Mapping the Border, Mapping the Nation: Towards an Understanding of the Other in

Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*

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Space of enunciation. The thesis ends with a concluding chapter summing up the analytical discussion of a borderless world. I have interpreted this transcultural world of Tridib through my theoretical understanding of Bhabha’s Third Space (Ghosh 149) with each other. This section also elaborates the concepts of physical border and abstract nation to counter the self/other binary politics.

3.2 describes the representation of cartography of The Shadow Lines. The thesis demonstrates how Thamma’s old home in Dhaka is transformed into a non-place. Section 3.1 discusses the construction of the home/world binary and the roles of home/non-home in relation to the national culture of India in the narrative. Then the thesis demonstrates how Thamma’s old home in Dhaka is transformed into a non-home, and becomes thereby unheimlich. Section 3.2 describes the representation of cartopolitics and the practice of b/ordering and othering in the text. It also explains the self/other binary politics. Section 3.3 details the way in which Thamma’s nationality and birth-place stand “messily at odds” (Ghosh 149) with each other. This section also elaborates the concepts of physical border and abstract nation to counter the arbitrary production of borders and the construction of binaries. The last discussion chapter is 3.4 that shows the possibility of a Third Space in the text. This section is important because it is here where Tridib, one of the central characters, is found imagining a borderless world. I have interpreted this transcultural world of Tridib through my theoretical understanding of Bhabba’s Third Space of enunciation. The thesis ends with a concluding chapter summing up the analytical discussions.

Avainsanat – Keywords
The Shadow Lines, Amitav Ghosh, Border, Nation, the Other/s, Homi K. Bhabha, Third Space, Transcultura Space
1. Introduction

Amitav Ghosh’ *The Shadow Lines* is a significant text in the present postmodern and postcolonial context. As Mukherjee writes: “It is very much a text of our times when human lives spill over from one country to another, where language and loyalties cannot be contained within tidy national frontiers” (*Elusive Terrain* 181). As a postcolonial text, *The Shadow Lines* breaks free from the conventional modernist framework of the concepts such as border and nation, thereby attempting to construct a transcultural space free of any spatio-temporal constraints. The text also suggests the possibility of a ‘third space’ where the history of the colonizer and the colonized can come together and be able to negotiate identities and culture.

The novel was written in 1988, 41 years after the partition of India, but the relevance of the text is still high due to the growing interest in the theoretical understanding of colonial history, anti-colonial struggles, emergence of nationalist discourse, home/world binary, and, above all, the significance of maps and borders in postcolonial times. Ghosh discusses on one hand the traumatic history of the partition era and its aftermath, and on the other hand he points out the futility of the borderlines. The setting of the novel also refers to the hybrid geography because the story is located both in South Asia and England. However, Ghosh emphasizes more the similarities between the places than their differences, thereby challenging the displacement and dislocation of the characters.

1.1 Aims and Structure

By exploring the discourses of borders and nation, this thesis aims to provide an understanding of the Other in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*. I have selected this prominent text by Ghosh because it ensures a broad spectrum of critical readings. The important thing to mention here is
that I have attempted to read the whole text primarily from postcolonial perspective, and thus I use the thoughts of major postcolonial thinkers such as Homi K. Bhabha, Partha Chatterjee, Gloria Anzaldúa, Paul Gilroy, and so on to develop the theoretical framework and apply these theoretical insights in analyzing the text.

The thesis aims to show how the construction of the Other/s is embedded in the core ideas of border and nation. Therefore, it deals with the self/other binary from several possible angles, and where it is necessary it uses this binary to formulate a further progression of theoretical discussions. I need to clarify that as my whole understanding of Self and the Other is based on postcolonial theory, I have tried to align this understanding with the argument of the thesis. To do so, first of all I direct the theoretical discussion on borders and nations towards developing a close understanding of the construction of the Other/s, and then later apply this theoretical insight in the analytical part of my thesis.

The theoretical framework is structured as two sections: the first section deals with the border while the following one with the nation. Section 2.1 introduces the basic concept of the border. Section 2.1.1 shows how border can be an ambivalent space, and section 2.1.2 focuses on the practice of b/ordering and othering. In the section entitled “Border and Ambivalence”, the concept of Gloria Anzaldúa’s hybridized space has been used, which is further explained in the same section by using Homi K. Bhabha’s interstitiality, in-betweenness and Third Space. Section 2.1.2, “B/ordering and Othering”, is mainly based on Henk van Houtum’s idea that the Other always generates both fear and desire.

The second section of theoretical chapter is about the discourses of nations, nationalism and nationalistic discourses. Like the previous section, 2.2 begins with a general discussion on the idea of a nation, especially an examination of the Andersonian concept of “imagined communities”. Then 2.2.1 explores the relationship between maps and nations, attempting to
discover the colonial/imperial agenda behind the arbitrariness of such lines and dots as well as their overall impacts in the process of nation-making. Section 2.2.2, “The Nation as Narration/Ambivalent Nation Spaces”, is based on the theory of Bhabha. This section deals with Bhabha’s denial of nationalism because of its historical certainty; he rather considers the nation as a narrative being expressed in a double movement of performance and pedagogy. Section 2.2.3 presents a counter-argument to Bhabha’s denial of nationalism by pointing out that nationalism is important as an ideological category because it is also a form of anti-colonial resistance/movements. To formulate the argument, this section has borrowed ideas from Partha Chatterjee, who describes home/world binary as a core concept in Indian Nationalism. The last section 2.2.4 discusses the emergence of the Nationalist discourse in India. This section basically examines Nehru’s concept of ‘Bharat Mata’ and shows how home, family, kinship and rootedness are important elements in Indian national culture.

These are followed with the third chapter, the analysis of Ghosh’s text. This chapter is structured as follows: 3.1 details the home/world binary and the national culture of India in the narrative of the text, and it is based on the theoretical sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 that help build up the main body of the discussion of this section. In section 3.2, the representation of carto-politics and the practice of b/ordering and othering in the text is discussed. The section tries to explain the self/other binary politics. Section 3.3 details the way in which Thamma’s nationality and birth-place stand “messily at odds” (149) with each other. This section also elaborates the concepts of physical border and abstract nation and depicts how the characters deal with the arbitrary mapping of borders and nations. The last discussion chapter is 3.4 that shows the possibility of a Third Space in the text. This section is important because it is where Tridib, one of the central characters, is found imagining a borderless world. This transcultural world of Tridib has been interpreted through the theoretical understanding of Bhabha’s Third Space of
enunciation. Then, the thesis ends with a concluding chapter summing up the analytical discussions.

1.2 Introduction to Text and the Author

Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta in 1956. He has won the Shaitya Akademi Award for *The Shadow Lines*. Ghosh is a prolific author whose complex writings focus on personal identity, nation, border mobility, history and memory, political and communal violence, and so on. Other than *The Shadow Lines*, his major fictions are *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), *The Glass Palace* (2000), and *The Hungry Tide* (2004). Both his fictions and non-fictions tend to establish an urge for a transcultural space in the narrative. The same ambition for a borderless world appears in *The Shadow Lines*. In this text, he has wanted to probe into the crisis of home, nation, and border by examining the shared past of three places — Dhaka, Calcutta, and London. The text captures many historical events ranging from colonial to post-colonial times. For instance, the 1947 partition of India, World War II, the 1963-64 riot in Dhaka (then East Pakistan) and Calcutta — all events surface over the narrative in the form of personal memories.

In that sense, *The Shadow Lines* is a memory novel as, from its beginning till the end, it presents an unnamed narrator’s memory that re/narrates events that have taken place in three different but historically interlinked spaces. The narrator’s memory works as a driving force in the narrative because it is mainly through his memories that the readers are familiarized with the stories of Thamma, Tridib, Mayadevi, Ila, May Price, and so on.

The narrator was born in India and received his higher education from England. We learn from his memory that his uncle Tridib was born in 1932, and had been to London in 1939 with his parents. Tridib is an important figure in the narrator’s life. Hence, his death in a communal riot in Dhaka in 1964 imposes a huge silence and question mark on the psyche of the narrator.
Thamma is another central character in *The Shadow Lines* whose influence on the narrator is immense. Besides, there are other major characters such as Ila and May Price — the first being her cousin and the latter is a daughter of Mrs. Price whose father Lionel Tresawsen was a friend to Justice Chandrashekhar Datta-Chaudhuri who is Tridib’s grandfather. The relationship of the Bengali family with the English begins from the time of the British Raj. Their intimacy has grown so strong over the years that even after their death their families have continued this.

Basically, *The Shadow Lines* traces a series of events from the Second World War to the violent partition of Bengal, from the communal riot of 1963/64 to the bombings on London’s streets in 1940. The time span of the events that the narrator rummages down his memory lane ranges from the colonial to the post-colonial period. It is a story of three generations of the narrator's family who have either travelled or lived in these places in these time periods.

