CHAPTER 4

Crossing Between Borders

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN EMILY BRONTË’S WUTHERING HEIGHTS AND ARUNDHATI ROY’S THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS.

“A writer’s technique is actually the means by which he discovers, objectifies, explores and evaluates his subject, and his technical dexterity determines his success” ---Mark Schorer

This chapter undertakes to make a detailed examination of all the narrative techniques present in the two novels, Wuthering Heights and The God of Small Things.

The novel, as an established cultural institution has over the last two hundred years become the most significant and dominant form of literary writing with an unprecedented global acceptance, unimagined before in its much chequered history. An unknown mode of writing till recently, the novel with its polymorphic and incursive nature did not fit easily into any classical mode of writing. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellog in The Form of Narrative postulate that in the complex literary evolution, where the process of mutation and permutation continues, different genres sometimes combine to produce new hybrids. The novel as a new and the latest of literary genres draws its essence from all traditional forms of narratives.

Literature and society exist in a dialectical unity. George Lukas in his Theory of the Novel propounds that the novel as a literary form has a dialectical nature, in so far as it derives from a society based on economic reality on one hand and individualism on the other. The novel’s serious concern with the daily lives of ordinary people seems to depend on the rise of a society characterized by ‘individualism’. The rise of the novel as an art form is closely linked with the rise of the capitalist society. Lionel Trilling in The Liberal
Imagination states, “For our time the most effective agent of the moral imagination has
been the novel...It taught us, as no other genre ever did, the extent of human variety and
the value of this variety”. Raymond Williams corroborates that the novel is “one medium
among many in which men seek to master and absorb new experience by discovering new
forms and rhythms, grasping and so constructing the stuff of social change in the living
substance of perceptions and relationships” (Eagleton 34).

Culler views the novel as, “the primary semiotic agent of intelligibility”
(1975:189), for it ‘catches’ as Henry James observes, “the strange irregular pattern of

Consequently, the need to define this most elusive of all genres indicates the shift from
classical view of the novel as a passive reflector of social change to the post-structuralist
view of the novel as an active agent in the formation of the discourse that shapes all
subjectivity.

The novel, according to M.H.Abrams, is an “extended narrative” (1993: 130).
Roland Barthes in the opening to his landmark essay on narrative (1966), speaks on the
universality of narrative. Narrative, a semantic innovation (Ricoeur, IX), and a distinct
human trait permeates our lives in various forms (Rimmon-Kennon 1). Hayden White in
The Content of Form points out that the word “narrative” goes back to the Sanskrit word
“gna”, which means “know”. But the term ‘narrative’ has its etymological base in the
Latin narrare, which is derived from Gnarus (“knowing”) and Narro (“telling”), which
means 'to relate in order to know'. A narrative, thus, relates a sequence of events “and then”
this happened (linearity) and “therefore” that happened (causality). Narrative or story
telling involves events, and characters. It is employed by human beings to ‘re-present’ time,
space and identity.
Narratives are distinguished by two characteristics: the presence of a story and a storyteller. Story is always mediated by a voice, a style of writing. But story comes to life only when it is narrated or constructed. Story (sequence of events) along with narrative discourse (how the narrative is told) form the two basic dimensions of narrative.

Narratology (a term first coined by Tzventan Todorov in 1969) is the theory of the structures of narrative. It has its bases in Plato’s and Aristotle’s distinction between ‘mimesis’ (imitation) and ‘diegesis’ (narration). But most narratologists follow Genette’s (1980: 4) proposal that narrative fiction is a ‘patchwork’ consisting of both mimetic and diegetic parts. Narratology is concerned with all types of narratives including both fictional (imaginary) and non-fictional (factual). Both fictional and factual narratives adhere to common principles of narration like time (events), structure (arrangement of events), voice (narrator) and perspective (point of view). The novel is a genre of fictional narrative.

The novel has a two-tier mode of existence that Russian Formalist calls ‘fabula’ (“story”) and ‘Sjuzet’. The ‘fabula’ is the pre-artistic basic story, stuff or raw material of events in chronological and causal order. The ‘Sjuzet’ is the aesthetically motivated transformation of the ‘fabula’ into a narrative discourse of artistic design. The shift in emphasis from content to form, the use of innovative narrative techniques, the distinction between who ‘speaks’ (voice)’ and who ‘sees’ (perception) i.e., ‘Point of View’ and ‘Focalization’, and the importance of Narrative Time and Narrative Space have been highlighted by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983), Gerard Genette (1988), Mieke Bal (1985), Gerald Prince (1982), Paul Ricoeur (1984), Joseph Frank (1945) and others. However, all critics agree that the novel primarily is the model by which society conceives of itself and through which it articulates the world.
4.0. NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN FICTION

Narrative technique is a mode of assessing the content/aesthetic structure of the literary text. It is also, in a sense, the method used by the novelist for telling a story (Holderness 4). The main purpose is to make the act of story telling as real, as convincing and as natural as possible. Herein lies the importance of narration, the narrators and the various narrative devices used in the novel to make sense of the ‘world’ created by the novelist. The fundamental aspect of the technique used in the novel involving plot, characterization, setting, dialogue etc, is the method of narration or the ‘point of view’ from which the novelist tells the story. The question of who shall narrate the story or through whose eyes the reader shall see is one which every novelist has to face. In the past the method of narrative presentation was through a single consciousness – the “central intelligence” or the “reflector”. But ever since Henry James raised the issue of narrative presentation in The Art of the Novel (1934), it has become a problematic term with critics trying to revise and modify it.

There are two basic ways of storytelling: The novelist can tell his story from the inside--that is, he can make one of the characters do it, or he can tell it from the outside as an omniscient author. But in choosing between these two methods, the novelist must consider the focus of his story, the characters and their relation with each other, the complexity of the plot and structure, the meaning of the story in all its parts and in its totality. Although the First person narration is only the direct method, it may not be the simpler, since such a story must inevitably remain tied to the point of view of the narrator. In third person narration, the author is omniscient. Two broad classes of third-person narration are usually identified. In the first, the story is told ‘sequentially from the shifting
points of view of many characters’, usually according to who is the centre of attention at a
given time in the action. In the second kind of third person narration, the author restricts
the point of view exclusively, or almost so, to that of one character, giving his thoughts to
one and depicting only the action he participates in and as it appears to him (Tilford
1968:307-311). The difference between a third -person narration and an omniscient
narration, though not so easily discernible, is that: while in the omniscient narration, the
author looks into the minds of his characters and relates to the reader what is going on
there, the information is presented as he sees and interprets it, rather than as his characters
see it. In third-person narration, the mental contents--the thoughts, feelings, and
perceptions of the persona-- are rendered as they seem and feel to him. In addition, the
mental states are presented scenically as if the settings or situations, which evoked those
states, were happening now before the reader, at the time of reading. The surest index,
perhaps, of discovering the author’s choice of vantage point is to consider the character on
whom he focuses the reader’s attention and on that character’s relationship to the action of
the story. Point of view, thus, denotes the angle of vision or perspective from which events
in a narrative are represented. According to Mitchell A. Leaska, “when the mental
atmospheres of two or more personae are presented, we have what might be called
multiple inner points of view” (Hoffman 251-266).

Regarding a text’s focalization, the relevant question is ‘Who sees?’, i.e., who
serves as the text’s centre of perceptio , or in what way narrative information is restricted
to somebody’s perception or ‘point of view’. Although a text’s centre of perception is its
narrator, focalization is distinct from narration, because narrators can present events from
somebody else’s point of view. Functionally, focalization is a means of selecting and
restricting narrative information, of seeing events and states of affairs from somebody’s
point of view, of foregrounding the focalizing agent, and of creating an empathetical or
eronic view on the focalizer. A ‘focalizer’ is, therefore, the agent whose point of view
orients the narrative text. Since a text is anchored on a focalizer’s point of view when it
presents the focalizer’s thoughts, reflections and knowledge, his / her actual and imaginary
perceptions, as well as his/her cultural and ideological orientation gets reflected. So,
Genette and Chatman prefer to restrict focalization to ‘focal characters’ only, though most
narratologists today follow Bal’s and Rimmon-Kenan’s proposal that a focalizer can be
either ‘external’ (a narrator) or ‘internal’(a character). External focalizers are also called
‘narrator-focalizers’; ‘internal focalizers’ are variously termed ‘focal characters’,
‘character-focalizers’, ‘reflectors’, or ‘filter characters’.

Two other concepts of great importance are “Narrative Time” and “Narrative
Space”. Genette examines the aesthetics of narrative time under three categories: ‘Order’,
‘Duration’ and ‘Frequency’. To indicate ‘Order’ in a story, Genette uses the term
“Analepsis” for flashbacks, in order to indicate narration of events after its time of
occurrence. “Prolepsis” or flash-forward is the narration of events ahead of its time.
‘Duration’ is the speed of narration of time. By speed, what is indicated is the relationship
between a temporal dimension and a spatial dimension. It is calculated in terms of the
amount of text (number of sentences, paragraphs or pages) devoted to the narration of a
stretch of story-time: a novel may narrate 20 years of story-time in 2 pages
(“acceleration”) and later narrate 2 days of story-time in 200 pages (“deceleration”).
‘Frequency’ indicates the relation between an episode in the ‘story’ and the number of
times it is narrated in the novel.

Time and Space in narrative texts, are actually very closely correlated. Narrative
Space, traditionally meant, a ‘place’, ‘setting’, ‘locale’ or ‘milieu’. But in Narratology, it
means more than a place or setting. ‘Setting’ provides a certain atmosphere to the narrative, while ‘Places’ are potential sites for narrative actions. Narrative involves the transformation of place into ‘space’. The space then becomes the location of narrative events. But space and setting in a narrative is not merely a place for characters to move in, but is an important component in the creation and communication of meaning. In narratives, Space is presented verbally and is not visible all at once. In the reading of a text, ‘Narrative Space’ refers to the space scattered in between the narration of a story. It opens the door for the discovery of the story and at the same time offers many new options and possibilities to an alternate story or another way of looking at things. Space in fiction is distinct from space in the visual arts because space in fiction can never be presented ‘completely’. There is a close relationship between objects and spaces. A fishbowl is an object from the human point of view, but to the goldfish it is a space; similarly, a house is an object in a larger environment (a district, a city), but to its inhabitants it is a space to move or be in. In other words, what’s space and what’s an object in space is a matter of adopted perspective and environmental embeddedness. Hence, it can be said that ‘Narrative space’ is, the environment which situates objects and characters; more specifically, it is the environment in which characters move or live in., Spatial dimension or Narrative space, evidently, influences the way in which a text is read.

### 4.1. NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS

*Wuthering Heights* is a complex, hermetic, many-layered novel that insists on a plurality of meaning which is generated by different aspects of its total design, narrative frames, imagery, dialectical structure and time-scheme. The novel has an elaborate narrative frame, although the author does not tell the story. So, the ‘frame’, places an insistent focus on the act of storytelling by foregrounding the intimate and intricate
relation of story and discourse in the novel. Hence, the text tells its story within a double frame. Incidentally, Lockwood’s diary is the outer frame to the whole story. He meets only three of the main characters (Heathcliff, Cathy and Hareton, in the final year of their forty year story). The two diaries – Catherine’s and Lockwood’s, with their formal prominence and stylistic difference, evidently, act as frames – the inner text to the outer text. A close reading of the text reveals that the structural and thematic relation of the second half of the novel is closely linked to the first half, out of which emerges a total pattern. One of the most striking aspects in the novel is that Emily Brontë brilliantly subverts existing novelistic techniques through her generic experimentations—by juxtaposing romantic, realistic, and Gothic elements, which are enhanced by her poetic imagination that pervades the whole text.

Despite being a Victorian novel, *Wuthering Heights*, can be regarded as a modern novel because of its technique that places such an emphasis on the devices of story telling and on the act of telling a story. The novel has a peculiar narrative method (Holderness 5). There is no first-person narrator and every word is spoken by a character in the story, while the author remains withdrawn. But the first word of the novel is ‘I’, suggesting the opening of a first-person narrative, yet Mr. Lockwood is not the novel’s hero, and the story is not about his experience. Even though he is one of the narrators, he is more like a reader. It is Mr. Lockwood’s strange experience at the Heights that prompts him to ask Nelly Dean, his housekeeper at The Grange, to enlighten him about his landlord’s family while he recovers from his illness. She narrates the ‘chronicle’ of the Earnshaws of the Heights and the Lintons of Thrushcross Grange, at various sittings, as she goes about her household duties. About the enigmatic Heathcliff she makes an epigrammatic statement “It’s a cuckoo’s story” (24) and then stops by saying “I could have told Heathcliff’s
history, all that you need to hear, in half a dozen words”. But Lockwood interrupts and tells her, “You’ve done just right to tell the story leisurely. This is the method I like; and you must finish in the same style. I am interested in every character you have mentioned, more or less” (43). Nelly breaks her ‘story’ at the point when Heathcliff leaves the Heights when he overhears Catherine tell Nelly of her decision to marry Edgar. And Lockwood too “felt rather disposed to defer the sequel of her narrative”. In the course of his convalescence, Lockwood felt “Why not ask Mrs. Dean to finish her tale? I can recollect its chief incidents, as far as she had gone. Yes I remember her hero had run off, and never been heard of for three years; and the heroine was married”. He then tells her “now continue the history of Mr. Heathcliff, from where you left off, to the present day” (65). 

Nelly pauses in her narration with incidence where Heathcliff accosts her to arrange a meeting with the ailing Catherine. Chapter 15 begins with Lockwood’s remark “I have now heard all of my neighbor’s history… I’ll continue it in her own words, only a little condensed. She is, on the whole, a very fair narrator, and I don’t think I could improve her style” (113; all emphasis are mine). The readers are introduced to Wuthering Heights through Lockwood but it is in the description of Heathcliff as a child that one sees Thrushcross Grange. Both are important narrative devices.

