

<sup>1</sup> Dissolved Boundaries and Fluid Spaces: The Spatial Imagination  
<sup>2</sup> of Amitav Ghosh in the Shadow Lines

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<sup>6</sup> **Abstract**

<sup>7</sup> Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines is a classic exposition of the defining postmodern notion  
<sup>8</sup> of the fluidity of space. The novel, through its overt transnational character, explores the idea  
<sup>9</sup> of dissolution of space through its conceptual dismantlement of national boundaries across the  
<sup>10</sup> globe. Through various events and episodes that occur in the text, its characters continually  
<sup>11</sup> transit across national borders thereby breaching the spatial confinements created by them  
<sup>12</sup> and unleash themselves into the limitless arena of transnational space that is fluid, unstable  
<sup>13</sup> and categorically transversal. The text, whose plot spans across the pre- and  
<sup>14</sup> post-independent times in the subcontinent, overtly exemplifies how the postmodern space  
<sup>15</sup> defies all notions of structuration, stability and territorial confinement for it is fluid,  
<sup>16</sup> indeterminate and fluctuating in nature. Based on these precepts, this article analyzes the  
<sup>17</sup> fickle and indeterminate nature of the fluid space that permeates across conceptually dissolved  
<sup>18</sup> national boundaries and frontiers in the subcontinent as effectively demonstrated in Amitav  
<sup>19</sup> Ghosh's award-winning novel The Shadow Lines.

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<sup>21</sup> **Index terms—**

<sup>22</sup> Introduction mitav Ghosh's Sahitya Akademy award winning novel The Shadow Lines ??1988) negates the idea  
<sup>23</sup> of a nation being a confined space; or in other words, it espouses what critical geographer David Harvey would  
<sup>24</sup> term "the collapse of spatial distinctiveness" ??1989: 209). The text, through its repeated engagement with many  
<sup>25</sup> transnational events and episodes, however focuses on a fundamental irony embedded in the subcontinent's unique  
<sup>26</sup> and strongly divided topography: the irony is its failure to curb increasing cross-cultural interactions between the  
<sup>27</sup> divided nations notwithstanding the presence of rigid boundaries between them and their boastful promise for  
<sup>28</sup> cultural impermeability. On this premise, the present article, while highlighting Amitav Ghosh's postmodernist  
<sup>29</sup> rejection of nations being specific "constraining ??spatial] enclosures" ??Kirbi 1996: 13), also seeks to explore  
<sup>30</sup> the writer's principal illustrations of space as an undivided boundary-defying cosmopolitan category.

<sup>31</sup> Though The Shadow Lines recounts events relating to a time that spans across pre-and postindependent  
<sup>32</sup> generations, one of its prime focuses revolves around the notion of space and spatial nonuniformity. The novels'  
<sup>33</sup> expansive spatial diversity is introduced at the very outset through the unnamed narrator's detailed chronicling  
<sup>34</sup> of the family history of the Datta-Chaudhuris, where the disintegrated family scatters across diverse geographical  
<sup>35</sup> locations while simultaneously rupturing numerous national and territorial ghettos and frontiers. In the puzzlingly  
<sup>36</sup> intricate movement of the plot, which oscillates back and forth in space and time, the story's relentless involvement  
<sup>37</sup> with the partition and its recurrent invalidation of the same as a spatial divider is obvious and undeniable. In  
<sup>38</sup> other words, the text, through its purposive elicitation of continually prodding questions relating to space, time,  
<sup>39</sup> territoriality at different crucial junctures, interrogates the validity of partition while concurrently questioning  
<sup>40</sup> its ability to create separate ethnically, culturally and religiously closed spaces.

<sup>41</sup> The novel's plot, which seems to be woven like a complex and fibrous cosmopolitan network, flaunts a set of  
<sup>42</sup> characters who are perennial cross-border itinerants, and hence are trespassers into the limitless arena of global  
<sup>43</sup> space. The unnamed narrator, Ila and Tridib are some such representational characters who are the habitual  
<sup>44</sup> violators of fixed territorial settlements; their continual cross-border movements and recurrent involvements  
<sup>45</sup> in trans-territorial events and episodes exemplify not only the novel's transnational character, but also its  
<sup>46</sup> ostentatious sustentation of a cosmopolitan spatiality.

