



## Decolonizing the English Language: Stylistic Innovations in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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### ABSTRACT

*The research analyzes stylistic innovations in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* in terms of postcolonial stylistics proposed by Esterino Adami (2025) in terms of the contribution of the novel to decolonisation of the English language. The language practices of Roy by use of syntactic deviation, phonetic spelling, code-switching and semantic foregrounding undermine the conventions of Standard English and represent the mixed Indian, postcolonial identity of Indian English literature. Through stylistic colorings of the language to make room of local expressions, cultural rhythms, and non-linear tale structures, Roy exercises the voice of rebellion of a subversive authorial identity that defies colonial linguistic domination. Referring to the major ideas introduced by Adami including hybridity, voice, resistance, and stylistic appropriation, the discussion draws attention to the uniqueness of the prose written by Roy as the field of political and cultural negotiations. The present research maintains that stylistic games initiated by Roy not only subvert colonial linguistic imperialism but also appropriates the narrative space to marginalized female voices as a very clear (post)colonial poem of resistance.*

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### Introduction

The postcolonial societies have used language as an instrument of both control and contravention. Colonial power was also instilled through the English language, specifically, the discourse was standardized and excluded the discourse of aboriginals. But, there has been growing opposition to this linguistic hegemony by postcolonial writers who have recreated the English language according to domestic identities, cultural timeframes and world perspectives. According to the discussion presented in Postcolonial Stylistics, writers resort to decolonizing the stylistics, or opening the formal patterns of the English language to embrace subversive discourses, hybrid language systems and local knowledge systems

(Esterino Adami, 2025). Such a process does not only destabilize the authority of the Standard English but also recovers a narrative and linguistic space of the previously colonized subjects.

The God of Small Things (1997) by Arundhati Roy is an example of this ploy in the bold stylistic innovations. Roy flouts regular syntax and plays with spelling with the intent of achieving a phonetic and emotional meaning as well as using Malayalam words and the use of cultural idioms all through in the narrative. These stylistic traits are not only indicative of a subjective preference but the ideological burden of these linguistic elements lies in the fact that they reorganize the colonial language so that it can convey postcolonial awareness and agency. As Adami points out (2025), this kind of strategies can be considered to be a politics of style where form of language is where the postcolonial struggle and self-assertion occur.

This research explores the linguistic ramification of postcolonial stylistics as applied by Roy to her work and identifies how language can be reterritorialized in order to overcome the colonial tradition and represent indigenous experience. That way, it adds to a relatively new domain: according to which, the stylistic practice is an essential part of decolonial literary practice (Adami, 2025).

### **Problem Statement**

Although the genres of postcolonial studies have been well diversified and utilized on the works of Arundhati Roy, The God of Small Things, little to no concern has been raised on the stylistic elements of the novel as deliberate forms of linguistic decolonizing. The majority of the analysis just touches upon its thematic content: like caste, trauma, memory and does not deal sufficiently with the way in which Roy through her innovative use of language has herself created a form of resistance to colonial linguistic norms. It is now time that the ways her manipulation of syntax, phonology and code switching both threatens the authority of Standard English and bears a witness to the hybrid identity of postcolonial India, is examined. The absence of the stylistic treatment based on the recent advances in postcolonial stylistics, especially, the framework developed by Esterino Adami (2025) leaves a void in the discussion of how the specific narrative strategies employed by Roy are politically and ideologically effective.

### **Rationale of the Study**

In postcolonial societies, the English language, which has long been a language of imperial domination, has been an encumbrance and a source at the same time. Authors such as Arundhati Roy exploit the language not only as a means of communication, but as an environs of struggle and cultural bargaining. The use of Esterino Adami (2025) postcolonial style provides a new opportunity to explore the working nature of the language in literary works as a decolonial process. The relevance of this study is that it does not put emphasis on what Roy tries to convey but to how she conveys and presents it as a stylistic reading it focuses on ideological connotations of the form, structure, and the innovative use of language. It furnishes to making a refined sense of postcolonial stylistics by illustrating how choices of stylistics occupy the center of politics of representation, identity and resistance.

### **Research Questions**

1. With what linguistic twist Arundhati Roy uses English as a medium of expression in The God of Small Things to disrupt cross-colonial rules of linguistic processes?