All narratives being repetitions, Wuthering Heights, reinscribes itself as a palimpsest with Lockwood making a written text out of Nelly’s oral narration. The novel, with its intricate structure and complicated method of narration calls attention to the very act of interpretation. The question of who interprets and who narrates become a complex one in the novel, since it is actually built around a pair of speaker/listener paradigms. Although Nelly directs her tale to Lockwood, the most crucial scenes of the novel center on those dialogues in which she herself must play the listener both to Heathcliff’s and
Catherine’s revelatory confessions. She is, therefore, both listener and teller, and acts as an interpreter positioned between an unexplained character and an incomprehending audience. The novel thus pushes the conventions of implied author, narrative and implied reader to their known limits.

Brontë effectively uses the technique of substitution. The idea of substitute is introduced early in the novel when Isabella tells Nelly that Heathcliff looked upon her as “Edgar’s proxy in suffering”. Later Isabella’s son Linton serves as the perfect proxy. The children Cathy, Hareton and Linton are substitutes of their parents, who are the original characters of the story. Hareton is, by substitute, the ‘ghost’ of Heathcliff’s original self. Hareton’s struggle to win Cathy revives the idea of Heathcliff’s original struggle to win her mother. Similarly, the Cathy-Linton relationship is, in a sense, a parody of the Edgar-Catherine relationship. Brontë’s technique also involves playing events off against each other in parallel fashion—the Edgar/Heathcliff, Linton/Hareton conflict and the Catherine/Edgar, Cathy/Linton marriages, as well as through parallel characters—Catherine/Cathy, Edgar/Linton and Heathcliff/Hareton. So, Lockwood’s experience of love is introduced in a gesture parallel to Catherine’s rejection of Heathcliff. But Brontë frames the narrative in such a way as to make the readers consider from the start that the obstacles to deep love are, in fact, obstacles created by superficial social deadness and hypocrisies.

Emily Brontë characteristically presents the causal sequence in reverse. For instance, one learns of Heathcliff’s brutal attack on Hindley from Isabella in chapter 17, but the underlying reason for Heathcliff’s rage—that he had been trying frantically to communicate with Catherine’s ghost, when he finds the door barred against him—is revealed only in chapter 29. Likewise, Nelly’s offer to make Heathcliff decent so that he
can sit with Catherine is repeated in a similar way when Zillah, the housemaid offers to help Hareton clean himself so that he can sit with Cathy (214). Brontë also uses the technique of emotional reversal to describe Catherine’s mad-scenes in chapter 10-12, where her earlier cruelty is juxtaposed by her now poignant imagining of what she was like before her transformation, which is due to her frustration, or inability to return to that glorious state of childhood. The technique of emotional reverse is again used in chapter 15 at the critical meeting between the two lovers where it is shown that Heathcliff’s cruelty is, in a large measure, tragically inseparable from his futile yearnings.

Issues of narrative techniques, especially, assumptions about ‘Point of view’ are raised in *Wuthering Heights*. The relation between characters, voice, and narration that underlie the concept of ‘Point of view’ is undermined in the storytelling. Brontë constantly teases the reader by the subtle technique of ‘changing’ point of view. So, in a sense, *Wuthering Heights*, can also be viewed as a ‘metatext’ for the way in which its complex patterns of textual levels with its intricate narrative structure absorbs the untidy details of the real world into the textual structure of the novel. This evidently proves that Brontë was far ahead of her times in the construction of her narrative.

4.1.1. PLOT

*Wuthering Heights* presents a complex narrative design. The plot presents a complicated dance-like pairing and dividing of characters and situations and has an intricate ending. An analysis of the plot structure shows that there are actually two plots in the novel. Brontë produces a comparable tiering effect with the way the plot divides into two halves, the second superimposed upon the first so that the text inscribes itself as a kind of palimpsest. The main plot unfolds with the arrival of Heathcliff to Wuthering Heights and ends with his death. According to Kettle, the plot of the story develops in four stages:
The first part ending in the visit to Thrushcross Grange, the establishing of a special relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine and their common rebellion against Hindley and of his tyrannical regime at the Heights. The second part concerns Catherine’s betrayal of Heathcliff culminating in her death. The third part deals with Heathcliff’s revenge, and the final section, shorter than the others, tells of the change that comes over Heathcliff and his death (1967:132-133). Neill contends that the plot of external action unfolds the story in three movements and is marked by a peculiar symmetry: The first movement begins when Mr. Earnshaw brings back home from Liverpool a homeless, dark ‘gipsy’ boy. Heathcliff’s revenge sets the second cycle of action in motion. The final stage of the story shows the re-gain of equilibrium with the marriage of Hareton and Cathy (1964:202). All three stages are interconnected in such an imperceptible way that the narration glides smoothly without any gaps or hitch. The scene of action too changes with the change in the stages. In the first stage of the story, the action takes place almost exclusively at the Heights. In the second stage, the action is mostly at the Grange and in the third and final stage, the events occur partly at the Heights and partly at the Grange.

In Wuthering Heights there is an unconventional subversion of a novel’s traditional plot. The mystery of Heathcliff’s origin is discussed but never explained just like the deliberate gap in Brontë’s narrative when the crucial bond between Catherine and Heathcliff is formed. The novel’s central consciousness is the passionate emotions of Catherine and Heathcliff. Yet their love cuts across all the conventional elements of a novel’s plot. Catherine does not marry Heathcliff. She marries Edger Linton. Heathcliff marries Isabella Linton. In terms of the novel’s plot, a ‘love affair’ between Catherine and Heathcliff never exists. Heathcliff’s and Catherine’s love relegates two courtships and marriages to a pale background. Heathcliff’s unresolved passion continues to overshadow
the text, and the novel’s resolution focuses on Heathcliff’s state of mind, and his death, eighteen years after the death of Catherine. As a result, events and actions, the traditional stuff of novels, appear secondary. The novel seems to present a complex and incoherent plot but a close reading reveals the artistic and intellectual symmetry of the book and Brontë’s skill in constructing the story out of a well-planned plot by paying particular attention to the chronology of events.

4.1.2. STRUCTURE

A novel’s strategy reveals itself in its structure and its narrational process (Oates 2). Wuthering Heights has thirty-four untitled chapters and is composed of two volumes. The novel presents two overlapping and starkly contrasting tales within an elaborately constructed structure. Marsh points out that the structure of a text is the shape or framework on which all the text’s details----characters, places, and events of the story hang together (1987:37). Therefore, analyzing the structure of a text provides information about the meaning and purpose of the work. The structure of Wuthering Heights reveals the novel as made up of three parts – a prologue, the main narrative, and an epilogue (Stevenson 1968:110). The readers enter the Heights with Lockwood and leave it with him. The most dominant and noticeable structure in the novel is its narrative structure through which the novelist has deployed her narrative techniques. The narrative structure, which is very intricate, not only in its organization of action but also in its management of time and point of view, primarily highlights the love story of Heathcliff and Catherine. Gordon observes that the novel has a highly developed structure, which is worked out with scrupulous accuracy in relation to its time-scheme. So, all the major events can be dated from internal evidence. Besides, C.P.Sanger has very meticulously established the
pedigree of the Earnshaw and Linton family and the structural symmetry which familial relations lend to the novel (1926:191-193).

The structure of *Wuthering Heights* is as unconventional as its theme. The first three chapters, which contain Lockwood’s narration, form the outer frame of the story and set the tone and character of the book. We are catapulted into the story at a point just before it comes to an end. Lockwood observes the primitive quality of life at Wuthering Heights, and is confused, shocked and mystified as any reader can be and this prompts his curiosity to know more about its strange inhabitants. Brontë succeeds in making her characters and scenes believable for Lockwood’s reaction coincides with that of the readers.

Repetition is an integral part of the structural devices used in the text. The structure presents a dualistic aspect with repetition in plot, in names of characters and even in situations. The very form of the novel presents a duality with its clashing modes of speech, and by its persistent appeal to two very different kinds of perception (Knoepflmacher 34-63). The contrast, social and cultural, and the relationship between the two houses, the Heights and the Grange, is one of the basic thematic and structural techniques of the novel (Holderness 28). The structure of Wuthering Heights like the verbal structure of the same name resists access to its interiors. The multi-layered form of the novel has been linked to that of a series of Chinese boxes-within-boxes and Brontë calls attention to this format when she allows Lockwood first to enter the “penetrarium” and later to venture into the ‘little closet’ in the room, while he stays at the Heights. His terrifying dreams force him to retreat to the Grange where his ‘over-stimulated nerves and brains’ are soothed by a gradual reinstatement of the sequential and hierarchical order by Nelly’s tidy arrangement of events, which seems to supply the ordering device to Lockwood’s own tentative and disjointed first-hand account. The various narratives of Lockwood, Nelly, Catherine,
Heathcliff, Isabella, and Zillah, remain partial strands. Brontë’s craft as a story teller lies in the interweaving of these partial strands into an aesthetic whole by using the genealogy or ancestral pedigree of her characters which are of crucial thematic and structural importance.

*Wuthering Heights*, relies upon the narrative device of threshold for its central design and theme. The enclosure of the novel within narrative frames evokes the concealed world of the Heights under Heathcliff’s embittered domination. Like the house, the text itself is enclosed and crossing the threshold thus functions as a trope for reading. In the novel, thresholds and boundaries are depicted as the structural essence of limited spaces bordering two places and times, the crossing of which serves problems of passage into liminal spaces of distance and eventual return, or of displacement and exclusion.

Even the rebellion, frustration, isolation and anguish of its central characters are contained within the main text, while dreams, delirium, fantasy and hallucination form the sub-text. Dreams and visions are paradigms that provide essential unity to the structure. They act as a transparent medium to establish continuity between ordinary consciousness and mystic super-consciousness. The second part of the dream, thus, lends credibility to the ghost theme. The dream sequence provides a link between the present world and that which existed in the past—the world of Heathcliff and Catherine. Since, the dream arouses Lockwood’s curiosity about Heathcliff’s history, the subsequent flashback appears convincing. Lockwood’s dreams are, thus, central to an understanding of *Wuthering Heights*. Even the dismissal of Catherine’s ghost as a gothic nightmare only seems to reinforce its reality. The treatment of the supernatural throughout the novel is superbly ambiguous. So, there is artistic justification for the presence of the supernatural juxtaposed as it is with the normal. The use of supernatural can heighten a mood of fear or confusion
and at times of high tension. Thus, the use of ghost, apparition, and superstition is raised to
the level of plot catalyst and is also used as an externalization of inner traumas suffered by
the characters (Oldfield 84-86).

The complex convoluted narrative structure of *Wuthering Heights* consist of two
halves which form a diptych and speak to one another constantly in terms of comparisons,
contrasts and developments in careful thematic connection. So the first half of the novel
presents a fierce, passionate romance against a strangely, static society which urges the
character to flight and freedom. The second half of the novel, on the other hand, focuses
attention on education and development through Cathy, though the ghost of Catherine
dominates the novel. By mixing genres, the novel moves between Gothic/romantic form,
which predominates the first half of the story dealing with the older pair of lovers-
Catherine, Heathcliff and Edgar, and in the latter half with the emerging genre of
Victorian domestic fiction.

Emily Brontë was meticulous in maintaining unity of place and tone. The readers
never leave the moors. The Heights, the Grange and the moors in between which are the
physical bounds of the story. The tone of the novel is flat, equal and somber with the
author casting neither blame nor praise on any of the characters. There are no comic
scenes or characters to lighten the dramatic intensity of the action. Even Joseph is more
ironic than comic and Mr. Lockwood’s occasional facetious comments are outside the
action of the story.

4.1.3. TIME

“Time stagnates here”, says Lockwood. Ordinary clock-time becomes ‘suddenly
arrested, laid asleep, trances, racked into a dread armistice’. C.P.Sanger, in his classic
essay ‘The Structure of Wuthering Heights’ (1926), demonstrates the careful time scheme
of the novel. In *Wuthering Heights*, durational order of time is utterly different from the sequential order. Time itself is modeled as a structure of tiered texts in such a way that the plot divides into halves, each a mirror of the other. Occasionally the passage of time is abridged or summarized, but several long episodes are developed day by day, even hour by hour. Goodridge comments that Brontë’s dating of her story, which separates it by fifty years from the Yorkshire of her own days, has its own significance. The very first word in the novel is a date. Though the actual narration of the story takes place, mostly in the winter of 1801-2, the novel’s present is rather tenuous. The date 1802--., at the beginning of chapter 32, marks the beginning of a new narrative cycle, a brief sequel to the first, similar in structure but quite different in mood and direction. Even the events of 1802, which occupy the final three chapters, are reported in September and are not directly witnessed.

Nelly’s recollection, which forms a substantial part of the narrative, extends back to some thirty years. She even gives the season, day and hour with great exactitude. Cathy, for example is born “about twelve o’clock, that night” (ch.16), the night of Sunday, the fourth day after Nelly’s visit to the newly-married Isabella (ch.15), five days before the “summer” weather is broken by a return to sleet and snow (ch.17). Yet this ‘date’, precedes the narration by some seventeen years: the effect of Nelly’s precision is to make of the past a “here and now” more vividly than the winter fireside of 1801, where she entertains the convalescent Lockwood.

Heathcliff’s occasional reports and those of Zillah’s, Isabella’s letter and direct account of her escape, the scrap of Catherine’s own childhood diary – all intensify this impression. Their immediacy makes the past more urgent than the novel’s present events.
Traces of the past are inscribed on the present as when Lockwood after meeting young Cathy earlier, falls asleep reading her mother Catherine’s diary and dreams of ‘a glare of white letters started from the dark as vivid as specters – the air swarmed with Catherines (13).

