay this scene in their heads. As children. As teenagers. As adults. [...]In a way, yes. But it wasn't as simple as that. (p.318)

Example 490, She needed to go to the bathroom. Urgently. [...] 'Estha.' Baby Kochamma chose. Knowing him to be the more practical of the two. The more tractable. The more farsighted. The more responsible. [...] *Little Man. He lived in a cara-van. Dum dum.* Estha went. Ambassador E. Pelvis. With saucer-eyes and a spoiled puff. A short ambassador flanked by tall policemen, on a terrible mission deep into the bowels of the Kottayam police station. Their footsteps echoing on the flagstone floor. [...] Embarrassed that the Inspector would see the colour and consistency of her stool. (p.319)

Example 491, Someone switched on the light. Bright. Blinding. Velutha appeared on the scummy, slippery floor. A mangled genie invoked by a modem lamp. (p.319)

Example 492, His face was swollen and his head look liked a pumpkin, too large and heavy for the slender stem it grew from. A pumpkin with a monstrous upside-down smile. [...] Swollen eyes opened. Wandered. Then focused through a film of blood on a beloved child. Estha imagined that something in him smiled. Not his mouth, but some other unhurt part of him. His elbow perhaps. Or shoulder. (p.320)

Example 493, Until the next morning, when Ammu shook it out of them. But by then it was too late. (p.320)

Example 494, And for the little family curled up and asleep on a blue cross-stitch counterpane? What came for them? Not death. Just the end of living. (p.321)

Example 495, After Sophie Mol's funeral, when Ammu took them back to the police station and the Inspector chose his mangoes (*Tap. tap*), the body had already been removed. Dumped in the *themmady kuzhy* - the pauper's pit - where the police routinely dump their dead. (p.321)

Example 496, Because, according to Baby Kochamma that would amount to destroying herself and her children. For ever. But Baby Kochamma hadn't taken into account the Unsafe Edge in Ammu. The Unmixable Mix - the infinite tenderness of motherhood, the reckless rage of a suicide bomber. (p.321)

Example 497, She managed that by doing what she was best at. Irrigating her fields, nourishing her crops with other people's passions. (p.321)

Example 498, It wasn't hard for her to portray Ammu as the person actually responsible for Sophie Mol's death. Ammu and her two-egg twins. [...] It was *her* idea that Ammu be made to pack her bags and leave. That Estha be Returned. (p.322)

Example 499, And so, at the Cochin Harbour Terminus, Estha Alone at the barred train

window. Ambassador E. Pelvis. A millstone with a puff. And a green-wavy, thick-watery, lumpy, sea weedy, floaty, bottomless-bottomful feeling. (p.323)

Example 500, Big round yellow laddoo crumbs on the seat. Trainrumbles under their feet. The blue nightlight not yet on. [...]She explained to the child that it was a sleeping light. Not an awake light. (p.323)

Example 501, Every First Class train thing was green. The seats green. The berths green. The floor green. The chains green. Darkgreen Lightgreen. (p.324)

Example 502, Estha nodded down at Ammu's face tilted up to the train window. At Rahel, small and smudged with station dirt. (p.324)

Example 503, A wave of panic. A bottomless-bottomful feeling. [...]By 'never' Estha had only meant that it would be too far away. That it wouldn't be *now*, wouldn't be *soon*. By 'never' he hadn't meant Not Ever. But that's how the words came out. [...]The Government. Where people were sent to Jolly Well Behave. And that's how it had all turned out. Never. Not Ever. (p.325)

Example 504, It was *his* fault that the faraway man in Ammu's chest stopped shouting. *His* fault that she died alone in the lodge with no one to lie at the back of her and talk to her. Because he was the one that had *said* it. (p.325)

Example 505, Estha said with his enduring pragmatism. His eye on the main chance. Free bus rides. Free funerals. Free education. Little Man. He lived in a cara-van. Dum dum. (p.325)

Example 506, On the day that Estha was Returned. Chalk. Blackboards. Proper punishments. They didn't ask to be let off lightly. They only asked for punishments that fitted their crimes. Not ones that came like cupboards with built-in bedrooms. Not ones you spent your whole life in, wandering through its maze of shelves. Without warning the train began to move. Very slowly. Estha's pupils dilated. His nails dug into Ammu's hand as she walked along the platform. Her walk turning into a run as the Madras Mail picked up speed. (p.326)

Example 507, 'Ammu!' Estha said as she disengaged her hand. Prising loose small finger after finger. [...]Little Elvis the Pelvis with a spoiled, special-outing puff. And beige and pointy shoes. (p.326)

Example 508, She moves her mouth. Their beautiful mother's mouth. Estha, sitting very straight, waiting to be arrested, takes his fingers to it. To touch the words it makes. To keep the whisper. His fingers follow the shape of it. The touch of teeth. His hand is held and kissed. Pressed against the coldness of a cheek, wet with shattered rain. (p.327)

Example 509, They lay like that for a long time. Awake in the dark. Quietness and Emptiness. Not old. Not young. But a viable die-able age. (p.327)

Example 510, There is very little that anyone could say to clarify what happened next. Nothing that (in Mammachi's book) would separate Sex from Love. Or Needs from Feelings. Except perhaps that no Watcher watched through Rahel's eyes. No one stared out of a window at the sea. Or a boat in the river. Or a passer-by in the mist in a hat. Except perhaps that it was a little cold. A little wet. But very quiet. The Air. (p.328)

Example 511, But what was there to say? Only that there were tears. Only that Quietness and Emptiness fitted together like stacked spoons. Only that there was a snuffling in the hollows at the base of a lovely throat. Only that a hard honey-coloured shoulder had a semi-circle of teethmarks on it. Only that they held each other close, long after it was over. Only that what they shared that night was not happiness, but hideous grief. Only that once again they broke the Love Laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much. (p.328)

Example 512, Cobwebs sealed old pickle vats. Empty, all but one - in which a small heap of congealed white dust lay. Bone dust from a Bar Nowl. Long dead. Pickledowl. [...] Asked on the evening of the day she arrived. She was standing on the edge of Baby Kochamma's ornamental pond looking up at the kites wheeling in the sky. Sophie Mol. Hatted, bellbottomed and Loved from the Beginning. (p.328)

Example 513, Margaret Kochamma called her in to have her regimen of pills. Filaria. Malaria. Diarrhoea. (p.328)

Example 514, In a happy whisper. *A little more her mother loved her.* [...] Ammu felt that she would die, wither and die, if she heard another word. If she had to endure another minute of Chacko's proud, tennis-trophy smile. Or the undercurrent of sexual jealousy that emanated from Mammachi. Or Baby Kochamma's conversation that was designed to exclude Ammu and her children, to inform them of their place in the scheme of things. (p.329)

Example 515, The God of Loss. The God of Small Things. The God of Goose Bumps and Sudden Smiles. [...] Ammu longed for him. Ached for him with the whole of her biology. (p.330)

Example 516, She paced up and down for a while. Restless. Feral. [...] A man's voice crackled through it. An English song she hadn't heard before. She sat there in the dark. A lonely, lambent woman looking out at her embittered aunt's ornamental garden, listening to a tangerine. To a voice from far away. Wafting through the night. Sailing over lakes and rivers. Over dense heads of trees. Past the yellow church. Past the school. Bumping up the dirt road. Up the steps of the verandah. To her. (p.331)