47 Before going further into our discussion, we must divide the article, as does the text itself, into two parts:  
48 "Going Away" and "Coming Home" in order to present separate analyses of spatial fluidity in the two major,  
49 divided portions of the book.

### 50 1 II.

### 51 2 Going Away

52 The introduction of the symbolic family tree of the Datta-Chaudhuris, almost at the beginning of the novel,  
53 provides enough connotative gestures at the dissolution of spatial boundaries and confinements. The tree  
54 symbolizes the breakage of spatial delimitations through the global spread-out of its branches that rupture  
55 not only the conceptually self-limiting topographical divisions, but also their attendant and circumscribed social,  
56 political and cultural spaces. In addition, the narrator's fortuitous coming across the Bartholomew's Atlas in  
57 Tridib's room, plays a pivotal role A in encapsulating Amitav Ghosh's intended theme of "out of placeness"  
58 ??Bauman 1988: 225). It can be observed that Tridib orchestrates a formulaic escalation of the narrator's  
59 newly developed fascination with the beyondborder places like Madrid, Cuzco, Cairo, Addis Ababa, Algeirs  
60 and Brisbane etc. so that the latter becomes a slavish associate in his weird, imaginative adventures. Tridib's  
61 insatiate imaginary craving for places beyond the border is an expression of his irresistible subconscious longing  
62 to transcend boundaries-a desire which he wilfully infuses into the narrator's voyeuristic childhood fantasy  
63 thereby transforming him into a copractitioner in his relentless imaginative ventures. It is discernible that  
64 the Bartholomew Atlas is a flippant, transgressive medium for both these fancying adolescents to surpass the  
65 geographical boundaries and imaginatively situate themselves in physically unreachable places-places that are  
66 nonetheless eminently reachable on the figuratively de-stratified terrain of the Atlas. It can also be noted that  
67 the narrator's increasingly intensifying captivation by Tridib's projected images of the "cafes in the plaza Mayor  
68 in Madrid," the "crispness of the air in Cuzco," the "printed arch in the mosque of Ibn Tulun," and with the  
69 "stones of the Great Pyramid of Cheops" (SL: 22) etc. is an oblique suggestion of Ghosh's clandestine design  
70 to predispose his characters to a proliferative global consciousness that will continue to remain his prime thrust  
71 throughout the text. The Bartholomew's Atlas thus generates what critic Frederick Jameson would term "virtual  
72 space," or "hyperspace": these are postmodern spatial buzzwords that conflate real and imaginary spaces to  
73 create a flowing spatial field that retains the capability to disrupt and transgress its own confinement. 1 It is  
74 interesting to note that the narrator's beyond-boundary consciousness is not only associated with the radical  
75 and transformational idea of global space, but also with people, particularly those showcasing a wide variance of  
76 activities and involvements that in D. E. Johnson and S. Michelson's representational postmodern idiom "trouble  
77 the place of the border" (1997: 31). The narrator's incognito imaginary proximity with Mrs Price's son Nick (with  
78 whom he does not have any previous acquaintance) is 1 Frederick Jameson, in his article "Postmodernism, or  
79 the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" defines "postmodern hyperspace" as the "latest mutation in space" which  
80 helps the human body to transcend its own physical confinement and locate itself "perceptually and cognitively"  
81 in the "mappable external world" (83). The Bartholomew's Atlas in The Shadow Lines does create a hyperspace  
82 where both Tridib and the narrator are able to transcend the spatial confinements of their respective bodies and  
83 situate themselves, fancifully though, in the actually unreachable places which nonetheless are very reachable in  
84 this hyperspace.

85 worth considering in this context. We see that the narrator quixotically positions himself beside Nick on a  
86 symbolic mirror, on which the latter grows as his substitutive or accompanying "double," in a scenario where Nick  
87 is attributed a surfeit of eerie and phantasmal epithets, including a "spectral presence" and a "ghostly presence"  
88 with "no features" and "no form" (SL: 55). Thus, the symbolic mirror, that can create preposterous imaginary  
89 proximities between distant and incongruous characters, generates an illusory fluid field where space vanishes "in  
90 the heat of the postmodern world" ??Valins 2003: 160), to borrow a fashionable phrase from critic O. Valins.