Time accelerates or contracts in accordance with the novel’s need (Smith 185). Even those vital years of transition from childhood to adulthood are virtually eradicated, in both generations, from the novel. So, when Catherine and Heathcliff first glimpse the Lintons through the window of the Grange, all four are children. Isabella is “eleven, a year younger than Cathy” (33). Yet the following summer, Catherine is courted by Edgar, and is given the more probable age of fifteen (46-47), but whilst on his proposal to her only a few pages later Nelly remarks of her ‘catechism’: “for a girl of twenty-two, it was not injudicious” (55). The narrative flow evidently suggests a lapse of months. When Catherine lies dying at the Grange in the year following her marriage, she dreams that she is a child of twelve again and says “the whole last seven years of my life grew a blank!”(91). Incidentally, there is no mention of Catherine following her illness that follows Heathcliff’s departure from the Heights to that day, more than three years later, when Edgar “led her to Gimmerton chapel” (64), neither is there any mention of the period in which she alters from a child to bride, nor which transforms Heathcliff from a “ploughboy” to a gentleman whose “countenance was much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr. Linton’s” (69). Edgar’s looks is described as “quite slender and youth like” when compared with Heathcliff’s, who at this point is barely twenty. Likewise, Cathy of the second generation is only seventeen and a widow when Lockwood comes to the Grange, whilst Hareton at twenty-two retains a child-like aspect. In the same way, Isabella is last seen “in the girlish dress she commonly wore, befitting her age more
than her position” (123), whilst her son Linton dies barely seventeen. So, only Hindley, Edgar and Heathcliff have time to mature. But Hindley dies soon after and though Edgar dies at thirty-nine, he still retains his youthful looks. Hence, it is only Heathcliff, apart from Nelly, who remains in the novel’s narrative, unchanged even at forty. Interestingly, the two main parts of the story are broken by the twelve years lapse that follows Catherine’s death.

One of the most astonishing examples of the narrative’s multi-layered time-scheme is found in Chapter 29, when Heathcliff walks in to the Grange after Edgar’s funeral. It reminds the reader that Catherine, whose splendid portrait presides over the room, had been dead for eighteen years when Heathcliff proceeds to recount what he did ‘yesterday’– the scene where he opens Catherine’s coffin lid while the sexton is digging Edgar’s grave and sees her face again – ‘it is hers yet’---then, going back eighteen years, to recount a similar episode, of opening her grave and holding her in his arms the day after she was buried.

A. Stuart Daley in ‘The Moons and Almanacs of Wuthering Heights’, claims that the Moon is a crucial factor and plays a key role in the time-sequence of the narrative. The harvest moon is mentioned three times in the novel. The first coincides with the return of Heathcliff in Chapter 10 “on a mellow evening in September” of 1783. The second harvest moon manifests itself in Chapter 28 and Chapter 29. Cathy abducted by Heathcliff, manages to escape and come to her dying father, Edgar using its light. In Chapter 29, following Edgar’s funeral, Heathcliff walks in to the Grange while Nelly and Cathy sit together in the library. Nelly says, “It was the same room into which he had been ushered, as a guest, eighteen years before: the same moon shone through the window; and the same autumn landscape lay outside…Time had little altered his person either” (207). It seems as
though Brontë wants to point out the similarity between the scenes. Heathcliff is shown into the same room when he returned after a three-year exile. The death of Edgar coincides with the second and central harvest moon in the story. So, this moon furnishes the key to harmonize the chronology of the narrative, it being twice evoked. The third harvest moon illuminates the final scene of the novel with its celebrated conclusion under a benign sky, when Lockwood makes an impulsive trip to Thrushcross Grange and walks to the Height to see his old ‘friend’ Mrs. Nelly Dean, who now lives at the Heights.

History, in the novel, symbolically recapitulates itself with the present reappearing as an image of the past. Thus, the past and present share a metaphorical unity. The third chapter is a masterpiece of brilliant interweaving of past and present. The difference between Heathcliff’s past and Lockwood’s present, is portrayed by the enmeshing of the lives of Catherine and Cathy, when Lockwood in 1801 reads the dead Catherine’s diary written a quarter of a century earlier after having just met her grown-up daughter and also through the carved names, all of which run through his mind and disturb his sleep. In the same way, the sense of the past-in-the-present is operative even in the scene when Heathcliff’s son Linton and Catherine’s daughter Cathy play with the long abandoned toys of their parents (180).

Brontë’s mastery in handling the time scheme is indeed commendable for its accuracy and precision. Norman Sherry states that within the larger time scheme, the movement of the season is chronicled by Nelly – Christmas at the Heights, summer on the moors, wet autumns, and bitter winter, along with mention of harvesting, apple-picking (1969:119). Significantly, Brontë gives the ages of various characters, and the amount of time that passes between events and therefore one is able to reconstruct the story with the given dates. The novel itself opens with a date 1802. Further, it is stated that old Mr.
Earnshaw died in October 1777, and that Hareton is six years older than young Cathy, and that they intend to marry in January 1803. There are also frequent precise references to the time passing in the text, like when Lockwood says that he was ill for ‘four weeks’ (65), or that Heathcliff’s return was on ‘a mellow evening in September’.

The narrative also includes close accounts in ‘actual time’, summary accounts of the passage of time, and Brontë carefully manages the transitions between these different narrative modes. So, the gap within the detailed time plotting in the narrative following Heathcliff’s arrival at the Heights, when the bond between him and Catherine is formed, stands out as a mystery. But this gap in time is significant for it enhances the idea that the bond was inevitable and natural. The narrative within its framework of different narrators is often structured to provide alternative accounts of the same period of time. In this way, time becomes complex being made up of different strands representing different perceptions. Another noticeable feature of Brontë’s use of time in the novel is the use of a general descriptive summary to survey long periods of time especially when the plot is uneventful, like in the beginning of Chapter 4 in Vol.2 which narrates the first twelve years of young Cathy’s life.

4.1.4. SPACE and DISTANCE

The dual mode of narration is also borne out in the novel’s dual topographical structure (Gordon 196). The novel is largely organized in terms of spatial situations, involving an inside and outside, like the two houses—Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, the moor and the park, the room and the coffin-like oak press. In the finely realized landscape, time is consistently related to space and space readily converts into time: “the clock chimed twelve as I entered the house, and that gave exactly an hour for every mile of the usual way from Wuthering Heights” (22). Lockwood’s diary provides
the narrative space within which the story of Earnshaws and Lintons can be told. Housing the narrative, his diary becomes the book itself.

In the novel, the author remains absent and the two narrators maintain an autonomous distance.

4.1.5. SETTING

“This is certainly a beautiful country!”, says Mr. Lockwood. “In all England,” he adds, “I do not believe that I could have fixed on a situation so completely removed from the stir of society. A perfect misanthropist’s Heaven” (1). According to Walter Allen, “No novel is more imbued with the spirit of place than Wuthering Heights” (1954:194). Although sparse in detail, Brontë’s evocation of her landscape is very vivid, whether it is in the description of Wuthering Heights, the Grange or the Kirk in between them. Similarly, her precise observation of the flowers, the leaning trees, the rocks and becks, the grey churchyard, the open moor, the “bit of moss, or a tuft of blanched grass, or a fungus spreading its bright orange among the heap of brown foliage” (167) and the grander sweep of snowstorm and the “bluff, bold swells of heath” (221), all evoke a landscape in all its brilliance. The place name, richly connotative, evokes native attributes of the scene. Evidently, Brontë’s ability in creating a rich and vivid world from a limited stock of material is, indeed, impressive.

Christopher Heywood contends that Emily Brontë’s fictional world comprises of two landscapes ---the old West Riding, comprising of the Penine region, that includes the northbound mountainous limestone highlands past Cowan Bridge and the low-lying gritstone moorland lying south, past Haworth. The two landscapes are geologically and geographically distinct, but in Wuthering Heights, both appear as a single setting. The limestone landscape in the first seventeen chapters is haunted by betrayal, oppression, and
death. The moorland landscape is first glimpsed at the grave of Catherine and is the setting of the last seventeen chapters.

The moor dominates the novel though it is hardly described in the first half of the novel (Oldfield 1976:61). Brontë observes the colour of the summer skies, the first yellow crocuses at the Heights and the languid shadows of an autumn evening in spare sentences. Her language vibrates with the power of nature realized in childhood. Brontë’s landscape is the landscape of the mind and she strove to get maximum effect through a few words. So one is conscious of the wild landscape outside, because it symbolically represents the mind of the characters. Many of the scenes take place on cold and stormy winter days with violent winds and in rain and snow. Scenes in which emotions are keyed to a high pitch are mostly set in cold stormy weather like the scene in which Heathcliff quietly leaves the Heights on discovering that Catherine has agreed to marry Edgar. His departure is followed by heavy rain, thunder and lightening which fells a tree. Catherine gets her brain fever by getting wet in the rain searching in vain for Heathcliff. Strong wind and stormy weather are symbolic of the violent emotions experienced by the characters in the novel. But Brontë balances this with descriptions of sunny spring days and of the changes the seasons bring on the landscape. All minute details about seasons and moods of nature reflect Brontë’s observational power. The entire novel is saturated with her feelings for nature and she waxes lyrical about its beauty.

The fictional area of the novel, as Norman Sherry points out, is carefully planned. The very structured topography of *Wuthering Heights* is dominated by two houses - Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange with their contrasting landscapes. Even the names of the houses in relation to its inmates are equally significant. ‘Wuthering’ is a local word for stormy weather. Similarly ‘Heights’ can suggest a ridge or promontory of a range
of hills. It also conveys the idea of undefined intensity, or heights of emotional tumult (Miles 53). A ‘thrush’ is a valley, woodland or garden bird with an attractive song. ‘Cross’ as a place-name, may signify a crossroad, a place where journeys and people meet, it may also suggest the conventional church emblem, a cross. ‘Grange’ means a barn, a storehouse for agricultural produce and also suggest cultivation, harvest, and plenty. Each of the houses and its ambience suggests a complete way of life including habits, and attitudes. Every scene of the story takes place within or between the two houses. Penistone Crags are the most distant visible feature beyond Wuthering Heights. Several of the characters have been there and report what they are like. There is a village, Gimmerton and a chapel and churchyard at the edge of the cultivated valley, half exposed on the moors. The evocation of Yorkshire moors and their isolation; the appropriate farming activities and the strong dialect of Joseph; the brief appearance of the doctor, the curate, and the lawyer; and the precise reference that “it is four miles from Thrushcross Grange to the Heights, and a mile and a half further on to Penistone Crag” (119) - such clear geographical demarcation of the setting gives the novel a strong topographical structure. It is through such minute details that Brontë repeatedly reminds the reader of the exact extend of the world of Wuthering Heights.

Wuthering Heights is often in darkness and dark corners are emphasized. Thrushcross Grange, in contrast, is full of light. The vegetation around Wuthering Heights is sparse as in Lockwood’s description of a few ‘stunted firs’ which have an ‘excessive slant’ due to the power of the strong north wind, blowing over the edge and of the range of ‘gaunt thorns’ (4), to which the house lies exposed. He further comments on the air of the heights “pure bracing ventilation they must have up there, at all times” (4). On his second visit to the Heights he calls it a ‘bleak hill-top’ with a few gooseberry bushes
(9-10). Thrushcross Grange, in contrast, is surrounded by ‘garden trees’ and ‘the high wall of the court’, and outside the garden is the ‘wooded wild green park’ and the park wall, alongside which runs the road to Gimmerton and ‘the south’.

Food, social class, economic roles, religions and ethics of the two houses are also contrasted. As far as food habits are concerned, at the Heights there is an emphasis on meat: “clusters of legs of beef, mutton and ham” (5). The emphasis on meat at the Heights is expanded by occasional details of farm work, which are to do with livestock. Lockwood steals the lantern from Joseph when he is “milking the cows” and Heathcliff cannot spare a guide because there is no one to look after the horses. Likewise he orders Hareton to ‘drive’ those dozen sheep into the barn. Lockwood comes across a few dogs on his first visit to the Heights. Wuthering Heights, with its associated emphasis on meat and livestock also informs some animal behaviour of the characters like when Heathcliff ‘howled’, “not like a man, but like a savage beast getting goaded to death” (167). In contrast, the Grange is repeatedly described in connection with flowers, plants and fruits. Nelly is carrying “a heavy basket of apples”(92), and when Catherine is caught trespassing at the Grange she is taken indoors where “Mr. Linton mixed a tumbler of negus and Isabella emptied a plateful of cakes into her lap”(35). Both the Lintons, father and son, are magistrates, and Edgar spends time in studying (he is continually among his books) (120). Young Cathy plays make believe games in the park of Thrushcross Grange, “now on foot and now on a pony, one day she said she was that day an Arabian Merchant, going to cross the Desert with his caravan” (190). The Lintons of Thrushcross Grange, in short, represent the governing educated class, upholding the law and conventional morality. Their activities are intellectual or imaginative, in contrast to those at Wuthering Heights, whose work is that of primitive labour.
Joseph is the mouthpiece for religion at Wuthering Heights. His is an extreme form of puritanism, which emphasizes sin, damnation and hellfire and is liberally laced with superstition. In contrast, the form of Christian belief that prevails in Thrushcross Grange is on tolerance and forgiveness, and hope of heaven, although, Edgar himself does not live up to the standards of charity and forgiveness in his behaviour to Isabella.

Emily Brontë’s strength and genius lies in capturing the reality of the contemporary period and presenting it in artistic form. As Gerin points out “No book is more rooted in its native soil, more conditioned by the local background of its author than Wuthering Heights” (225). Therefore, despite its apparent complexity and strangeness, Brontë anchors her novel in prosaic and homely details through the description of the weather, the Elizabethan buildings, and in the untrammelled dispositions of her characters. Hence, Wuthering Heights can certainly not be viewed merely as a Yorkshire tale or “Gothic” romance.

4.1.6. CHARACTERIZATION

Character portrayal is one of the most important aspects in the novel. The skill of a novelist is exhibited in her/his character portrayal. The story in a novel is rooted in its character and grows out of it. Psychological change in the character changes the very story. Unlike other Victorian writers of her time, Brontë does not attempt to paint an extensive picture of Victorian life and society through her novel. The men and women in her novel are not essentially Victorian, in the sense, that the narration is confined mainly to happenings and to the inmates of two houses in rural Yorkshire. So, details concerning the people of Wuthering Heights are often singular. Besides, Brontë scarcely pauses to indicate style of clothing. Like her passing references to weather, descriptions of dress are integrated into dialogue or into a more general picture. Equally idiosyncratic is Brontë’s
presentation of the physical attributes of her characters, so that details of appearance emerge as hearsay (66-67). Through her characters, she portrays two contrary aspects of human nature. Hence, her characters have symbolic significance. Further, she gives each character a duality within their personality.

