

Borders, Nation, Memory, and Home: A Study of a 'Third Space' in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*

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Abstract:

The novel *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh revolves around the horrors of Partition, trauma of refugees, heartbreak of dislocation and absence of one in own 'desh' and a sense of nostalgia and longing to go back to its home land. Ghosh intensively questions the concept of borders through the character of Thamma. Torn between her new found national identity and not being able to distance herself of her origin, Thamma is not sure whether she should go home to Dhaka or come home to Dhaka. Her inquiry on the way up the border between the two countries can be realized as actually absent or present, as she asks, raises the question of how the geopolitical boundaries are actually understood as meaning, legitimate, and arbitrary.

Ghosh, also, builds up an image of free or fluid space that will not have fixed binaries, through the novel. It can be interpreted as transcultural space, a place of cultural and ethnic interaction where characters dream to break artificial boundaries. It is a geographic place that is created through cross-cultural remembering and imagining, and through shared histories and spaces. The intertwined strings of space, memory, history and nation are created throughout the novel in a complex and harmonious pattern. This paper attempts to discuss the concept of the 'Third Space', which is at the heart of the concept of transcultural space by Ghosh, as a way of retrieving past and memory and of linking people across cultures and communities across the borders of the shadow lines of territorial and national differences.

Keywords: Partition, Nationalism, Barriers, Transcendence, Third Space, transcultural space, artificial boundaries, nostalgia, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Timothy Brennan (1990) posits that race, geography, tradition, language, and size are unsatisfactory parameters of determining any stable national essence, despite the fact that nations still enjoy exceptional emotional and political attachment (49). It is particularly applicable to the Indian subcontinental context where his formulation was quite pertinent in terms of the Partition which deeply revealed the violent contradiction based on the nature of nation-making. Formation of new states did not just reshape a map line, it resulted in mass turning and ethnic conflicts, and a break in social and cultural worlds. It is against this historical-ideological background that the work of Amitav Ghosh *The Shadow Lines* attains a special meaning. The novel provides a severe criticism of nationalism through the disclosure of how the boundaries of the politics divide people instead of creating coherent identities instead of creating estrangement, loss, and uncertainty.

According to Gyanendra Pandey (2001), Partition was much more than the unraveling of new flags or new governments; it permanently divided families, households, language and cultural communities (21-22). *The Shadow Lines* translates that historical understanding into fiction. Ghosh introduces the country not as a natural or obvious unit but rather as a political and imaginative fabrication, which echoes with the insights that a nation expressed by Benedict Anderson is an imagined community (6). Meanwhile, the formal approach by Ghosh is also vital to such a criticism. In the interview by Frederic Luis Aldama (2002), Ghosh defines the novel as a meta-form which has the ability to consume history, politics, religion, family life, desire without necessarily having to be limited by the traditional disciplinary norms (84). Read so, *The Shadow Lines* is not just a Partition novel, it is a protracted reflection on the concept of memory, history, and the frailty of borders, an indication that the private lives are being divided by the events taking place in the broader world and that literature can be used to question the violence hidden within the very words of nationhood. The novel's visions of relational space where histories, memories and identities are inextricably mixed up are juxtaposed with the solid binaries of self and other, home and exile, and nation and foreignness.

The Shadow Lines creates one of the main characters Tha'mma, using whom Amitav Ghosh puts national boundaries and their political and emotional rationality to the test. Being a product of the dislocations of Partition, she must abandon Dhaka and find the new Calcutta as her home; nevertheless, the novel provides an understanding that citizenship and resettlement can never let the affective claim of place. The two women, meeting each other, revert unconsciously to their old Dhaka dialect, which is a moment in which memory cannot be erased by the official restructuring of the nation and the land (Ghosh 38). She is equally attached to Dhaka in material memory. Even after many years she still recalls the specific place where the jackfruit tree was located in the courtyard of her childhood home and she is very upset to hear that the area has been converted into a workshop (Ghosh 209). Tha'mma's experience in this way can be referred to as the deeper violence of Partition as it is not only a drawing of new borders in terms of political lines, but also the enduring separation of homes, families, and language and cultural communities (Pandey 21-22).