91 The introduction of Mrs Price's father Lionel Tresawsen along with the information relating to his enormous  
92 traveling ventures across the globe further substantiates Amitav Ghosh's idiosyncratic predilection for the creation  
93 of a boundary-defying cosmopolitan cartography. A man born in a small Southern Cornwall village, Mabe,  
94 Tresawsen travels "all around the world" (SL: 56) including far-off places like Fiji, Bolivia, the Guinea coast,  
95 Ceylon, Calcutta, etc. An imaginary line connecting these places on the map would show that Lionel Tresawsen's  
96 Odysseus-like travelling itinerary creates an inclusive cartographic lining that transgresses, trespasses and violates  
97 the limiting confinements proposed by the traditionally constricted topography of different nation states. A. N.  
98 Kaul very rightly says: "Crossing of frontiers-especially those of nationality, culture and language-has increased  
99 the world over, including India. Of this tendency The Shadow Lines is an extreme example" (1988: 299).

100 Further, Nick's desire "to travel around the world like [his grandfather] Lionel Tresawsen" and "to live in  
101 faraway places halfway around the globe, to walk through the streets of La Paz and Cairo" (SL: 57) extensively  
102 corroborates to many of the telling instances cited beforehand in support of Amitav Ghosh's decisive agenda  
103 to conceptually dismantle spatial boundaries and frontiers. The narrator's veiled keenness on Nick which he  
104 has already expressed beforehand through his eager inception of Nick's image as some kind of his invisibly  
105 accompanying double-a spectral and ghostly presence mysteriously lurking around and growing in his vicinity-  
106 reaches its anticipated maxims when he discovers in Nick a "kindred spirit" (SL: 57), yet undiscovered amongst  
107 his friends. Similar feelings capture the narrator's buoyant, boundary-defying consciousness when he, while

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108 "looking up at the smoggy night sky above Gole Park," wanders "how the stars looked in London" (SL: 57).  
109 In this scenario, he nurtures a clandestine desire for a subliminal substitution of Gole Park for London through  
110 a secretive erasure of physical distances between these two places far apart. We also learn that the obvious  
111 reason behind the narrator's proliferating fascination with Nick is firmly grounded in his keen and self-conscious  
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114 with the latter's willful desire to be a global itinerant-a desire which he, of course, had inherited from his  
115 grandfather Lionel Tresawsen's amaranthine globetrotting spirit and credentials. Amitav Ghosh's frequent and  
116 prescient presentation of people (whether in a photograph or in a residential apartment) needs to be examined.  
117 It seems that it is nothing but a endeavour on the writer's part to showcase a few representational characters of  
118 transnational space who either possess an extensive variety of national identities with widely differing professional,  
119 ideological, and political affiliations, or are people involved in a kaleidoscopic range of crossborder activities, such  
120 that the assortment leads to a "postmodern diffusion of heterogeneous orientations" ??Paulston & Liebman 1994:  
121 215). For instance, the cluster Ghosh presents in the residential apartment at Lymington Road comprises Dan,  
122 "a bearded Irish computer scientist," "a girl from Leicester," and "a morose young Ghanian" (SL: 106-107).  
123 In this "multicultural medley" ??Werlen 2005: 56), someone is a Trotskist and Nazist (like Dan); someone is  
124 an anti-Nazist (like the Ghanian) and someone is an upperclass Asian Marxist and a Fabian (like Ila), where  
125 these characters loaded with their respective ideological comportments try to spread their "influence on another  
126 continent," despite their supposed "impotence at home" (SL: 107). It goes without saying that Ghosh's recurrent  
127 and purposive use of such clustered assortments of characters at many places in the novel is nothing but an integral  
128 part of his overall project of cosmopolitanism. The assortment creates an emblematic mini-cosmopolis where  
129 intersecting, intercepting, and interfacing ideological cross-currents not only coexist in a synergetic harmony with  
130 their beyond-boundary ethos and implications, but also with their attendant cultural, political and ideological  
131 spaces mingled and overlapped into each other through what Elleke Boehmer would emphatically call "trans-  
132 societal flows" (2005: 246).