Example 517, She couldn't believe it. The cheap coincidence of those words. [...] Then suddenly she rose from her chair and walked out of her world like a witch. To a better, happier place. (p.332)

Example 518, She didn't know what it was that made her hurry through the undergrowth. That turned her walk into a run. That made her arrive on the banks of the Meenachal

breathless. Sobbing. As though she was late for something. As though her life depended on getting there in time. As though she knew he would be there. Waiting. As though *he* knew she would come. (p.332)

Example 519, That knowledge had slid into him that afternoon. Cleanly. Like the sharp edge of a knife. When history had slipped up. While he had held her little daughter in his arms. When her eyes had told him he was not the only giver of gifts. That she had gifts to give him too, that in return for his boats, his boxes, his small windmills, she would trade her deep dimples when she smiled. Her smooth brown skin. Her shining shoulders. Her eyes that were always somewhere else. (p.332)

Example 520, She buried her head in her arms, feeling foolish for having been so sure. *So certain.* (p.333)

Example 521, So he was free to lie in the river and drift slowly with the current. A log. A serene crocodile. [...]He flipped over and began to swim. Upstream. Against the current. He turned towards the bank for one last look, treading water, feeling foolish for having been so sure. *So certain.* [...]He could have been anything. A floating coconut. (p.333)

Example 522, Had he known that he was about to enter a tunnel whose only egress was his own annihilation, would he have turned away? Perhaps. Perhaps not. Who can tell? (p.333)

Example 523, He began to swim towards her. Quietly. Cutting through the water with no fuss. [...]As he rose from the dark river and walked up the stone steps, she saw that the world they stood in was his. That he belonged to it. That it belonged to him. The water. The mud. The trees. The fish. The stars. (p.333)

Example 524, Each plank he planed, each nail he drove, each thing he made, had moulded him. Had left its stamp on him. Had given him his strength, his supple grace. [...]She could see his smile in the dark. His white, sudden smile that he had carried with him from boyhood into manhood. His only luggage. (p.334)

Example 525, She stayed sitting on the steps, watching him. Her face pale in the moonlight. [...]There were people in the bushes. Watching. [...]He was shivering. Partly with cold. Partly terror. Partly aching desire. Despite his fear his body was prepared to take the bait. It wanted her. Urgently. (p.334)

Example 526, She held him till it calmed down. Somewhat. [...]They stood there. Skin to skin. Her brownness against his blackness. Her softness against his hardness. Her nut-brown breasts (that wouldn't support a toothbrush) against his smooth ebony chest. She smelled the river on him. His Particular Paravan smell that so disgusted Baby Kochamma. Ammu put out her tongue and tasted it, in the hollow of his throat. On the lobe of his ear. She pulled his head down towards her and kissed his mouth. A cloudy kiss. A kiss that demanded a kiss-back. He kissed her back. First cautiously. Then urgently. Slowly his arms came up behind her. He stroked her back. Very gently. She could feel the skin on his palms. Rough. Calloused. Sandpaper. He was careful not to

hurt her. (p.334)

Example 527, She could feel herself through him. Her skin. The way her body existed only where he touched her. [...]Terror timed it. Dictated the rhythm with which their bodies answered each other. As though they knew already that for each tremor of pleasure they would pay with an equal measure of pain. As though they knew that how far they went would be measured against how far they would be taken. So they held back. Tormented each other. Gave of each other slowly. But that only made it worse. (p.335)

Example 528, They lay under the mangosteen tree, where only recently a grey old boatplant with boatflowers and boatfruit had been uprooted by a Mobile Republic. A wasp. A flag. A surprised puff. A Fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo. The scurrying, hurrying, boatworld was already gone. The White termites on their way to work. The White ladybirds on their way home. The White beetles burrowing away from the light. The White grasshoppers with white violins. The sad white music. All gone. Leaving a boat-shaped patch of bare dry earth, cleared and ready for love. As though Esthappen and Rahel had prepared the ground for them. Willed this to happen. The twin midwives of Ammu's dream. (p.335)

Example 529, He drew her hair around them like a tent. Like her children did when they wanted to exclude the outside world. She slid further down, introducing herself to the rest of him. His neck. His nipples. His chocolate stomach. [...]He took her nipple in his mouth and cradled her other breast in his calloused palm. Velvet gloved in sandpaper. (p.336)

Example 530, Was it? Two lives. Two children's childhoods. And a history lesson for future offenders. (p.336)

Example 531, She could feel him moving deeper and deeper into her. Frantic. Frenzied. Asking to be let in further. Further. Stopped only by the shape of her. The shape of him. (p.337)

Example 532, He kissed her eyes. Her ears. Her breasts. Her belly. Her seven silver stretchmarks from her twins. The line of down that led from her navel to her dark triangle, that told him where she wanted him to go. The inside of her legs, where her skin was softest. Then carpenter's hands lifted her hips and an untouchable tongue touched the innermost part of her. Drank long and deep from the bowl of her. She danced for him. On that boat-shaped piece of earth. She lived. (p.337)

Example 533, Seven years of oblivion lifted off her and flew into the shadows on weighty, quaking wings. Like a dull, steel peahen. And on Ammu's Road (to Age and Death) a small, sunny meadow appeared. Copper grass spangled with blue butterflies. Beyond it, an abyss. Slowly the terror seeped back into him. At what he had done. At what he knew he would do again. And again. (p.337)

Example 534, She woke to the sound of his heart knocking against his chest. As though

it was searching for a way out. For that movable rib. A secret sliding-folding panel. (p.338)

Example 535, It was a little cold. A little wet. A little quiet. The Air. [...]Only one thing mattered now. They knew that it was all they could ask of each other. The only thing. Ever. They both knew that. (p.338)

Example 536, They had nothing. No future. So they stuck to the small things. They laughed at ant-bites on each other's bottoms. At clumsy caterpillars sliding off the ends of leaves, at overturned beetles that couldn't right themselves. At the pair of small fish that always sought Velutha out in the river and bit him. At a particularly devout praying mantis. At the minute spider who lived in a crack in the wall of the black verandah of the History House and camouflaged himself by covering his body with bits of rubbish - a sliver of wasp wing. Part of a cobweb. Dust. Leaf rot. The empty thorax of a dead bee. *Chappu Thamburan*, Velutha called him. Lord Rubbish. One night they contributed to his wardrobe - a flake of garlic skin - and were deeply offended when he rejected it along with the rest of his armour from which he emerged - disgruntled, naked, snot-coloured. As though he deplored their taste in clothes. For a few days he remained in this suicidal state of disdainful undress. The rejected shell of garbage stayed standing, like an outmoded world-view. An antiquated philosophy. (p.338)

Example 537, They fretted over his frailty. His smallness. The adequacy of his camouflage. His seemingly self-destructive pride. They grew to love his eclectic taste. His shambling dignity. They chose him because they knew that they had to put their faith in fragility. Stick to Smallness. (p.339)

Example 538, She touched him lightly with her fingers and left a trail of goosebumps on his skin. Like flat chalk on a blackboard. Like breeze in a paddyfield. Like jet-streaks in a blue church sky. (p.339)

Example 539, She turned to say it once again: '*Naaley*.' Tomorrow. (p.340)