The narrative of the novel is non-linear, moving back and forth in time with the stories of the narrator’s grandmother Thamma and grandaunt Mayadevi, of his uncle Tridib and Robi, of his Cousin Ila and a family friend May Price. The novel opens in Calcutta in the 1960s and ends in London in 1981. The story shifts from one place to another, carrying within it the multiple stories of two families—one Bengali and one English. The spatial distance and cultural difference between the families do not matter that much; rather, the events of two different places might affect the private lives of both in the same way. Thus, Tridib’s death is as much a significant incident for the Price family as it is for the narrator’s. Such a transcultural relationship and intermixing of history, culture, and memories can subvert the possibility of boundaries altogether. According to Bhabha, this hybridizing process appears as a sort of resistance against the discourse of bordered national culture (Sharp 123).
This interdependence, irrespective of cultural and national borders, epitomizes a transcultural relationship of two families whose different socio-cultural and political background tend to interweave the spaces, though separated by distance and borders, in one single frame. It is as if the experience of the colonized and the colonizer at the crossroads of history, at the juncture of cultures where two families share the colonial and post-colonial history of the nation, carrying their identities beyond the national and cultural borderlines. The transgression can cause a creative synthesis in the process of border crossings that “defy the limits of inclusion/exclusion, creating a distinctive space of its own, a borderland culture that resists enclosure and confinement” (Soja 34).

1.3 Literature and Earlier Studies

The Shadow Lines by Ghosh is a critically acclaimed text. There are many studies on the text from the perspective of border, nation and postcolonialism. Here, I will mention only some of the major works which have helped me to understand the text from different possible critical angles. What we see is that in most of the studies on The Shadow Lines, it has become clear that the text rejects the normative foundation of Indian nationalist discourses. For example, Suvir Kaul’s article, which deals with border, nation, Thamma’s militant nationalistic spirit, Ila’s foreignness, and so on, writes: “the novel offers a radical critique of political boundaries, vaporizing the rigidities into shadow-lines” (143). So most of the studies like that of Kaul aim to understand and explain the non-normative impulses in the text.

Also, the partition of 1947, as it is a vital issue in the text, has been discussed in most of the critical studies. Keeping in line with this thought, Meenakshi Mukherjee’s “Maps and Mirrors: Co-ordinates of Meaning in The Shadow Lines” brings out the arbitrariness of maps and
borders, suggesting that mirror and maps have been used in the narrative as literary tropes in the process of meaning-making. She further shows that “maps in this novel are not [only] confined to the atlas” (260). The inclusive geography, which is covered by Tridib and the narrator’s imaginary and real travels, makes it a text of spatial and cultural multiplicity with no boundaries. Mukherjee establishes through her essay that Ghosh’s text challenges the normative functionality of mapping the border and nation by interrogating “the organizing principles of division” (267).

Other than border, nation and maps, ‘home’ is a major issue in Ghosh’s text. Sharmani Patricia Gabriel takes the perspectives of home as the major theme of her introspective essay entitled “The Heteroglossia of Home”. She connects in this essay Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia and Bhabha’s “recommendation to jettison the binarism of nationalism” (47) to Ghosh’ idea of ‘home’ in The Shadow Lines. This study is significant because it leads us to understand the Other and otherness from the perspective of home, national culture, identity, family, and kinship. Keeping in line with Gabriel’s thoughts, Shameem Black’s “Cosmopolitanism at Home: Amitav Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines” delineates the possibility of finding cosmopolitan sensibility in domestic cultures. This study also discusses the transcultural experiences of Tridib and the narrator. However, in my thesis these studies have helped me to analyze the text from the perspective of home and non-home.

Furthermore, Nadia Butt has discussed a key issue in her article, that is, transcultural spaces in The Shadow Lines. This study shows that the construction of spaces in the text is completely different in a way that it does not refer to any territorial struggles. Rather, “it serves to show the interplay between local and global influences, national and transnational reconfigurations and above all the search for community and alliances that cut across boundaries
of cultural and ethnic identity” (Butt 3). In her study, the spaces in Ghosh’s text appear as connective or conjunctive devices. I have applied this idea to develop the core points of analytical section 3.4 in my thesis.

Dora-Laskey also deals with some critical points regarding the cartographic distance and its binary politics in *The Shadow Lines*. J. E. Mallot discusses the same kind of ideas in his essay. These two studies are important because they are helpful to understand Thamma’s nationalistic spirit and ambivalent self in relation to border and national maps. From these two essays, it becomes clear that Ghosh has used borders in his text not as separators but as mirrors. Crystal Taylor takes this notion further and investigates how Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities” works in *The Shadow Lines*. However, it is worth mentioning here that my thesis shows a different approach of nation in the text. Rather, I show how Ghosh’s idea of nation, which is manifested in the narrative of the text, takes a different route from Andersonian and Nehruvian concept of nation and nationalism.

To establish my points, I have also addressed core issues in as represented in Ghosh’s other works, fictional or non-fictional, which have the same underlying message regarding home, national culture, border and identity; for instance, in the essay entitled “The Diaspora in Indian Culture”, he attempts to discuss Indian culture in a way that resonate the implied understanding of India and Indianness discussed/represented in *The Shadow Lines*:

If there is any one pattern in Indian culture in the broadest sense it is simply this: that the culture seems to be constructed around the proliferation of differences (albeit within certain parameters). To be different in a world of differences is irrevocably to belong. Thus anybody anywhere who has even the most tenuous links with India
is Indian; potentially a player within the culture. The mother country simply does not have the cultural means to cut him off. (“Diaspora” 6)

Ghosh’s emphasis on the “proliferation of differences” here clearly differs from Nehru’s all-embracing inclusions of “people like them or me” (Nehru 48-49). I have discussed this Nehruvian point in detail in my theoretical chapter 2.2.4. But what I would like to suggest here is that I have taken the message of Ghosh and applied this to analyze the text in my thesis. For example, I have kept in mind while analyzing the text that when for Ghosh “to be different in the world of differences is to belong”, for Nehru cheering up the zeal of millions of people through eradication of any difference between them was an essentiality. While Ghosh acknowledges the “world of differences” as an axiomatic universality, Nehru outlines Mother India with its territorial inclusiveness and refers to the vast geographic space beyond which there is a void. If the “vast land” (Nehru 48-49) that Nehru mentions is considered “home”, outside its periphery, then, lies “non-home”, the world that is another reality different from the interiority of home. This realization has formed the core of my analysis of Ghosh’s text in relation to border, nation and the Other.

Also, my thesis reverberates with what Ghosh has expressed in his non-fictional work, *Dancing in Cambodia and at Large in Burma*. Both reflect on the understanding of same gesture: “all boundaries are artificial: there is no such thing as a ‘natural’ nation, which has journeyed through history with its boundaries and ethnic composition intact” (100). The point that is emphasized in the text is the culture of difference and recognition of periphery. This is the key understanding, which has led me to insert Bhabha’s theory of Third Space of enunciation in my analysis. To do so, I connect Tridib’s imagined borderless space with Bhabha and
Anzaldúa’s idea of hybridized space “where different people, cultures, nations and communities communicate above the ‘shadow lines’ of social, national and territorial barriers” (Butt 4).
2. Mapping the Border, Mapping the Nation

In this section, I will explore the discourses of nation and border so that my thesis leads towards an understanding of the Other/s in the text of Amitav Ghosh. However, to understand borders and nations as contested spaces in postcolonial context is grossly challenging, because there is no single theory to outline the terms from any vantage point, and one needs to consult several theorists and several scholarly essays dealing with the issues. However, in revealing the ‘ambivalence’ of borders and nations and discussing the possibility of in-betweenness and ‘Third Space’, I have depended mainly on the thoughts of Homi K. Bhabha. Besides, while discussing nationalism and nationalist discourse, Partha Chatterjee’s ideas have helped me to formulate the arguments.

In this theoretical chapter, the first section will open with a general discussion on the border and it will gradually make the ground for some specific understanding of borders by examining the idea of ambivalent border spaces and the construction of the Other/s. On the other hand, the final section is based on the discussion of nation/s. Like the previous section, also this one begins with presenting the basic idea of a nation, and then moves on to explore specific ideas such as the ambivalent nation-space, anti-colonial nationalism, and the emergence of nationalistic discourse in India.

2.1 What is a Border?

The emergence of a border is rooted in the early notions people cherished about territoriality, which ensured control of people over their personal possessions. This place-making tendency is deeply rooted in human nature, and the way people wanted to secure their possessions from
‘others’ in ancient times has played a significant role in the formation of modern society and community. It might be an ethnocentric mindset that can explain why some particular groups or communities have always wanted to secure their own space where they could practice and entertain their own rituals and cultural heritage without any interference/interruption from ‘others’, outsiders or strangers to their beliefs and ritualistic practices. These people needed a particular sense of belonging which would not be achieved if their own lands are separated from those who are different, the ‘Others’. They knew that this marking on the lands would give them identity, and this is a kind of identity that is physical rather than a political and a cultural one because borders did not use to serve people in that way at the time. In that sense, it gives us a clear impression that the political meaning that has been added to this drawn line what we call ‘border’ is comparatively a modern concept.