133 Tridib's politically engaging conversations with Ila at Brick Lane regarding the nagging potential dangers of  
134 people living in that place due to persistent German bombing and Ila's unpretentious but bizarre response to  
135 the former's comments need further examination in the context of our study. Firstly, we learn that Ila's insistent  
136 yearning to flee from India is heavily contingent on her craving for liberation from what she feels to be the  
137 oppressive cultural restraints of an orthodox Indian society; and, secondly, we also learn that her desire to liven  
138 the face of lurking death in a wardevastated England is premised on her concurrent longing to be a part of  
139 history: "We may not achieve much in our little house in Stockwell, but we know that in the future political  
140 people everywhere will look to us-in Nigeria, India, Malayasia, wherever" (SL: 115). In her unbounded excitement  
141 to achieve a timeless and global standing for herself as a part of the significant history of her times, Ila willfully  
142 reasserts her incorrigible stubbornness-which of course she has dauntlessly flaunted many times beforehand-  
143 to diffuse into the global space rather than being fruitlessly glued to the restricted sociopolitical and cultural  
144 milieu of her home country. Ila, through her bold and belligerent free ride into global space, acts as a "line of  
145 flight" 2 Tridib's amusing recollections of his enchanting experiences while writing letters to May showcase his  
146 premeditated and imagined contraction of space. In what appears to be an outlandish, imaginative adventure  
147 on his part, Tridib, while writing letters to May and Ila respectively, creates phantasmagoric visions of May  
148 as well as of Lymington Road and Hampstead (the spatial substitutions for Ila) right before him: his frenzied  
149 recreations of distant places and people serve the symbolic purpose of reduction of space and the compression  
150 of distances. Meenakshi Mukherjee aptly observes that "Distance in The Shadow Lines is [?] perceived as a  
151 challenge to be overcome through the (to use Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor) to deterritorialize the locally  
152 restricted socio-political and cultural space which in the words of Keith Woodward and John Paul Jones III is  
153 an "institutionalized apparatus of capture" (2005: 237).

154 We find more textual evidence of Ila's obtrusive display of cosmopolitanism through her snotty denunciation  
155 of "local things" like "famines and riots and disasters" in places like Delhi and Calcutta-things which do not  
156 presumably have their transnational and beyond-boundary effects and ramifications-and her simultaneous keen  
157 embrace of global events like "revolutions and anti-fascist wars," which would set "a political example to the world"  
158 (SL: 115). Her passionate longing for being part of a global thing-that will expectedly have its permanent and  
159 inerasable imprint in the world's history-makes the narrator feel that she is "immeasurably distant" compared  
160 to his life lived "in the silence of voiceless events in a backward world" (SL: 115). Through what looks like a  
161 carefully drawn contrast between local and global events and through Ila's willful rejection of the former along  
162 with her revolutionary flight into the latter, Amitav Ghosh showcases how his representational cosmopolitan  
163 characters like Ila are "spatially disoriented" ??Francesc 1997: 3). use of imagination and desire until space gets  
164 dissolved" (1988: 256). Even through Tridib's meticulous descriptions of the passionately amorous encounter  
165 between a man and a woman in the pitted ruins of a German-bomb-devastated Lymington Road-an encounter  
166 whose actual occurrence cannot be factually ascertained because of Tridib's unclear and fluctuating memory-  
167 he craves for a transnational and liberated neutral space bereft of unwarranted national, cultural and religious  
168 bearings: "He wanted them to meet far from their friends and relatives in a place without a past, without  
169 history, free, really free, two people coming together with the utter freedom of strangers" (SL: 159). Notably, the

kind of neutral and vacuum-space devoid of any undesirable national and cultural imprint that Ghosh associates with this place is sufficiently akin to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "smooth space" which is open, sprawling and non-striated as opposed to the striated space which is closed, stratified and territorialized. 3 One can also examine the episode of the narrator's fanciful but visionary recreation of an illusory spatio-temporal matrix at the cellar of Mrs Price's abode in Lymington Road where he forms a whimsically fabricated assortment of characters not only from across divergent nations and continents, but also from separate and unconnected temporal spheres. He assorts the ghosts "nine-year-old Tridib," of "eight-yearold Ila" and of course, of Snipe and the narrator himself into a conglomerate, picturesque canvas where not only the disembodied individuals, but also the distant geographical spaces like Lymington Road and Raibazar coalesce, mingle and overlap in what appears to be an improbable spatio-temporal mix-up: "They were all around me, we were together at last, not ghosts at all: the ghostliness was merely the absence of time and distance-for that is what a ghost is, a presence displaced in time" (SL: 200). The dissolution of temporal and spatial coordinates, according to Meenakshi Mukherjee, is the crux of the novel as she writes: "One of the many intricate patterns that weaves the novel together is the coalescing of time and space in a seamless continuity, memory endowing remembered places with solidity, and imagination the recounted ones" (1988: 256-7). We must understand that in this seamless spatial continuity, space achieves an abounding postmodern fluidity and does not remain stagnant and restricted as Jack Richardson 3 Deleuze and Guattari introduce the notion of "smooth space" and "striated space" in their collaborative philosophical treatise *A Thousand Plateaus*. Smooth space, according to them, is nomadic, i.e., it does not have any specific territorial, cultural and national orientation whereas, striated space is sedentary, i.e., it is nationally, territorially and culturally circumscribed. In this light, one can discern that the pitted ruins of the German bomb-devastated Lymington Road is actually a "smooth space" for being devoid of specific national, cultural and spatial associations.