2. Which are the most important postcolonial elements of stylistics in the novel (including syntactic deviation, code-switching, or lexical innovation) and how do they work ideologically?
3. What does a postcolonial stylistic framework by Esterino Adami (2025) mean to Esterino Adami (2025) in the interpretation of Roy as an effective linguistic decolonization act?

## **Literature Review**

The relationship between language and power in postcolonial literature is not new in the field of Study. Early theorists like Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) felt that African writers must discard the colonized language and use indigenous languages because language is not any neutral instrument but it helps to spread culture and ideology. Other postcolonial writers and critics have, in contrast, posited a strategic appropriation of English; they have argued that English may be remodelled to reflect local identities, and use it to fight against the imperial command (Ashcroft et al., 1989).

One of the most witting examples of such works is the book by Arundhati Roy *The God of Small Things* (1997), which was highly studied due to its political motives, primarily due to the critique of caste, gender, and postcolonial identity (Tickell, 2007; Roy, 2011). Nevertheless, the unconventional use of language has also been considered by the scholars as one of the major aspects representative of the style of Roy in her literature. Mehrotra (2003) shows her techniques of syntactic fragments and rhythmical repetition as important as a device of expression that reveals not only the perception of a child, but also cultural particularity. Likewise, Nair (2002) notes that Roy tactfully combines the use of words and Malayalam idioms in such a way that forms a subversive linguistic hybridity which destabilizes the power of Standard English.

In spite of these observations minimal work has so far been done to give a detailed stylistic analysis of the language of Roy following a systematic postcolonial stylistic frame of reference. The gap is filled by Esterino Adami (2025) who in his work on *Postcolonial Stylistics* puts forward a methodology which renders the two fields. Adami suggests that the linguistic deviance strategies that are employed by the postcolonial writers include lexical innovation, syntactic deviation, code-switching, and non-linear narration as the stylistic means of opposing linguistic imperialism. His theory provides a set of instruments to analyze in terms of how form is adapted as ideological space how the very methods of telling transform into the vehicle of resisting the logic and organization of the colonial discourse.

Such an analysis is a rich case in the novel by Roy who makes it frequently with disjointed syntax, capitalized childlike refrains, phonetic spellings (e.g. Pappachi moth), and embedded vernacular phrases. Such properties may be viewed through the aspect of Adami as stylistic acts of decolonization, language decisions, which counter colonial language conventions as well as conventional literary elements. In addition, her manipulation of the temporal and focalization of the narrative and the way it establishes an ideological effect about her stylistic experiments enable the reader to experience a particularly postcolonial approach to narratives.

Thus, a stylistic reading of *The God of Small Things* based on Adami scheme may help clarify how Roy innovations can be used in the overall endeavor to decolonize the English language. Not only does this method enhance stylistic reading of Roy but also helps advancement in the area of postcolonial stylistics by proving that form and politics are indivisible in postcolonial literary production.

## **Research Methodology**

This discussion which is also a qualitative analysis uses the stylistic analysis (textual) to analyze *The God of Small Things* written by Arundhati Roy (1997) as a work of post-colonial art that decolonizes the English language by creating linguistic innovation. The selected passages that undergo the analysis include the elements of syntax deviation, phonetic spellings, code-switching, lexical creativity and other stylistic characteristics that are non-standard in English. These aspects are formally located, classified, and explained depending on their ideological role and cultural value. The analysis achieved by combining close reading procedures with the concepts of postcolonial stylistics studies the way in which Roy unites the language to use it as subversive method against the colonial discourse. Primary data as the source is regarded as the novel as such, and the critical secondary literature is employed to contest and scaffold interpretive claims. The research is not intended to be generalized, targeted at an in-depth interpretative explanation of stylistic resistance in a local postcolonial situation of a literary text.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This research is also theoretically based on the postcolonial stylistics (Adami, 2025), which can be defined as an association of the means of stylistic study with the ideological interests of the postcolonial theory. Adami points out that the linguistic options in the postcolonial literature and works, which include code-mixing, syntactic abnormalities, textual fragmentation, and hybridity are not only aesthetic as they demand some aesthetic meaning but also have ideological and political connotations. In this perspective, English language is claimed, used and transformed by postcolonial writers in a bid to highlight cultural identity as well as to defy colonial expectation and establish narrative authority. The concepts of stylistic hybridity, resistance through form, and voice negotiation by Adami are the main focuses of the analysis and allow structuring the inquiry of the way in which Roy uses the colonial language to develop the idiom of indigenous voices and critique. This model allows viewing the language in the novel as a cultural space of negotiation and decolonial struggle in a fine-tuned manner.

