



Decoding Narrative: Applying Barthes' Five Codes To Arundhati Roy's *The God Of Small Things*

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the theory of the five codes of *S/Z* (the hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, symbolic and cultural codes) by Roland Barthes (1970) is applied in interpreting the nonlinear narrative and postcolonial themes in *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy (1997).^[1] All three goals of the research include defining the codes put forward by Barthes; analytically exploring how they work in the novel through the lexia segmentation; and evaluating how well they fit the multiplicity of the writerly in the novel faced by caste, gender, and colonial oppressions. With the help of qualitative textual analysis, the novel is being broken down into about 400-500 lexias, with codes being mapped by means of inductive coding to uncover mysteries of forbidden love (HER), action chains that lead to tragedy (ACT), connotative motifs of small things (SEM), binaries that are inverting the Laws of Love (SYM), and intertexts of the Kerala history (REF). Results confirm the effectiveness of the codes to reveal ideological divides, but Malayalam-English hybrid prose and Roy living with embodied trauma enhance the model by disrupting its Eurocentric linearity, politicising its meaning interpretation in a postcolonial society. This makes a connexion between narratology and the study of Indian literature, establishing the subaltern readings democratically, and syncretic resistance. The framework may be expanded to Rushdie or Adiga in future research to continue the development of the decolonial narratology.

Keywords: Roland Barthes, five codes, Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*, postcolonial literature, narrative analysis

Introduction

Roland Barthes (1915–1980) is among the most prominent representatives of the literary theory, semiotics, and culture critique of the 20th century. Barthes was born in France, in Cherbourg and was subjected to a turbulent childhood due to the death of his father during the First World War, which caused Barthes to be taken up by his mother in relative poverty. This biography gave his writing a sensitivity to the ability of language to create a sense of identity and ideology. Although originally allied to existentialism and Marxism, Barthes went on to structuralism, inspired by Ferdinand de Saussure, into post-structuralism, in which he questioned the fixity of meaning itself. His work cut across genres: his early work, such as *Mythologies* (1957) which broke down mundane myths such as wrestling and wine as a bourgeois ideology,^[2] to his later work, which explored the subject of photography in *Camera Lucida* (1980), a mixture of personal grieving and semiotic work. The radical essay *The Death of the Author* (1967) by Barthes best encapsulated his movement towards the reader-centred interpretation by asserting that the intentions of the author need not be determinant of the meaning, being rather dependent on the multiple facets of the text that are occupied by the reader.^[3] This philosophy led to his masterpiece *S/Z* (1970), a radical study of Honoré de Balzac's novella *Sarrasine* (1830), wherein Barthes came up with the theory of the five codes.^[4] Not simply a summary of the plot, *S/Z* reads the text as a tissue of quotations that is gleaned of a myriad of cultural centres dismantling linear narrative in favour of a pluralistic, interactive model of reading.^[5]

The key point of *S/Z* is the novel system of five codes presented by Barthes, who uses the concept to break down *Sarrasine* (a story about a painter infatuated with a castrato singer) into 561 lexias (small writing units). These codes do not work as strict categories but as braids or as voicings which weave together and create the erotic, mysterious and ideological textures of the text. Barthes demonstrates how literature is a dynamic system

of signs and not an authoritative message by tracing the proliferation of these codes throughout the story. This is in marked contrast to the unity, genre or biography emphasis of classical criticism, providing a method of the so-called writerly texts (those requiring readerly engagement rather than readerly ones which provide passive consumption).^[6]

The importance of Barthes' five codes on literary criticism cannot be underscored given that they were the ones that transformed narratology by explaining that the focus should be on multiplicity rather than totality. In pre-Barthes criticism, the discovery of the essence of a text has been pursued using the Aristotelian unities or using close reading introduced by the New Criticism; in post-S/Z analysis, the critics have adopted the notion of fragmentation and used the codes to the genres of soap opera to the hypertexts. As an example, feminist critics such as Teresa de Lauretis (1984) used them to deconstruct gender binaries in film, and algorithmic text mining with the help of digital humanists (Manovich, 2001).^[7] The theory democratizes the reading process, and the agency is transferred to other interpreters and the way the narratives encode power, i.e. colonial in Conrad or queer in Woolf.^[8] But it also is a subject to criticism: its granularity is often overwhelming, and its Eurocentric tendency does not even consider non-Western forms.^[9] However, the five codes survive as a flexible toolkit, which promotes the notion of a joyful disruption of criticism, and affirms the perpetual readability of literature.^[10] In a multimedia narrative age, we are urged by Barthes' legacy to deconstruct texts not to find answers, but to take pleasure in their deconstruction.