The significance of Tha'mma is particularly high since her belief in nationalism is slowly undermined upon by her personal experience with the border. Neo-liberal profoundly establishes a militant and territorial sense of nationhood, and, at first, she views borders as real, material, and objective. The finding that there is no dramatic demarcation of the border separating India and East Pakistan on the ground that she can be able to view in the plane followed by her confusion at realizing that no such dramatic line exists can reveal the difference between the cartographic imagination and lived geography (Ghosh 167). Her puzzled attitude to the difference between the two sides turns out to be one of the most critical remarks about territorial nationalism ever published on the novel since it demonstrates the irony of the Partition, such enormous amount of violence was perpetrated under the banners of what can be defined as politically decisive yet physically indefinable boundaries (Ghosh 167). According to Suvir Kaul (1994), the novel reveals that borders have a rather flimsy material presence and even the history of bloodshed cannot transform it into a completely secure and impermeable fortification (137-41). And yet, through Tha'mma, Ghosh is not merely documenting the suffering displacement; he reveals the status of the border as unstable political fiction whose violence is its ability to split individuals, memories and histories that are still interlaced.

In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh actually throws the problem of nationalism into the limelight with the highly ambiguous feeling of the concept of home as experienced by Tha'mma. To her, Dhaka is not only a geographical place but a love place that she tries to maintain using memory, habit and emotional affinity. She is eager to take herself back to the city of her childhood but she is too indecisive when the process of doing so at last comes true and tells herself that it will not be like home anymore (Ghosh 128). However, when she arrives at the house of Jethamoshai in Dhaka, she says that they are finally home (212). This movement is the focus of this critique by Ghosh. The border of the country is not the same as home in the novel and home cannot be safely packed into the newly-defined political borders. Rather, it is precarious, stratified, and emotionally charged and is molded equally by memory and fantasy as it is by geographical position. The fact that Tha'mma had previously been involuntarily slipping, despite her insistence that she could go home to Dhaka, already indicates how ineffective official national identity is in erasing lived belonging (152). Ghosh uses her to show that Partition can draw boundaries and can form citizens, although it will not be easy to cut memory, attachment, the sense of a previously undivided world.

This crisis of belonging cannot be separated here, as it is inseparable with the paradoxes of freedom and nationalism to Partition survivors like Tha'mma. When she is younger, she is fuelled with anti-colonial spirit and remembers having done anything to get our freedom (Ghosh 39). At this point, she sees freedom as a dignified and accredited political ideal, one that is worth sacrificing and even violence. But gradually the novel complicates this belief. Subsequently, Robi thinks that in Assam, Punjab, Sri Lanka, and Tripura, people keep killing and dying in the name of being free (246). His look reveals one of the most disturbing truths of the novel the rhetoric of freedom does not always lead to peace, justice or human flourishing; it can also legitimize the new forms of exclusion, violence and fragmentation. In this regard, Ghosh challenges the traditional nationalist pledge that political sovereignty is bound to bring about collective belonging. As John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (1994) would contend,

The traditional conception of nationalism ties popular freedom with sovereignty, territorial cohesion, and a collective culture in common (4-5).

The Shadow Lines, though, exposes this price of that ideal by revealing the way in which the pursuit of homogeneous nationhood continues to generate estrangement, as opposed to security. Thus, Suvir Kaul is correct in interpreting the novel as an exploration of the violence underlying modern nation-states and the shift of Tha'mma away of nationalist assurance to uncertain awareness of the ambiguity of borders and identities (126, 140). The greater success of Ghosh is to demonstrate that the process of finding home does not conclude with the formation of nations, and instead, in the case of the displaced subject, it resides in memory, desire and unresolved historical consciousness.