Complete List of Figures of Speech

Roy Style Marker: Repetitive Sentence Patterns

Example 1, Yet Estha's silence was never awkward. Never intrusive. Never noisy. (p.10)

Example 2, He never bargained. They never cheated him. (p.11)

Example 3, It reached out of his head and enfolded him in its swampy arms. It rocked him to the rhythm of an ancient, foetal heartbeat. It sent its stealthy, suckered tentacles inching along the insides of his skull, hoovering the knolls and dells of his memory, dislodging old sentences, whisking them off the tip of his tongue. It stripped his thoughts of the words that described them and left them pared and naked. (p.11)

Example 4, As Khubchand lay dying on his cushion, Estha could see the bedroom window reflected in his smooth, purple balls. And the sky beyond. And once a bird that flew across. (p.12)

Example 5, Other days he walked down the road. Past the new, freshly baked, iced, Gulf-money houses built by nurses, masons, wire-benders and bank clerks who worked hard and unhappily in faraway places. Past the resentful older houses tinged green with envy, cowering in their private driveways among their private rubber trees. Each a tottering fiefdom with an epic of its own. He walked past the village school that his great-grandfather built for Untouchable children. Past Sophle Mol's yellow church. Past the Ayemenem Youth. Kung Fu Club. Past the Tender Buds Nursery School (for Touchables), past the ration shop that sold rice, sugar, and bananas that hung in yellow bunches from the root. (p.13)

Example 6, Rahel grew up without a brief: Without anybody to arrange a marriage for her. Without anybody who would pay her a dowry and therefore without an obligatory husband looming on her horizon. So as long as she wasn't noisy about it, she remained free to make her own enquiries: into breasts and how much they hurt. Into false hair buns and how well they burned. Into life and how it ought to be lived. (p.17)

Example 7, Not when Mammachi died. Not when Chacko emigrated to Canada. (p.18)

Example 8, He couldn't be expected to understand that. That the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other. That the two things fitted together. Like stacked spoons. Like familiar lovers' bodies. (p.20)

Example 9, Rahel gave up her job at the gas station and left America gladly. To return to Ayemenem. To Estha in the rain. (p.20)

Example 10, Just to be near him. Close enough to smell his beard. To see the coarse weave of his cassock. To love him just by looking at him. (p.24)

Example 11, Through the holes in her ears you could see the hot river and the dark trees that bent into it. And the fishermen in their boats. And the fish. (p.30)

Example 12, 'But we can't go in,' Chacko explained, 'because we've been locked out. And when we look in through the windows, all we see are shadows. And when we try and listen, all we hear is a whispering. 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.' [...] 'We're Prisoners of War,' Chacko said. 'Our dreams have been doctored. We belong nowhere. We sail unanchored on troubled seas. We may never be allowed ashore. Our sorrows will never be sad enough. Our joys never happy enough. Our dreams never big enough. Our lives never important enough. To matter.' (p.53)

Example 13, They would grow up grappling with ways of living with what happened. They would try to tell themselves that in terms of geological time it was an insignificant event. Just a blink of the Earth Woman's eye. That Worse Things had happened. That Worse Things kept happening. But they would find no comfort in the thought. (p.55)

Example 14,

He watched the trains come and go. He counted his keys.

He watched governments rise and fall. He counted his keys.

He watched cloudy children at car windows with yearning marshmallow noses.

The homeless, the helpless, the sick, the small and lost, all filed past his window.

Still he counted his keys.

He was never sure which cupboard he might have to open, or when. He sat on the burning milestone with his matted hair and eyes like windows, and was glad to be able to look away sometimes. To have his keys to count and countercheck. (p.63)

Example 15, He said it was a lucky leaf that made the monsoons come on time. A brown leaf on a black back. An autumn leaf at night. A lucky leaf that wasn't lucky enough. (p.73)

Example 16, When Mammachi decided to enclose the back verandah, it was Velutha who designed and built the sliding-folding door that later became all the rage in Ayemenem. Velutha knew more about the machines in the factory than anyone else. When Chacko resigned his job in Madras and returned to Ayemenem with a Bharat bottle-sealing machine, it was Velutha who reassembled it and set it up. It was Velutha who maintained the new canning machine and the automatic pineapple slicer. Velutha who oiled the water-pump and the small diesel generator. Velutha who built the aluminium sheet-lined, easy-to-clean cutting surfaces, and the ground-level furnaces for boiling fruit. (p.75)

Example 17, An unwarranted assurance. In the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way he offered suggestions without being asked. Or the quiet way in which he disregarded suggestions without appearing to rebel. (p.76)

Example 18, At least not until the Terror took hold of him. Not until he saw, night after night, a little boat being rowed across the river. Not until he saw it return at dawn. Not until he saw what his Untouchable son had touched. (p.78)

Example 19, In her mind he grew to represent the march. And the man who had forced her to wave the Marxist Party flag. And the man who christened her Modalali Mariakutty. And all the men who had laughed at her. [...]

There were too many stains on the road.

Squashed Miss Mitten-shaped stain in the Universe.

Squashed frog-shaped stains in the Universe.

Squashed crows that tried to eat the squashed frog-shaped stains in the Universe.

Feathers. Mangoes. Spit.

All the way to Cochin.(p.82)

Example 20, Rahel giggled. Ammu giggled. Baby Kochamma giggled. (p.95)

Example 21, The orange too orange. The lemon too lemon. The chocolates too melty. (p.98)

Example 22, In the lobby, the orangedrinks were waiting. The lemondrlinks were waiting. The melty chocolates were waiting. The electric blue foamleather car-sofas were waiting. The *Coming Soon!* posters were waiting. [...] The Man wiped his marble counter with a dirtcoloured rag. And he waited. And waiting he wiped. And wiping he waited. And watched Estha sing. (p.101)

Example 23, His gold wristwatch was almost hidden by his curly forearm hair. His gold chain was almost hidden by his chest hair. (p.102)

Example 24,

(a) Did Captain von Clapp-Trapp shiver his leg?

He did not.

(b) Did Captain von Clapp-Trapp blow spit-bubbles? Did he?

He did most certainly not.

(c) Did he gobble?

He did not. (p.106)

Example 25, Rahel stood in the hotel room doorway, full of sadness. She had in her the sadness of Sophie Mol coming. The sadness of Ammu's loving her a little less. And the sadness of whatever the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man had done to Estha in Abhilash Talkies. (p.115)

Example 26, And so, out the gate, up the road, and to the left. The taxi stand. A hurt mother, an ex-nun, a hot child and a cold one. Six goose bumps and a moth. (p.112)

Example 27, To learn her. Imprint her on his memory. To ensure that when he thought of her, the child that he invoked would be accurate. He memorized the brown down on

her soft skull. The shape of her puckered, constantly moving mouth. The spaces between her toes. The suggestion of a mole. (p.117)

Example 28, Ammu watched with her handbag. Chacko with his roses. Baby Kochamma with her sticking out neckmole. (p.140)

Example 29, Because of a calamitous car crash. Because of a Joe-shaped hole in the Universe. (p.143)

Example 30, Little Ammu.

Who never completed *her* corrections.

Who had to pack her bags and leave. Because she had no Locusts Stand I. Because Chacko said she had destroyed enough already.

Who came back to Ayemenem with asthma and a rattle in her chest that sounded like a faraway man shouting. (p.159)

Example 31, She had no plans.

No plans.