Suzanna Arundhati Roy (born Arundhati Roy on November 24, 1961, in Shillong, Meghalaya, India) is a versatile personality who is also known not only as an author but also as a formidable activist. Born in Kerala into a Syrian Christian mother and a Hindu father, Roy experienced the cultural and political conflicts of the post-independence India at a young age, and this experience had a significant impact on her worldview. She wrote after a brief period as a student of architecture at the Delhi School of Planning and Architecture, then became a screenwriter and actor and switched to writing. An incredible literary performance, *The God of Small Things* (1997) was the first book written by Roy and it helped her burst into the world of literature, gaining the esteemed Booker Prize when she was 36 years old and making her a global voice of the oppressed. In addition to fiction, Roy has also written cutting-edge essays and books such as *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2001) and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014), critiquing globalisation, environmental degradation and militarism. She has been a vocal opponent of nuclear policy in India and the Narmada Dam project and has been accused of sedition in 2010 and 2024 due to her pro-Kashmir stance, which makes her a key example of a dissident intellectual who merges artistry with political dissent. Roy personally has a high profile marriage with filmmaker Pradip Krishen and an activist who promotes the cause of indigenous people, even reflecting the theme of rebellion and intimacy of her work, which makes her a symbol of postcolonial protest.

The God of Small Things is the first novel of Roy as well as a breakthrough in the Indian English literature and was released in 1997 by the publishing house of Random House. The novel takes place in the peaceful, humid Kerala village of Ayemenem, and is narrated by fraternal twins Rahel and Estha whose ideal childhood in 1969 transforms when family secrets, social taboos as well as historical upheavals come to light. The story takes the form of a nonlinear narrative, as it switches between the carefree observations of the twins when they were innocent and the ruin of adulthood, rediscovered in 1993 when the family is organising a funeral. The Ipe family of twins with their divorced mother Ammu, whose affair with a white man is against all canons of caste and class; the tyrant grandmother Mammachi; and the mysterious half-Hindu Velutha, a paravan (untouchable), whose affection to the children reveals the hypocrisies of the Love Laws (the unwritten rules according to which people should be loved, and how, and how much).

The prose of Roy is a chaos of sensuous description and language invention, Malayalam idioms, onomatopoeia, and disjunct syntax used to replicate the contagiousness of memory and monsoon rains. It is a kind of writerly style, filled with metaphors, such as the river as the giver of life and its ruiner, which makes a domestic tragedy a universal reflection on the innocence polluted by power relations. The novel does not have a clear plot outline but imposes layers of vignettes based on the conflicts between individual desires and group history, both the 1969 Communist rebellion and the still uncovered wounds of British colonialism.

The God of Small Things has played an important role in modern literature because of its bold approach to combine the micro and the macro in a way that provokes the limits of postcolonial literature. Roy was made to gain worldwide recognition when she won the Booker Prize in 1997, the first woman of Indian descent to win the prize, and sold more than six million copies globally, which encouraged an avalanche of South Asian authors in the publishing industry. It is an important book in that it criticises unflinchingly the Big Things in India—caste hierarchies, gender oppression, and neocolonial capitalism—through the prism of the Big Things; the small things, the humanising of the political by placing it in the context of the wonder of children and the grief of adults. The motives of prohibited love (with the tinges of queerness in the reunion of the twins) and the destruction of nature become timeless and inspire the works of such authors as Jhumpa Lahiri and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to integrate the theme of hybridity and subaltern discourse.

Importantly, the experimental form of the novel with its non-linear time and non-Western approach has ensured that it is now a classic in postcolonial studies, feminist theory, and ecocriticism, as in how it is said to funnel the history of South India through the eyes of seven-year-old twins. It has survived as a literary work in a world full of controversies, including a court case in 1997 accusing it of obscenity in Kerala (the case was dismissed), and as a contribution to literature's ability to break Love Laws and give voice to suppressed stories.

In 2025, when inequality and identity issues are becoming hotly debated worldwide, the work by Roy is pressing in need, as it reminds the reader that things could change... just with a few minor things.