John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (1994) explain that nationalism seeks to unify a people by dissolving the domestic divisions, uniting them around a longstanding homeland, bonded by legal equality and unified by a popular culture (4). *The Shadow Lines*, however, shows how ironic such an ideal is. Rather than producing security and cohesion, the logic of national fragmentation is more likely to yield to intimidation, estrangement, and cruelty in places that were formerly viewed as intimate and even intimate. It is irony at its best when the narrator is looking back at the riots where he says that our city was not our side (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines* 224). Ghosh elaborates on it by articulating a specific state of vulnerability that is thoroughly subcontinental in such that even most mundane spaces may at any given time transform into aggressive and alien places leading to what the novel refers to as a form of loneliness which is rather fueled by fear and alienation (225). In this way, the novel demonstrates the fact that the country is not always an enclosing form; it can also become the alienation form and residents of the country can happen to feel like strangers in their own city.

This affiliation is best described by Tha'mma when their attachment to Dhaka reveals how both the home and the nation are not permanent. Not only is she bewildered about whether one come home to Dhaka or to Dhaka she is also made to feel the psychic dislocation caused by Partition. By collapsing the distinction of coming and going against her, as she still is a schoolboy, the narrator is unable to grasp the historical and emotional weight that becomes crushing the distinction between coming and going to her (Ghosh 168). Dhaka is home, and place of residence, and more so a country. The irony of this is agonizingly obvious with her arrival since she inspects the airport and asking in good faith where Dhaka is.

"I can't see Dhaka" (213).

As can be seen, the city of her dream is a construction that is more of a memory image drifting out of time and loss when the narrator points out that her Dhaka had long ago vanished into the past (213). Through such a fashion, Ghosh proves that Partition is not simply a question of redefining political boundaries, but a dissection of the bonding between place and identity and putting the subject of displacement in-between geography and memory. And so where is home where borders have permanently changed the lives of people? In *The Shadow Lines*, this question is answered by Amitav Ghosh with specific vehemence through the reaction of Tha'mma to the isolation of Jethamoshai in Dhaka. Her pain when she envisions that an old man is going to die in another country, and will be left alone, expresses the human price of Partition:

The fact that political borders are turning relatives into strangers and making places that one used to know into foreign entities overnight (Ghosh 149).

Meanwhile, the fact that the narrator refers to India as the country invented by Tha'mma is of crucial importance, as it reveals that national belonging is not something organic and eternal, it is a historically produced sense of belonging that is forced upon previous experiences of belonging to place, family, and memory (151). Ghosh thus makes the reader wonder whether a new nationality can indeed substitute the previous sense of belonging, or remain in between being a legal and an emotionally grounded citizen.

The most effective response to this dilemma is provided by Jethamoshai, who does not want to go out of Dhaka. He dispels the idea that one can get safety, identity or home easily by crossing the border to a new-marked country. The instability of borders and the lack of end to the logic of displacement that they imply is revealed in his warning that once people start to move, they might not stop, because there is always another line that can be drawn (Ghosh 237). There is a sense of home that is based not on the sovereignty of the state but on the lived habitation and continuity of his insistence that he is born and will die in Dhaka. In this side, *The Shadow Lines* is a strong opposition to the philosophy of nation-making as the solution to the crisis of belonging. Gyanendra Pandey (2001) states:

Partition was much more than just the demarcation of the boundaries; it was the bloody break of the homes, families, linguistic and cultural communities (21-22).

The refusal of Jethamoshai to be rescued by Tha'mma to fit into the structure of her nation, and his inability to acknowledge that structure, dramatize this distance between the political rationality of the nation-state and the more long-lasting assertions of place and memory. In this perspective, Ghosh has approached the issue of home with the same caution as Rabindranath Tagore used to warn that, nationalism is a great menace since it solidifies collective existence into exclusivity, instead of supporting human forms of relations (Tagore 29). Ghosh neither refutes the historical potency of nationalism, he merely reveals boundaries of the same by revealing that those (who were symbolic of the Partition) usually have no home, only memory (as the narrator puts it) (Ghosh 214). Home in the novel is thus not the same as the country and cannot be reclaimed fully on the basis of returning. It exists rather as a space of affect and imagination, which thrives on memory, desire and the continual presence of the past.