Catherine’s heart and mind are divided. So, although she loves Heathcliff, she marries Edgar. Likewise, Heathcliff loves Catherine more than his own life, yet he is a cruel and harsh man who marries Isabella, to take revenge on Edgar. He is the very spirit of the wild Yorkshire moors; an ‘unreclaimed creature’ as Catherine knows him, but he is the only creature who can ‘reconcile her to God and Humanity’. In addition, Catherine and Heathcliff are shown to possess violent, tempestuous passion and an all consuming love.

Heathcliff is a character ideally conceived by Brontë, for he is Brontë’s idea of a man frustrated in love. Time has no effect on his feelings for it fails to mitigate either the intensity of his love or the fury of his revenge. Since Heathcliff is shown as having absolute control over others, he has to be rendered in gigantic scale and his victims as puny and helpless. Catherine matches Heathcliff in his passion.

Nelly is portrayed as an “impartial” storyteller, yet she clearly influences events and their outcome, as she is physically present at many key moments (Miles 31). Although Hafley sees Nelly as the ‘villain’ (1965:200), Gilbert and Gubar see her as ‘Patriarchy’s paradigmatic housekeeper’ (1984:291). Lockwood, the new tenant of Thrushcross Grange and the narrator who introduces the strange world of Wuthering Heights to the readers, is a city man, who has come to the country to avoid ‘the stir’ and bustle of superficial social forms. He is attracted to the countryside not only for its wildness but also its desolation. As a refined man of means, his usual occupation in the country is hunting which he calls “devastat[ing] the moors”, and his usual milieu is “the stirring atmosphere of the town”.
His usual vacation choice is ‘a month of fine weather at the seacoast’. His choice of the desolate isolation of Thrushcross Grange is, however not accidental; it grows from the ‘peculiar constitution’ that led his mother to predict that he “should never have a comfortable home”. This constitution is shortly revealed as an inability to accept the reciprocation of love. From this account it is clear that Lockwood is afraid and ashamed of love. He therefore withdraws like a snail. His name too is significant; he locks his vulnerability behind the wooden exterior of conventional social forms. Later, having lost the chance to court young Cathy, he can only watch her and Hareton with “a mingled sense of curiosity and envy” and, “feeling very mean and malignant”. Hareton is a coarse, taciturn man who wants to become civilized but does not know how until Cathy enters his life. Cathy is a spoiled child yet she shows grit and spirit in trying circumstance and openly defies Heathcliff’s tyranny.

The development of Isabella is most discernible in her changing attitude toward Heathcliff. From childish revulsion, “Frightful thing! Put him in the cellar, papa”, to romantic longing, “evincing a sudden and irresistible attraction toward the tolerated guest”, to frustrated love, as she shouts at Catherine, “I love him more than you ever loved Edgar; and he might love me, if you would let him!”(74). Her subsequent elopement and final confrontation with the truth reveals disappointment in love. As a narrator, she suddenly springs forth an ironic voice. Isabella grows, like so many in the book, with a twist.

Joseph, the servant at the Heights, is a ‘flat’ character. He remains uniformly the same from the beginning of the story till its end. He is also the ‘humourous’ character who provides humour in this dark story of passion and revenge. The main characters in the novel are ‘round ‘characters’ and Brontë endows them with a remarkable depth of soul.
Brontë’s belief in ‘Heredity’ and environment is revealed in her character portrayal. Heathcliff, as a gipsy reveals the primitive nature of his class, despite the veneer of culture and sophistication he acquires later. His nature matches the wild, primitive lifestyle at the Heights. Both Catherine and Hindley inherit the violent temper of their father, Mr. Earnshaw. Edgar and Isabella are shown as petty and selfish, though Edgar possesses a mildness that is in striking contrast to Heathcliff’s violent nature. Heredity determines the characters of the younger generation—Cathy, Hareton, and Linton. Hareton inherits the strong physique of the Earnshaws and the gentle nature of his mother Frances. Cathy combines the best qualities in her parents. Though she is obstinate and capricious as her mother, she also has the gentleness of her father. Linton Heathcliff is shown as possessing the worst trait of his parents. He is selfish and pettish like his mother and possesses the bad temper of his father.

4.1.7. NARRATION

_Wuthering Heights_ has a multi-layered narration, with each narrative opening out to reveal a new level of the story. This intricate technique helps to maintain a continuous narrative despite the huge time shifts involved in the novel. A. C. Swinburne praises the peculiar force and distinctive style of the author, especially in the narration, which is ‘vivid’ and ‘life-like’ as an actual experience of living fact (Allott 97). The novel follows an achronological method of narration, though the story of _Wuthering Heights_ as narrated by Nelly follows a linear narration. Her manner of telling rests on the technique of reminiscence and recalling of past events. In the second half of the novel, the shift in mode from romance to realism provides a thematic resolution to the conflict expressed in the first half of the novel.
The story of *Wuthering Heights* is a series of witnessed narratives (Macovski 365). Lockwood’s narrative is the outer framework of the story. He is, in fact, the recipient of Nelly’s story and she in turn, is the recipient of tertiary narratives: Heathcliff (Ch.6, 29), Isabella (Ch. 13, 17), Cathy (Ch. 24), Zillah (Ch. 30). Brontë employs a complicated technique of narrative at several removes. Though she has employed the narrative method of the ‘first person singular’ the narration passes on from Lockwood to Nelly Dean, who as an eyewitness describes and reports what she actually saw and heard. But there are scenes where she is not present. Other characters describe these scenes to her, and the description is given in their actual words. Brontë relies on voices of other characters though these voices are only partly filtered. Catherine’s voice speaks unencumbered in the diary fragment Lockwood comes across. The sequence that begins with Catherine’s diary entry ends with Heathcliff’s account of his grave-tampering. In between, the segments that make up the story rely on the voices of four separate narrators – Catherine, Heathcliff, Isabella, and Cathy. There are significant links among these fragments. Even though Heathcliff’s speech comes almost eighteen years after Isabella fled the Heights, he returns to events encountered in her narrative. Cathy unwittingly recapitulates portions of the speech made by her mother twenty years ago, when Catherine tried to distinguish her love for the two men, whose names telescoped into that of Linton Heathcliff. Thus, the repeated references to storm, sleet, and snow help to establish a rhythm that connect these segments and lift them out of the linear narratives of Nelly and Lockwood.

Macovski observes that narrative addresses in *Wuthering Heights* make use of confessional tropes (1987:371). Confessional narration takes on a hermeneutic function in the novel. Thus many of the novel’s secrets remain opaque. Catherine ‘lets out’ her secret to Nelly in order to incorporate a listener’s response to her own evaluation of self. Again
and again she begs Nelly to corroborate her decision to marry Edgar. But Nelly unable to comprehend Catherine’s divided nature only mocks her. Heathcliff too displays the need to express his innermost feelings before another. He says, “it is tempting…to turn it out”. But no sooner than he begins to do so, he breaks off, and concludes, “My confessions have not relieved me” since his outpouring does not elicit reciprocal response. Nelly’s silence indicates her inability to comprehend. She thereby misses the pivotal revelation of the novel: the mystical bond between Catherine and Heathcliff. Both Catherine and Heathcliff engage in projective self-analysis. This kind of analytic form is useful in reconstructing the past ‘history’ of the characters and to ‘recover’ a lost past. Establishing ‘self’ in the novel is thus a linguistic act. In other passages, a more overt form of interpretation represents the addresses. Lockwood holds his rhetorical place in the novel by his request to play listener to Nelly’s narrative which initiates the analytic form of the novel; his quest to fathom Heathcliff’s ‘curious conduct’ and ‘character’; by his attempt to ‘decypher’ Catherine’s ‘faded hieroglyphics’ and by his efforts through Nelly, to ‘uncover’ “something of my neighbour”. Significantly, nearly every character in the novel voices a commensurate need for a dialogic exchange. Characters, thus establish ‘being’ through social intercourse, by ontological ‘listening’ by others, and by being ‘heard’. Even Cathy acknowledges Hareton’s identity by first assailing his silence, “Hareton, Hareton, Hareton!” she cries, “do you hear? … You must listen to me” (227). An interesting observation is that in Brontë’s novel, though the main narration is in first-person, standard-English narration, the dialect used by Joseph remains within quotation marks.

4.1.7.1. ANALEPSIS

Brontë makes use of the technique of ‘flash-back’, which serves an artistic purpose. Thus the novel begins with an arresting scene, one not necessarily the first in the
time-sequence. Significantly, the story begins almost at the end. Nelly begins her narrative from the time Mr. Earnshaw of Wuthering Heights, brought from Liverpool, an abandoned and starving gipsy child, whom he later names as Heathcliff. From Chapter 4 to Chapter 30 the story travels in the past. Before the story ends in Chapter 34, it once again travels back in time in Nelly’s narration as she updated Lockwood of the events that happened in his absence from the Heights. This is the ‘final flash-back’ in the novel.

4.1.7.2. PROLEPSIS

The novel begins in the present with Lockwood’s first visit to the Heights in the opening scene when most of the incidents in the story have already occurred. The first three chapters are in the present. In Chapter 31, the story once again emerges in the present, so that the opening situation of Lockwood’s visit to his landlord is once again repeated. There is a short gap of time when Lockwood remains absent from the Grange. On his return, he visits the Heights and learns of Heathcliff’s death and watches the young lovers, Hareton and Cathy, unobserved. The novel ends with Lockwood’s visit to the graveyard.

4.1.8. NARRATORS

Emily Brontë skillfully impersonates Lockwood as the first “I” in her novel. Lockwood narrates the first three chapters. Then Nelly Dean takes over the narration of the rest of the story. She transmits the story to Lockwood, who reports it in her own words, interposing sections of narrative in his own voice in Chapter 31 and 32, and at the novel’s conclusion. Lockwood’s voice then dominates the narrative till Nelly displaces him. As a young urban gentleman, his sophistication and ‘worldliness’ prove to be inadequate in narrating a material which is beyond his understanding and experience. Although Nelly is someone who has been “living among the hills and seeing one set of
faces” she is hardly the provincial he makes her out to be. Therefore, his inadequacy and insecurity in dealing with the inmates are brought out at the very beginning itself.

Brontë’s shifting of narrators is complicated, for she enlists the reader’s sympathy with characters whose action it is often difficult to approve. She sometimes urges the reader to take sides (with Heathcliff or with Nelly) and then undermines their position by introducing behavior that is profoundly shocking. The narrators, Lockwood and Mrs. Dean are recognizable representations of people in Victorian society, which is a class society.

4.1.9. POINT OF VIEW

The fictional world of the novel is never presented to the readers in ‘themselves’ but only through a certain perspective, a certain point of view. The concept ‘point of view’ turns on the distinction between a narrator who ‘speaks’ and a ‘focalizer’ who ‘sees’. Brontë presents a narrative in which the point of view changes repeatedly. Catherine’s diary fragments intrude on Lockwood’s narration, as does Isabella’s details of Heathcliff’s action following Catherine’s death in her letter to Nelly. Hence, Lockwood’s and Nelly’s narratives often intersect in stylistically complex ways producing different points of view of the same events.

In the narratives of Lockwood, Nelly Dean and Isabella, three points of views are given which not only differ in some respect from one another, but are also united in opposition to the nature and implication of the world of Catherine and Heathcliff that they record. The many embeddings or narrative layers in the novel provide different points of view, although embedded narrative layers like that of Heathcliff, Isabella and Zillah do not vary from Nelly’s narrative version. These narratives, in fact, keep the story moving when the plot requires Nelly to be absent. The other narrators ‘speak’ because Nelly requires them to ‘see’ for her. Their function is to link narration to vision, ‘telling’ to ‘seeing’.
Accordingly, the narrative in the novel involves the point of view, the ways of ‘looking’ at different characters, that is, the manner in which Lockwood and Nelly use their eyes to understand people and to interpret events. The balance of the novel lies in the narration of Nelly Dean, for it is she who tells Lockwood and the reader most of the story of Wuthering Heights, although, she does it very much from her point of view.

Nelly can be considered a ‘hypodiegetic-homodiegetic’ narrator, a term used by Gerard Genette, as she participates as a character in the story she tells, and is also the second narrator; her tale being enveloped by Lockwood’s. At the same time, Nelly could also be called an ‘unreliable narrator’, to use Wayne Booth’s expression, for she shows all the weaknesses of being a gossip. She is not always loyal or honest as she pretends to be, and the passions of the main characters are beyond her understanding as she exhibits a very Victorian attitude towards love and death and can therefore be called a ‘patriarchy’s paradigmatic housekeeper’ (a term coined by Gubar), for she is shown to be manipulative in maintaining the status quo of male authority. Finally, towards the end of the novel, the views of Cathy and Hareton, though witnessed briefly by Lockwood, are mostly given to him by Nelly.

The narrative form, incidentally, does not allow the author to use her own voice. So the story must speak for itself. Hence, its values are created for the reader in a language that is emotive and strong, particularly in moments of self revelation and strong feelings. Each narrative takes place within the action, which occupies an important place in the dramatic structure of the novel. Similarly, the smaller narratives, like Catherine’s diary, give direct glimpses of the lives of the main protagonists. Brontë with great dexterity, weaves all these together to form the core of the story, and they are intermeshed together in such subtle ways with each other, with images of past and present juxtaposed, as to
form a single unified whole. The presence of Lockwood as narrator, thus, allows the author to begin the story near the end and work backwards and forwards in time. So, the opening chapter of the novel as narrated by Lockwood is in the format of a diary. Lockwood’s limitations, nevertheless, allow the author to highlight the complex love relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine. As a detached observer, he is therefore able to bring a different perception of the story from that provided by Nelly.

The only scene in the entire book where the readers are given Heathcliff’s point of view, long after Isabella’s narrative has given us her point of view of the same happening, is the one where Heathcliff holds Isabella off while he kicks the prostrate Hindley almost to death. It is only from Isabella’s narrative, the readers learn how she and Hindley bar Heathcliff out of the Heights, when he returns from his visit to Catherine’s grave, and how she vengefully taunts him the next morning till he hurls his knife at her. But Heathcliff’s account of the whole episode, which he retells to Nelly years later puts the whole affair in an entirely different light. He recounts how while trying to open Catherine’s coffin, he felt her presence for the first time since her death, though he could not see her. So absorbed was he in his intensity and desire to see her that he hurries to the Heights with the certainty of finding her there, only to find himself be locked out by Hindley and Isabella. Heathcliff states’1, “I remember stopping to kick the breath out of him, and then hurrying upstairs”. But Catherine is gone and he has to live with the spectre of a hope for the next twenty years. By presenting a narrative in which the point of view changes repeatedly, Brontë is, thus, able to retain the suspense and drama of the story being narrated.