emphatically comments: "Yet, it must also be understood that spaces within which one sees are no more static than the subjects or objects that exist within space; in other words, space itself is a fluid construction" (2006: 63). It is also discernible that the imaginary spatio-temporal matrix that the narrator creates here is amply evocative of the Foucauldian notion of "heterotopia" 4 III.

## 196 4 Coming Home

where a particular space creates heterotopic congregations and overlappings of diversified spaces and multiple times.

The second part, "Coming Home," shifts the focus from the writer's wishful delineations of an overt cosmopolitanism to that of the tangled socio-cultural and historical problematic of the Indian subcontinent; nonetheless, the narrative never disassociates itself from the potentially irresolvable questions of space and spatiality. Here the writer, despite his keen investigation into the complex historicity of the subcontinent, highlights the volatility of each divided nation's respective boundaries to hold them as cloistered, selfsufficient containers of different realities. The story's clumsy opening-up, which is both progressive and retrogressive, carries two sets of views; one, to envision India as an undivided and continuous space (one of its chief proponents is the narrator's great-grandfather); and two, to see India, Pakistan and Bangladesh as separate, sovereign nation states (its proponent, of course, is the narrator's grandmother). The latter however receives considerable amounts of subversions at many crucial occasions in the novel, one of which certainly is the unnamed narrator's increasing understanding of the cultural indivisibility of the subcontinent. The narrator's juvenile, obstinate and presuppositional attribution of a different reality to the other side of the border nevertheless receives enough corrective reinforcements with his expositional stepping in into adulthood. He rids himself of his falsified, juvenile fantasies and declares with a visible sense of disillusionment: "I was a child, and like all the children around me, I grew up believing in the truth of the precepts that were available to me: I believed in the reality of space; I believed that distance separates, that it is a corporeal substance; I believed in the reality of 4 Michel Foucault in his excellent article "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" differentiates between utopia and heterotopia in a scenario where the former represents a unified and singular spatiotemporal field whereas the latter represents a social field that is spatially and temporally heterogeneous and diversified. According to Foucault: "The heterotopia has the power of juxtaposing in a single real place different spaces and locations that are incompatible with each other. nations and borders; I believed that across the border there existed another reality" (SL: 241).

One must also look at the way the narrator links two supposedly incongruous incidents: one his "nightmare bus ride back from school" and two "the events that befell Tridib and others in Dhaka" (SL: 241). The connection indicates his ingenious recognition of the religio-sentimental inseparability of the subcontinent's inconsequentially divided cultural domains. Through the effectual instauration of the nightmarish bus-ride episode, which, of course, is the immediate and direct fall-out of the epicentric "Mui-Mubarak incident," the narrator reflects on the very affective nature of the sub-continental citizenry's existence, where a violent incident can percolate from one country to another, despite territorial blockages formed by their inflexible boundaries. This is further through the narrator's metaphoric representation of the divided nations and their people as nothing but mutually reflective mirror images of each other: "one is caught up in a war between oneself and one's image in the mirror" (SL: 225). The narrator's crafty and covert delineation of the divided nations and their divided people through his ingeniously conceived self-reflexive mirror-image-an image which makes a significant reappearance after its many

232 recurrent and efficacious use in quite a few other occasions inside the text-correctly epitomizes the undeniable  
233 crux of the novel. Suvir Kaul aptly comments: "What the narrator learns is that the separatist political logic  
234 of the nation state cannot enforce cultural difference, that some "other thing" will always connect Calcutta to  
235 Dhaka, Bengali to Bengali, Indian to Pakistani, an image in a vast mirror" (1988: 281).