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly writes that “Borders, boundaries, frontiers and borderlands are human creations that are grounded in various ethical traditions” (634). It means that humans are geographical beings who believe in b/ordering as a system and an institution that have been changed and modified with the passage of time. Here, the term b/ordering has been borrowed from Schimanski and Wolfe who define it as a process of inclusion/exclusion dynamic, thereby denoting a fixed line of demarcation (149). However, while the border was only a geographical factor in the early stage, today its dynamics are so pervasive that its dissolution is an impossibility because its constructions are no longer limited to geographical issues only; rather, it has spread out to every sphere ranging from our individual, social, political, and cultural life to aesthetic and literary aspects.

Whatever the reason behind the construction of borders, it is evident that the practice of bordering is not at all a natural phenomenon. Earlier there was a purpose behind the creation of
borders, and that purpose was very straightforward, that is, to ensure control and dominance of cities. But today the concept of borders is more abstract and metaphorical in comparison. The border is viewed as a social construct which has surpassed all its previous meanings and eventually become a central discourse of power and politics. Even though borders were often seen as simple barriers and dividers of space, today these are certainly not the only roles that borders play. Rather, borders have become ambivalent in their functions. The duality of borders breaks down the established myth which tells that most “international borders have been purposely constructed and represented to appear as though they derive from some higher logic” (Diener and Hagen 12). Thus, the ambivalence in borders has added a new dimension to the understanding of borders in the current globalized world.

2.1.1 Border and Ambivalence

Johan Schimanski writes: “a border is first and foremost a form of barrier which may be crossed” (42). According to him, “the border is split when crossed. Its status as a barrier is compromised; it reveals itself as a passage. The border is both affirmed and denied” (45). This paradoxical nature of borders brings a new dimension to the understanding of borders in a political and cultural world. By affirmation and denial carried out simultaneously, the border becomes an ambivalent space. The paradoxical nature of borders is interesting because on the one hand it tends to decline ‘otherness’ while on the other hand it re/invents the ‘Others’ both within and across. Affirmation and denial, thus, are endless in the functions of b/ordering.

Surprisingly, the same ambivalence works for those crossing the border because there is no certain knowledge of whether the border has been crossed or not. It means that borders are
not fixed in one space; rather, they are constantly in motion. Konrad points out this mobility in such dichotomous borderlines:

Borders are born in dichotomies and fashioned in dialectics, and as constructs evolved from opposing forces, these dichotomies and dialectics produce energy which is translated into motion between separated entities. Accordingly, borders, viewed either as object or process, are born in motion, conduct motion and create motion. (1)

What Konrad emphasizes is the mobility which discards the fixity and rigidity attributed to the concept of borders. “Motion between separated entities” gives multipolarity to borders, thereby challenging the concept of fixity and unipolarity which emerges from the images and constructs that are “still engaged and evolved by the visible, often linear, and generally institutionalized lines, fences and walls that are the dominant manifestations of borders, the agencies and processes that permeate borders, and the statist positions that create them” (Konrad 1). In that sense, it can be said that this is the visibility of border/lines or fences across different states or nations, the ultimate manufacturers of the notion of fixed cultural identity and rigidity of border spaces. The mobility of borders, therefore, makes a counterpoint to this dominant concept of borders.

Today a border is not something that is fixed at one place. The multipolarity of borders is manifested through transnational flows and increasing networks across borders. This is the consequence of the globalized reality, and because of these flows and networks, one important change is happening, that is, the linear space-time and history that has constructed the world’s political and cultural organization on the basis of fixity and rigidity is called into question. Brambilla points out that:
The modernistic binary logic of essentialisms and forms of dualisms (centre/periphery, internal/external, inside/outside) is also replaced with a novel idea of ‘dislocated space’, that is, [...] a network constituted by a set of points crisscrossed by different kinds of flows. (“Borders Still Exist” 74)

This ‘dislocated space’ idea stands in opposition to the modernistic concept of a fixed area identified by naturalized and territorial borderlines which separate, protect, and exclude. According to Bhabha, such modernistic stance cannot grasp the multipolar applications of borders, thereby giving up considering identity and sovereignty as a complex process characterized by mobility (Location 19). From that perspective, Bhabha highlights transnational migration and flows as examples of contemporary globalized reality which the modernistic assumptions do not take into consideration due to its inadequacy in conceptualizing the plurality of culture, gender, class, and race. The modernistic assumption of borders, rather, relies on the establishment of binary representations of social antagonism. The plurality is not entertained in such compulsory binary fetishism; hence, the ambivalence of space is an important issue that can destabilize the unipolar functionality of borders by disrupting the normative binary establishment. In that case, the dualistic essentialism is replaced with an idea of dislocation and mobility.

The idea that “borders [only] create order” (Newman 1) is no longer a valid point when such paradoxical structures of borders evolve into “an expression of culture and territory multipolarity, generating a transnational flow of narrations and images” (Brambilla, “Borders Still Exist” 74). The narrative in which borders are seen as a systemic builder of the world mosaic is challenged by the plurality of culture, gender, class, and race being mobilized across them. However, the idea of ordering the world is not at all over yet; rather, its agency is
manifested in the “discursive differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Brambilla, “Borders Still Exist” 75). The constant division into us/them by the borders also represents “a repertoire of conflictual positions” (Bhabha, “Difference” 204). On the one hand, they tend to forge a cohesion in order to delimit territorial ambiguities and ambivalent identities, while on the other hand they produce new differences in space and identity. The ambivalence transforms the authorial concept of fixity into an “uneven, divided, incomplete, and therefore potentially resistant” (Easthope 341).

Such conflictual positions of a border space might generate a scope for multiple identities and cultures to meet and get transformed into new differences. Gloria Anzaldúa broadens the aspect of this ‘hybridized space’ further, when she observes that it is not always the case that these new transformed spaces will be at the margin or a peripheral zone. This is neither the literal bordered space where the borderlands exist; rather, this space moves and it might be anywhere where the two groups with separate ethnic or racial identities might likely encounter. Anzaldúa says that

[...] the borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. (preface, n.p.)

This productive space functions like a melting pot where cultural exchanges are always taking places. It is the same space which Bhabha, in The Location of Culture, describes as emerging from “in-between the designations of identity” and claims that “this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Location 4). The hierarchical chain of cultural identities breaks down in such liminality of borders. This hybridity which is created in the space,
then, brings out a new sense of identity in the meaning of the political function of borders and makes the rigidity of borders a fluid phenomenon.

As mentioned earlier, this interstitial passage opens up the possibility of a ‘Third Space’, a combined form of deferral and possibility suggesting that “a culture’s difference is never simple and static but ambivalent, changing, and always open to further possible interpretation” (Ashcroft et al. 53). This is the space of hybridity where cultural meanings and identities operate dialogically, which means that their ideological and definitive construction is dependent on other’s meanings and identities. The dialogical relationship is what makes this space, taking cue from Bakhtin’s concept, “not only double-voiced and double-accented […] but also double-languaged” (“Discourse” 360). As a result, the concept of purity and the originality of cultures is an invalid option in such hybridized space. This hybrid strategy or discourse basically creates a state of negotiation which destabilizes the power structures and decenters the authority. In such negotiation the possibility of assimilation or collaboration is, therefore, completely disrupted as much as the representation of binary oppositions is collapsed.

It is the ‘in-between’ space where culture finds its meaning. Bhabha calls it the ‘Third Space of enunciation’ (37) because it is the ground for the construction of all cultural systems and structures. As the space becomes contradictory and ambivalent, there is no room for a hierarchical ‘purity’ of cultures. This is also true for cultural identity. According to Bhabha, if we can recognize the ambivalent space of cultural identity, we might rule out a priori exoticism of multiculturalism that contains cultural diversity, and instead we can celebrate cultural difference which operates within hybridity (Ashcroft et al. 53). Bhabha makes a clear distinction between cultural diversity and cultural difference by claiming that they are two distinct ways of representing culture, but for their production of meaning to disseminate, they always require a ‘Third Space’ (Ashcroft et al. 53).
2.1.2 B/ordering and Othering

The earlier section on the paradoxicality of borders resonates with Henk van Houtum’s words in which he describes the border as being Janus faced. Like the Roman God Janus, the border has two faces, representing the world inside and the world outside. A centripetal and a centrifugal appearance — two faces which represent fear and trust. The inward face is full of trust whereas the outward face is full of fear, and it is the fear of the unknown or of knowing the unknown, which tends to define the border at this stage as uncanny (van Houtum 59).

The idea of an uncanny border reminds us of the unknown Other on the other side, that is, the world outside. From this perspective, it can be deduced that there is a fear of ‘Other/s’ behind the basic construction of a border, and this fear of the unknown and knowing/confronting the ‘Other’ is what motivates its construction. It is such a fear which generates a desire through self-repression. As Henk van Houtum explains:

The desire to escape from one’s home, one’s self, to de-appropriate one’s home and one’s self, is of all ages and has many shapes. The most well-known is of course holiday, vacation, that expresses a desire to stay and be home away from home in the land of the other for a few weeks, to be a stranger oneself for a few weeks. Some people wish to be a stranger longer and buy a second home in the land or the place of the other. Others decide to migrate forever and to exchange one’s own house and home for the house and home in the land of the other. Whether with that the desire to be a stranger sometimes, to long for the other side stops, remains dubious. (59)

From that perspective, the border represents a reflection of a desire to come to terms with the uncanny (unheimlich). If the existence of a border comes up as a fabricated myth, then the
longing to cross the border resembles the longing to end up somewhere else beyond that familiar world constructed by the border. The other side of the border, therefore, always emanates a space of fear and desire.