4.1.10. FOCALIZATION

The novel explores narration as a metaphorical seeing, although Ian Gregor avers that, ‘there seems to be no single focal point in Wuthering Heights’ (1970:2). For a
Victorian writer and that too a woman writer, Brontë has been quite daring in using the technique of open focalization in order to disclose the actualities of the words and thoughts of Catherine and Heathcliff, who are ‘implied archetypes of unlicensed sexuality’. But such terms implicitly invoke a ‘gaze’: a look that the subject whose perceptions organize the story directs at the characters, and the acts that are being represented. Thus ‘gaze’ in the novel becomes a concept as well as a visual metaphor. In *Wuthering Heights*, narration is both foregrounded and linked emphatically to the visual phenomena of gaze. The novel being presented as a series of diary entries recording an orally told tale that is itself full of reference to folk ballads and other vestiges of an oral tradition. Further, it also unravels the relation between ‘seeing’ and ‘telling’, between narration and the ‘gaze’, which are not only a central thematic concern of the novel but also its structuring principle.

Beth Newman opines that *Wuthering Heights*, through its representations of the gaze as a network of gazes, offers a context to understand how the act of narration, seeing, and knowing are connected in the technique of ‘point of view’ (1990:1036). At the very beginning of the novel there is an entry made by Lockwood in his diary that recounts his flirtation with a woman, whose ‘look’ filled him with fear. “If looks have language...” (15). Lockwood’s look, therefore, suggests that ‘looking’ is both a mode of telling and a source of pleasure. But when she looks back, ‘he shrinks like a snail’. In the same way, the ‘gaze’ is mentioned again in the scene where Lockwood first encounters Cathy Heathcliff. He is filled with admiration at her beauty but expresses ambivalence about her eye that returns his gaze with a kind of defiance. In fact, Cathy’s impudent and assertive look seems to offend almost all the male characters in the novel. So, Lockwood is taken aback
by her “regardless look”. Joseph speaks of her as one “with evil eye” (23), and even Heathcliff is disconcerted by her “infernal eyes” (251).

In the novel ‘gaze’ is inextricably tied with the process of narration that in turn produces the theme and content. It does so through the extradiegetic frame (Lockwood’s diary entry and the many metadiegetic texts embedded within Nelly’s narrative). So, the story of Wuthering Heights is seen through the ‘eyes’ of Lockwood, the refined society man whose peculiar constitution reveals his inability to accept or reciprocate love. Brontë shows how the too intimate gaze of desire at the nakedness of a human being inspires disgust, shame and fear. So, the gaze of desire makes Lockwood shrink like a snail for it reveals his vulnerability. Hence, he is aggressive to anyone who ‘sees’ this.

Lockwood rebuffed by Cathy hopes to guard himself against the power of her gaze (“let me beware of the fascination that lurks in Catherine Heathcliff’s brilliant eyes” (130), he therefore asks Nelly to tell him the story of Cathy (“I should like to know her history” (36). It is here that the two narratives merge: Nelly’s story and Lockwood’s enframing diary. Thus, the metaphor of listening is substituted for looking. Nelly remarks that during most of her narration Lockwood had been ‘gazing’ at Catherine’s portrait (204-5). Lockwood now is both narrator and spectator. The conjunction of ‘gazing’ and ‘telling’ is presented here. That is, the text presents Lockwood as narrator at the very moment it represents him as a spectator gazing at Catherine’s portrait. So, Lockwood’s position as narrator is now that of a looker-on, which is expressed in his own phrase “the situation of the looker-on” (58). There is, however, a difference between Lockwood’s ‘seeing’ and Nelly’s ‘looking’.

Gaze is an erotic experience for Lockwood but not for Nelly. As a character in her own narration and as a narrator she never completely abandons her task, nor her
propensity to ‘see’ and ‘tell’. It is she who tells Edger about the ‘scene in the court’ and the whole subsequent dispute, and of Isabella’s attraction to Heathcliff, and of Catherine’s quarrel with him over that. Nelly’s telling is, thus, enforced by her habit of looking.

Heathcliff is first seen through the eyes of Lockwood and then through Nelly’s. Similarly, Catherine is first presented through her diary, which is read by Lockwood and later as the child-ghost in his dream. The courtship of Cathy and Hareton too is based on gaze (248), when Cathy succeeded in making him ‘look’. This gaze escapes Nelly’s vigilant eyes disabling her ability to tell. Even Heathcliff goes to his grave with his eyes fixed in an intense gaze, probably seeing the ghost of Catherine Earnshaw, whose ‘gaze’, he has long solicited.

To sum up, *Wuthering Heights* is different from many Victorian novels, not only in its stylistic and structural character but also in the way Brontë makes effective use of the narrative device of narration, point of view and focalization.

### 4.2.0. NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

Robbe-Grillet postulates that “What constitutes the novelist’s strength is precisely that he invents, that he invents quite freely without a mode...” (1965:32). Roy does exactly that. She not only invents but also makes use of different techniques in her novel. *The God of Small Things* as a postmodern novel has a complex narrative technique, and Roy’s unorthodox manipulation of language, her deliberate style choices and the emphasis she places on the manner of telling appeals to modern sensibility. In an interview, Roy discussed her narrative technique: “The fitness of a story-teller is to be able to say things and see things the way it has not been done... The main thread of the story takes place within twenty four hours but there are several other united threads that go over years that make the structure steel” (Mathrani 1997:15). Her narrative technique, in fact, can best be
summed up in her own words which she uses to describe the way the Kathakali man tells his story:

The great stories are the ones you have heard and want to hear again. The ones you can enter anywhere and inhabit comfortably. They don’t deceive you with thrills and trick-endings. They don’t surprise you with the unforeseen. They are as familiar as the houses you live in or the smell of your lover’s skin. You know how they end; yet you listen as though you don’t...that is their mystery and their magic (229).

Arundhati Roy’s narrative technique is almost cinematic with its flashbacks and flash forwards. As Mani Meitei elucidates, the narrative structure of the novel is not only repetitive but also spatial. The past, the present and the future rush simultaneously (2001:192). The first twenty pages of the novel epitomize the sum total of the text. In fact, the novelist does away with the story in the first chapter itself thereby revealing the iconoclastic position of the omniscient author narrator. Moreover, Roy claims that through her novel she is attempting “to make the connection between the very smallest things and the very biggest things and to see how these fit together”. The novel is about what happens to characters in the Ayemenem House that go through change, chaos and death. There is no causality of events. The seismic events of the novel are depicted through the prism of the twins, Rahel and Estha (Singh 2001:133). On the whole, the narrative movement is whirling, characterized by bits of information that keep recurring time and again.

In the first few pages of the book, a brief account of the funeral of Sophie Mol, who appears only in the sixth chapter, and whose death occurs in the thirteenth chapter, is given. Similarly, the reason as to why Ammu goes to the Kottayam Police Station after Sophie Mol’s funeral to enquire about Velutha, and why she keeps repeating almost
guiltily on the way back to Ayemenem, “He is dead, and I’ve killed him”, is made known only in the last chapter. So, throughout the novel the past is unreeled, the big and small things get mixed up; and “only small things are ever said. The Big Things lurk unsaid inside” (142).

For Rukmini Bhaya, the novel is a work where ‘fiction and autobiography cohabit’ (1997: 4). The novel is a nostalgic narrative that looks back to an earlier time (December 1969) before the childhood of the twins are shattered forever. As a matter of fact, Roy uses the device of ‘memory’ to build up the narrative and portray the interior life of the characters. So, she leaves ‘gaps’ for the reader to fill in. The fictional method of the novel is that of presentation rather than representation, ‘telling’ rather than ‘showing’, even though the novel begins with showing. Roy’s characters are ‘shown’ mainly as objects of description rather than as subjects of action. She even makes use of the technique of ‘Stream of Consciousness’, although M.P.Sinha contends that Roy’s narrative technique is mainly ‘Interior Monologue’ but at places it is dramatic and realistic (2001:75).

4.2.1. PLOT

Although some critics find the plot of the novel ‘awfully involuted’ (Sharma 1998:18), many applaud ‘the new pattern’ as breathtaking in narrative technique. The plot of the novel begins with the birth of the twins and ends with their reunion at the age of thirty-one. On first reading, the plot appears to be rather confusing. A careful reading however, presents a story that has been well planned and executed. The movement of the plot comprises of three stages: the first stage accelerates with the arrival of Ammu to Ayemenem with her twin children, Estha and Rahel, and ends with the arrival of Sophie Mol, which forms the pivotal turning point in the story.
The second stage begins with the love affair of Ammu and Velutha and culminates with its discovery, which coincides with the drowning of Sophie Mol. The third stage begins with the death of Velutha and the twins getting separated as Estha is ‘returned’ to his father. This is followed by Ammu’s death which leads Rahel to ‘drift’ through life. The final stage comes to an end with Rahel’s return to Ayemenem twenty–three years later to meet Estha, who has been ‘re-Returned’ by their father. The different stages are smoothly connected and the action changes with change in the stages. The main actions, however, take place across the river Meenachal, or near to its banks. The actual event is the presence of Rahel at Ayemenem, and the remaining part of the plot is covered through Rahel’s memory and the information is conveyed by the narrator. The content of story, thus, can be separated into two: firstly, the actual event or events that occur and form an integral part of the plot, and secondly, the back ground or context or historical information that issues either from the narrator or from the memory of the characters, but chiefly through Rahel.

Incidentally, the plot of the novel begins from the birth of the twins to their reunion. Other strands, peripheral or collateral that may have historical, social, cultural and political relevance are interwoven into the main plot. But what is significant is the intriguing presentation of riddling and deceptive mention of some highly significant occurrences and experiences in the first chapter. A re-reading of the text, nevertheless, discloses that the deceptive statements and cryptic observations have profound significance. So, what are almost insignificant from a larger point of view, are in fact, cataclysmic and are directly relevant to the theme of the novel.

The two major events foregrounded in the novel are the death of Sophie Mol and the reunion of Rahel and Estha, even though, the central event of the novel is the death of
Sophie Mol, aged nine, when Estha and Rahel were seven years old. These respectively are the beginning and end of the action covered by the plot, although each subsequent chapter opens with a new event. The main action, however, takes place one day in December 1969: “In a purely practical sense it would probably be correct to say that it all began when Sophie Mol came to Ayemenem” (33). Nevertheless, the action of the plot covers the period from December 1969 to 1993.

4.2.2. STRUCTURE

The 340-page debut novel The God of Small Things has 21 titled chapters. A few dozen hours is what the novel accounts for. Regarding the complex architectonical design of her novel, Roy herself comments that, “The God of Small Things is such an intricately structured book... if you take anything out, something will crash” (First City June, 1997, 21-25). Being an architect, she has designed and constructed the intricate structure of her book with great care and attention. She says, “The structure of the book ambushes the story”. So, Roy yields most of the important events and their chronological signposts in the first chapter in a very cryptic and precise way and yet retains the interest of her reader (Prasad 2001:138).

Frederic James speaks of the importance of architecture in postmodern fictions and writes, “...it is evidently architecture which is the privileged terrain of struggle of postmodernism...” (1988: 374). The architectonics of the novel reveals that structurally the novel is postmodernist. Roy is able to balance the intricate structure of the novel with a careful arrangement of graphics and designs. The beginning contains the end and the narrative unfolds towards it. Sophie Mol’s funeral is described at the very outset in the first chapter although she actually arrives in Ayemenem in the sixth chapter and her
tragedy takes place only in the thirteenth chapter. The presence of Sophie Mol, just like the presence of the dead past, pervades the whole novel. Besides, Roy makes ample use of the Past- Present technique using variation, which is in harmony with her narrative strategy (Dodiya 2001: vi). She further admits that she was inspired by the Kathakali dance where the narrative dispenses with a linear structure in favour of a cyclical one, and the complex patterning makes it meander through several time frames. So, each small event in the book is filtered through the lenses of the past, the present and the future. The narrative and structure of the novel are so interwoven into each other that nothing in the novel--characters, events, and places, can be seen in isolation.

The novel opens with a description of Ayemenem, the fictional world of The God of Small Things around which Roy weaves the saga of a family who lives in the Ayemenem House. The story is basically spread over a day and encompasses in many ways a lifetime. The God of Small Things is also the title of the eleventh chapter, with ten chapters before and after. Placed in the middle, it suggests the subject to be a matter of central concern. At the same time, there is an ever-growing intensity as the story progresses to its centre from the partial revelations in the beginning. The whole story, incidentally, is told in the first few pages and is several times superimposed through combination and permutations. The interrelated movements of the narrative are based on structural repetitions. Significantly, the novel ends with the word ‘tomorrow’ defying the structural end itself. The author herself provides a clear indication as to how the novel is structured:

In a purely practical sense it would probably be correct to say that it all began when Sophie Mol came to Ayemenem. 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.

Little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted. Imbued with new meaning. Suddenly they become the bleached bones of a story (32-33).

Roy admits that the architecture of her book is something she has consciously crafted. The novel evidently has a sort of spiral structure, a brooding around central events, whose essential contours are made known fairly early in the novel. At each turn of the spiral, the reader is taken to a few more places, and made to experience other feelings and persons that are enmeshed in an ever-denser cross referentiality. Even resonance and nuance become part of the architecture of the book.