No Locusts Stand 1. (p.188)

Example 32, It is after all so easy to shatter a story. To break a chain of thought. To ruin a fragment of a dream being carried around carefully like a piece of porcelain. To let it be, to travel with it, as Velutha did, is much the harder thing to do. (p.190)

Example 33, 'You're not the Sinners. You're the Sinned Against. You were only children. You had no control. You are the *victims*, not the perpetrators.' (p.191)

Example 34,

Past floating yellow limes in brine that needed prodding from time to time (or else islands of black fungus formed like frilled mushrooms in a clear soup).

Past green mangoes, cut and stuffed. with turmeric and chili powder and tied together with twine. (they needed no attention for a while.)

Past glass casks of vinegar with corks.

Past shelves of pectin and preservatives.

Past trays of bitter gourd, with knives and coloured finger guards.

Past gunny bags bulging with garlic and small onions.

Past mounds of fresh green peppercorns.

Past a heap of banana peels on the floor (preserved for the pigs' dinner).

Past the label cupboard full of labels.

Past the glue.

Past the glue-brush.

Past an iron tub of empty bottles floating in soapbubbled water.

Past the lemon squash.

The grape-crush.

And back. (p.194)

Example 35, An old river silence. The silence of fisher People and waxy mermaids. (p.200)

Example 36, The boat that Estha sat on and Rahel found. The boat that Ammu would use to cross the river. (p.202)

Example 37,

White termites on their way to work.

White ladybirds on their way home.

White beetles burrowing away from the light.

White grasshoppers with whitewood violins. (p.202)

Example 38, Here Chacko had taught them to swim (splashing around his ample uncle stomach without help). Here they had discovered for themselves the disconnected delights of underwater farting.

Here they had learned to fish. To thread coiling purple earthworms onto hooks on the fishing rods that Velutha made from slender culms of yellow bamboo.

Here they studied Silence (like the children of the Fisher Peoples), and learned the bright language of dragonflies.

Here they learned to Wait. To Watch. To think thoughts and not voice them. To move like lightning when the bendy yellow bamboo arced downwards. (p.203)

Example 39, Her children, an insane whisper whispered to him. Her eyes, her mouth. Her teeth.

Her soft, lambent skin. (p.212)

Example 40, If he held her, he couldn't kiss her. If he kissed her, he couldn't see her. If he saw her, he couldn't feel her. (p.215)

Example 41, Some of them had newspapers. Some didn't. Some of them blew spit-bubbles. Some didn't. But they all had the flickering reflection of an oil lamp on each lens. (p.216)

Example 42, if he touched her, he couldn't talk to her, if he loved her he couldn't leave, if he spoke he couldn't listen, if he fought he couldn't win.

Who was he, the one-armed man? Who *could* he have been? The God of Loss? The God of Small Things? The God of Goose Bumps and Sudden Smiles? Of Sourmetal Smells-- like steel bus-rails and the smell of the bus conductor's hands from holding them? (p.217)

Example 43, The folding chairs were folded. The black sea smoothed. The creased waves ironed. The spume' rebottled. The bottle corked. The night postponed till further notice. (p.218)

Example 44, There was Pathil Arnmai, who at the age of sixty-fiye began to take her clothes off and run naked along the river, singing to the fish. There was Thampi Chachen, who searched his shit every morning with a knitting needle for a gold tooth he

had swallowed years ago. And Dr Muthachen, who had to be removed from his own wedding in a sack. Would future generations say, 'There was Ammu—Ammu Ipe. Married a Bengali. Went quite mad. Died young. In a cheap lodge somewhere.' (p.223)

Example 45, No milestones marked its progress. No trees grew along it. No dappled shadows shaded it. No mists rolled over it. No birds circled it. No twists, no turns or hairpin bends obscured even momentarily, her clear view of the end. [...]She dreaded it too much. So if she were granted one small wish perhaps it would only have been Not to Know. Not to know what each day held in store for her. Not to know where she might be, next month, next year. Ten years on. Not to know which way her road might turn and what lay beyond the bend. And Ammu knew. Or thought she knew, which was really just as bad (because if in a dream you've eaten fish, it means you've eaten fish). And what Ammu knew (or thought she knew), smelled of the rapid, vinegary fumes that rose from the cement vats of Paradise Pickles. Fumes that wrinkled youth and pickled futures. (p.224)

Example 46, The bedroom with blue curtains and yellow wasps that worried the windowpanes. The bedroom whose walls would soon learn their harrowing secrets. (p.224)

Example 47, The oil replenished the light. The light lit the tin. (p.229)

Example 48, They don't deceive you with thrills and trick endings. They don't surprise you with the unforeseen. They are as familiar as the house you live in. (p.229)

Example 49, So when he tells a story, he handles it as he would a child of his own. He teases it. He punishes it. He sends it up like a bubble. He wrestles it to the ground and lets it go again. He laughs at it because he loves it. He can fly you across whole worlds in minutes, he can stop for hours to examine a wilting leaf. Or play with a sleeping monkey's tail. He can turn effortlessly from the carnage of war into the felicity of a woman washing her hair in a mountain stream. From the crafty ebullience of a rakshasa with a new idea into a gossipy Malayali with a scandal to spread. From the sensuousness of a woman with a baby at her breast into the seductive mischief of Krishna's smile. (p.230)

Example 50, But he himself, left dangling somewhere between heaven and earth, cannot do what they do. He cannot slide down the aisles of buses, counting change and selling tickets. He cannot answer bells that summon him. He cannot stoop behind trays of tea and Marie biscuits. (p.230)

Example 51, That night Karna was stoned. His tattered skirt was darned. There were hollows in his crown where jewels used to be. His velvet blouse had grown bald with use. His heels were cracked. (p.231)

Example 52, It's all he has to keep him from crashing through the world like a falling stone. It is his colour and his light. It is the vessel into which he pours himself: It gives

him shape. Structure. It harnesses him. It contains him. His Love. His Madness. His Hope. His InffinateJoy. (p.231)

Example 53, He was grateful to her for not wanting to look after him. For not offering to tidy his room. For not being his cloying mother. [...]The river too small. The fish too few. [...]Margaret Kochamma and Chacko were married. Without her family's consent. Without his family's knowledge. (p.246)

Example 54, Sophie Mol put the presents into her go-go bag, and went forth into the world. To drive a hard bargain. To negotiate a friendship. A friendship that, unfortunately, would be left dangling. Incomplete. Flailing in the air with no foothold. A friendship that never circled around into a story, which is why, far more quickly than ever should have happened, Sophie .Mol became a Memory, while The Loss of Sophie Mol grew robust and alive. (p.267)

Example 55, Work is Struggle. Struggle is Work. (p.268)

Example 56, She said nothing, but used her hands to modulate Mammachi's fury, to stoke it anew. An encouraging pat on the back. A reassuring arm around the shoulders. (p.284)

Example 57, He noticed everything. Each leaf. Each tree. Each cloud in the starless sky. Each step he took. (p.285)

Example 58, And there it was again. Another religion turned against itself. Another edifice constructed by the human mind, decimated by human nature. (p.287)

Example 59, Carried away on the muffled highway. Greygreen. With fish in it. With the sky and trees in it. And at night the broken yellow moon in it.

There was no storm-music. No whirlpool spun up from the inky depths of the Meenachal. No shark supervised the tragedy.