According to Suvir Kaul (1994),

The Shadow Lines constantly destabilizes the assumed unity of national identity and prefigures the violence hidden in the boundaries of territories (125-45).

The novel, hints at the fact that home does not lend itself to a passport, or border or nation-state; instead, it is tenuous, disputed, and intensely recalled space to the displaced subject.

In another discussion about the 1993 Presidential Address of Abena Busia to the African Literature Association, Anjali Roy (2000) states that postcolonial subjects exist in the world where community is envisioned through the flexible affiliations whereas the daily lives are determined by the strict state boundaries (39). The formulation by Busia is particularly applicable to *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh, a novel that continues to challenge the sufficiency of national identities and prefigures in favor of multi- and multi-layered and fragmented forms of identity. Ghosh intentionally spreads the story throughout Calcutta, Dhaka and London in that, memory and imagination play the key role in recovering individual and historical memory. The title's lines of shadow hence are not national borders as well; they also represent to the shaky lines of memory and history, intimacy and alienation, place and identity. In this regard, the novel is reminded of the powerful argument as stipulated by Benedict Anderson stating that the nation is an imagined political community (Anderson 6), whilst also revealing the violence and exclusions that ensue when imagined political communities are transformed into absolute divisions of territory and politics.

This shift in the evolution of the nameless narrator most vividly dramatizes this shift against the staid cartographic thinking. At the beginning of his childhood, he believes in the solidity of the geographical distance and the national division and believes in the existence of space and the existence of nations and their boundaries (Ghosh 241). But his connection with Tridib starts to challenge this by and by and opens his eyes to a broader concept of place. Tridib informs him that a place does not just exist but one has to create it in his mind (23). This revelation forms the basis of the spatial imagination in the novel. Ghosh never implies that place is unreal, but, instead, he shows the ways in which places come to gain meaning in their interactions with desire, storytelling, recollection, and historical consciousness. It is here that the narrator comes to appreciate the fact that indeed Tridib had lent me a world to travel in and had lent me a pair of eyes to see it (22). He gets to know how to live in alien locations without having to physically hit them, and to relate parallel aspects across seemingly different geographies using maps, histories, photographs, and recalled dialogues. As a result, the past starts manifesting itself as being simultaneously with its current, and the national boundaries lose their incidence to finality. (34)

What arises out of this creative education is a kind of consciousness which goes beyond the logic of territorial nationalism. Calcutta, Dhaka, and London are not depicted as identifiable and self-contained spaces but rather an intertwined space tied together through memory, migration and sentimental past. The novel by Ghosh therefore indicates that the life experience of belonging cannot be entirely explained using the official political maps. *The Shadow Lines* displays that identity is both relational and not fixed in the postcolonial world and that the understanding of history must focus on the porous and transnational and highly human relationships that persist across the border.

Tridib is the most useful guide that the narrator can get to help him learn how to envision space beyond the guaranteed limitations of maps and borders. He teaches him that places must be actively fantasized and fail

which we become entangled in the fantasy of other individuals (Ghosh 35). This lesson transforms the thinking of the narrator regarding the issue of geography, history, and selfhood. At the hands of Tridib, he learns to dream of London in Calcutta at war time and Nick Price as a troubling image of his own which he understands to be not only a physical image but also an imaginative one. The interested part in Tridib is desire: to him, the proper knowledge is a powerful wish to go beyond the confines of his own present moment to the past and to another place (Ghosh 32). This creative traveling does not turn its back on material reality; in fact, it attacks the principle of fixed cartographies and national pasts. In such a way, the novel suggests that instead of liberation through destruction of geography it is better to seek liberation through defying of political geography to determine the entire scope of awareness.