## **Data Analysis**

This section introduces the stylistic devices of syntactic deviation, lexical innovation, code-switching and phonetic spelling and explains how they work ideologically as an opposition to the colonial language paradigm and an agent of the postcolonial subjectivity.

*The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy uses the stylistic innovation as one of the main methods regarding linguistic decolonization. This analysis demonstrates that through the form he manipulates in terms of syntax, lexis, sound, and structure, Roy comes out as a subversive postcolonial voice in reaction to the colonist control over language while showing the hybrid Indian cultural awareness that draws on postcolonial stylistics of Esterino Adami (2025).

## **Syntactic Deviation and Childlike Rhythm**

The fragmentation by Roy in syntactics disturbs the Standard English norms and indicates psychological disposition as well as cultural alterity. Take the example of the line:

“Ammu said that human beings were creatures of habit. That it was amazing the kind of things they could get used to.” (Roy, 1997, p. 20)

In this case, the example of sentence repetition in the openings combined with the relatively simple sentence structure shows the childish vision of Estha and Rahel. As Adami (2025) considers, those gestures of stylized simplifications are ideologically constituted to subvert logical and linear, imperialistic narratives in favor of other forms of consciousness. Such stylistic decisions of Roy develop a voice which is innocent and traumatic, a fragmented experience of a postcolonial identity against the colonial syntactic straightjacket.

### **Capitalization and Lexical Innovation**

Roy frequently puts capitals in the middle of sentences to imply emotional load, ideological criticism or to invest with a poetic symbolic meaning:

“The Love Laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much.” (Roy, 1997, p. 33)

The title does not act as a proper noun, but is capitalized to become a stylistic foregrounding device (Adami, 2025). It appeals to colonial and caste based rules that govern interpersonal relations. This alienation of the everyday speech renders abstract ideas into inflexible institution and reveals the social constructs underlying the same. The pattern of repetition and the capitalization opposes Western principles of narrative objectivity and opens the door to a relatively clear postcolonial language of emotion and politics.

### **Oral resonance and Phonetic Spelling**

One of the stylistic elements repeated in the Roy story is phonetic distorts. For example:

“Lay Ter. All of them. Lay Ter.” (Roy, 1997, p. 140)

This phonetics representation of the word later resembles the Malayalam-English pronunciation and local speech pattern. It is aural performative and culturally founded, but it is not a feature of phonological correctness colonially expected. Adami (2025) observes that the phonetic deformation of the postcolonial texts is used to re-accent the English, making it localized and documented as part of a culture. In such a way, Roy establishes a multisensual sensation where she allows the readers to listen to English using the postcolonial ear.

### **Cultural Anchoring and Code-Switching**

Roy also adds words of Malayalam language without giving glosses as:

“Estha was the Ambassador E. Pelvis. He said 'My name is Estha. Estha P. Pelvis.'” (Roy, 1997, p. 152)

Though in this example, there is English usage, it is weighed down in Indian-English jokes, puns and local usage (e.g. Ambassador for the Indian car). In other passages Roy introduces Malayalam words such as Kochamma, Kari Saipu, Ammu, and Velutha without a translation and this is a deliberate act of linguistic independence. Such strategies as the so-called acts of stylistic resistance (Adami 2025), according to which the reader must assume the body of the text in the logic of a culture, are priorities to the author.

### **Nonlinear Narrative and stylistic memory**

To a large extent, the temporal dislocations that Roy introduces are both stylistic and structural. Her movements between past and present confuse the sequential movement

common to colonial realist stories. As an example, the novel begins with an aftermath of the family tragedy and slowly starts to unveil its reasons:

“May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees.” (Roy, 1997, p. 1)

This richly coloured/toned descriptive opening is opposed to conventional expositon. According to Adami (2025), non-linearity in the structure and the use of radical stylistic imagery enables postcolonial authors to focus on temporal emotion rather than time in sequence, which causes trauma and memory to be cycl

ical. The style of Roy then turns out to be a symbol of cultural time that opposes the narrative realism of the imperial story telling.