236 Tha'mma is one important character in the novel who shares some of the narrator's one time juvenile fantasy  
237 of a unified nationhood with fixed and immovable boundaries. Her excruciatingly sentimental harangue over  
238 her overt rejection of Ila's belongingness to England testifies to her firm and rigid notions about nation and its  
239 territory: She doesn't belong there. It took those people a long time to build that country; hundreds of years,  
240 years and years of war and bloodshed. Everyone who lives there has earned his right to be there with blood:  
241 with their brother's blood and their father's blood and their son's blood. They know they're a nation because  
242 they've drawn their borders with blood. Hasn't Maya told you how regimental flags hang in all their cathedrals  
243 and how all their churches are lined with memorials to men who died in wars, all around the world? War is  
244 their religion. That is what it takes to make a country. Once that happens people forget they were born this  
245 or that, Muslim or Hindu, Bengali or Punjabi: They become a family born of the same pool of blood. That is  
246 what you have to achieve for India, don't you see? (SL: 85-6) Tha'mma's conversation with her son, which takes  
247 a humorously dialectic form of a mini-discourse on space and spatiality, wavers between her irresistible longing  
248 for seeing territorial demarcations between nations and her son's forceful affirmation of its virtual impossibility.  
249 In response to her son's question that whether "the border is a long, black line with a green on one side and  
250 scarlet on the other," Tha'mma answers by saying that she wants "to see at least trenches [?] or soldiers, or [?]  
251 even just barren strips of land" along the border to which her son responds again by saying: "No, you won't be  
252 able to see anything except clouds and perhaps, if you are lucky, some green fields" (SL:167). Thus, Tha'mma's  
253 separatist sentiment revealed through her rigid reliance on "the unity of nationhood and territory" (SL: 86) and  
254 through her utter desperation to see differences along the borders ends up with the conclusion that "a border  
255 place no longer exists" ??Hardt & Negri 2001:183). Tha'mma is visibly disappointed as she says:

256 But if there aren't trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? And  
257 if there is no difference, both sides will be the same; it will be just like it used to before, when we used to  
258 catch a train in Dhaka and get off in Calcutta the next day without anybody stopping us. What was it all for  
259 then-partition and all the killing and everything-if there isn't something in between? (SL: 167).

260 In an immediate corroborative response to her utter and vociferously expressed sense of disappointment, her  
261 son introduces the peculiarly elusive and mercurial nature of the borderline by stating that she would not be able  
262 to trace a Himalaya-like barrier along the border, as it starts right from the moment she steps into the airport.  
263 Her son's statement suggestively foregrounds the imaginative construction of the border while simultaneously  
264 impugning its actual, palpable presence which of course disturbingly thwarts Tha'mma's inherent and strong  
265 predilection for keeping things "neat and in place" (SL: 165). Borders that define a nation territorially are  
266 nothing but imaginary constructions; as Homi Bhabha states: "Nations, like narratives [?] fully realize their  
267 horizons in the mind's eye" (1990: 1). Tha'mma's son's consideration of the border as a mental construct rather  
268 than as a substantive and sublimated presence brings to mind Deleuze and Guattari's maverick cartographic  
269 metaphor "map without tracing." 5 5 Deleuze and Guattari introduce their famous concept of "map without  
270 tracing" while explaining the indeterminate and fluctuating structural features of a rhizome. A rhizome, they  
271 say, is a "map without tracing" since a tracing always threatens the former with an enforceable territoriality. In  
272 this way, the map continues to remain an open entity without any fear of being territorialized. In a similar vein,  
273 the subcontinent's cartography, in Ghosh's scheme of things, escapes rigid territorial formations and remains  
274 a "map without tracing." Amitav Ghosh's eclectic mapping of the subcontinent as a muddled and vaporous  
275 cartographic field makes the border a sham, a subterfuge and the adjacent lands corollaries of an indistinctively  
276 flowing spatial field. Her son's startling comments push Tha'mma into an entangling paradox in terms of her  
277 knowledge, understanding, and belief of space, where she is innocuously caught in the interstices between her  
278 rigid, non-compromising notions of nationalism-induced territorial space on the one hand, and her son's dissident  
279 and disquieting rejection of the same on the other. Timothy Brennan, while explaining the volatile and arbitrary  
280 nature of nationhood very fittingly quotes a Peruvian publicist and organizer Jose Carlos Mariategui as: "The  
281 nation [?] is an abstraction, an allegory, a myth that does not correspond to a reality that can be scientifically  
282 defined ??Brennan 1990: 49). Anshuman Mondal states in a similar context that Amitav Ghosh rejects in *The  
283 Shadow Lines* the idea of a nation as an inclusive geographical territory:

284 A nation therefore, much more than a portion of earth surrounded by borders that contain within them a  
285 'people' to whom the nation belongs. It is a mental construct ???]. Nations are both "real" and 'imaginary',  
286 material and immaterial. It is for this reason that Ghosh suggests that the borders that separate them are  
287 "shadow lines." ??1988: 88) Truly, as Ernest Renan points out, a nation cannot be determined by "the shape of  
288 the earth" ??1990: 19).