This ambiguity always already rests on the borderlines. In addition, the attempt at crossing the border without knowing what exists on the other side unconsciously re/invents the mirror image of the self through bordering. This discovery of a mirror image on the other side of the reality proves the fact that the border is not only a protective tool under which one can take refuge only; rather, it might also be an opening to another world, the world which is always the ‘Other’, the uncanny. Being a kind of Unheimlich, the ‘Other’ gives a feeling of lost identity and non-home; it produces a desire and fear to become a complete stranger with no control and power over the own space. Through such feeling, it becomes a sort of divided space where the feeling of unity is lost at one point. This is how the ‘Other’ emerges as an existential fear, producing a void in oneself, the void which pervades the existence of the self. In a word, it is a fear of the missing half of own self.

In this sense, ‘unheimlich’ is actually a feeling containing a sense of hatred and enmity for the ‘Other/s’ on the other side of the borders. To stop such fear, sometimes new borders are produced and sometimes the old borders are reaffirmed. It is like closing or opening the borders only to confirm the security and sovereignty of the own space and identity, but the ‘Other’ remains always unknown, stranger and sometimes a ‘barbarian’ who must be fenced off for the purpose of national security.

However, the irony is that borders are never shut down completely because borders are a perennial phenomenon. They are everywhere, embedded in the system and structured like a language, as if patterned like Lacan’s unconscious. The ‘Other/s’ that we are afraid of, and that
we want to term as ‘barbarians’, ‘uncivilized’, or ‘different’ are essential for the construction of our own identity and order. Therefore, borders cannot be sealed off even if someone wants it to occur permanently. It is also true that even if the border is closed, the fear for the ‘Other’ is never gone; rather, the ‘Other’ becomes

[…] a fantasy, a ghost, a monster, an invader, an illusion reigned by distrust. Not the forest outside is fearful, but the stories that is told about it. It is the border of the forest that as an entrance to another world – a world of the darkness, the chaos, the wild, the barbaric – is cultivated and reproduced by the stories about it. (van Houtum 58)

If the construction of our own identity is contingent upon the signification of ‘Other’, then the essential binary opposition is meaningless at this point. The normative hierarchy built in such a ‘we’/‘they’ or ‘self’/‘other’ binary can no longer work out the moment when the myth of the ‘Other’ is realized. But the re/production of the ‘Other’ continues, as the stories about “the forest” (van Houtum 58) are instilled into the process of b/ordering. As the ‘self’ takes its meaning from the ‘Other’, there is no superior or inferior position between them. The ‘Other’ is as much fabricated as the ‘self’ is, and the uncanny representation of the ‘Other’ comes directly from the desire and fear discussed above. Perhaps, the reasons we are entrapped into such desire and fear might be comfort, security/sovereignty and freedom— the three essential products resulting from the process of bordering.

The above discussion makes clear that borders are, indeed, a combination of structures which not only define what is known and familiar but also introduce a systemic process whereby “the practices of ordering and the practices of othering” (Brambilla, “Borders: Paradoxical” 585) takes place. This systemic process marks a shift from border to bordering. Henk van Houtum
and van Naerssen give an illuminating explanation in this regard: “semantically, the word ‘borders’ unjustly assumes that places are fixed in space and time, and should rather be understood in terms of bordering” (126). This processual shift from border to bordering puts emphasis on the epistemology of borders rather than as empirical manifestations. It means that the empirical observation of physical borders as stable and fixed entities undergoes an epistemological transformation, thereby being understood as both institutions and a symbolic process.

However, the process of b/ordering emerges as a creative space that works as a contact zone playing a vital role “in encouraging the multiple, complex interplay between political and territorial, as well as cultural and identitarian processes” (Brambilla, “Borders Still Exist” 76). In that case, identity and borders can build up a symbiotic relationship which depends on the inclusion-exclusion dynamic. This relationship here functions paradoxically because, on the one hand, borders re/invent the identity whereas, on the other hand, the same identity is altered. It is the same border that does both — othering and ordering. The process of ordering means the creation of ‘we’ and ‘they’, the differentiation between different constructed images through the spatial strategy of demarcation. In that case, the border becomes the space of “identities and alterities [which] are continuously invented and re-invented”, thereby being paradoxical structures “that, created in order to separate, rejecting the very idea of otherness, are at the same time the very device through which the others are continuously invented” (Brambilla, “Borders: Paradoxical” 584).

From that perspective, borders represent a complex “interplay between” “the practice of ordering and the practice of othering” (Brambilla, “Borders: Paradoxical” 584). All inter/national boundaries work in the same dialogical manner. It is like a complex unity in the
multipolar functionalities of the borders. However, this paradoxical feature of borders is visible from both sides. The US-Mexico border, in this case, would be a good example. After the implementation of the NAFTA agreement in 1994, the delimiting strategy of the USA is a more visible option today. It is really noticeable that how the same border is functioning for two completely different purposes at the same time. How the order is being established on one side of the border in exchange of othering the opposite side. This agreement is also an example of current imperialist agenda of globalization which ensures the maximum profit for the capitalist powerful nation/s. Arxer clarifies this issue:

Under NAFTA, trade tariffs between Mexico, the United States, and Canada have been eliminated, which has made North American borders more open to the free flow of goods, services, and capital. But while border regions are more porous and facilitate the movement of capital, NAFTA does not offer similar terms for the free passage of people. That is, a proposal is not present for reducing the continued reinforcement of the U.S-Mexico border. (181)

This tendency “where goods and services can move more freely but where borders intrude on the everyday lives of groups of people” (Sadowski-Smith 1) places national security and the practice of ordering at the forefront. Through such a duality/ambiguity in the functionality of borders emerges the possibility of nationalist political identities “which are represented as depending on the construction of boundaries with the Other” (Newman and Passi 188). On the basis of this argument, it is clear that the nationalist political identities are tied to the practice of ordering and the practice of othering.
2.1.3 Summary

To sum up, a border is an ambivalent space which cannot be identified with the concept of fixity and rigidity. Rather, borders, according to Konrad, conduct and create motion. This mobility gives the border a multipolar functionality. For this reason, a borderland can become a place of multiple identities and cultural exchanges. Bhabha and Anzaldúa see such borderlands as a cultural melting pot. This hybridizing space opens up the possibility of an interstitial passage which rules out the possibility of any binary fetishism. As a result, an ambivalent border space is an important phenomenon as it discards the construction of self/other binary; the modernistic binary essentialisms such as center/periphery or inclusion/exclusion are completely disrupted by the ambivalent border space. Rather, what it produces instead is a possibility of the “Third space of enunciation” which celebrates the cultural difference.

However, the construction of the Other is always already behind the basic construction of a borderline. For instance, if van Houtum’s idea is taken into account, we see that the Other always creates both a fear and a desire. In that case, borders function like a Janus-faced Roman god, thereby being a paradoxical entity because it can both create and alter the identity. Through the inclusion/exclusion dynamic, the border constantly re/invents the Other. This is how the process of othering and ordering happens. But what is important is that the identity of “self” is always dependent on the identity of the “Other”, and when the myth of the Other is realized, then the hierarchical position between the self/other binary can be obfuscated. As this theoretical observation will help us to understand the discourses of a nation as well, I am going to explore the same binary concept and its dissemination in the idea of a nation in the next section.
2.2 What is a Nation?

Like borders, nations are socio-political and geographical constructs. They are geographical because there are around 5,000-8,000 nations in the current world, which, according to Bernard Nietschmann, have gradually developed through steady relationships with the local environment (225). Geography has played a vital role in constructing these diverse nations around the world. Ernest Renan, in his seminal essay “What is Nation”, explains this clearly:

Geography, or what are known as natural frontiers, undoubtedly plays a considerable part in the division of nations. Geography is one of the crucial factors in history. Rivers have led races on; mountains have brought them to a halt. The former have favoured movement in history, whereas the latter have restricted it. (18)

Other than being called geographical, the nation is often synonymous with the state. In Timothy Brennan’s words, nations refer “both to the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous— the ‘natio’— a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging” (45). The core of the nation is, therefore, based on the sense of collectivity and belonging, a sense of community shared imaginatively by all kinds of people, and these feelings of community lay the emotive structures of the ‘state’, the socio-political tool functioning as a hinge to the nation. Yet we have to remember that the identity produced by territorial sovereignty is not merely geographical; rather, it is bound up with the construction of ‘Other/s’ which functions as one of the fundamental nationalist representations.

The construction of otherness is so vital that by this category we can even interpret the colonial discourse of difference which has given birth to the concept of the civilized Occident vs. the savage Orient binary. We must know that all definitions of identity are dependent on something else for their own construction. In the same way it is dependent on the perceived
‘Other/s’ that ultimately construct the foundation of our concept of the ‘self’. Therefore, when some imaginative borders — which become self-evident through othering and ordering — are drawn between nations, the borders in-between the nations emerge as the distinction lines between the ‘self’ and the ‘Other’. Here, what I mean by the ‘self’ is the nation and its people whereas the ‘Other’ means the outsiders beyond the borders, a category which is always already different. Here, the Other is never selfed; thus, the borders’ attempt to self the Other is always a failure which creates the emotive foundations for a nation to emerge.