Just a quiet handing over ceremony. A boat spilling its cargo. A river accepting the offering. One small life. A brief sunbeam. (p.293)

Example 60,

Past a deepblue beetle balanced on an unbending blade of grass.

Past giant spider webs that had withstood the rain and spread like whispered gossip from tree to tree.

A banana flower sheathed in claret bracts hung from a scruffy, torn-leafed tree. A gem held out by a grubby schoolboy. A jewel in the velvet jungle. [...]

Past tall anthills congealed in the rain. Slumped like drugged sentries asleep at the gates of Paradise.

Past butterflies drifting through the air like happy messages. Huge ferns. (p.305)

Example 61, The History House.

Whose doors were locked and windows open.

With cold stone floors and billowing, ship-shaped shadows on the walls.

Where waxy ancestors with tough toe-nails and breath that smelled of yellow maps whispered papery whispers.

Where translucent lizards lived behind old paintings.

Where dreams were captured and re-dreamed.

Where an old Englishman ghost, sickled to a tree, was abrogated by a pair of two-egg twins - a Mobile Republic with a Puff who had planted a Marxist flag in the earth beside him. As the platoon of policemen minced past they didn't hear him beg. In his kind-missionary voice. *Excuse me, would you, umm . . . you wouldn't happen to umm . . . I don't suppose you'd have a cigar on you? No? . . . No, I didn't. think so.*

The History House.

Where, in the years that followed, the Terror (still-to-come) would be buried in a shallow grave. (p.306)

Example 62, The train pulled out. The light pulled in. (p.326)

Example 63, She whispers.

She moves her mouth.

Their beautiful mother's mouth.

Estha, sitting very. straight, waiting to be arrested, takes his fingers to it. To touch the words it makes. To keep the whisper. (p.327)

Example 64, But what was there to say? Only that there were tears. Only that Quietness and Emptiness fitted together like stacked spoons. Only that there was a snuffling in the hollows at the base of a lovely throat. Only that a hard honey-coloured shoulder had a semi-circle of teethmarks on it. Only that they held each other close, long after it was over. Only that what they shared that night was not happiness, but hideous grief. Only that once again they broke the Love Laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much. (p.328)

Example 65, Who was he?

Who could he have been?

The God of Loss.

The God of Small Things.

The God of Goose Bumps and Sudden Smiles. (p.330)

Example 66, As though she was late for something. As though her life depended on getting there in time. As though she knew he would be there. Waiting. As though he knew she would come. (p.332)

Example 67, When history had slipped up. While he had held her little daughter in his arms. When her eyes had told him he was not the only giver of gifts. That she had gifts to give him too, that in return for his boats, his boxes, his small windmills, she would trade her deep dimples when she smiled. Her smooth brown skin. Her shining shoulders. Her eyes that were always somewhere else. (p.332)

Example 68, How his labour had shaped him. How the wood he fashioned had fashioned him. Each plank he planed, each nail he drove, each thing he made, had moulded him. Had left its stamp on him. Had given him his strength, his supple grace. (p.334)

Example 69, He was shivering. Partly with cold. Partly terror. Partly aching desire. (p.334)

Example 70, Her brownness against his blackness. Her softness against his hardness. Her nut-brown breasts (that wouldn't support a toothbrush) against his smooth ebony chest. (p.335)

Example 71, White termites on their way to work.
The White ladybirds on their way home.
The White beetles burrowing away from the light.
The White grasshoppers with white violins. The sad white music.
All gone. (p.336)

Example 72, He kissed her eyes. Her ears. Her breasts. Her belly. Her seven silver stretchmarks from her twins. (p.337)

Example 73, Slowly the terror seeped back into him. At what he had done. At what he knew he would do again. And again. (p.337)

Example 74, They laughed at ant-bites on each other's bottoms. At clumsy caterpillars sliding off the ends of leaves, at overturned beetles that couldn't right themselves. At the pair of small fish that always sought Velutha out in the river and bit him. At a particularly devout praying mantis. At the minute spider who lived in a crack in the wall of the black verandah of the History House and camouflaged himself by covering his body with bits of rubbish - a sliver of wasp wing. (p.338)

Example 75, She touched him lightly with her fingers and left a trail of goosebumps on his skin. Like flat chalk on a blackboard. Like breeze in a paddyfield. Like jet-streaks in a blue church sky. (p.340)

Complete List of Figures of Speech

Roy Style Marker: Neologisms

Example 1, Not old. Not young. But a viable die-able age. (p.6)

Example 2, Sophie Mol smelled of cologne and coffinwood. (p.5)

Example 3, Estha stood close to her, barely awake, his aching eyes glittering like glass, his burning cheek against the bare skin of Ammu's trembling, hymnbook-holding arm. (p.5)

Example 4, They were already familiar with the smell. Sicksweet. Like old roses on a breeze. (p.6)

Example 5, The singing stopped for a 'Whatisit? Whathappened?' and for a furrywhirring and a sariflapping. (p.6)

Example 6, The sad priests dusted out their curly beards with goldringed fingers as though hidden spiders had spun sudden cobwebs in them. (p.6)

Example 7, She heard (on Sophie Mol's behalf), the softsounds of the red mud and the hardsounds of the orange late rite that spoiled the shining coffin polish. She heard the dullthudding through the polished coffin wood, through the satin coffin lining. (p.7)

Example 8, And now, twenty-three years later, their father had re-Returned Estha. (p.9)

Example 9, Heaven opened and the water hammered down, reviving the reluctant old well, greenmossing the pigless pigsty, carpet bombing still, tea-coloured puddles the way memory bombs still, tea-coloured minds. The grass looked wetgreen and pleased. (p.10)

Example 10, Further away, in the wind and rain, on the banks of the river, in the sudden thunderdarkness of the day, Estha was walking. He was wearing a crushed-strawberry-pink T-shirt, drenched darker now, and he knew that Rahel had come. (p.10)

Example 11, It had been a gradual winding down and closing shop. A barely noticeable quietening. (p.10)

Example 12, It rocked him to the rhythm of an ancient, foetal heartbeat. (p.11)

Example 13, A professional omeletteer. (p.14)

Example 14, And Estha, walking on the riverbank, couldn't feel the wetness of the rain, or the suddenshudder of the cold puppy that had temporarily adopted him and squelched at his side. (p.15)

Example 15, Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria, the vinegar-hearted, short-tempered, midget cook, were the only people left in the Ayemenem house when Estha was re-Returned. (p.15)

Example 16, [...] with a row of stern-mouthed nuns seated behind her and a sea of sniggering schoolgirl faces in front. (p.16)

Example 17, [...] savouring their teacherly disapproval, touching it with their tongues, sucking it like a sweet (p.17)

Example 18, Baby Kochamma force-bathed a poor village child at the well with hard red soap that hurt its protruding ribs. 'Morning, Father!' Baby Kochanuna would call out when she saw him, with a smile on her lips that completely belied the vice-like grip that she had on the thin child's soapslippery arm. (p.23)

Example 19, Reverend Ipe smiled his confident-ancestor smile out across the road instead of the river. (p.30)

Example 20, Though you couldn't see the river from the house any more, like a seashell always has a sea-sense, the Ayemenem house still had a river-sense. A rushing, rolling, fishswimming sense. (p.30)

Example 21, After that they were all going to stay at Hotel Sea Queen with the oldfood smell. (p.35)