The main research questions of this paper are: critically assessing the theory of the five codes of Roland Barthes (i.e. proairetic, hermeneutic, semic, symbolic and cultural codes) as a structuralist approach to unravelling the narrative multiplicity in literature; analytically applying the five codes to the analysis of the novel by Arundhati Roy (i.e. *The God of Small Things*) with specific reference made to the nonlinear structure of the novel, thematic binaries of the novel and culturally related allusions; and to analyse how successful the novel is as a writerly text.

Literature Review

The theory of the five codes formulated by Roland Barthes in his masterpiece *S/Z* (1970) can be used to analyse the narrative text as a multiplication of possible meanings, a multiplicity of readings, rather than a unitary intention of the author.^[11] Through dividing the novella *Sarrasine* by Balzac into 561 lexias (textual units), Barthes shows that the narratives are not linear, and instead they are a tissue of quotes, a tissue of hermeneutic (HER), proairetic (ACT), semantic (SEM), symbolic (SYM), and cultural (REF) codes, which overlap to create a sense of suspense, connotation, and ideological depth. This structure places the agency in the hands of the reader and creates a writerly interaction that brings out power relations, desires and cultural contingencies. Discussion in other fields like musicology, and other interdisciplinary fields like literature, encourages the versatility of the discussion of scholarly discourse in revealing the hidden aspects of structures. Each code is described in the following sections based on the original formulations by Barthes and the analysis made by him.

The hermeneutic code regulates the production, maintenance, and partial resolution of enigmas, puzzles, and ambiguities which drive the readerly curiosity and postpone the resolution. It works by using such devices as "snares" (deceptive hints), "jammings" (story blocks), and "partial disclosures" and makes the text look like a highly enticing game in which truth is constantly postponed.^[12] As an example, in *Sarrasine*, the gender ambiguity in the role of castrato Zambinella in the play tricks the resolution of lexias, increasing the voyeuristic tension. It is functionally similar to the hermeneutic urge of detective fiction, which guarantees the narrative project through unresolved questions. It has been discussed extensively in scholarly literature as part of postcolonial texts, which unravel colonial silences through enigmas; McCreless (2002) compares it to any unsolved chromatic problems in music, such as the remnant dissonances that require interpretive work; it helps create ideological critique by holding back dominant truths.

The proairetic code organises the story into a series of actions and events and creates a pseudo-logic "chassis" suggesting causality and creating suspense by means of inducements (e.g. the character is going to come to a door, expectant of confrontation). It uses verbs of doing to connect the episodes together, establishing the illusion of inevitability though it is made.^[13] The search after Zambinella by the painter in *Sarrasine* triggers a chain of erotic adventures and infidelity. The purpose of this code is to lure the readers with the forward action tendency to the extent that less apparent layers are sometimes shunned, as Barthes condemns its hegemony in readerly texts.^[14] It has been applied to musical stories by scholars such as Newcomb (1984), as accounted action sequences as Schenkerian extensions that shape thematic development, and how it has been used to perpetuate colonial myths of progress by linearizing the non-linear history of literature.

The semantic (or semic) code gathers connotative features or semes onto characters, objects or themes that enhance denotative meanings with thematic echoes (e.g., the seme of vulnerability that the seme of fragility brings to a character). It serves to develop personalities and moods, and grouping signifiers into systems that suggest wider cultural stereotypes.^[15] The examples of *S/Z* are Zambinella, whose feminine semes (delicacy, allure) stands in conflict with castrated ones, which questions gender fluidity. Barthes puts SEM as an intermediary point towards symbolism and inviting readerly proliferation. In the academic extensions, McCreless (2002) equates it with motivic analysis in music, where repetitive themes (e.g., a "yearning" motive) signify character development, providing postcolonial critics with instruments to unravel hybrid identities into layers of connotation of exoticism or otherness.

The symbolic code structures the story through macro-level binary oppositions (e.g. light/dark, same/other, life/death) that bring in mythic or thematic antitheses, usually mediated by metaphors. It goes above the plot to express ideological tensions, and the text is exposed with the deep structure.^[16] The phallogocentric anxieties and cultural taboos are represented by the castration binary (intact/mutilated) in *Sarrasine*. In practice SYM offers verticality as opposed to horizontality in ACT, and encourages deconstructive readings. According to scholars, it is powerful in the postcolonial analysis; McCreless (2002) claims it to be a remnant of literature in non-literary forms but necessary to expose the power dichotomies in literature, like coloniser/colonised where it encourages the development of resistance interpretations by inversion.