The first chapter, ‘Paradise Pickles and Preserves’ gives the whole story in an enigmatic nutshell. It begins with the return of Rahel to Ayemenem in the midst of the rainy season. Estha has been sent back to Ayemenem by his father, who has migrated to Australia. Rahel meets her twin brother, Estha after a separation of twenty-three years. According to C.J Davees, their re-union is superimposed on the structure no less than thirteen times (1999:328), which in fact, is a repetition of thirteen meetings of Ammu and Velutha. The theme of betrayal, adultery and incest is repeated through innumerable frames of overt and covert/textual references that are superimposed subversively into the very structure of the novel. The structure of the novel, in essence, is simple and clear but by its spirals, digressions and reiteration, and by its use of cinematic techniques like flashbacks and flash forwards, slipping back and forth between several time frames, makes it appear complex.
‘Reverse’ is the order, both ideologically and structurally, in the novel (Barat 91). There are several ‘reversals’ in the novel including that of a chronological time. Structurally, the novel defies a chronological sequence in the narration of events. So, there are two consecutive accounts of forbidden relationships in reverse chronology. Each becomes an image of the other; each is as doomed as the other. Thus, the novel ends not with Estha and Rahel but with Ammu and Velutha, and with the reversal of the conventional order of narration, it is obvious that the present can only lead to the past and that the only possible future is a version of the past.

The novel, in addition, poses several binaries. ‘Doubling’ is used in the novel to neatly dovetail the content and structure of the text (Harishankar 51). At the structural level, the technique of doubling unifies the opposing strands in the narrative and lifts it beyond conflicting binaries. The twins share a common selfhood in their experience to life and to the world around them is used by Roy to work out the complexity of multiple personalities through the technique of doubling. Hence, Rukmini Bhaya Nair purports that the whole book is constructed according to arithmetic of pairs (1997:4). Velutha, which means ‘white’ is actually dark, and is matched with Kari Saipu who is called ‘black’ although he being an Englishman, is white. Ammu and Chacko, brother and sister, are both divorced and each is without a spouse; Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, widow and spinster; Sophie Mol and Lenin, who ‘belonged’ in contrast to the twins, Rahel and Estha, the outcasts.

Roy builds two houses on either side of the river—the Ayemenem House and the History House, both of which hide different stories of people and their ‘transgressions’. People with broken dreams like Pappachi, Mammachi, Chacko, Ammu, and Baby Kochamma who inhabit the Ayemenem House. On the other side of the river, is the
haunted History House, where an old Englishman’s ghost, sickled to a tree, is abrogated by a pair of two-egg twins. In between these two houses flows the river Meenachal where history steps away and biology takes over. In between the House and the river lies the family business, ‘Paradise Pickles and Preserves’.

The appositional structures are also apparent in the way Roy develops her characters. There are two groups of characters in the novel. The first abides by the old social structures in blind adherence- Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Chacko, and Vellya Paapen. The second group consists of the non-conformists --Ammu, Velutha, Estha, and Rahel. However, both groups pay the price for what they choose. Baby Kochamma’s ‘abandoned’ ornamental garden is a fine example. Ammu-Velutha and Estha-Rahel, by violating the social order are forced to pay the price of ‘transgression’. Velutha is brutally beaten to death, Ammu dies a lonely and miserable death and as for Estha and Rahel it was ‘Just the end of living’ (321). When moral degeneration sets in inwardly, deterioration sets in outwardly. Ayemenem House loses it former splendour (2) and the History House is compared to the Heart of Darkness where evil lurks in the house and its verandah.

Driesen compares the structure of the novel to musical compositions and avers that by reinventing the traditional linear novelistic structure, Roy’s text presents a mode of female ecriture (1999:366). Viewed from the angle of gynocritics, the narrative structure of the novel is authentically feminine. According to M.K.Ray, the linguistic features of the novel with regard to phonological, morphological, and syntactic structures, and the liberty taken with spelling, reinforce the feminist quality of the novel (2001:105). Besides, the narrative is resonant of echoes, echoes of feelings that are signified by certain expressions. Thus, Estha becomes ‘pointy shoes’ and a ‘spoiled puff’; a ‘fountain in Love-in Tokyo’ signifies Rahel, a ‘read aloud voice’ substitutes Chacko, a ‘brown leaf on
a black back’ stands for an image of Velutha, a ‘moth’ embodies Pappachi’s spirit, a ‘
violin’ represents Mammachi, and a ‘mortgaged glass eye’ Vellay Paappen.

Roy’s construction also gives rise to the notion of satiric tragic inevitability.

“There was nothing accidental about what happened that morning. Nothing incidental.…”

(309). There is strong irony in the words she uses to present the snobbish caste-system
reasserting its absolute control on the powerless lover Velutha, an untouchable for daring
to love a high caste woman. Deeply embedded in the novel’s structure are elements of the
popular culture of urban India such as cinema, television etc., that are juxtaposed along
with Indian mythology in coloring the narrative. The structure of the novel is ambivalent
in being fictional and poetic at once (P. Hari Padma Rani 1999:338), as Roy makes
extensive use of alliteration, rhythm, repetition, similes and metaphors, and other poetic
and stylistic devices. Further, Roy has skillfully integrated the many disparate elements
within the structure of the novel, that there is cohesion and coherence giving the work a
unified and aesthetic whole.

4.2.3. TIME

Roy employs different modes for conveying time, but what is foregrounded is her
use of a double time scheme in narrating the story (Bhatt 13; Mani 20), which forms an
important aspect of her narrative technique. A major part of the action in the novel is
concerned with the momentous and tragic past of the Ayemenem household. The present
action occupies only a little part of the whole story with the divorced Rahel returning to
Ayemenem from America, to be with her ‘Re-returned’ twin Estha, after twenty-three
years of forced estrangement. Although the action of the plot covers the period from
December 1969 to 1993, background information goes back as far as 1876 when Baby
Kochamma’s and Pappachi’s father was seven years old. Exact time and year or only the
latter is mentioned to fasten the story at a point within the calendar. However, the years mentioned are not in chronological order. It was in the month of June that Rahel came back to Ayemenem. At that time she is thirty-one years old. For cross-reference it is informed that this is the age at which Ammu died. Many other points of time are obliquely referred in the first chapter. The second chapter opens with: “…it was a sky blue day in Dec’69” (the nineteen silent), when Chacko, Ammu and her twins along with Baby Kochamma travel to Cochin to receive Sophie Mol and her mother.

The ages of various characters are mentioned mostly in the first chapter itself. The twins are “as old as Ammu was when she died. Thirty-one”(3). So, when Rahel returns to Ayemenem to visit her twin brother Estha from whom she was separated twenty-three years ago, “Baby Kochamma is eighty-three” (20). The twins are born when the Indo-China war broke out. On page 4, it is stated that the twins have been seven years old when their cousin Sophie Mol, aged nine, died. In Chapter Seven, ‘Wisdom Exercise Notebooks’, Rahel takes a trip down memory lane, while Chapter Eight, unveils events that takes place in December1969 when Sophie Mol arrives from England with her mother, Margaret Kochamma.

An analysis of the time-scheme in the novel reveals that the times and experiences, life histories and situations extraneous to the main action are brought in to assemble in a medley of occurrences quite asymmetrical along the time scale (Talwar 28). Thus, a chapter that opens with an event in 1993 hops back to something that happened in 1969. But this pattern of alternation is broken around December 1969 and this structural manipulation clearly establishes the centrality of the cluster of events that happened then—the death of Sophie Mol, which coincides, with the discovery of Ammu and Velutha’s
illicit relationship. Political and historical events also help to anchor the story on the temporal plane.

Rain plays a significant role in the time-scheme. Roy brilliantly connects the two points of the novel through the image of the rainfall, “It was raining when Rahel came back to Ayemenem” (1); “It was raining steadily. Night rain. That lonely drummer practising his roll long after the rest of the band has gone to bed” (295). It was on a rainy day that Sophie Mol gets drowned in the Meenachal. Similarly, Estha is shown as walking on the riverbank in the rain after being ‘Re-return’.

Roy makes frequent use of allusion and verbal collage, as a result of attempting a radical compression of time within a narrative (Surendran 33). So, there are time shifts, of endless fast-forwards and reversals that highly enhance the effect of the narration and thereby make the novel daringly postmodern. But the time sequence is not perceived effortlessly because the narrator employs different styles in indicating time. Hence, both the temporal and spatial movement of the novel are circular. Events emerge elliptically and out of chronological sequence. Besides, in the novel, past and present flow into one another with ‘memory’ bridging the events to lend them a chronological storyline (Amin 19). The time frame of the novel is, thus, in keeping with the complex structure and highlights Roy’s skill as a creative writer.

4.2.4. SPACE and DISTANCE

The novel is very much moored in time and space, but at the same time it is also a story that transcends space and time. Roy makes a cinematic visualization of space in the novel. An unmistakable ‘Indianness’ especially in its basic theme and background characterizes the novel. The village, river, houses, dusty roads, mud and squalor, trees, birds, sound of rain, sights and smells are typically Indian and the changes wrought about
with time, all contribute together to make the spatial element vividly alive. Pramod K Nayar asserts that the novel is spatially organized around closed spaces (2001:74). In terms of topography and architecture, the text abounds in crypts of various kinds like coffin, grave, skull, the Ayemenem House, the History House, and the old Plymouth car.

In the same way Nandini Nayar refers to the secret world of Velutha and Ammu, which she feels is spatially and geographically the same as the physical setting of the Twin’s world. It is on the river, the boat and the History House that they—Velutha and Ammu, Estha and Rahel, attempt to construct a separate space (2001:86).

The author, therefore, maintains a detached distance, though there are a few instances when the narrative provides authorial comments regarding characters or events. Although the voice of the central consciousness in the novel may seem to be distant and detached from the object of its narration, Roy, nevertheless, skillfully succeeds in gaining the reader’s sympathy for her main characters without reducing the distance between the implied author and the narration.

4. 2.5. SETTING

“All creative art”, declares D.H. Lawrence, “must arise out of a specific soil and flicker with a spirit of place” (1936: 334). In this respect, The God of Small Things powerfully evokes the place, the people and the ethos. Aymenem, the little village on the banks of the river Meenachal with its idyllic beauty forms the locale of the story. Roy gives a poetic description of it in the opening lines of the novel. The story is set in the Kerala of 1960’s. The novelist refers to the consequence of hybridization and degeneration of culture. Ayemenem, which can be said to be a microcosm of any small village in Kerala, or India, presents the plight of people awkwardly suspended between the cultural values of two worlds. The turbulent Ayemenem represent, to quote Updike, “a vast,
violent, circling driving, ridiculous, insane, unfeasible public turmoil of a nation”. It is a village, authentically Indian, but the sensibility is urban, westernized and modern.

The Ipe family is a conglomeration of people devoted to upholding bourgeois values at all costs. The “inbreeding among the Christian” bourgeoisie (130-31) has begun to self-destruct and is bound to affect the body and mind of most of them. Chacko himself admits, that his family has been pointed in the wrong direction, “trapped outside their own history, and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away” (52). Pappachi, the imperial Entomologist, “an incurable British CCP, which was short for chhi-chhi-poach’ and in Hindi meant ‘Shit Wiper’”, is an Anglophile, whose mind has been brought into a state “which made him act like the English” (51). Chacko with his “Marxist mind and feudal libido” can’t help having a “Man’s needs” (168). Baby Kochamma, frustrated and embittered in love, used to nurture a beautiful garden, but now presides over the world in her drawing room on satellite television.

The novelist alludes to the “Foreign Returnees”, the new rich class, who despite their wealth, have become careless in their habits and lifestyle. The collusion of cultures, thus have brought a new affluence that transformed the sights of even small villages in Kerala. Estha, walks around Ayemenem:

Past the new, freshly baked, iced, Gulf-money houses.... 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 (13).

New Gulf-money houses that vie with older houses, the Ayemenem House, the History House across the river, Sophie Mol’s Yellow Church, the Ayemenem Youth Kung Fu Club, Tender Bud Nursery School (for touchables), the Ration Shop, Comrade Pillai’s
Lucky Printing Press, the Ayemenem Temple, and the Paradise Pickles Factory are some of the geographical signs that mark the fictional world of Ayemenem.

Nature, in the novel, acquires a personality of its own (Pathak 2001:20-21). Roy has an eye for minute details pertaining to its shape, colour, size, moods, wishes and whims. Therefore, the lush green scene is recreated with telling economy. Roy’s deep-rooted love for the landscape of Kerala is present in her vivid, exotic, pictorial description of Ayemenem and its lush surroundings. She writes about the weather and the vegetation of Kerala with such evocative force and a dazzling command of language as to evoke a tropical splendour at the very beginning of the novel:

But by early June the south-west monsoon breaks… 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…

It was raining when Rahel came back to Ayemenem. 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 walls, streaked with moss, had grown soft, and bulged a little with dampness that seeped up from the ground. The wild, overgrown garden was full of the whisper and scurry of small lives. In the undergrowth 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 (1-2).

The vegetation of the region and the undulating landscape provide an immortal locale to the novel. The splash of colour and smell provide a vivid picture of the rich
locale against which Roy’s characters act and react. However, the most integral part of this landscape is the sluggish river Meenachal. Imbued with a life of its own, the river Meenachal assumes a great significance in the novel. It symbolizes the ebb and flow of time, representing at the same time the lost world of innocence to an all round degeneration. Estha on being re-Returned, “Some days he walked along the banks of the river that smelled of shit, and pesticides bought with World Bank loans. Most of the fish had died. The ones that survived suffered from fin-rot and had broken out in boils” (13).

In the same way, when Rahel comes back, she finds a definite sign of degeneration in the landscape. Using a graphic, but unusual metaphor Roy writes,

…the river, it greeted her with a ghastly skull’s smile, with holes where teeth had been and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed … It had shrunk… the river was no more than swollen drain now. A thin ribbon of thick water that lapped wearily at the mud banks on either sides, sequinned 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… (124).

The river now has lost its original flow and is getting saturated with filth and dirt produced by the people:

Children hung their bottoms over the edge and defecated directly onto the squelchy sucking mud of the exposed river bed ... Upstream, clean mothers washed clothes and pots in unadulterated factory effluents... On warm days the smell of shit lifted off the river and hovered over Ayemenem like a hat (125).

The degeneration is chiefly due to economic progress “a saltwater barrage had been built, in exchange for votes…for the price of a river” (124). Consequently, in the
changed scenario, the river had shrunk; it was no more than a swollen drain now: “Once it had had the power to evoke fear. To change lives. But now its teeth were drawn its spirit spent. It was just a slow, sludging green ribbon lawn that ferried fetid garbage to the sea. Bright plastic bags blew across its viscous, weedy surface like subtropical flying-flowers” (124). The twins, as children, often dreamt of their river. The Meenachal river is part of the dissolute Ayemenem geography. As a victim of man’s rapacity and greed, the river Meenachal in the novel becomes a universal symbol of man’s merciless exploitation of nature.