Example 22, As though she had temporarily set aside the morality of motherhood and divorceehood. Even her walk changed from a safe mother-walk to another wilder sort of walk. (p.44)

Example 23, Ex-nun, and incumbent baby grand aunt. [...]The fate of the wretched Man-less woman. The sad, Father Mulligan-less Baby Kochamma. (p.45)

Example 24, Chacko strode into the room, caught Pappachi's vase-hand and twisted it around his back. (p.48)

Example 25, On the way to Cochin now, it rattled and made fallingoff noises. (p.58)

Example 26, Ammu smiled and. they shook hands, as though she really was being awarded a Certificate of Merit for being an honest-to-goodness Genuine Bourgeoise. (p.62)

Example 27, Murlidharan was naked except for the tall plastic bag that somebody had fitted onto his head like a transparent chef's cap through which the view of the landscape continued - dimmed, chef-shaped, but uninterrupted. (p.63)

Example 28, Rahel, standing on the car seat, had grown out of the Plymouth window like the loose, flailing horn of a car-shaped herbivore. (p.71)

Example 29, And she shuddered theatrically, like a child being force-fed spinach. (p.78)

Example 30, The woman in the neighbouring car had biscuit crumbs on her mouth. Her husband lit a bent after-biscuit cigarette. (p.83)

Example 31, She looked grumpy and bad-tempered, with her babylegs dangling. (p.84)

Example 32, Rahel put on her sunglasses. The World became angry-coloured. (p.85)

Example 33, A carbreeze blew. Greentrees and telephone poles flew past the windows. (p.87)

Example 34, A pale daymoon hung hugely in the sky and went where they went. As big as the belly of a beer-drinking man. (p.87)

Example 35, The terrible ghosts of impossible-to-forget toys clustered on the blades of the ceiling fan. (p.91)

Example 36, Rahel at the bathroom door. Slim-hipped. (p.92)

Example 37, Drownable in, as tarry McCaslin had said and discovered to his cost. (p.92)

Example 38, In their irreconcilable far-apartness. (p.93)

Example 39, As though his body had the power to snatch its senses inwards (knotted, egg-shaped), away from the surface of his skin, into some. deeper more inaccessible recess. (p.93)

Example 40, Her father's hardness had left her eyes and they were Ammu-eyes again. (p.96)

Example 41, The orange too orange. The lemon too lemon. The chocolates too melty. (p.98)

Example 42, The Torch Man opened the heavy Princess Circle door into the fan-whirring, peanut-crunching darkness. (p.98)

Example 43, They had complaints to make to their Reverend Mother. Sweetsinging complaints. (p.99)

Example 44, It was clear and true, cutting through the fan-whirring, peanut-crunching darkness. (p.100)

Example 45, Black-haired backs of heads became faces with mouths and moustaches. (p.100)

Example 46, In the lobby, the orangedrinks were waiting. The lemondrlinks were waiting. The melty chocolates were waiting. The electric blue foamleather car-sofas were waiting. The *Coming Soon!* posters were waiting. (p.101)

Example 47, The Man wiped his marble counter with a dirtcoloured rag. (p.101)

Example 48, 'Ay! *Eda cherukka!*' the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man said, in a gravelley voice thick with sleep. 'What the hell d'you think you're doing?' (p.101)

Example 49, First slowly. Then fastly. (p.103)

Example 50, Stickysweet lemon bubbles of the drink he couldn't drink. (p.104)

Example 51, The lemondrink was cold and sweet. (p.104)

Example 52, With his dirtcoloured rag, the man wiped Estha's other hand. (p.104)

Example 53, His lemontoolemon, too cold. (p.105)

Example 54, He had a greenwavy, thick-watery, lumpy, seaweedly, floaty, bottomless-bottomful feeling. (p.107)

Example 55, 'Feeling vomity,' Estha said. (p.107)

Example 56, 'Out again sosoon?' he said. Estha was already retching. Ammu moonwalked him to the Princess Circle bathroom. HERS. He was held up, wedged between the notclean basin and Ammu's body. Legs dangling. The basin had steel taps, and rust stains. And a brownwebbed mesh of hairline cracks, like the roadmap of some great, intricate city. (p.108)

Example 57, 'No thank you.' Estha looked at Ammu. Greenwavy, seaweedly, bottomless-bottomful. (p.109)

Example 58, Ammu saw her son's bright feverbutton eyes. (p.109)

Example 59, Wiping with his dirtcoloured rag the ring-shaped water-stains they had left on his marble Refreshments Counter. (p.111)

Example 60, His disgusting, after-sweet sweet. (p.116)

Example 61, A dinnerless niece and her dinnerfull uncle brushed their teeth together in the Hotel Sea Queen bathroom. (p.116)

Example 62, Ammu was asleep and looked beautiful in the barred-blue streetlight that came in through the barred-blue window. She smiled a sleepsmile that dreamed of dolphins and a deep barred blue. (p.119)

Example 63, And the dull, sullen sound of the boatmen's bamboo poles as they thudded against the dark, oiled boatwood. It was warm, the water. Greygreen. Like rippled silk. (p.125)

Example 64, When they grew tired of waiting, the dinner smells climbed off the curtains and drifted through the Sea Queen windows to dance the night away on the dinner-smelling sea. (p.123)

Example 65, Bronze-winged lily-trotters walked across it. Splay-footed, cautious. (P.124)

Example 66, With her thumb in her handkerchief she blocked the beadless nostril. (p.133)

Example 67, She arrived on the Bombay-Cochin flight. Hatted, bell-bottomed and Loved from the Beginning. (p.135)

Example 68, Red-mouthed smiles the Airport Kangaroos had. And pink-edged ears. (p.138)

Example 69, When Sophie Mol's plane appeared in the skyblue Bombay-Cochin sky, the crowd pushed against the iron railing to see more of everything. (p.138)

Example 70, She turned away from the screaming steel bird in the skyblue sky that had her cousin in it, and what she saw was this: red-mouthed roos with ruby smiles moved cemently across the airport floor. (p.139)

Example 71, Crumpled people uncrumpled on their way to the Arrivals Lounge. (p.140)

Example 72, [...] the Foreign Returnees would be trapped outside the History House, and have their dreams redreamed. (p.141)

Example 73, She turned around to find her crisp-knickered daughter communing with cement marsupials. She went and fetched her, scoldingly. (p.141)

Example 74, Across the tall iron railing that separated Meeters from the Met, and Greeters from the Gret, Chacko, beaming, bursting through his suit and sideways tie, bowed to his new daughter and ex-wife. (p.142)

Example 75, Because of a calamitous car crash. Because of a Joe-shaped hole in the Universe. (p.143)

Example 76, It was an easy-to-understand laugh. (p.143)

Example 77, An Imperial Entomologist's nose-within-a-nose. A moth-lover's nose. (p.143)

Example 78, 'He's a filmactor,' she explained to Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol, making Adoor Basi sound like a Mactor who did occasionally Fil. (p.144)

Example 79, Ambassador Rahel, unable to cope with see-sawing changes in her life, had raveled herself like a sausage into the dirty airport curtain, and wouldn't unravel. (p.146)

Example 80, Sophie Mol was puzzled. She regarded Baby Kochamma with a beady-eyed interest. (p.144)

Example 81, Margaret Kochamma said in a kind-schoolteacher voice. (p.146)