However, there are two established perspectives regarding the concept of the nation: one is called the essentialist view and the other is the constructivist approach. The former claims that the nation is an organic element in a society and it is created inevitably because the fate of the world lies in its inescapable divisiveness. On the other hand, the latter, that is, the constructivist view of the nation argues that the nation is a fabrication, a complete myth made by the people (Herb 14). Like the borders, the nation is a fabricated truth, based on the foundations of myth. Thus, the nations are basically the ‘imagined communities’, as Benedict Anderson suggests. By ‘imagined communities’, Anderson means that the modern nation is formed due to people’s ability to think simultaneously of themselves as the members of one single community, perceived right there and right now in their imagination (Huddart 71). The palpability of such singular community is possible, according to Anderson, because it is a matter of simultaneity which is horizontal and quite a rational process (Huddart 71). Yet, this simultaneity of modern people contrasts the non-rational divine simultaneity that is based on the monarchical structures at the ancient period.

For Anderson, the nation as an idea has successfully evolved because of the modern printing culture. He has suggested that realistic novels and newspapers have largely contributed
to the birth of the concept of modern nation (Anderson 25). It is true that the novel form has always been an important catalyst of modern European nations because it is through the structures and plots of the novels that the imagination of the nation can manifest itself. On the other side, the newspaper is another major source for the construction of a nation. The newspaper symbolizes a literal simultaneity by enabling millions of people reading the same element in the same language. It is quite surprising that “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives an image of their communion” (Anderson 6). Space and time shrink into singularity for the readers, allowing them to take refuge imaginatively under one calendrical event thinking that all belong to the same singular spatio-temporal reality.

Anderson describes this calendrical event as one of the vital elements: “the idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history” (26). Anderson’s phrase of ‘homogeneous, empty time’, which has been borrowed from the German critic Walter Benjamin, suggests that the nation’s journey through history appears as smooth and unimpeded. This means that the nation is a self-identical phenomenon able to stand strong, calm and quite even in time of war; the nation’s solidity is steady so that any disjunction or dislocation cannot break its strength. In that sense, nation’s durability is undoubtedly resting on its confidence even under pressure, as suggested by Anderson (Huddart 71).
2.2.1 Maps and Nation

As Ernest Gellner points out in his book *Nations and Nationalism*, “[n]ations are not inscribed into the nature of things” (49). It means that the nation is not a natural thing; rather, it is a concept which is subject to change, and like buildings they can grow up and fall down. According to this theory, we see that many nations have been lost forever while many more are being born.

However, since nations emerge from the territorial border, the manifestation of nations, thereby, happens through the maps, which are arbitrary products/remnants of the history and time of colonization. McLeod’s words are illuminating in this regard:

> It is almost second nature these days to map the world as a collective of different nations, each separated from the other by a border. But borders between nations do not happen by accident. They are constructed, crossed, defended and (in too many tragic cases) bloodily contested by warring groups of people. (56)

The maps are combinations of lines and dots on the paper indicating the differences around the world and the borders that have created numerous nations. Hence, we need to understand the significance of carto-politics in nation-making. It is one kind of cartographic separation that takes place by the arbitrary lines and dots on the maps. The whole mapping process is so arbitrary that:

> [...] it consciously silences what is not represented and it dehumanizes the landscape. The signifier of the map is not the world as we know it, the signified, as philosopher Foucault already argued discussing the work of the surrealist painter René Magritte (ceci n’est pas une pipe). The map of a border is sur-real, it is not a border. What a map of a border creates is a gap, a difference. Representing is making a difference. It is an image of reality, a truth outside truth
itself. The border represented on a map colonizes the free and constantly ontologically reinterpreted space that truth necessarily is. The border demarcates, represents and communicates truth, but it is thereby not truth itself. The consequence is that a border, just like the map of it, is inescapably a fabricated truth. (van Houtum 52)

Thus the whole world can be categorized as a world divided into nations constructed by the borders drawn on the maps. But it should be realized that this construction is not an accidental event; rather, we see that a lot of people sacrifice their lives for nations. Everyone in the nation believes in maps, the fabricated narrative of colonizers. As Graham Huggan writes:

The exemplary role of cartography in the demonstration of colonial discursive practices can be identified in a series of key rhetorical strategies implemented in the production of the map, such as the reinscription, enclosure and hierarchization of space, which provide an analogue for the acquisition, management and reinforcement of colonial power. (21)

Thus, the practice of mapping the landscapes/borders is found rooted into the colonial expression of Western colonial powers that established controls over the colonized by manufacturing public perception regarding territorial ownerships. The purpose of maps was to, in J. B. Harley’s words, bring the “space discipline” (“Maps” 285), which would provide the colonizer the power to control the colonized lands:

[Maps] have been the weapons of imperialism. Insofar as maps were used in colonial promotion, and lands claimed on paper before they were effectively occupied, maps anticipated empire. [...] Maps were used to legitimise the reality of conquest. They helped create myths which would assist in the maintenance of
the territorial status quo. As communicators of an imperial message, they have been used as an aggressive complement to the rhetoric of speeches, newspapers, and written texts, or to the histories and popular songs extolling the virtues of empire. (‘‘Maps’’ 282)

It means that the maps have been used to manufacture colonial subjectivities. The meaning of empire is embedded in a way within the meaning of maps that the goals of map-making and imperialism are the same.

What do these lines and dots might mean then? They are not some simple landscapes or geographical re/arrangements, not even is the making of a nation a matter of child’s play; it rather evokes an ideology charged with a strong sense of collectivity. In this regard, Paul Gilroy’s words are exemplary. He says that nations are constructed through elaborate cultural, ideological and political processes which culminate in [the individual’s] feeling of connectedness to other national subjects and in the idea of a national interest that transcends the supposedly petty divisions of class, region, dialect or caste. (49)

The “feeling of connectedness to other national subjects” is what has united people to stand against all forms of colonial authority in the past, thereby being one of the primary sources of many anti-colonial movements, central to this feeling is the fact that this is why nation and nationalism were effective as a counter-discourse to European colonializations.

But the mutual collectivity and sense of belonging, whatever we call them, are not self-performing; rather, they basically manifest through the “performance of traditions, narratives, rituals and symbols which stimulate an individual’s sense of being a member of a particular national collective” (McLeod 57). These are the national traditions projected in the repetitive performances of various symbols or icons. In that case, nation and nationalism are performative
apparatuses which connect the nation’s people in such construction of the ‘myth of the nation’. Therefore, all nations stand firmly on homogenizing tendency resulting from the attempt to manufacture and sustain mutual connectedness among the people.

What is important is that nations require some symbols or icons to fall back on. These national symbols or icons project the glorious history of the nation, the past that must be commemorated. These are vital elements that all nations participate as a collective national body in front of them. This is a celebration of the nation’s historicity connecting the past with the present. According to Arjun Appadurai, items such as flags, stamps, and airlines are the simple composition of “a system of semiotic recognition and communication” (25). They are the physical representations of the abstract nation, and so when any violation, such as disrespecting or burning the flag, happens to these concrete symbolic codes of the nation, it means a direct insult to the nation or nation-state. It is such a serious matter that any incident of this sort might provoke the whole nation. A lot of riots in pre/post-colonial India took place at different times, and the partition history records many national and anti-colonial movements which were results of such provocations. In a word, the symbols — maps, flags, national anthem, national leaders — all are powerful apparatus that can bring/gather the whole national body into one space, and that is the power lying in the concept of ‘nation’ and its idiosyncratic icons.

2.2.2 The Nation as Narration/Ambivalent Nation-Space

According to Bhabha, every nation has its own narratives (“Nation” 1). The nation is an important matter for postcolonial writers because it is nation and nationalism which have formed stable identities for people including the minority groups in the society. However, Bhabha rejects the idea of stable/fixed national identity because for him, the nation as a narration should be open where the identity is formed through constant negotiation. Hence, a community is built
up not because someone is gay or black; rather, it is created through different negotiations (Bhabha et al. 19). Thus, there is no room for fixity and stable national identity even though such national form is associated with many anti-colonial struggles in the past.

The national narrative gives an impression of coherence and consistency, but the surprising thing about this narrative is that when it tends to fix the identity of the people, it delimits its scope to a single nationality. The identity is fallen, therefore, reductive in that case. Nationality, though it seems fixed and well-defined at the very beginning, ultimately denies the multipolar options of narrative in the formation of identity. The fluidity of the national narrative makes nationality a displaced category, which is continually negotiating with other identities such as sexuality, ethnicity, class, and so on. This negotiation through displacement is an endless process, thereby ruling out the fixity and stableness of any national identity.

