



The Discursive Role of Silence in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Abstract

A major contributor to the unique reading experience that Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* lends itself to, is its language. In fact, to say that the novel has an excess of language will not be an understatement. The narrator is chatty, even garrulous, wanting to say and share everything. Yet, what this paper intends to study through a narrative textual analysis of the work, is not the effusiveness of its language, the many linguistic techniques, innovations and experiments that Roy engages in, but the role of silence in the novel, the character it assumes, silence as a politically constituted construct, and the discourse it leads to, shapes and displaces. Sometimes through a studied silence, sometimes through an enforced silence and sometimes through a deliberate and pregnant silence, the narrator seems to be indicating that not every action can be accounted for, through words. Not every relationship can be contained in the constricting spaces of words. By not choosing to describe or rationalize or validate and by taking recourse to silence, the narrator seems to be engaging in the powerful discourse of silence, turning a handicap into a weapon to contest the discursive laws and structures of power. Silence thus stands discursively produced, an archival repository of meaning and memory.

Key words: Subversive masculinities, subaltern, caste oppression, gender and novel, marginalized identities.