This is one of the central elements of nationalism and dualistic ideas of identity that *The Shadow Lines* challenges by means of this playful intermingling. Unable to conceive at the infantile stage that space and nation can be solid, the narrator is gradually pushed into a more permeable imaginative existence where Calcutta, Dhaka and London are in a state of simultaneity, not as entirely separate national entities. It is on this background that the idea posed by Brinda Bose (2001) can be especially useful: what she sees in the novel is a migration into a third space where boundaries are blended and cultures are in conflict (239). This latter is not a flight out of history; but a transnational space in which histories, narratives and geographies intersect and by which one can read history in a great variety of different points of vision. In its place the picture which Ghosh creates of tiny thousand lines which run across the sub continental territory shows the meaninglessness of political delimitation and the very writing of the novel repeats these delimitations in its own way by linking people and places both through time and space (Ghosh 272). *The Shadow Lines* therefore constructs a vision of space that disrupts, discrete binaries, and also lays emphasis on the intelligibility of the pasts, geographies and identities.

To highlight Tridib's vision of space, Ghosh presents Ila in sharp contrast to him. Ila can never think of space as an imaginary construction, but considers it as a given reality. Though she has travelled to various places of the world, she is trapped in a static zone. Her problem lies in the fact that memory and imagination occupy no central position in her conception of space:

For Ila the current was the real: it was as though she lived in a present which was like an airlock in a canal, shut away from the tidewaters of the past and the future by steel floodgates (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines* 33).

That is why she can never understand that how such dull familiar places like the cafes in Plaza Mayor in Madrid or the crisp air in Cuzco can become "a set of magical talismans" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines* 22) to the narrator who has never been able to physically visit these places. The narrator being mentored by Tridib can imagine these very places because of his familiarity with the "tattered old Bartholomew's Atlas" (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines* 22) and does not need to visit those sites like Ila to be intimate with them.

To emphasize the uniqueness of Tridib of his spatial imagination, Ghosh puts Ila in close opposition to him. Ila does not envisage space as in the case of Tridib mediated by memory and desire or imagination but in her visions, space is immediate and concrete, physical and self-evident. The narrator notes that she leads a purely present life, without being connected with the past and future (Ghosh 33). Therefore, in spite of her travelling experiences, Ila has an oddly narrow experience of place. She cannot see why the apparently mundane places like the cafes of Madrid or the air of Cuzco can gain such fanciful power of the narrator, who has never seen it in person, but came to know it through the tales of Tridib, and the bookish Atlas of Bartholomew (Ghosh 22). Ghosh therefore creates a vital contrast of the meanings of travel as bodily interference as compared to place as qualities of imagination. The mobility of Ila cannot lead to depth of understanding, whereas Tridib educates the narrator that places should be actively envisioned; otherwise, he/she will be trapped in the inventions of other people (Ghosh 35). It is through the influence of Tridib that the narrator is made to see that true knowledge can lie not in ordinary coming to the physical world but the depth of one's imaginative and ethical interests in the world.

This imaginative learning enables the narrator to challenge the same assumptions on which the nationalism structures space and distance. Taking a geographical look back he finds that Calcutta is further away than Chiang Mai as well as Delhi further than Srinagar, and Chengdu is still farther than Srinagar (Ghosh 255-56). What is of interest in this discovery is, it is not only cartographic but it is a discovery that national consciousness creates mental distances that are not related with geographical reality. This can also be seen

when the narrator scans old Calcutta newspapers in search of any evidence of the communal bloodshed that is both associated with East Pakistan and Kashmir only to be left without any traces of the relationship where he feels he ought to have shown. The newspaper being the tool of nationalistic perception is now realized to be influenced by the tool of the novel known as the power of distance (Ghosh 250). In that regard, Ghosh shows how distance is not a neutral fact but an ideology, the one, which defines what events are perceived to be close, what pasts are being recalled, what sufferings are disregarded. This is why critics like Brinda Bose have interpreted *The Shadow Lines* to be heading towards a third space, a way of imagining where histories, identities and territories cross over each other instead of being confined to definite national compartments (Bose 239-40). Ghosh finally creates a no-binomial vision of space through Tridib and the narrator, which tends to prefigure simultaneity, interrelationships, and human ability to conceive relationships across borders.