Understanding the uncanniness of culture leads us to understanding nations and cultural rights as well. Like colonial discourse, culture and national identity are split in themselves, the ambivalent positions of both are, therefore, emerging as unhomely (Huddart 56). On the one hand, nation is homely, suggesting a stable and fixed space: the people who belong to this space make the space meaningful. The people are those who create the narrative of continuity while trying to understand what it is meant by the nation. On the other hand, the national identity that emanates through such fixity is found unhomely because it is not any self-evident category; rather, national identity is always dependent on other identities such as class, race, gender, and so on. It is dependent on ‘Others’ for its own meaning to make sense or for its own definitive and ideological construction. Here, ‘Others’ are the different category who do not belong to the same national identity. Since national identity is ambivalent in itself, the concept of coherence
and consistency, thus, at this point do not work out. Rather, what national identity becomes at the end is a narrative of displacement which negotiates with other cultures.

Bhabha’s essay “DissemiNation” “essentially argues that nations do not have to be conceived in historicist terms, and this is the central point to grasp because for Bhabha nations are forms of narration” (Huddart 74):

The linear equivalence of event and idea that historicism proposes, most commonly signifies a people, a nation, or a national culture as an empirical sociological category or a holistic cultural entity. However, the narrative and psychological force that nationness brings to bear on cultural production and political projection is the effect of the ambivalence of the ‘nation’ as a narrative strategy. (Location 140)

The ambivalence of this nationness is all about temporality than about historicity because the present of the nation is actually located into the “rhetorical figures of a national past” (Bhabha, Location 142). According to Bhabha, nation is a kind of double movement in between “pedagogy and performance, of certainties and anxieties, which always go together” (Huddart 73). Here, performativity is one kind of restatement of the pedagogy, because when pedagogy tells us who we are as a nation, the performativity declines it by saying who we are not. This means that we can find the pedagogy in the performativity, and thereby the distinction between them is blurred. In this sense, the polarity between them is generating an endless hybridity that must be located in ‘in-between’. Therefore, for Bhabha, “the space of the modern nation-people is never simply horizontal” (Location 141), thereby dismissing the concept of nationalism, particularly its historical certainty.
2.2.3 Anti-Colonial Nationalism and Home/World Binary

Bhabha’s dismissal of nationalism has not been accepted by many other postcolonial thinkers because nationalism is still seen as a strong expression of anti-colonial movements. However, it is true that in the modern postcolonial nation-states, nationalism is currently emerging as a new problem, a reason of conflicting and violent ethnic politics. What in the 1950s and 1960s was a great force of anti-colonial struggles and history in Asia and Africa has today become a threatening issue for global politics. Partha Chatterjee writes:

[...] nationalism is now viewed as a dark, elemental, unpredictable force of primordial nature threatening the orderly calm of civilized life. What had once been successfully relegated to the outer peripheries of the earth is now seen picking its way back toward Europe, through the long forgotten provinces of Habsburg, the czarist, and the Ottoman empires. Like drugs, terrorism and illegal immigration, it is one more product of the Third World that the West dislikes but is powerless to prohibit. (4)

Even though Europe now considers nationalism as a problematic product of the Third World, the concept of nationalism has been manufactured and imported to the colonies by the West. Hence, all categories of nationalisms — be they bad or good — originated from the political history of Europe.

Partha Chatterjee argues that if nation is something which is ‘imagined into existence’, the pre-established European models of nationalism, then, tend to rob of the power of imagination from Africa, Asia and India in constructing their own nations. In Chatterjee’s words,
History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial script of enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imagination must remain forever colonized. (5)

The modern West has prepared the script of nation and nationalism, and this attempt is another form of colonizing the mind. For example, if we read the history of anti-colonial nationalism of India, we see that it is mostly based on differences rather than sameness, as we see in every form of nationalism in the West. But in this case, when India’s nationalistic spirit is interpreted from the perspective of the modern West, the spiritual domain of the latter remains ‘forever colonized’. We have to understand that the reason why the Indian anti-colonial movement is different is because its history is not only political but it also has its own spiritual domain. This divide in the nationalistic spirit of India is what has made it different from the Western concept of anti-colonial nationalism.

Chatterjee demarcates the two domains as material and spiritual where the material is the outside and the spiritual is the home/inside. From that perspective, it might also be seen as the combination of home and the world. The material domain is where the West can dominate because it represents the outside knowledge starting from science and technology, state craft, and so on; yet, the spiritual domain, that is, home/inside, is where the East is superior. Chatterjee takes the distinction further. He writes that

The world is the external, the domain of the material; the home represents one’s inner spiritual self, one’s true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the
pursuit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world — and woman is its representation. (120)

This is the representation of ‘ghar’ (home) and ‘bahir’ (world) which characterizes the type of Indian nationalism and its concomitant features. This means that the Indian national culture is completely distinct from the Western model and that it pre-exists even before the colonization era. As a result, the spiritual domain is a unique model in terms of national cultures, and thereby being able to decolonize itself by opposing the colonial authority and its power.

### 2.2.4 Emergence of Nationalist Discourse in India

In normative nationalist discourse in India, home and family are assigned an important role to play. They are regarded as two cultural signifiers deeply connected to one’s national identity. However, this nationalistic discourse tends to be problematic when it tries to locate both (home and family) on the basis of fixity, rootedness, and stasis. The tendency as such, both practical and theoretical, might arise from the rhetoric of homogeneity and geo-cultural rootedness in the nationalist forum since pre-partition times. Thus, the definition of nationhood that the anti-colonial nationalists in India wanted to establish from then on has always predicated on singularity, where cultural complexities and multiplicities have been overlooked and sometimes considered (though not vocally) as inimical to its sustainability.

Since the 1940s when the anti-colonial sentiment is rife in people in India, “temptations for a clear, singular definition of nationhood, for the apparent neatness of authoritarian politics,
for the clarities of a statist or pure market economy, for unambiguous alliances with other states” (Khilnani 8) have been enunciated over and over again in the triumphant words of the adherents of Indian nationalism. At the emergence of a nationalist view of this sort among the masses, the nationalist leader Jawaharlal Nehru once delivered a speech to peasants. The speech was important for two reasons: i) because it was delivered before the independence of India, and ii) because in this speech, he attempts to clarify what ‘Bharat Mata’ (Mother India) means. At first he asked from the peasants what ‘Bharat Mata’ means, and in response to the silence of the peasants, he then clarifies his view that later constructs the definitive foundation of Indian nationalism:

I would endeavour to…explain that India was all this that they had thought, but it was so much more. The mountains and the rivers of India, and the forests and the broad fields, which gave us food, were all dear to us, but what contained ultimately were the people of India, people like them or me who were spread all over this vast land. Bharat Mata, Mother India, was essentially these millions of people…as this idea soaked into their brains, their eyes would light up as if they made a great discovery. (Nehru 48-49)

His speech is significant if the genesis of the all-inclusive nationalism of India is to be concerned with. When he included all people in the definition, he had to reduce the millions of people into one single group without acknowledging the (voices of) prevailing caste/class distinctions between them. To establish an all-inclusive concept of a nationhood, Nehru has to cut off the thought of caste/class distinctions from the nationalist model he has devised within his mind. What he wanted to prove through his speech is the inclusive capacity of Mother India. Hence,
his view of a nation is a homogenous project where unification of “people like them or me” strengthens/supports the uniqueness the idea of Mother India upholds.

Also, imagining a society on the basis of the sameness, exhibited in such political rhetoric as that of Nehru, testifies to Benedict Anderson’s claim that every nation in Europe and elsewhere in the world is “imagined into existence”. However, this imagined community, the Indian nation that Nehru and other nationalist leaders of India had dreamt “over the past generation”, was felt to be trapped in “the processes through which national identities have been moulded out of the pressures and opportunities of power, often by active gerrymandering of the boundaries of individual and collective selves” (Khilnani 29). It appears that the reality of the rupture is ironically drawn by imagining such an unambiguous nation that in resisting the colonial discourse has inadvertently produced a discourse of power and division within itself.

The nationalist agenda that Nehru preached at the time might be reductive as to social stratification and historical reality, but its tentative emotional fallacy could easily glide into the nationalist spirit later. It might be the hope of a homogenous society beneath that nationalist enthusiasm in a later period could bring freedom of India, but in exchange of that freedom the whole nation has to experience the inescapable erection of borders functioning to secure the sameness within and disperse the differences beyond. Sharmani Patricia Gabriel’s comment on this historical incident is worth mentioning in this context:

The dynamics of otherness and difference involved in the formation of national identity acquires a charged significance in the South Asian context where the moment of the creation of the Indian state at Partition also heralded the formation of Pakistan. (44)
As a result, this demarcating narrative of nationalism, popular in the 1950s and 1960s and regarded as an effective device of the anti-colonial struggle, has today been alarmingly relegated to celebratory unifying tendency of ethnic politics, as Partha Chatterjee writes:

> By the 1970s, nationalism had become a matter of ethnic politics, the reason why people in the Third World killed each other—sometimes in wars between regular armies, sometimes, more distressingly, in cruel and protracted civil wars, and increasingly, it seemed, by technologically sophisticated and virtually unstoppable acts of terrorism. (3)

Apart from nationalism “being relegated to the domain of the particular histories of this or that colonial empire” (Chatterjee 3), from the time of its genesis in the history of colonial India, dependence on homogeneity and modernist enthusiasm to disregard/keep out the Other/s in a given society might cause nationalism’s inevitable reduction into a form of ethnic politics, that is, a degradation to “postcolonial misery” from a vigorous “anticolonial resistance” as suggested by Chatterjee (5).