Example 82, Rahel's mind was full of millstones with bluegreyblue eyes. (p.146)

Example 83, [...] intimidated by Chacko's suit and sideways tie and his generally bursty demeanour. He kissed her bluegreyblue eyes, her entomologist's nose, her hatted redbrown hair. (p.147)

Example 84, On their way across the airport car park, Hotweather crept into their clothes and dampened crisp knickers. (p.150)

Example 85, In the doorway of the Arrivals Lounge, a shadowy, red-mouthed, roo-shaped silhouette waved a cemently paw only at Rahel. (p.152)

Example 86, The skyblue Plymouth with tailfins had a smile for Sophie Mol. A chromebumpered sharksmile. A Paradise Pickles carsmile. (p.153)

Example 87, Estha and Rahel had to sing in English in obedient voices. Breezily. (p.154)

Example 88, Just outside Ayemenem they drove into a cabbage-green butterfly (or perhaps it drove into them). (p.154)

Example 89, The way she held their faces steady with one hand (squashed-cheeked, fish-mouthed) while she parted and combed their hair with the other. (p.163)

Example 90, The green - in the last moments of that strange, glowing, preshower light - was fierce. (p.164)

Example 91, It was a grand old house, the Ayemenem House, but aloof-looking. (p.165)

Example 92, And on one side of the driveway, beside the old well, in the shade of the kodam puli tree, a silent blue-aproned army gathered in the greenheat to watch. Blue-aproned, white-capped, like a clot of smart blue and white flags. (p.172)

Example 93, Jet-lagged and barely awake. Then the swollen-ankled adults. Slow from too much sitting. 'Have you arrived?' Mammachi asked, turning her slanty dark glasses towards the new sounds: car doors slamming, getting-outedness. (p.172)

Example 94, There was a short, Sad-About-Joe silence. (p.173)

Example 95, They looked up like slanting cat's eyes at the mouldy bison head. The mouldy bison said, 'No. *Absolutely Not.*' In Mouldy Bisonese. (p.174)

Example 96, . To check her like a bank note. Mammachi (with her better eye) saw redbrown hair (N . . . Nalmost blond), the curve of two fatfreckled cheeks (Nnnn . . . almost rosy); bluegreyblue eyes. (p.174)

Example 97, A little way away, Velutha walked up the shortcut through the rubber trees. Barebodied. (p.174)

Example 98, She wondered at how his body had changed – so quietly, from a flatmuscled boy's body into a man's body. Contoured and hard. A swimmer's body. A swimmer-carpenter's body. (p.175)

Example 99, Surprised that her child seemed to have a subworld that excluded *her* entirely. (p.176)

Example 100, 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-Tokyos. And backward-reading habits. (p.179)

Example 101, An embarrassed schoolteacher-shaped hole in the Universe. (p.179)

Example 102, And that became a delighted, breathless, Rumplestiltskin-like dance among the rubber trees. (p.182)

Example 103, A cloying chocolate melody. Stickysweet, and meltybrown. (p.183)

Example 104, She put her violin away into its black, violin-shaped box. (p.183)

Example 105, Red ants that had a sour farty smell when they were squashed. (p.185)

Example 106, Sophie Mol, hatted, bellbottomed and Loved from the Beginning, walked out of the Play to see what Rahel was doing behind the well. (p.186)

Example 107, Then in her frothy Airport Frock with matching knickers (no longer crisp) and unmatching sunglasses, she ran away. (p.186)

Example 108, The green-for-the-day had seeped from the, trees. (p.187)

Example 109, She looked back at the looming, gabled, house-shaped hole in the Universe and imagined living in the silver bowl that Baby Kochamma had installed on the roof. (p.188)

Example 110, Flowers blooming and unblooming. (p.188)

Example 111, Where a red, tender-mango-shaped secret was pickled, sealed and put away. (p.192)

Example 112, Ambassador E. Pelvis/S. Pimpernel (with a puff) of the beige and pointy shoes, pushed open the gauze doors to the dank and pickle-smelling premises of Paradise Pickles. (p.193)

Example 113, Past an iron tub of empty bottles floating in soapbubbled water. (p.194)

Example 114, The sound of their hammering echoing dully under the brooding, storm-coming sky. And nearby in the jungle, in the eerie, storm-coming light, animals queued up in pairs (p.195)

Example 115, Over the somewhat discourteous questions and answers of the boatsong, Rahel's voice floated into the factory. (p.197)

Example 116, The factory was Angry-coloured. [...]And Ousa the Bar Nowl watched the pickle-smelling silence that lay between the twins like a bruise. (p.195)

Example 117, A sickled smell, that bled clear, amber blood, and begged for cigars. (p.199)

Example 118, But he had the satisfaction of knowing that his lightning-quick reflexes (despite his mortgaged eye) and his presence of mind had put an end to the bloodthirsty wanderings of a paedophile ghost. As long as no one succumbed to its artifice and unsickled it with a cigar. (p.199)

Example 119, And that inside, map-breath'd ancestors with tough toe-nails whispered to the lizards on the wall. [...]That the ones he craved most of all, the dreams he loved redreaming, were the tender dreams of two-egg twins. (p.199)

Example 120, Distant cake-crumbled voices and approaching Blue Army footsteps caused the comrades to seal the secret. It was pickled, sealed and put away. A red, tender mango-shaped secret in a vat. (p.200)

Example 121, In a kind-schoolteacherly voice. (p.201)

Example 122, Knock on it and it made a hollow knocked-on sound. [...] Finger-coloured fingers fought the ferns, moved the stones, cleared the way. (p.202)

Example 123, A grey old boatplant with boatflowers and boatfruit And underneath, a boat-shaped patch of withered grass. A scurrying, hurrying boatworld. (p.202)

Example 124, White grasshoppers with whitewood violins. [...] A brittlewhite snakeskin (p.202)

Example 125, Greygreen. With fish in it. The sky and trees in it. And at night, the broken yellow moon in it. When Pappachi was a boy, an old tamarind tree fell into it in a storm. It was still there. A smooth barkless tree, blackened by a surfeit of green water. Driftless driftwood. (p.203)

Example 126, The deep-swimming fish covered their mouths with their fins and laughed sideways at the spectacle. A white boat-spider floated up with the river in the boat, struggled briefly and drowned. (p.204)

Example 127, The room was dark and clean. It smelled of fish curry and woodsmoke. (p.207)

Example 128, The black hen left through the back door, and scratched abstractedly in the yard where woodshavings blew about like blonde curls. (p.208)

Example 129, [...] a little old church-going ammooma, quiet and clean (p.210)

Example 130, Boat-dust flew around the room and settled on hair and eyebrows. (p.213)

Example 131, [...] like jet streaks in a blue church-sky. (p.215)

Example 132, 'It's an afternoon-mare, Estha-the-Accurate replied. 'She dreams a-lot.' (p.217)

Example 133, Chinks of late afternoon light stole into the room through the curtains and fell on Ammu's tangerine-shaped transistor radio that she always took with her to the river. (Tangerine-shaped too, was the Thing that Estha carried into *The Sound of Music* in his sticky Other Hand.) (p.217)

Example 134, Outside in the mittam, crisp saris lay in rows and crispened in the sun. Off-white and gold. (p.219)

Example 135, Like two pieces of lightly sugar-dusted, unidentical cake. (p.220)