The cultural (or referential) code refers to the common knowledge, stereotypes, sayings, or intertexts of history, literature, or science upon which the narrative is based and which attach it to mass discourse. It is used as an encyclopaedic source, which makes extra-textual reverberations multiplying meaning.^[17] *S/Z* can be used in allusions to Roman castrati or operatic conventions and in *S/Z* to decoding 19th-century ideologies. Barthes applies the concept of REF to criticise the bourgeois wisdom, which advocates intertextuality.^[18] According to McCreless (2002), it is also highlighted as a way of connecting the texts to cultural authorities, such as musical

allusions to Wagner; in postcolonialism, it shows the hybrid markers, the mixing of lore of the native with imperial narratives to expose ideological divisions.

The five codes of Barthes have been widely used in the analysis of narrative, especially to elucidate the multiplicity in postcolonial and Indian literature, where the codes have been used to deconstruct hybrid structures, subaltern voices and even culture conflicts. In his Indian-based context, Ahmad (2013) uses the codes to interpret *The Shroud* (1936) by Munshi Premchand, a realistic critique of caste and poverty in colonial India, indolent actions are the proairetic sequences of the story that reveal the economic determinism, symbolic binaries (male labour/female suffering) and cultural allusions (Hindu rituals) satirise feudal hypocrisy affirming in progressive discourse of subaltern resistance in the story.^[19] In a similar approach, Hidayat (2018) uses the codes on *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga (2008) to discover postcolonial satire: hermeneutic enigmas of Balram's entrepreneurial killings also support irony, semantic semes of darkness, that indicate cultural codes refer to neoliberal India, and the class revolt is a fragmented, writerly narrative.^[20]

Raza (2014) breaks down the positions of the proairetic actions of the arranged marriage plot and symbolic opposition (tradition/Westernisation) and hermeneutic puzzle (e.g. ironic optimism) to find out gender subversion in South Asian postcolonial fiction by dissecting *The Optimist* (2007) by Bina Shah, and as a part of the analysis of the fractured modernities of the postcolonial Pakistan.^[21] Further to the Indian diaspora, with a piece by Amita Trasi, *The Colour of Our Sky* (2017), Trasi delivers the codes to unpack displacement: hermeneutic enigmas of lineage support diaspora searches, cultural references to Indian femininity norms express gender defiance and symbolic skies to produce emotional hybridity that challenges firm postcolonial subjectivities through recombinant readerliness.^[22] More widespread uses of postcolonial, such as in *A Pair of Jeans* by Shahraz Javed (2015), use codes to read post-structurally on migration, with the semantic connotations of Western clothing as a symbolic opposition to cultural binaries. All these works support the effectiveness of these codes in postcolonial/Indian texts and bring out the ideological subtexts as well as mention constraints to non-linear and oral traditions.^[23]

Methodology

This paper will be qualitative and interpretive, based on the structuralist-poststructuralist textual analysis through the five codes framework developed by Roland Barthes in *S/Z* (1970), and the main methodological instrument used in breaking down the text by Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things* (1997) is the five codes framework. The methodology proceeds through three mutually overlapping stages: the textual segmentation, code identification and application, and interpretive synthesis, which guarantees the rigorous and replicable analysis of narrative multiplicity and provides the methodology with the postcolonial entails of the novel.

During the initial step, textual segmentation, the novel is broken down into lexias, short, semantically independent units, of about 50 to 200 words, much like Barthes (1970) divided *Sarrasine* into 561. They are given more priority during partitioning in this non-linear manner that emphasises thematic as well as semiotic breaks over plot points in chronological order, which produces about 400–500 lexias of *The God of Small Things* (a 321-page text). Passages containing enigma, action, connotation, opposition, or some cultural reference are sampled purposively and taken as passages to represent major arches in the story: the 1969 childhood of the twins (e.g., Chapters 1 through 5), the affair of Ammu (Chapters 10 through 13), and the 1993 reunion (Chapters 20 through 21). This step applies close reading methods of New Criticism, modified through the use of digital tools such as NVivo software to do initial tagging, which allows tracking the data in a systematic manner without the artificial imposition of linearity.^[24]