### 2.2.5 Summary

To conclude, I provide an overview of the ideas discussed above. For instance, the concept of “imagined communities” in section 2.2 leads us to understanding the emergence of a modern nation. Imagination plays a vital role in constructing the sense of belonging among the national subjects. But without even imagining the existence of a nation, one can find it being manifested through lines and dots on the maps. It means that carto-politics plays an important role in making
a nation. In that case, a nation seems a divisive phenomenon, constantly separating the self from the Other.

However, Bhabha does not see nation in such a physical form; rather, he considers a nation as a narrative which performs through constant negotiations. As a result, the national identity is not a stable and fixed concept for Bhabha since for its own construction one’s national identity has to negotiate with other identities such as race, class, gender, etc. But Bhabha denies nationalism because of its claim for historical certainty. He rather tries to show that national identity is unstable in a double movement between pedagogy and performance because these two categories are always opposing each other. Since our national identity is not fixed, for Bhabha the question of nationalism is not at all valid at this point.

Partha Chatterjee presents a counter-argument to Bhabha’s denial of nationalism by pointing out that nationalism is a particular form of anti-colonial resistance/movements. To do so, he showed that how European nationalism is completely different from Indian nationalism. The latter is divided into two domains: one physical, the other spiritual. Chatterjee claims that the physical domain has been borrowed from the West, but it is the spiritual domain of the nationalistic spirit of the East which has not been colonized ever (6). This binary is better understood as Home vs. World, and this binary is what characterizes Indian nationalistic spirit most. Therefore, in normative Indian nationalist discourse, the importance of home and family as a spiritual domain play a vital role.
3. Towards an Understanding of the Other/s

This analytical sections will investigate the construction of the Other/s in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*. To do so, it aims to examine the narrative of *The Shadow Lines* to present how the bordered space loses its fixity and is disentangled from its hegemonic establishment/project. When home and country do not function with any such stasis/fixedness, the narrative departs from the normative discourse of nationalism. This is what I have sought to show in section 3.1 by exploring the counter-discursive representations of home, family, kinship, and domesticity in relation to the notions of world and “non-home” in Ghosh’s text.

Section 3.1 entitled “Home and the World/Non-Home” progresses with critical investigations into ‘home’ and national culture in the text. The construction of the Other is so vital in Thamma’s concept of home that it defines her homogenous nationalistic spirit. My analysis also focuses on the transformation of Thamma’s home into a ‘non-home’ lacking security and hope, and thereby generating an endless fear to confront it. This section examines how Ghosh’s text deals with the otherness through representation of home, family, kinship, and so on.

The following section 3.2, “Maps, Borders and the Other/s” progresses with examining the carto-politics and the process of othering through maps and borders. The aim of this section is to understand the myth of nation-making through b/ordering and othering. Section 3.3 entitled “Where is Thamma’s Border and Nation” deals with Thamma’s ambivalence regarding her nationality. The duality manifests itself when Thamma wants to see the border between Dhaka and Calcutta. This section tries to examine the ambivalence by relating it to her sense of nationhood. In so doing, section 3.3 presents a different observation to the idea of ‘home’ in the text. While the section 3.1 examines Thamma’s sense of belonging rooted in her
monoglossic ‘home’, section 3.3 delves deep into her ambivalent self to show that her sense of belonging, like her ‘self’, is also stuck into in-betweeness.

On the other hand, the final section 3.4, “Imagining a Transcultural Space” details Tridib’s desire of a borderless world. The section shows that Tridib inhabits, at least psychologically, Ghosh’s “mother country” (“Diaspora” 6), a borderless space with all-inclusiveness. In contrast, Thamma sticks to Nehruvian nationalism that allows the borders to perform and designate identities for the people on the basis of the self/other binary. The section presents their ideologically contradictory positions analogous to the ideological difference between the thinking of Ghosh and Nehru. Like Ghosh, Tridib’s imagined world does not create any discriminatory social hierarchies as it is not limited by any history, space and time. It becomes rather a borderless world without any possibility of the Other/s to be produced, thereby countering the idea of the Nehruvian nation that Thamma preserves.

3.1 Home and the World/Non-Home

In this section, I will explore how ‘home’ and family play a significant role for understanding Indian national culture in The Shadow Lines. To do so, I will base my analysis mostly on Partha Chatterjee’s home/world binary. This section is meant to show how home and nation are related concepts, and how the construction of otherness is vital when discussing family and home from the nationalist perspective. Also, this section deals with Thamma’s concept of home, and later presents an idea of how her home is transformed into a non-home, thereby being unheimlich. Through these discussions, what will also come out here are the concepts of ‘heteroglossia’ and a homogenous nationalistic spirit in Thamma’s sense of belonging.
### 3.1.1 Home and National Culture in *The Shadow Lines*

An attempt to dis/locate the position of both home and world in relation to national culture has also been an important aspect of *The Shadow Lines*. ‘Home’ plays a significant role in this text. As we see, the names of its two sections are respectively “Going Away” and “Coming Home”. What is recorded in them are descriptions and outcomes of two important journeys that take place at different times and in different places: one by Tridib when he went to London in 1939, and the other by Thamma to Dhaka in 1964. When Thamma travels to Dhaka in post-partition time in 1964, her journey is meant to visit the ancestral home that she had to leave temporarily — first after marriage and finally after partition; on the other hand, the time Tridib journeyed to London for the first and last time in 1939, eight years before the partition and thirteen years before the narrator is born, makes it possible for the narrator during his childhood to see through imagination the other world/reality across the national boundary. Even though these two quintessential journeys have temporal and spatial differences on the surface, underneath they seem to be functioning in the same way whereby the literal and apparent line between home and the world is called into question.

The journey of Thamma is a search for a singularity, a "fixed and settled point" (153). The narrator observes:

> Every language assumes a centrality, a fixed and settled point to go away from and come back to, and what my grandmother was looking for was a word for a journey which was not a coming or a going at all [but] a journey that was a search for precisely that fixed point which permits the proper use of verbs of movement. (153)
Her birthplace in Dhaka and her nationality as Indian "are messily at odds" (149) with each other. She says that she will “come home to Dhaka” (152) instead of “go[ing]” home to Dhaka. Sengupta’s comment perfectly fits here:

Caught between memory and her “other” new identity as an Indian national, between belonging to homeland Dhaka and her Indian citizenship, the certainties of the language of differentiation and distantiation slip away. Evidently, in her mind she seeks a fixed and settled point to go away from, and come back to, a point that allows the proper use of verbs of movement, instead of the point itself being in a state of flux. (507-508)

The confusion of geographical locations and unawareness of the geo-physical border reality might affect her knowledge of verbs of movement, for which she does not know, according to the narrator, "the difference between coming and going" (152).

From another viewpoint, her idea of home is, to use Bakhtin’s concept, monoglossic as it is based on the fixity and stasis from dominant nationalist discourse (“From the Prehistory” 66). Thus, her journey rules out the dynamism of heteroglossia regarding home and national space; instead, it incorporates the binary logic of nationalist discourse that permits only one physical/epistemological journey towards the root but does not include the routes and multiplicity in relation to nation and home. The discontinuity between ‘coming and going’ is a disruption to the narrative of home as providing continuity and cohesion.

Tridib’s journey explores the frailty of Thamma's concept of home. While his journey to London, together with his parents, permits the narrator to imagine “‘the world’ through the home”, (Black 45) Thamma’s visit at Dhaka, located on the other side of the border, discovers
another reality or the world at her home. As a result, the text explores the disruptive interrelationship between these two particular domains that deal with domesticity and the public space in the historical and political context of the novel. In other words, at this juncture in the narrative, the representation of home and the world functions as a means of deconstructing the concept of cultural coherence and continuity. Thus, the normative construction of coherence and continuity in manifestation of national culture and identity encounters a challenge in the narrative. For instance, Tridib’s journey to London maps the sense of belonging from another viewpoint, from the point of the mobility of border and bordered spaces, and thereby it interrogates the epistemology of home and its concomitant fixity in normative nationalist discourse.

All the implicit and explicit references to domesticity and kinship in the narrative are manifested through home and family. The narrator’s family has become one major key point in the construction of the whole body of *The Shadow Lines*. The kinship between two families — one narrator’s and other Tridib’s — reflects bonding that is not stuck to any national territory, but one that rather crosses the boundary and spreads elsewhere beyond the border. Through the development of friendship, the family relationship is linked up with the Price family at London and it is maintained through generations on both sides even after the death of the narrator’s great grand-uncle and Mr. Price, which ultimately has a bearing on the life of Tridib and the narrator. The interconnectedness and interdependence of the two families — one Bengali and other English — are the epitome of kinship between the native and the foreign.