289 Tha'mma's perennial urge to see a fix ed, territorial boundary for her nation and her son's gentle but  
290 humorous ridicule of her ideas can be understood in the light of Deleuze & Guattari-proposed processes of  
291 "reterritorialization" and "deterritorialization" that perhaps most effectively articulate the novel's tangled cultural  
292 scenario. One can observe that Tha'mma's attempt to reterritorialize the disintegrating social, political and  
293 cultural landscape of her nation confronts its own subversion through her son's acknowledgement of the former's  
294 already accomplished deterritorialization. 6 Contrary to Tha'mma's obsessive preoccupation with an ideational

295 predilection for spatial fixities, Jethamoshai's blatant refusal to accept India as a separate nation re-establishes  
296 the volatility and arbitrariness of dividing lines in the subcontinent. The latter's outright rejection of Tha'mma's  
297 plea to come to 6 "Deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization" are terms typically introduced by Deleuze and  
298 Guattari to denote the respective processes of fragmentation and reconstitution occurring to a rhizome such  
299 that it never achieves a structural stability. The Shadow Lines is replete with such occurrences happening  
300 to the nation's socio-political and cultural scenario. It reflects through Tha'mma's desire to reterritorialize  
301 Indian nationality and culture whereas her son and Jethamoshi's uncle are well aware of the former's already  
302 accomplished deterritorialization. For, according to Deleuze and Guattari: "Deterritorialization [?] is always  
303 relative, and has reterritorialization as its flipside or complement [?] deterritorialization [?] always occurs in  
304 relation to a complementary reterritorialization" (60).

305 India for his safety testifies to his absolute cognizance of the above fact: I know everything, I understand  
306 everything. Once you start moving you never stop. That is what I told my sons when they took the trains. I  
307 said: I don't believe in India-Shindia. It's all very well, you are going away now, but suppose when you get there  
308 they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? Where will you move to? No one will have  
309 you anywhere. As for me, I was born here, and I will die here. (SL: 237) Tha'mma's self-proclaimed declaration  
310 of radical and aggressive nationalism is a proven failure and falls in line with Benedict Anderson's calling of the  
311 nation as nothing more than an "imagined [?] community" (1983: 48) bereft of specific territorial delimitations.  
312 Tha'mma's desire to be an authoritarian surveyor of the "spatial panopticon" 7 The famous or infamous "Mu-  
313 i-Mubarak incident" is a massive demonstrator of the virtual nonexistence of the dividing lines between India,  
314 Pakistan and Bangladesh. The incident, along with its sudden and eruptive occurrence in India, acts an epicenter  
315 of resultantly spreading out politico-religious turmoil in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The spillover transnational  
316 and trans-spatial impacts, ramifications and repercussions of the event can be testified through correspondingly  
317 flaring-up events that include the observance of 31 December as a "Black Day" in (Foucault 1965: 92) of her  
318 nation-which of course is predicated upon her ignorant or self-conscious denial of the complicated cultural history  
319 of this part of the world-receives a destabilizing abrogation in the subtly humorous counterargument provided  
320 by the narrator and his father. What Amitav Ghosh looks like proposing here is that "nationalism" is something  
321 that is to be understood not so much in terms of Tha'mma's present, radical political ideology which is essentialist  
322 and self-limiting, but rather much in terms of the subcontinent's larger and complicated cultural system that  
323 lies beyond her limited understanding of a nation's spatio-temporal configuration. In the context of the failed  
324 territorial definition of nationalism, Anderson redefines the same as: "What I am proposing is that Nationalism  
325 has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural  
326 systems that preceded it, out of which-as well as against which-it came into being." ??1983: 12) Year 2020