Third Space as Cartographic Illusion

National borders can never guarantee a place of authentic home to migrants such as Tha'mma. Memory and imagination help to maintain *The Shadow Lines* as a place of affection at home and not on a territorial level. The speaker points out that individuals like my grandmother who lack homes but mentally know to become very masterful in the craft of remembering (Ghosh 214). In this respect, memory is another way of being in place: it retains affections that the nation-state is unable to totally absorb. The novel gives a suggestion therefore of how official geographies have been unable to capture the experience of individuals who have crossed borders and have thus lost the feeling of continuity between place of birth, citizenship and belonging. Tha'mma facing a dilemma is not the only one, but one that characterized the more general situation of post-Partition home being understood as it is rebuilt by remembering but not quite through the act of going back. Suvir Kaul believes that the novel by Ghosh still undermines the integrity of national identity since this novel reveals the ways in which boundaries are alienating people of places that continue to embrace their hearts and history (Kaul 125-45).

The Shadow Lines indicates that it is the narratives that create their own home beyond the confines of the national borders. That everyone inhabits a narrative provided by Tridib can imply that agency of a human being its location is not entirely dependent on history but also stories on the basis of which people account their lives (Ghosh 201). By this the telling of stories becomes part of the struggle against the reality of frontiers. Folding of the memory, history, space and nation generates what Brinda Bose terms as movement into a both space when frontiers are staged and cultures conflict (239). This third space is not the free zone; it is the fantasy of dreaming relationship in sexual ambiguous histories and locations. His associations of Calcutta and Dhaka and London are by heart, desiring and narrating which spread the light that it is impossible to describe the life that was broken due to Partition in terms of nationalistic explanations only. Formal structure of the novel, thus, can be associated with its political shrewdness, histories overlap, memories migrate and belonging transcends the boundaries that are put on maps.

The concept of third space in *The Shadow Lines* is not only brought to bear with power as a cultural hybridity suggestion, but also as a criticism of any systems that claim to transform human life into clear categories. In the novel, the placement of the characters in the areas where the official boundaries are not established continues: between nation and family, map and memory, event and recollection, witness and reconstruction. Third space, in this novel, is not merely the intersection of two cultures, the unsteady position when political absolutes start to disintegrate. The text does not take nation as an artificially granted mode of belonging, but how it has to be constructed as repetitive as well as didactic, frightening and produced difference. This is an aspect that is reiterated in scholarly readings of the novel. Ajanta Sircar believes that Ghosh attacks the cultural essentialism affirmed by nationalist ideology, and more recent efforts on the cartographic imagination of the novel suggest that the distinctions on which nations rely are not natural, but constructed.

A more unique interpretation of the novel can come into play where third space can be construed as a cartographic crisis. The atlas, as represented in *The Shadow Lines* is not a factual object of knowledge but a symbolic machine which produces political estrangement and, at the same time, reveals its own fictionality. A current discussion of the cartographies of difference of the novel suggests that Ghosh completes national separation as an inventive process, and demonstrates that nations are frequently perpetuated through so-called perceived impassable distinctions, which must be artificially produced first. According to the same

study, the atlas by Tridib has got its own undoing, since the geographical distance between locations is not equal to the imagined distance. What is referred to as a border therefore proves to be a mental technology before it turns out to be a political line. In this context, third space is found where the map becomes subordinated and the lived relation start playing more important roles than the official geography. This is the most institutional challenge to nationalism in the entire novel: the novel shows that national reliance is not on land but on a habit of vision which sees land in a specific manner.