The second stage is code identification and application—this is a multi-pass coding that is implemented on every lexia. In the line of Barthes (1970), the five codes are operationalised as follows: (1) Hermeneutic (HER): marking enigmas and delays (e.g. withheld revelations about the fate of Velutha); (2) Proairetic (ACT): mapping sequences of actions (e.g. the river escapade of the twins as inducements to tragedy); (3) Semantic (SEM): marking semes (e.g. river as fluidity/erosion); (4) Symbolic (SYM): marking binary oppositions.^[25] The coded material gets entered into a tabular matrix (e.g., Excel or qualitative software) in form of a lexia reference, frequencies, and illustrative quotes, and cross-code overlaps can be revealed as braids. It is an inductive-deductive hybrid that is faithful to the theory but accommodative to postcolonial hybridity that advocates its application to non-Western texts.^[26]

Lastly, the alignment is measured by thematic triangulation in the interpretive synthesis phase: quantitative measures (e.g., prevalence of codes using chi-square tests of distribution patterns) supplements the qualitative synthesis, determining how the features of the writerly text (e.g., fragmented temporality) in this novel confirm or replicate the Barthes model, in both showing ideological fissures such as caste/gender binaries. Weaknesses, e.g. subjectivity with boundaries of lexia or bias along Eurocentric codes, are addressed through inter-coder reliability assessments (when working collaboratively) and reflexivity regarding the postcolonial perspective of the researcher. This is an iterative and reader-focused methodology making the study a scriptible exercise, which is open to new recombinations in narratological studies.

Analysis and Application of Five Codes

The analysis is organised in this type of code since this type of structure fits best into the framework presented by Barthes (1970), and therefore, the dissection of the ways in which each code weaves over Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) is carried out in a systematic manner. Using the codes and the chosen lexias (nonlinear textual units) allows seeing the writerly multiplicity of the novel as personal traumas clash with the ideologies of postcolonialism. Key narrative gets used to come up with examples and interpretive insights that make the connections between codes and the themes of forbidden love, caste oppression, and narrative fragmentation.

Hermeneutic Code (HER)

According to Barthes (1970), hermeneutic code is the arrangement of enigmas, partial revelations, and narrative procrastinations to keep the reader in suspense and imitate the postponement of the truth.^[27] In *The God of Small Things*, HER is present in the mysteries unveiling around the family secrets, untimely deaths, and forbidden relationships and is tempting in the nonlinear timeline.

The most notable one is the discovery of how Sophie Mol was drowned in the river, over time, in the Anglophile History House visit in 1969.^[28] Snappers and broken flashbacks, such as the fogged memory of a small hand that Rahel has of holding the boat, use snares (red herring), jamming (sudden change to 1993), and do not give full causation until the final lexias. This works by discontinuity, whereby readers are left to assemble clues amongst the traumatised silence of the twins, like a detective story in which the denouement is indefinitely deferred.

Interpretively, HER throws light on the themes of the novel such as silenced subaltern voices and the Love Laws of secrecy, it emphasises such characters as Ammu and Velutha as enigmatic figures and their interracial desire is turned into a puzzle censored by caste and colonial pasts, as a result, Roy criticises the influence of historical traumas (e.g., the echo of partition) on shaping personal psyches, thereby creating the narrative style that reflects the dissociated innocence of the twins.^[29]

Proairetic Code (ACT)

The structures of the narrative proposed by Barthes (1970) are the proairetic codes, which construct the story by the use of sequence of actions which suggest causality and further the story by use of what Barthes (1970) calls inducement, and which give an impression of linear movement in the text, yet the text is actually fragmented.^[30]

In the novel, ACT becomes the factor in the critical 1969 series of the family journey to Cochin when Sophie Mol arrives and the then adventure to the History House.^[31] Actions chain as inducements: The boat renting that occurs as a result of energetic planning by Chacko results in the rowing that the children engage in, resulting in the drowning and the subsequent arrest of Velutha as a scapegoat. These moving verbs such as "they rowed," "the boat tipped" create tension to disaster and connect the harmless family outings to unavoidable violence.