### **Iteration and Undercurrent Ideology**

The prose that Roy writes is full of rhythmic repetitions that remind of oral traditions and poetic refrains:

“Things can change in a day. And things change in a day. And things change.” (Roy, 1997, p. 191) This kind of repetition is stylistically important. It shows the volatility of the process of postcolonial living, and at the same time gives a critique of the illusion of progress of the modern world. According to Adami (2025), the concept of repetition is commonly employed in the postcolonial stylistics as a strategy to counter the domination of Western linearity and to strengthen collective cultural memory through the echo and the return.

### **Intertextual and cultural overlay**

Roy also mixes the cultural texts of Western and Eastern cultures in a stylistically innovative manner. Allusion to Shakespeare, Elvis and colonial history overlap with the same text as rural Kerala myths and stratification by caste. This intertextual superimposition disrupts colonial structures of knowledge. Such stylistic hybridity as considered by Adami (2025) is a way to regain intellectual, literary space laid down the line of the dialogic narration of the confrontation of colonial and global discourses.

With these elements of syntactic experimentation, phonological play, code switching, and non-linear construction, Arundhati Roy has made English the language of post-colonial defiance and post-colonial culture. Using the premise developed by Esterino Adami (2025), this interpretation evinces the extent style in *The God of Small Things* is highly ideological to resist linguistic imperialism and establish the hybrid and subaltern subjectivity. The stylistic innovation produced by Roy does not merely and simply adorn the narrative it forms its political voice and language itself is one of the locations where a decolonial struggle has to be waged.

### **Discussion**

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) presents a radical reimagining of the English language within a postcolonial context, using stylistic innovation as a tool of both narrative distinctiveness and linguistic decolonization. The novel resists standard British English norms through syntactic disruption, neologisms, capitalizations, and non-linear temporal shifts, thereby producing a narrative that reflects hybrid identity and cultural specificity. Roy's manipulation of English performs what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) advocates in *Decolonising the Mind*: reclaiming language from colonial dominance to

express indigenous epistemologies, lived realities, and local idioms. Through this lens, Roy's stylistic strategies become a mode of resistance, challenging linguistic imperialism and asserting a postcolonial Indian voice within an English literary framework.

Roy's narrative style exhibits significant deviation from canonical English literary conventions. Her use of capitalized words—"Things Can Change in a Day," "Love Laws," or "Small God of Things"—demonstrates what Adami (2025) describes as postcolonial stylistics, where typographical play subverts dominant reading expectations and emphasizes cultural rhythms. This stylistic defamiliarization reflects the Bhasha-English mode identified by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989), in which English is transformed to accommodate the worldview of the colonized. By embedding Malayalam terms and expressions within English syntax without glossing or translation, Roy positions the reader in a space of cultural negotiation—forcing an encounter with linguistic difference rather than assimilation.

This approach aligns with Nair's (2002) analysis, which emphasizes Roy's innovative syntax as a reflection of "childhood consciousness and political resistance." The narrative often slips into stream-of-consciousness and fragmented chronology, echoing the psychological disorientation of the characters and reflecting the impact of caste, gender, and postcolonial dislocation. Such strategies also recall the interiority and linguistic play of modernist writers, yet Roy indigenizes them to portray postcolonial fractured identity rather than existential ennui. As Tickell (2007) argues, Roy's style "undermines the totalizing logic of Western realism," allowing multiplicity and marginality to surface both thematically and formally.

Moreover, Mehrotra (2003) situates Roy within a broader Indian English literary tradition that increasingly uses English not as a colonial legacy but as a creative and transformative medium. In *The God of Small Things*, language is not merely a vehicle of narrative but also a thematic concern—language becomes a site of trauma, exclusion, and eventually resistance. The character Ammu's silence and Velutha's marginalization are echoed in the novel's fragmented style, implying that the disruption of linguistic norms parallels the disruption of social and political hierarchies.

Roy's innovations serve not only aesthetic purposes but also ideological functions. She inscribes Indian cultural realities into the structure of English, thereby reshaping the language to reflect local sensibilities. This aligns with postcolonial theorists like Ngũgĩ and Ashcroft et al., who argue for the political imperative of linguistic transformation in formerly colonized societies. Roy does not merely write in English; she rewrites English through a postcolonial lens, demonstrating that stylistic innovation can function as a powerful tool of decolonization.

In this section, the research questions of the study are answered in integrating the stylistic data with the theoretical framework by Esterino Adami (2025) in showing the *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy as the postcolonial act of linguistic defiance and innovation.