The fictional Ayemenem is a place of social, political and moral corruption (Barnabas 296). It is a place where untouchability is a social reality and even the smell of a paravan is considered offensive. Moreover, it is a place where political degeneration and opportunism exist, as exemplified in the case of Comrade K.N.M. Pillai, the local politician, who is manipulative and exploitative. He leaves no chance to achieve his political aim; quite indifferent to the miseries he brings to others. He is also responsible for the social and political degradation of Ayemenem just like Inspector Thomas Mathew, of Kottayam Police Station, who as a representative of the Police Department and as a member of the Congress Party. He too is supposed to maintain law and order in Ayemenem and if necessary defend the powerless and weak. But he treats Ammu like a commodity, an action “calculated to humiliate and terrorize” in an effort to “instill order in a world gone wrong” (260). These ‘history’s henchmen’ (308) have no respect for basic human relationship. The Inspector’s contribution to the town’s degeneration is as crucial as that of K.N.M. Pillai. The Ayemenem at the time of Velutha’s death is not an ordinary place. The destructive socio-political and moral corruption of its value system can erase its victims without any trace.
The novelist, further, informs that Ayemenem’s population had swelled to the size of a little town. “Behind the fragile facade of greenery [which gave it the semblance of rural quietness], 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” (128). The old Ayemenem House on the hill having lost its former glory now looks empty. “Filth had laid siege to the Ayemenem house” (88). The moral decadence of Ayemenem has seeped into the Ayemenem House as well. There is gradual degeneration in the House.

A close study of the inhabitants reveal horrifying aspects of their characters----their hypocrisy, vanity, brutishness, male chauvinism, sexual jealousy, despicable colonial feelings, and callousness to name a few. This is best exemplified in Pappachi and can extend to almost all characters. The spirit of degeneration is also found even in Ammu and her children, although they are engaged in a kind of revolt against the corruption prevalent in the House. In fact, it can be said that it is the rotten values cherished by the Ayemenem House that shape their rebellious character. One interesting fact is that the Ayemenem House is presented in the novel as a ‘House’ not a ‘home’, which points to the absence of any bond between the House and its members. Even Sophie Mol and her mother Margaret Kochamma experience the suffocating atmosphere of the House. The once flourishing Paradise Pickles factory is closed; everything in it has broken down and is rotting. Even the History House symbolically represents the moral corruption and spiritual degeneration of the place. It had been Kari Saipu’s house (the Black Sahib). “He is Ayemenem’s own Kurtz” (52) with dark passions and the place was “his private Heart of Darkness” (52). Likewise, it is here that he shot himself when his boy lover is sent away to school by his
parents. The History House also symbolizes the horrors and discontent brought about by advancing human civilization.

4.2.6. CHARACTERIZATION

An important and somewhat intriguing aspect of Roy’s character sketching is the way she portrays her characters. The novelist has given a distinct identity to the inhabitants of Ayemenem. Information is always kept to the minimum and rationed out in doses, which nonetheless produces a remarkable effect (Talwar 27). Roy with great psychological insight, portrays the intricate human nature of her characters with its egotism and selfishness and shows how these qualities affect the lives of other people. With consummate skill she exposes and unmasks the hypocrisy of some characters, who masquerade as respectable people by showing how behind the mask, there is cunningness, deception and untruth. This tendency of hiding the real self and masquerading as a different person is perceptible in the case of many of her characters, like Pappachi, a snobbish man with Eurocentric pretension, who donates money to orphanages and leprosy clinics in order to maintain a public facade of being a sophisticated, generous and moral man, but who, when alone with his wife and children, turns monstrous. They are often beaten up and humiliated and then made to suffer the envy of friends and relations. Throughout the novel he is portrayed as a dubious, scheming, ruthless and self-centred person. Thus, he is more of a caricature than a rounded, full-blooded fictional character.

Roy’s art of characterization, however, is at its devastating best in her portrayal of Comrade Pillai, whose deeds and words are marked by ambiguity and ambivalence. Comrade Pillai attempts to create an image of himself as a champion of the downtrodden. As the local politician, political opportunism enables him to be safe, always. He is manipulative and exploitative, and to achieve his political aim he uses effectively any
number of clichéd Marxist terms. He tries to project himself as a friend of the working class people, yet at heart he is a class-conscious ‘touchable’ man, belonging to an upper class community. There is a wide gap between what he preaches and what he practises.

Pillai does not like Velutha because he sees him as a threat to his own position, for Velutha is a card-holding member of the Marxist Communist party and an ‘untouchable’. Although Marxism is supposed to be class / caste-less, Comrade, as a Marxist, contemptuously refers to Velutha as ‘that Paravan’ (278). This exposes his hypocrisy. He not only uses his position in the party to promote his own vested interest by managing a family enterprise, a printing press, but also projects himself as a “prospective candidate to contest election to the State Assembly” (120). He even tries to persuade Chacko to fire Velutha from his service, as caste prejudice is deep rooted in him. He also withholds vital information from the police and virtually betrays Velutha and brings about his death.

“Even though his part in the whole thing had by no means been a small one…, he dismissed the whole business as the Inevitable Consequence of Necessary Politics” (14).

Pillai’s brand of Communism is shown to be deceptive and motivated by selfishness. He is in many ways instrumental in closing down the Paradise Pickles factory, thereby rendering many members of his own party jobless. The author describes Pillai as “A professional omeletteer. He walked through the world like a chameleon. Never revealing himself, never appearing not to. Emerging through chaos unscathed” (14). He is also responsible for the social and political degradation of Ayemenem.

Another powerful character portrayal is that of Inspector Thomas Mathew of Kottayam Police station, who as a representative of the Police Department and a member of the Congress Party, is supposed to maintain law and order in Ayemenem, and if necessary to defend the powerless and the weak. But he joins hands with Pillai. “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” (262). These ‘history’s henchmen’ (308) had no respect for basic human relationship nor did they give ear to truth. He even treats Ammu like a commodity. “With ‘sly and greedy’ eyes, he calls her a ‘veshya’ and taps on her breast as if he was choosing mangoes from a basket” (8). In very telling lines, the novelist informs, “They (Mathew and Pillai) looked out at the world, never wondered how it worked because they knew. They worked it. They were mechanics who serviced different parts of the same machine” (262).

Chacko, the capitalist projects himself as Comrade Chacko, only to entice and exploit the female workers of his factory. He is portrayed as a ‘failure’- in business, in marriage and in life. A Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, he is known in the family for his ‘Reading Aloud Voice’ and his ‘Oxford moods’.

Baby Kochamma embittered by frustration in love, adopts a puritanical attitude towards Ammu. So, when she learns of Ammu’s illicit love affair “[She] recognized at once the immense potential of the situation...and saw it as God’s Way of punishing Ammu for her sins” (257).

Riemen Schneider views most of the characters in the novel as typified figures(1999: 122- 126), although Ammu is seen as the most individual of all the characters. Velutha is only a partly individualized character as he is seen mostly through the eyes of others. Velutha also practises deception when he keeps his attachment to the Communist Party a secret, but his skills and lovable nature is portrayed in glowing terms. Set against the range of stereotype figures, Ammu, Estha, Rahel and Sophie Mol are individual characters. Nevertheless, Roy’s skill as a novelist is at its best in the credible
portrait of the children. Their childlike nature endows them with individuality that is
recognizable even as adults, although their individual personalities have undergone change
due to their experiences.

Almost all the characters in the novel, both major and minor suffer from shattered
dreams (Surendran 4). Most of the characters in the novel are depicted as ‘damaged’
resulting from some kind of ‘rejection’. According to Myers, the characters have well
established, behavioural traits pre-determined by the emotional baggage, which they have
brought with them from past defeats (1999: 357). Hence, each character is driven on by
the inner force of his or her passion and the ensuing inevitable conflict results in
disharmony, and often leads to powerful personal tragedy. Moreover, most of the
characters in the novel are liminal or marginal (Pramod Nayar 1999:237). Therefore,
Ammu, Estha, Rahel, and Velutha are liminal figures as far as the society of Ayemenem is
concerned; yet paradoxically they become the central figures because they function as
actants in its major rites.

4.2.7. NARRATION

The epigraph by John Berger states, “Never again will a single story be told as
though it were the only one”. The ‘bleached bones’ of Roy’s story is made of, “Little
events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted. Imbued with new meaning”(32).
Hence, “The novel has no linear narrative. “Fragments go to make her novel” (C.Ajayan
98). The narrative of The God of Small of Things, although it focuses on the twin’s
perception of the world at large, moves out to encompass the social, political and religious
life of Ayemenem. The narration begins with the re-union of the twins, a brother and
sister, separated twenty-three years ago, when their once happy home with their one-
parent childhood in Ayemenem is irrevocably shattered by the ‘terror’ which forces the
three to drift apart. It is only in Chapters 18-19, that the readers come to know how the twins get traumatized for life by one terrible experience, when they were just seven years old.

The narrative focuses mainly on the happenings in Ayemenem House. Incidentally, when the narration begins, it is in a state of desolation and emptiness. The narrative encompasses three generations of a family and covers a vast tract of time. Significantly, the story is unravelled mainly through the eyes of the seven-year-old Rahel. This adds credibility to the details, as Rahel along with her twin brother Estha is an active participant in the story. Since most of the story relates to childhood events, Roy is able to present an honest and uncorrupt view of the events. The omniscient narrative voice is, thus, used as a structural device in conferring unity and homogeneity to disparate points of view. Although the story is narrated through the consciousness of Rahel, the omniscient presence of the author is never far away.

The fictional method of the novel is that of presentation rather than representation, telling rather than showing, even though the narration begins by showing. Roy’s characters are in the main, objects of description, than subjects of action. The novel, in fact, is a nostalgic narrative, as it looks back to an earlier time (precisely December 1969) before the childhood of the twins are shattered forever. The entity, Estha-Rahel is destroyed at the moment when the seven-year old Estha is carried away on the Madras mail leaving his twin sister Rahel screaming on the platform.

Roy uses various narrative devices to make her narration lively and interesting. A typical three fold narrative device used by Roy is seen at the very beginning of the novel:

They were nearly born on a bus, Estha and Rahel. The car in which Baba, their father, was taking Ammu, their mother, to hospital in Shillong to have
them, broke down… They abandoned the car and flagged down a crowded State Transport bus… That was before they were divorced and Ammu came back to live in Kerala (3).

The three-dimensional past, comprising Ammu’s struggle just before giving birth to Estha and Rahel, her divorce, and her return to Ayemenem is thus, wrapped up in an instant entirely from the focal point of the author. M. Mani Meitie alludes to how the novelist employs the device of cinematic close up while capturing the different levels of the past (2001:192).

A study of the narrative structure of The God of Small Things reveals that the narrative pattern is not quite cyclical, as it does not end where it began, but shuffles past and present; one person’s story with another, so that one hears a number of voices, though Rahel’s is the dominant voice and point of view. Her story, thus, is linked to everyone else’s through the common centre of destructive relationship, so that the novel seems like a chain of links forged together seamlessly without beginning or end, the structure suggesting both ‘closure and indeterminacy’ (Umberto Eco’s famous paradox). Interestingly, each story seems to echo the others, or makes a comment on them, and this adds to the effect of repetitions and parallels throughout the novel. So, there is no monocentric voice in the narration and heterogeneous ideas play simultaneously. Further, the linear progression is almost absent but the unity of action works as a unifying device (Manju Varma 157).

The narrative keeps on drifting corresponding to the manifestations of the unconscious in women, which is so different from men. Moreover, the sense of a woman’s peripheral yet invested position within a male-dominated culture leads her to thematic and
stylistic experimentations and innovations, so as to make herself heard. Roy’s narrative style is, thus a combination of both, a stream of consciousness novel and a traditional narrative style. Her narrative is distinguished by emotivity achieved by means of using connotative vocabulary – words and utterances carry feelings and emotions, which are sometimes at a low-key, and sometimes, rise to passionate outburst. So, the omniscient narration now and then ventures into stream of consciousness of minor characters like Baby Kochamma and Muralidharan. Finally, Roy uses irony to draw sympathy for her central characters, although she uses cynicism, sarcasm and ridicule in case of others.

4.2.7.1. ANALEPSIS

The novel consists mainly of the memories of Rahel’s past, which is interconnected with the lives of the other characters in the story. Hence, most of the events in the novel are presented through flashbacks. Flashbacks are powerful narrative techniques because of their evocative nature. They appeal to the senses because of their focus on the sights, smells and sounds that make up that experience. Roy makes strong use of flashbacks to introduce childhood scenes. The main advantage being that it provides a method for presenting characters outside time and place, by separating the presentation of consciousness from the chronological sequences of events. In flashbacks, the characters regain their innocence and naiveté and hence the tone of the text shifts to accommodate these alterations.

4.2.7.2. PROLEPSIS

The novel begins with Rahel’s arrival to Ayemenem after twenty-three years. The narration being predominantly about past events, there are also a few references to present or future events. The main event in the story’s present is the re-union of Rahel and Estha.
Sophie Mol’s death is narrated in the first chapter itself although she makes her appearance in the story much later, just like the mention of Velutha’s death and Estha’s silence. The full account of these cryptic accounts are given only much later in the text. However, one of the most striking examples of Prolepsis is seen on Page 266: "SORROW, HOWEVER, was still two weeks away on that blue cross-stitch afternoon, as Margaret Kochamma lay jet-lag and still asleep”. There is also a huge pause in the narrative on pages 326-327, as the narrator makes a jump from the painful past to the present.

4.2.8. NARRATOR

In The God of Small Things, Roy has chosen a totally impersonal narrator to characterize the voice of the implied author. This omniscient ‘heterodiegetic’ third person author-narrator is intrusive and hence the final vision that arises out of the work is that of the narrator. Right from the very beginning it is clear that a third person narrator is presenting the story: “It was raining when Rahel came back to Ayemenem” (1). The novel begins with ‘showing’ the natural scenes of Ayemenem in the months of May and June. But in the midst of it, the voice of the omniscient narrator, who is possessed of her/his own consciousness which gives shape to the linguistic utterances, is heard.