This code works by linearizing chaotic happenings, seducing the reader with pseudo-logic that conceals ideological forces, like police brutality that is caused by classes. Clues suggest that ACT contributes to the revelation of the theme of inevitability in oppression of the novel, where the twins Estha and Rahel represent the stalled agency, their killings returned as guilt, and the code criticises the narratives of progress of postcolonial modernity, such as the pretensions of an Anglophile like Chacko, as empty chains resulting in tragedy, complementing Roy in his fragmented style which interrupts the expected pattern of reading.^[32]

Semantic Code (SEM)

The semantic code is the accretion of connotative semes around characters, objects or motifs and adds thematic resonance and stereotypes to denotation.^[33]

Roy uses the SEM in terms of repetition of motifs, such as small things, frogs and the river, and these motifs form a cluster of semes of vulnerability and temporality. As an example, the motif of small things (e.g., the tightening of the steel band around the throat of Estha during the encounter with Orange drink Lemon drink Man),^[34] would gain semes of hidden trauma and the feeling of innocence as a child (frogs in the flowerbeds... croaking their love songs).^[35] The river which is swollen with semes of fluidity and decay is a symbol of both erotic liberation (Ammu-Velutha tryst) and an entropy of destruction.

SEM functions through the application of connotation which makes characters more human: the Velutha's seme of darkness turns into more of a seductive than a slave, breaking down the inhuman stereotypes. These motifs, interpreted, disclose the motifs of marginalised desire and ecological frailties; the preoccupation of the twins with small things ridicules the histories of Big God, the characters are hybrid transfers of postcolonial anxiety, and Roy's stylistic innovation, the Malayalam-infused English, implies cultural displacement.^[36]

Symbolic Code (SYM)

The binarial symbolic codes meaning comprise antitheses of the mythical using binary oppositions, which give the vertical thematic profundity beyond history.^[37]

In *The God of Small Things*, SYM is manifested in the contrasts such as innocence/guilt, tradition/modernity, caste/class divisions which are manipulated throughout the narrative. The best illustration here is the innocence/guilt dichotomy when the twins reunite in 1993, and through the so-called two-egg sexual act, their incest is contrasted with the punitive gaze of the so-called Love Laws represented by the waters of the river as the symbol of guilt in comparison with the innocent flow when they were young. Caste binaries oppose paravan otherness of Velutha with syphilitic purity of Ipe family, tradition/modernity war in pickle factory of Mammachi and Marxism of Chacko tainted with Oxford.

The logic of SYM is to reverse binaries to sound ideological struggles: guilt is transferring to innocence through metaphors of entrapment (e.g., millstones of memory),^[38] phallogentric and colonial hierarchies are disrupted. Clues shed light on the thematic centre of the novel, the fragmenting power of oppositions, making characters such as Ammu a place of resistance against patriarchal tradition and ratifying the narrative of Roy as a symbolic dismantling of the modernity of syncretism in India, in which minor acts of defiance can shatter huge institutions.^[39]

Cultural Code (REF)

The code references to culture utilises the collective knowledge and intertexts, and clichés in order to in-text the story within the overall discourse of a society so that it can be echoed in the ideology.^[40]

The REF by Roy is based on Indian past, social practices, and political backgrounds, including references to the Communist insurrection in Kerala in the 1969 and the coming of the Anglophile Sophie Mol reminiscent of displacement in the times of the partition.^[41] Such traditions as the Love Laws refer to caste endogamy sayings ("Why and Who should be loved. And how much"),^[42] as intertexts to a Malayalam movie, *Chimene*^[43] allude to sea lore of cursed love, and Onam festival boat races an allusion to Hindu-Muslim syncretic harmony being disrupted by history.

This code is a kind of an encyclopedic anchor, recalling the clichés such as "History House" (British colonial ruins) to unravel neocolonial hypocrisies, proliferating meanings by having a readerly cultural decoding. Reflectively, REF reveals the postcolonial hybridity of the novel: the characters find themselves enduring conflicting references: the rituals of Syrian Christianity and the untouchable lore, portraying the themes of subaltern erasure in the face of globalisation; the style of Roy therefore criticises how the dominance of Big Things (e.g. Emergency-era politics) overwhelms small lives, which contributes to a story of erotic existence between the personal and the nation.