RQ1: What are the stylistic manipulations of the English language in *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy and how does it attack the colonial norms of language?

The aesthetics and the politics of Roy rely entirely upon her willingness to utter words that are out of the loyalty to the laws of Standard English. Due to the syntactic fragmentation, imaginative punctricational, and phonic spellings she subverts the grammatical formality of colonial English. Not only through capitalized abstract concepts such as "Love Laws," "History Henchmen," but also through fragmentation of sentences and repetition of phrases, the systemic ideologies are referred to, whereas the trauma, displacement and fragmented consciousness of postcolonial subjects is depicted. Such stylistic compromises are an

indication of refusal to bend to the demands of imperial literacy, which corresponds to the claim made by Adami (2025) that such wordplay-enabling linguistic strategies have an ideological influence that helps decolonize narrative voice and reorganize the meaning thereof.

RQ2: Which postcolonial stylistic elements does the novel present most strongly, i.e. syntactic deviation, code-switching or lexical innovation, and what is their ideological role?

The postcolonial stylistic features in the novel by Roy are abundant and give clarity to the ideological intents. Her code-switching between the Malayalam language and English without glossing down leads to the negligence of the colonial demand of linguistic accessibility to Western readers. Rather it enables the indigenous cultural reasoning, and makes the outsider bear the burden of meaning. This is what Adami (2025) has called the linguistic reterritorialization, or the practice of taking a linguistic possession over English through infusion of the local language. Also, the lexical innovativeness of Roy, such as creating new expressions, modifying familiar sayings, and incorporating cultural sayings, transforms into the weapon of semantic defiance, and appropriates expression by setting free from colonial limitations. These features do not make any decoration, they are politically oriented and it is more important to stress that postcolonial experience is not possible to be realized in the inherited form of colonial cosmos.

RQ3: How can the postcolonial style guide put forward by Esterino Adami (2025) be used to refer to Roy as a linguistic decolonization exercise?

The framework developed by Adami can be particularly applied to the undoing of the stylistic tactics of resistance and reclamation as implemented by Roy. His several themes, including stylistic hybridity, negotiation of voice, deviation of ideology allow him to discern the language of Roy to be a cultural assertion. The English language is reshaped by Roy into a terrain of plural voices and captures not only the subjectivity of individuals, but of history and repressed experiences by people as a group. Its narrative form, which shifts back and forth into the past, fits with Adami, who has argued that postcolonial stylistics frequently bristles at linear and realistic modes of narration in favour of an understanding of time as fluid, like indigenous conceptions of time and memory. So the reading of *The God of Small Things* through the interpretive construct of Adami simply turns this into not just another novel that is written in English but a complete recreation and innovatively re-creating of English itself- as a form that was able to give vent to the rhythms, ruptures, and resistances of postcolonial life.

To conclude, in Roy, the stylistic experiments are an extended commentary on the orientalism of colonial linguism and her stylistics can be seen as an achievement of Adami in thinking stylistics as a critical method that reveals politics of form. Her language does not simply narrate a story- it decolonizes.

## **Conclusion**

*The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy is the example of how the postcolonial literature can be used to decolonize the language by introducing some new stylistics techniques. Based on the postcolonial stylistics of Esterino Adami (2025), which underlays this study, it is demonstrated that Roy has her own, not aesthetic, but profoundly ideological use of syntax, lexis, phonology as well as the narrative structure. Roy breaks down the dictatorial nature of Standard English through syntactic fragmentation, phonetic spellings, code-switching and



even lexical invention in creating a linguistic space of linguistic expression by the postcolonial voice and identity.

Their story also makes Roy insist on marginalized experiences, such as caste oppression, gendered trauma, and reshaping posterity in the postcolonial displacement, not only as content but also as form. Her noncompliance to phonological rules paralleled by the colonial education institutions is part of a bigger cultural and political project: the reterritorialized distortion of English as a subaltern language. This stylistic deviation is high concept as a form of resistance used by the authors such as Roy as Adami points out in her framework, enabling them to establish an English language that represents and reflects their cultural realities.

This research confirms that stylistic analysis provide the possibility to expose the complexity of the ways the language is used in verbal power and identity and resistance, when informed by the postcolonial theory. The work of Roy is an admirable illustration of how fiction can destabilize the hierarchies of language, and provide novel, mixed ways to express ourselves, as befits the experiences of a postcolonial world.

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