Example 136, It was a clear-as-glass kiss. Unclouded by passion or desire - that pair of dogs that sleeps so soundly inside children, waiting for them to grow up. It was a kiss that demanded no kiss-back. (p.221)

Example 137, Red the colour of splintered doorwood. (p.226)

Example 138, The ear bones cracked like twigs. *Snap* the softsound of breaking bones. (p.225)

Example 139, Inside, everything was white-walled, moss-tiled and moonlit. (p.228)

Example 140, Comrade Pillai. Ayemenem's egg-breaker and professional omletteer. (p.236)

Example 141, Underneath the flush, there was a paleness. A staved-off sadness. (p.239)

Example 142, He ordered coffee with that same friendly smile, but without really appearing to notice the tall, bushy eyebrowed waitress who took his order. (p.241)

Example 143, The dejammed strawberries were summoned one by one, and sliced into delicate pieces. (p.242)

Example 144, She had always thought of herself as a somewhat uninteresting, thick-waisted, thick-ankled girl. (p.245)

Example 145, A year into the marriage, and the charm of Chacko's studently sloth wore off for Margaret Kochamma. (p.247)

Example 146, [...] yes they do, the deepswimming fish. They sample everything. (p.251)

Example 147, She recoiled from its slippery hardness. Its slimy marbleness. (p.255)

Example 148, With that olfactory observation, that specific little detail, the Terror unspooled. (p.257)

Example 149, It overflowed in a wave of vomit and left her mute and empty-eyed. [...] Long, dim hours of thick, furry-tongued serenity (medically administered by Dr Verghese Verghese), lacerated by sharp, steely slashes of hysteria, as keen and cutting as the edge of a new razor blade. (p.163)

Example 150, The sun had moved across the sky and cast a deep house-shadow across the, plantation; darkening the already dark-leafed trees. (p.266)

Example 151, Comrade Pillai arrived mid-poem, a sheen of sweat glazed his skin, his mundu was folded up over his knees, dark sweatstains spread under his Terylene armpits. (p.272)

Example 152, And so, having bagged the contract for the Synthetic Cooking Vinegar labels, he deftly banished Chacko from the fighting ranks of the Overthrowers to the

treacherous ranks of the To Be Overthrown. [...]Comic book adversaries in a still-to-come war. (p.280)

Example 153, Victory was gifted to him wrapped and be-ribboned, on a silver tray. (p.281)

Example 154, A rushing, rolling, fishswimming silence. [...]Carried away on the muffled highway. Greygreen. [...]There was no storm-music. [...]Hansel and Gretel in a ghastly fairy tale in which their dreams would be captured and redreamed. (p.293)

Example 155, No one noticed her panicked car-window appeals. [...]Kochu Maria was asleep on the drawing-room floor, curled into a comma in the flickering light of the television that was still on. American policemen were stuffing a hand-cuffed teenaged boy into a police car. (p.296)

Example 156, Her senses feasted, between changes, on that lean, concave, Christ-like body. [...]She reconverted him into the high-stepping camel that came to lunch on Thursdays. [...]She put the pen back into the pen-loop and shut the diary. (p.298)

Example 157, A clenched-smile soda. [...]Her small, clever-looking hands. (p.299)

Example 158, Her mouth, full lipped. Something wounded-looking about it. [...]Ammu's trying-not-to-cry mouth. (p.300)

Example 159, Stamping her feet on the platform, unsettling clouds of settled station-filth. Until Ammu shook her and told her to Stoppit and she Stoppited. Around them the hostling-jostling crowd. Scurrying hurrying buying selling luggage trundling porter paying children shitting people spitting coming going begging bargaining reservation-checking. Echoing stationsounds. (p.300)

Example 160, Grey in the stationlight. (p.301)

Example 161, A man sitting on a red weighing machine unstrapped his artificial leg (knee downwards) with a black boot and nice white sock painted on it. The hollow, knobbed calf was pink, like proper calves should be. (p.301)

Example 162, The Stationworld. (p.302)

Example 163, The Kottayam Police. A cartoonplatoon. [...]Dark of Heart. Deadlypurposed.(p.304)

Example 164, Ground creepers snagged in their dewdamp leghair. [...] Rough grass left their legskin raw, crisscrossed with cuts. (p.304)

Example 165, Motherbirds and their eggs. (p.305)

Example 166, Past a deepblue beetle balanced on an unbending blade of grass. [...]Crimson dragonflies mated in the air. Doubledecker. (p.305)

Example 167, In his kind-missionary voice. [...]Where, in the years that followed, the Terror (still-to-come) would be buried in a shallow grave. (p.306)

Example 168, It was a beautiful house. White-walled once. Red-roofed. But painted in weathercolours now. With brushes dipped in nature's palette. Mossgreen. Earthbrown. Crumbleblack. Making it look older than it really was. Like sunken treasure dredged up from the ocean bed. Whale-kissed and barnacled. Swaddled in silence. (p.306)

Example 169, Rotting beams supported on once-white pillars had buckled at the centre, leaving a yawning, gaping hole. A History hole. A History-shaped hole in the Universe. (p.307)

Example 170, Hotfoam on warmstone. Police-piss. [...]Making nonsense of all that Touchable cunning. The Surpriseswoop. [...]For this insolence, this spoiling-the-fun, their quarry paid. (p.307)

Example 171, Blue-lipped and dinner-plate-eyed, they watched, mesmerized by something that they sensed but didn't understand: (p.308)

Example 172, Mrs Eapen and Mrs Rajagopalan, Twin Ambassadors of God-knows-what, learned two new lessons. [...]With the sourmetal smell. (p.309)

Example 173, The cockroach-crisp food.(p.317)

Example 174, She gnawed like a rat into the godown of Chacko's grief. (p.321)

Example 175, And a green-wavy, thick-watery, lumpy, sea weedy, floaty, bottomless-bottomful feeling. (p.323)

Example 176, Trainrumbles under their feet. The blue nightlight not yet on. [...]Darkgreen Lightgreen. (p.323)

Example 177, 'Keep your ticket carefully,' Ammu's mouth said. Ammu's trying-not-to-cry mouth. 'They'll come and check.' (p.333)

Example 178, Little Elvis the Pelvis with a spoiled, special-outing puff. (p.326)

Example 179, Only that a hard honey-coloured shoulder had a semi-circle of teethmarks on it. (p.328)

Example 180, Bone dust from a Bar Nowl. Long dead. Pickledowl. (p.328)

Example 181, Sophie Mol. Hatted, bellbottomed and Loved from the Beginning. (p.328)

Example 182, If she had to endure another minute of Chacko's proud, tennis-trophy smile. (p.329)

Example 183, Then she sat on the wicker chair below the mouldy, button-eyed bison head and the portraits of the Little Blessed One and Aleyooty Ammachi that hung on either side of it. (p.331)

Example 184, A kiss that demanded a kiss-back. (p.335)

Example 185, They lay under the mangosteen tree, where only recently a grey old boatplant with boatflowers and boatfruit had been uprooted by a Mobile Republic. [...]The scurrying, hurrying, boatworld was already gone. (p.335)

Example 186, On that boat-shaped piece of earth. She lived. (p.337)

Example 187, [...] disgruntled, naked, snot-coloured. As though he deplored their taste in clothes. (p.339)

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