Discussion

The five codes construct as proposed by Barthes (1970) can be effectively applied to *The God of Small Things* and help understand why the nonlinear and fragmented story of the novel is a writerly text that works on the interpretive plurality instead of the linear resolution.^[44] Deferred enigmas (e.g., the death of Sophie Mol) and chained actions (e.g., the ill-fated river trip) of the hermeneutic and proairetic codes, in turn, drive the suspense of the story by the dissociated nature of the memories of the twins and help to keep the reader interested in the story even when the time jumps. Characters are enhanced with semantic and symbolic codes—the fluidity of the river when compared with hard and fast caste rules is connotative in nature—and we can see how Roy codes his own desires in comparison with what the society is not allowing him to do. These strata are placed by the cultural code within the sociohistorical organism of Kerala, Communist agitations, and Love Laws so that ideological indictments of the narrative appear not as single threads and patterns but as braids of them. Together, the codes cut the multiplicity of the novel, confirming its position as a postcolonial masterpiece in which small-scale intimacies are played out of large historical oppressions just as Barthes had imagined texts as a moving sign system.^[45]

Yet, the novel adds shades to this model of Eurocentric structuralism, which challenges and enriches it, especially its language and its affective specifics. The hybrid prose writing style of Roy (mixing English with Malayalam onomatopoeia (e.g. Koffi-Koffi)) and sensory overload disrupts the codes of the text by emphasising denotative transparency, making it difficult for Barthes (1970) to underline the independence of the text. The extreme family and erotic attention, provoking "jouissance" when the twins reunite, intensifies symbolic oppositions way past intellectual opposite to bodily disturbances, providing the structure with an added layer of foreshadowing embodiment over abstraction—a shift in the approach of *S/Z*.^[46] Furthermore, the oral-inflected narration of the novel, its repetitive phrases and group histories, works against proairetic linearity by filling action sequences with cyclical, mythic temporality, thereby expanding the instruments of Barthes to a more flowing, non-Western narratology to embrace the non-progressive time of trauma.^[47]

The application of the codes in the cultural and postcolonial situation of the Indian context in the 1990s is deeply conditioned and the codes are perceived as the instruments of resistance towards the colonial legacies. The setting of Roy (Kerala) with its caste endogamy, gender oppression and neocolonial Anglophilia recalibrates the cultural code as a point of struggle with references to the History House (an in reference to the British imperialism) revealing that REF is no longer an neutral encyclopedia, but a battlefield of subaltern reworking. The postcolonial hybridity adds onto the hermeneutic enigma, silenced indigenous information, including the paravan lore of Velutha, to disrupt Barthesian readerly universality, to insist on culturally specific interpretations that accentuate the imbalance of power. The codes are therefore politicised in this contextual perspective of *The God of Small Things* as a decolonial scriptable text that turns symbolic oppositions (e.g., untouchable/pure) inside out to affirm marginalised eros to enhance Barthes in the framework of non-Eurocentric realms and emphasises its limitations in those directions.^[48]

Conclusion

This paper has illustrated the effective use of the five codes of Roland Barthes (1970)—hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, symbolic and cultural codes—to the novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy (1997), the narrative of which is revealed in a pluralistic form of the tissue of meanings that binds personal intimacies with postcolonial oppressions. The main findings unveil the ways the hermeneutic code perpetuates the enigmas of forbidden relationships and deaths, delays the resolutions to reflect familial silences; the proairetic code links the actions such as the river outing into the realities of tragedy, revealing the linear illusions under the caste hierarchies; semantic patterns of the small things and the river attract connotations of vulnerability and hybridity; symbolic divides (e.g. innocence/guilt) dismantle the Love Laws; and cultural allusions to the history of Kerala expose ideological divisions.

Although the framework is quite useful in breaking down the fragmented style of Roy, postcolonial undertones of syncretic language and embodied trauma add rich layers to it and subvert Eurocentric suppositions and politicise reading. This research is valuable because it links structuralist narratology with the postcolonial literary theory and provides a flexible set of instruments with the help of which one can unravel ideological rifts in the Indian English fiction. Through the application of the codes of Barthes to *The God of Small Things*, the analysis democratises the subaltern narratives, but one can see how small transgression excavates Big colonial legacies, and the study offers contributions to the studies of Indian literature since it predicts Roy innovations as a place of global-south resistance.^[49] It highlights the timeless importance of poststructuralism to enlighten hybrid identities in the globalisation process, establishing interdisciplinary discourses in ecocriticism and feminist readings.

The future of the research is bright, especially in the further extension of the five codes to other works of the Indian authors that incorporate personal and political worlds. Such comparative studies of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) might examine the enhancement of cultural codes by magical realism in partition fiction, and such studies can be applied to Aravind Adiga in *The White Tiger* (2008) to examine proairetic sequences in neoliberalism. Algorithms and machine learning Digital humanities techniques, like algorithmic lexis generation, may scale the structure to diasporic texts to fill the gaps in the non-linear, oral traditions and develop decolonial narratology.

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