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328 Karachi, the hoaxed poisoning of the water tanks in Calcutta by Muslims, the subsequent mob-uprising and  
329 curfew and finally, the riot in Khulna district in Dhaka. In addition, the narrator, while investigating Khulna  
330 and Tridib's death in this riot, implicatively calls the investigation "a voyage into the land outside space" : "It  
331 was thus, sitting in the air-conditioned calm of an exclusive library, that I began on my strangest journey: a  
332 voyage into a land outside space, an expanse without distances; a land of looking glass events" (SL: 247). It is  
333 fairly discernible that Tridib's death brings us abruptly face to face with the illusory notions of space and territory  
334 created by a counterfeit sense of nationalism. The illusoriness of space finds another metaphoric substantiation  
335 through the narrator's preposterous undertaking of a retrospective backward journey into a vast expanse that  
336 runs beyond space and time. Thus, the theft of Prophet Mohammad's sacred relic, the ensuing violence, and  
337 Tridib's tragic death taken together are a combinatorial matrix of events that demystify the idea of boundaries,  
338 which, according to Edward Soja, are nothing but "life's linear regulators" (2005: 33).

339 The fascinating cartographic experiment performed by the narrator towards the last part of the text adds  
340 further corroborative insights to our point. The narrator's gripping analytical reading of the map reveals Khulna's  
341 inexplicable unconcern with events happening in adjacent foreign countries and its concomitant strange concern  
342 with the incident in Srinagar despite its farness from Khulna. The incident underscores the ethnic and cultural  
343 inseparability of the subcontinent, in spite of its fervidly divided topography. The narrator, at the end of his  
344 exegetic cartographic venture, abruptly discovers the irony that in this supposed act of partition, the nations  
345 have indeed paradoxically turned into each other's replica on the mirror: They have drawn their borders [?] hoping  
346 perhaps that once they have etched their borders upon the map, the two bits of land would sail away from  
347 each other like shifting tectonic plates of the prehistoric Gondwanaland. What they felt, I wondered, when they  
348 discovered that they had created not a separation, but a yet undiscovered irony [?] the simple fact that there  
349 had never been a moment in the fourthousand-year-old history of that map, when the places we know as Dhaka  
350 and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines-so closely that I, in  
351 Calcutta, had only to look into the mirror to be in Dhaka; a moment when each city was the inverted image of  
352 the other, locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free-our looking-glass border. (SL:  
353 257)

354 In the final analysis, it can be ascertained that though the central storyline predominantly revolves around the  
355 times before and after partition, the story, at another level, continually engages itself with the postmodern  
356 suspension of the "normal categories of time and space" ??Jencks 1984: 124). Through his characteristic

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357 dissolution of boundaries-a notion that runs amok through the text as a major thematic undercurrent-Ghosh  
358 creates an overabundance of transnational and cosmopolitan space that is perplexingly slippery and elusive  
359 towards specific national and territorial fixations. The text, through its symptomatic disavowal of traditional  
360 notions like fixed topographical divisions and boundaries, leads us into an uncanny postmodern world where the  
361 idea of confined national space is readily substituted by an invading, sprawling, open and liberated global space.

## 362 **6 Works Cited**

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<sup>1</sup>© 2020 Global Journals

<sup>2</sup>Dissolved Boundaries and Fluid Spaces: The Spatial Imagination of Amitav Ghosh in the Shadow Lines

<sup>3</sup>Deleuze and Guattari have introduced the concept of "lines of flight" in their introductory chapter on "rhizome" in their collaborative book *A Thousand Plateaus*. A rhizome, they argue, is a representative postmodern structure that is fluid and is subject to continual ruptures, breakages and corresponding reconstitutions. The ruptures and breakages are effectuated by the "lines of flight" which are lines that breach the structure along its boundary and flee across it thereby disenabling the former from achieving stability. Ila continually breaks and violates the moral, ethical and cultural codes of the Indian nation by rupturing its restricted territory and flees abroad adopting western ways of life. She acts as a "line of flight" that ruptures the restrictive Indian cultural domains.

<sup>4</sup>Foucault borrows the idea of "panopticon" from eighteenth-century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham. A panoptical design is one which consists of a circular structure with an "inspection house" at its centre, from which the manager or staff of the institution is able to watch the inmates, who are stationed around the perimeter. Tha'mma imagines the Indian nation as some kind of an inclusive "panopticonspace" confined within definitive territorial limits, which she can visualize through her imaginative eyes.© 2020 Global Journals



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