The narrator, thus, supplies the background information. Rahel has come to see her brother Estha, who is her two-egg twin. “Dizygotic” doctors called them, a statement which could not have emanated in the consciousness of the twins, nor the cryptic explanation that, “The confusion lay in a deeper, more secret place” (2). The intruding presence of the author-narrator is again indicated at the funeral of Sophie Mol when she describes an old lady masquerading as a distant relative. The author comments that she is a “funeral junkie” or “a latent necrophilia” (5). Sophie Mol, the author comment is “the seeker of small wisdoms” (16). There are numerous instances of authorial comment and
though the author is ‘the shaping embroil’ of the narrative, several voices within the text vie with each other to make themselves heard. Using a child narrator has certainly helped Roy forge a new language by breaking grammatic and syntactic rules, which is no doubt one of the most innovative aspects of her narrative style.

Since the story deals with different levels of perception, the narrator modulates the perspective by entering the consciousness of various characters in the story. At times there are passages in the story where the narrator has invested herself with the personality of a character and when this takes place, there is a shift in point of view to some degree. In spite of the multiple points of view, there are always narrative summaries of action that takes place ‘Off stage’ (Mani 18). Throughout the book there are scattered passages, from half a page to several pages long, that is devoted to descriptions of a character’s past or characterization of persons and places. The most obvious example is that which deals with the history and success of the Communist Party in Kerala and of Baby Kochamma’s early love for Father Mulligan, her stint as a novice at the Roman Catholic Convent, her bitter ornamental garden and later obsession with Television. Moreover, the point of transition of this account is cleverly made. The omniscient author also furnishes an account of Ammu’s failed marriage, her father’s sadism, Chacko’s failed marriage, Mammachi’s pickle venture, Velutha’s many talents, his disappearance and reappearance. Even a whole chapter is devoted to Chacko and Margaret Kochamma. Likewise, an entire chapter (Fourteen) is devoted to Comrade Pillai, his domestic life, personal and professional ambitions, pretensions and craftiness, his high pitched political speeches about Rights of Untouchables, his hectoring and mouthing of inanities and platitudes in the name of Communism, which are all delineated with maximum efficacy.
Roy’s technique of revealing a bit here, or a little there, concealing something for the moment, promising something else, serves in delaying the crucial action and accelerating at the same time, the climax of the story. A fine example is when the readers are informed that Larry McCaslin saw in his wife Rahel’s eyes, 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” (20). So this last bit hints at something unusual to come. Similarly, much before the account of Sophie Mol’s drowning in the course of the children’s escapade is given, the following lines occur: “Despite not knowing any of this, why did Margaret Kochamma blame Estha for what happened to Sophie? Perhaps she had a mother’s instinct” (264). Roy, thus, very effectively makes use of authorial comments as she narrates her story, as these comments help the readers to know the characters more closely. At times the author-narrator even makes use of irony to criticize contemporary society.

4.2.9. POINT OF VIEW

The novel is obviously written from a child’s and childhood’s point of view. The Booker citation says “Roy funnels the history of South India through the eyes of seven-year old twins”. But though the twins and their points of view occupy large space of the book there are passages in the text, which are evidently beyond the perception of seven years old twins. Hence, it is necessary to distinguish between who ‘perceives and conceives’ and who ‘narrates’ the story. According to Talwar, ‘Point of view’ and ‘Focalization’ have great effect on the message and the vision sought to be communicated (1998:34). In The God of Small Things, the cover point of view is that of the third person omniscient and the final vision that arises out of the work is that of the narrator.
Estha and Rahel are ‘reflectors’ or ‘centres of consciousness’ through whom Roy filters her narrative. In Chapter Eight, there is a column of ants, which the child Rahel proceeds to kill. The following portion represents the consciousness of the child Rahel in a clear and lucid manner:

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 (185).

The remaining part printed in italics seems to be a verbalization of Rahel’s thinking but it is, in fact, the narrating self, for it is too ingenious to be assigned to the child:

*The Antly Church would be empty and the Antly Bishop would wait in his funny Antly Bishop clothes,... And nobody would arrive... After he had waited for a reasonably Antly amount of time, he would get a funny Antly Bishop frown on his forehead, and shake his head sadly ... Then he’d go home to his wife, and (if she wasn’t dead) they’d have an Antly Afternoon  Gnap (185-86).*

Similarly, in another passage taken from the text, the readers are transported into the mind of a seven year old:

A car breeze blew. Greentrees and telephone poles flew past the windows. Still birds slid by on moving wires, like unclaimed baggage at the airport. A pale day moon hung hugely in the sky and went where they went. As big as the belly of a beer-drinking man (87).
The narrator enters not only the consciousness of Rahel as a child, but also Rahel as an experienced and adult person. So, after her return from America, Rahel’s memories are couched in a different vocabulary:

*Around now, Rahel thought, if this were Washington, I would be on my way to work. The bus ride. The streetlights. The gas fumes. The shapes of people’s breathe on the bullet proof glass of my cabin. The clatter of coins pushed towards me in the metal tray. The smell of money on my fingers. The punctual drunk with sober eyes who arrives exactly at 10 p.m.; ‘Hey you! Black bitch! Suck my dick’!* (187).

Apart from the twins, the character whose consciousness is appropriately enough captured by the narrator is their mother Ammu:

*It was his smile that reminded Ammu of Velutha as a little boy. Helping Vellya Paapen to count coconuts … Calling her Ammukutty. Little Ammu… When she looked at him now, she couldn’t help thinking that the man he had become bore so little resemblance to the boy he had been. His smile was the only piece of baggage he had carried with him from boyhood into manhood* (175).

Although the experience in the passage belongs mostly to the consciousness of Ammu, a close analysis reveals the mixture of the narrator’s point of view and consciousness.

Most of the actions in the novel are seen from the point of view of the twins like the trip to Cochin. In the same way, Sophie Mol’s reception at Ayemenem is again presented partly from Rahel’s perspective. So also, the expulsion of Ammu and her twins from Ayemenem House by Chacko, Ammu’s fatal illness and her incineration in an
electric crematorium are seen through Rahel’s stricken eyes. Similarly, the events leading to the drowning of Sophie Mol and their part in it are also seen from the points of view of the twins. Moreover, when the play “Welcome Home, Our Sophie Mol” is being played at Ayemenem House, it is Estha’s thoughts that are revealed as he retires into the dark interior of the Paradise Pickles factory.

In many places, the point of view of the implied author is that of a very observant seven year old child. However, there are several stages of action in the novel where the twins are not present, where they do not know or even understand what has happened. But the omniscient narrator is present. Likewise, there is a clear instance of another person’s consciousness in the letter written by Baby Kochamma to her father where the narrator has zeroed her role or has completely identified herself with the character. In fact, there are several passages in the novel that present the reflections of various characters. Besides, a whole section is devoted to Ammu’s reflections, her secret passions and frustrations, her fear and foreboding, her dreams and reality. There are also passages where her unlucky marriage, divorce and return to Ayemenem are recounted. As a matter of fact, the mental processes are not always presented from the point of view of the characters concerned. On close examination, one is aware of the author behind the character, ever ready to explain things that the characters themselves do not understand. The relatively brief eleventh chapter titled ‘The God of Small Things’ is predominantly from Ammu’s point of view—her dream of the one-armed man. But the authorial voice keeps slipping in here and there, mostly unobtrusively.

Coming to Velutha, although he is central to the whole story, the titular hero, The God of Small Things, the God of Loss---his point of view does not figure in a predominant manner. He is first seen with the children, playing with them, acting out their fancies,
acting host to them, or playing at being grown ups. Mammachis’ point of view is clubbed with that of Baby Kochamma’s. This is especially so in the context of their agreement over the logicality of Men’s Needs (Chacko’s) and over what ought to be done to salvage some of the family honour that has been besmirched by the Ammu-Velutha affair. The story also has Chacko’s and Margaret Kochamma’s points of view, besides that of Comarade Pillai. Similarly, minor characters and their points of view are presented at appropriate places—Vellya Paapen (Velutha’s father) and his invalid son, Kuttappen, and even Kochu Maria, the family’s midget cook. The shifting point of view, thus, allows the reader to gain insights into the minds of the characters, and even what they think and feel. As Shiela Mani points out, it also gives scope for the author to ‘report’ the thought process of several of her characters (2001:19).

Most of the content presented in the novel, however, is the consciousness of the character in the form of words, phrases or sentences—and sometimes even as short passages. Surendran points out that it is Rahel who mostly makes use of interior monologue (2000: 239). Roy’s use of the stream of consciousness technique as well as the technique of interior monologue in the novel, therefore, greatly helps the readers in knowing what exactly goes on in the minds of some important characters. These methods of narration, thus, secure for the reader an understanding of the responses of the characters. In this context it is significant to note that except in direct speech, the characters are indicated by third person references even when their consciousness is being foregrounded. An analysis of the various modulations and variations as well as mixing of consciousness evidently helps in the better understanding of the context, message and tone of the text. To put it briefly, it can be stated that Roy effectively utilizes the consciousness and experience of a character in the service of the grand design.
4.2.10. FOCALIZATION

In the novel the focal point of narration is that of the omniscient author or the narrator persona, who is sometimes the adult Rahel, but is mostly the child Rahel. But there are a few instances when other characters become the centres of focalization.

Velutha is ‘seen’ from several points of view, but he is always seen through the ‘eyes’ of others who surrounded him, never through his own eyes. In the beginning of the novel he is seen through the eyes of Rahel, for it is she who first sees Velutha, with a flag in his hand, in the march taken out by the Communists. This little but significant observation proves to have a lot of bearing on the later tragic unfolding of events. “It was Velutha. That much Rahel was sure of. She’d seen him. He’d seen her. She’d have known him anywhere any time… She knew his back…” (73).

Velutha, nevertheless, is primarily ‘seen’ as Ammu’s lover and that too briefly. For the narrator and for Ammu, Velutha’s body is an erotic object for the gaze to transfix itself:

Velutha walked up … Barebodied… Ammu watched Velutha … 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 (174-175).

As Ammu watches Velutha playing with Rahel, she becomes aware of him as a man. So, on the fateful day of Ammu’s and Velutha’s mutual recognition as man and woman, it is his physical appearance that invites the narrator’s attention. In a rare, epiphanic moment they ‘see’ each other as soul mates and realize that they have gifts for each other:
Centuries telescoped into one evanescent moment. History was wrong-footed, caught off guard. … In that brief moment, Velutha looked up and saw things that he hadn’t seen before..., he saw that Rahel’s mother was a woman…He saw too that he was not necessarily the only giver of gifts. That she had gifts to give him too.

This knowing slid into him cleanly, like the sharp edge of a knife…It only took a moment.

Ammu saw that he saw. She looked away. He did too… (176-177).

A little later Velutha is again ‘seen’ arrested in mid-action as he swings up little Rahel. Through his ‘eyes’ the readers see the picture Ammu makes, and experience with him the immensity of the ‘knowledge’ as it breaks into him. Velutha’s own thoughts and feelings are presented directly: “In that brief moment, Velutha looked up and saw things”.

It is here that he gains individuality through his realization of a ‘new world’ of wonder and fear. Then it’s the narrator’s voice taking over “This knowing slid into him clearly….”

Even in their lovemaking his physique takes the center stage both in Ammu’s mind as also of the narrator. So, in their first night together, it is Velutha himself who conveys the turmoil of his emotions, his joy, love, apprehension and hope. And again, shortly before his life ended: “He was suddenly happy. Things will get worse, he thought to himself. Then better. 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” (290). The last four lines are however that of the narrators and not Velutha’s. Similarly, when he swims towards Ammu who is sitting on the stone steps leading to the water, [h]e “watched her….” (333).
Sometimes Velutha is shown to be god-like: “As he rose from the dark river and walked up the stone steps, she saw that the world they stood in was his” (333-334). Ammu in her dream even raises him to the level of ‘the God of Loss’, ‘the God of Small Things’; a symbolic heightening of character who assumes central importance in the narrator’s story. Velutha is also ‘seen’ through the eyes and the mind of other characters. Even his father recognizes an assuredness in Velutha that he himself does not possess and this worries him. Comrade Pillai ‘sees’ him as a political threat. Baby Kochamma ‘sees’ him as the Nemesis of the family, but for the Twins, he is their friend and they are impressed by his skilled craftman’s hands.

Another instance of focalization is when Estha is taken to testify against Velutha, whereby he loses both his childhood and his friendship at one stroke. Estha is numbed by the sight of Velutha lying awash in his own urine, blood and spit in the police lockup: “Swollen eyes opened. Wandered. They focused ...on a beloved child ” (320).

Yet another important instance of focalization is presented in Chapter Ten. Estha is alone in the pickles and preserves factory, in front of a vat of banana jam left there to cool, which he starts stirring: “A boat to row across the river. Akkara. The Other Side...The jam stirring became a boat-rowing. The round and round became a back and forth. Across a sticky scarlet river” (196). The disturbing act of sexual harassment calls forth in the text metaphor of rowing the jam. The transition from a circular movement to a back and forth rhythm qualified the sexually heated metaphor “across the sticky scarlet river”, positing a double ground of associations: the hot and red penis of the vendor and its semen: “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” (197). The rising sense of anger is lexically grounded in the colour ‘red’. Consequently, the Verb
Phrase ‘Angry-coloured’ means literally ‘to be red due to anger’. The scene is presented in the text through the ‘coloured’ (or subjective) focalization of an angry Estha, frowning, as he looks around the factory. According to Monti, it represents the psychological fact concerning his inner thoughts and emotions (1999:380-381).

Mammachi, Ammu’s mother provides the focus for the action in many passages. Her pickles factory, her obsessive love for her son Chacko, her dislike for his English ex-wife Margaret and her double standards of morality for Chacko and Ammu are narrated from her angle.

To sum up, Roy uses the narrative techniques of narration, point of view and focalization in such a way that it provides better insights about the characters and adds graphic vitality to the aesthetic structure of the novel.