The issue of memory initiates a new and no less important way of discussion. Third space in the novel is also mnemonic formation, formed where the private recollection and public history inter-fit in each other without ever actually fully coalescing. The most important essay by Suvir Kaul describes the novel as an archaeology of silences and insists that the nagging question used in the novel was 'Do you remember?' creates not only its form of narration but also its urgency as political. To Kaul, the memory within the novel is productive and empowering yet, traumatic, as it frees the imagination and reveals the violent nature of the modern nation-states. Such formulation is important in perceiving why the novel dismisses the linear narration. The digressions, returns and the bits of reconstructions it uses do not just appeal to memory; they will reveal the failure of official historical talk. In this context, the third space is the realm where memory opposes the state wish to make a closure. It releases the past not as a closed history but as an unsettled pressure on the present. Another degree of originality is the one that is found in reading the novel when the geography is substituted with genealogy. Placing *The Shadow Lines* in a post-Rushdie tendency tradition to rewrite Indian history in an anti-official historiography angle, and building on Foucault in terms of the concept of the Nietzschean genealogy, Maria Elena Martos Huesos (2008) reads the novel as a deconstruction of nationalist myth where women and motherhood are at the centre of the allegory of nation-making. This method is particularly excellent since it shifts the conversation of the third space off the abstract national borders to the corporeal and domestic spaces where the nation contemplates itself. The beliefs of the grandmother, the resurrected hoedown of Dhaka, the motherly and familial chainage and the language of giving birth hint and imply that maps, armies are not the only maintainers of the nation but domestic histories. Third space will so become genealogical: it emerges when the history of the family disrupts the history of the state; when women whose lives have been remembered expose the breaches of the nationalist fantasy.

The home in the novel cannot be confused with the escape of politics. It serves as rather as a counter-site of worldliness. The book by Shameem Black on the novel is particularly critical as it holds the view that cosmopolitanism in Ghosh today is being developed in a paradoxical way due to its adoption of domesticity. The above formulation allows one to see why *The Shadow Lines* does not oppose home to the world in any easy way. Never are the house, the story of the family, the heirloom, the recalling room airtight spaces, but they are grids at which the world penetrates ordinary lives. Home is not any more than a transnational documentation instead of a fixed inclusion. In this kind of building, third space does not exist outside the house but inside it. It is through the home that Calcutta, Dhaka, and London exist in the presences of layers and belonging is produced in relation and not in territory. This is the originality of the novel because this is the opposite one: the world is not met once one has left home; it is already inside home.

The ethics of this specific third space is even more ethical because of the involvement of the narrator. He is not an independent witness, he actually does not see all that he tells on, on the contrary, he inherits pieces, silences, rumors, photographs, newspaper traces, scattered evidence of others. Recent trauma-oriented texts refer to him as a recipient of a trauma by others as well as providing the narrative form of trauma. Such argument is important in that it demonstrates that the truth of the novel is not the result of full accessibility to history but it is rather the result of the work of putting together what history has dispersed. The narrator lives in ambiguity between fact and fantasy, and it is this in-betweenness that makes the novel so strong in its morality. The third space, in this case, is an ethical form of narration: the location where one is not to talk with utter authority, but with accountable concern with what has been silenced, misremembered or simply never known fully. The novel thus has the effect of turning story telling into witness work to alternative histories that cannot be captured well by the state history writing.

The latter interpretation allows one to re-read the meaning of third space in *The Shadow Lines*. It is not its importance that is in hybridity or cultural mixture, but in its ability to unmask any false pretense to purity, be it national, historical, spatial or familial. The novel tells how boundaries must be invented, as well as

memory surpassing historiography, home being inhabitants of multiple interiorities, and narrative truths frequently imploding out of fragments and not certainties. Third space thus represents the most essential critical principle in the novel: it refers to the field of the nation viewed as performance, the map viewed as fiction, the family viewed as counter-history and memory as an incomplete ethical imperative. In such a form, *The Shadow Lines* is not merely a discussion about borders; it undermines the epistemological practices on which borders are believable.

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