This juxtaposition creates a different approach to understand kinship, home, and family in the contexts of home and the world. The home gluts itself with the world for the sake of kinship and friendship, not as locally marked. However, the perspective of the normative
nationalist viewpoint is not sufficient to decode the dynamics it might carry out in the postcolonial period because the local/native perspective gazes at the family and the relationship as categories, which are always already based on local culture of domesticity and rootedness. However, the kinship and family in the text manage to confront differences (racial, national, and ethnic) rather than jettison them. Thus, the English family of Mr. Price might influence the Bengali family’s memory in a way that one family’s presence necessitates the other family’s historical and ideological position.

Therefore, the conflicting position of “us” vs. “them” does not work here, not because the binary does not function but because its conclusive standing tends to rule out any sort of ambivalence in between, including the ambivalence that exists prominently within the narrative. In this regard, Ghosh’s text tends to oppose the othering process of the dominant nationalist discourse. Therefore, the narrative might introduce an idea of mirror image that reflects the “self” and its split half in the construction of identity, as suggested by Sharmani Patricia Gabriel in her article “The Heteroglossia of Home”:

[…] one of the key devices used in The Shadow Lines is the mirror image, which runs throughout the novel as a sign of those relations that paradoxically connect nations and individuals even as they divide them. Towards the end of the novel the narrator learns to recognize each of the other characters—Tridib, Ila, Robi, Nick, Tha’mma—as his mirror image, that is, as an image whose otherness defines his identity, suggesting that the self has to be known not in its separateness from but in its relatedness to the other. (43)

Homi Bhabha writes in his seminal text The Location of Culture that: “In the postcolonial text the problem of identity returns as a persistent questioning of the frame, the space of
representation, where the image […] is confronted with its difference, its Other” (46). Therefore, the mirror image of the narrator becomes a possibility to confront the otherness in his Self, to say in Bhabha’s language. The otherness gives the identity to the self because “identification […] is always the return of an image of identity that bears the mark of splitting in the other place from which it comes” (Bhabha, Location 45). So Tridib, Ila, Robi, Nick and Thamma are not examples of the distinct Other, but rather exemplify the splitting self of the narrator, a possibility of multiple voices in one place. This doubling of self/identity “cuts across the boundaries” between nation and individuality, and “it opens up a space in-between” the two domains in the narrative, that is, home and the world (Bhabha, Location 55; emphasis original).

3.1.2 Home and the World

*The Shadow Lines* refers to the profound emphasis on family and home. It suggests that home, family and belonging are connected with dis/location and dis/placement, symbolizing the process of alienation and adjustment of an individual in a given society. In that normative pattern where identity and acts of identification occur, a geo-cultural space comes up with an undeniable phenomenon in question of origin and national identity.

Although a departure from fixed points of identification such as home and family is considered as a separation from the cultural roots of origin in Indian nationalist discourse, Ghosh’s text opposes this separatist impulses through non-normative representation of home and family. Thus, the text tends to show how an individual is tied up with a space through a birth right and eventually lacks mobility in the normative discourse of Indian nationalism.
However, it is not surprising that Thamma’s idea of home, in this case, incorporates this dominant nationalist discourse regarding home and family, for she thinks of “home” as a space which determines the national identity, making an individual feel safe and secure within its refuge. Moreover, in her view home and nation come into being in exchange of bloodshed and struggling history of the people (though the participation of males is more vivid in such worldly activity), which means that a nation is a product of male activity whereas home is its encouraging backup, providing its women with security. At this point, a dominant nationalist point of view regarding the material and spirtual divide in the spatial hierarchy, as suggested by Chatterjee, is echoed in Thamma’s idea of home and nation.

As a result, it is Thamma’s expectations from middle-class Indian women such as Ila that sound patriarchal. “For Thamma, Ila is firmly outside the pale, her looks and her clothes inappropriate to her Bengali bourgeois origins” (Kaul 129). She harshly criticizes Ila’s decision to stay permanently in London and views it as a betrayal of her own roots, as she has left her own place, family, and nation for a better and more secure life at abroad with others who do not share the “same pool of blood” (76). This is the question of belonging that is an important issue for an individual to become a part of nation and home. Her understanding of Ila’s way of life at England is, thus, charged with vehement disapproval and disdain because Ila fails to perform her duty as a girl from a middle-class family (Bhadralok society). Ila’s transgression, thus, becomes a concern for Thamma’s middle-class existential crisis, which cannot accept the breach in the normative understanding of home and its woman. She says:

I don’t blame the boy. It was Ila’s fault. It was her own fault and the fault of that half-witted mother of hers. It was bound to happen: anyone can see that. She has no right to be there. She doesn’t belong there. (75)
She believes that Ila “has gone there because she’s greedy; she’s gone there for money” (77). Ila’s moving away from “real home” is a move away from the pattern Thamma considers to be the expected task of an educated woman from the upper middle class. The class consciousness that Thamma imposes on herself contains the normative preferences towards nation and home for a woman; hence, from her perspective, Ila’s moving away from “real home” originates a separation fear, the fear of not getting close to her middle class educated and modest life as a woman. The betrayal is, therefore, not only one of the family or the accompanying class of its own; rather, it is a betrayal of the nationalist pattern and its consecutive preferences to nation and home. Thamma’s crisis is more vivid when Tridib puts an insightful remark on her:

She was not a fascist, she was only a modern middle-class woman — though not wholly, for she would not permit herself the self-deceptions that make up the fantasy world of that kind of person. All she wanted was a middle-class life in which, like the middle classes the world over, she would thrive believing in the unity of nationhood and territory, of self-respect and national power; that was all she wanted — a modern middle-class life, a small thing, that history had denied her in its fullness and for which she could never forgive it. (77)

She wanted the same middle-class pattern of life for Ila as well. According to Mukherjee, “although Ila and the grandmother are in many ways mirror images of each other across generations in their absolutism and rigidity about their own concepts of freedom, their situations in the novel are not symmetrical”, because for Ila “history can only happen in Europe” (“Maps and Mirrors” 263). She once vehemently says to the narrator that “nothing really important ever happens where you are” (102). For her, all “famines and riots and disasters […] are local things after all – not like revolutions or anti-fascist wars. […] nothing that’s really remembered” (102).
Thus, her Eurocentric mind is different in every aspect from Thamma’s nationalistic fervor for home and identity.

Moreover, Ila’s home and sense of belonging are constantly fleeting. She moves from one place to another, and when she does it with her parents, the place also moves with her, thereby transforming her belonging into a fluid entity and placing her conscious self always in the present, not in the past. For her, home is not an expression of singularity as it is for Thamma, and so her belonging must not be stuck to only one root; rather, it is connected with the many destinations where she can reinvent her root through the routes, the journey between home/s. In Sara Ahmed’s words:

Home is here, not a particular place that one simply inhabits, but more than one place: there are too many homes to allow place to secure the roots or routes of one’s destination. It is not simply that the subject does not belong anywhere. The journey between homes provides the subject with the contours of a space of belonging, but a space which expresses the very logic of an interval, the passing through of the subject between apparently fixed moments of departure and arrival.

(330)

Thamma’s home and “being at home” are challenged with the possibility of "too many homes" that Ila has. The journey of Ila, therefore, contains metaphorically a departure and arrival point where she ends up in “a space of belonging” (Ahmed 330). The journey is from singular point to multiple destinations, breaking away from the norms of stasis and fixity; it disrupts the nationalist discourse of the border’s fixity and uniqueness, emphasizing imagination that permits fluidity to inscribe one’s identity. Hence, Ila’s world might provide her with the spaces that are always already fleeting with every journey even if they are not occupied with the sense
of hope and security, as Thamma thinks they must be as in the case of any place supposed to be her “home”.

3.1.3 Home and Non-home

Thamma’s “home” in Dhaka is unable to generate within her the same hope and sense of belonging when she visits it in 1964. The absence of past familiar images (inscribed into her memory) in that Zindabahar Lane of old Dhaka city, the post-partition infrastructural changes, and the influx of Muslim border crossers from India, offer, on the one hand, a challenge to the expected visuality of that place, and on the other, generate a sense of insecurity within her. The insecurity makes her feel uncomfortable when she is heading towards home with her sister, Tridib and May Price. She cannot even recognize the interface of the house where Jethamoshai now lives. The confrontation with the place called “home” now generates a sense of “non-home” in terms of familiarity and community. The integration of the Muslim community from the other side of the border into this city of Thamma and Mayadevi’s childhood concretizes the border reality while it also challenges Thamma’s concept of a homogenous home and nation. Therefore, she might think that this transformed reality of the place will not be safe for Jethamoshai, even though his Muslim tenant, the rickshaw puller, takes good care of him. The difference and different reality is palpable enough for her — so much so that the place has now become a distrustful entity currently occupied by other community/nation.

The story of the “upside-down house” (125) that Thamma used to tell Mayadevi when they were little causes fear and separation anxiety within both sisters. An uncanny return of the same fear happens when the sisters first decide to visit their home again many years afterwards.
This time, before travelling to Dhaka, Thamma faces a crisis of indecision regarding her visit, because she still has the same anxiety about exploring what is inside that ‘upside-down house’. It is not only the house her Jethamoshai now lives, but the same is true also for the city of Dhaka which, for her, appears an upside down reality on the other side of the border.

Thamma is uncomfortable as she knows that her nationality and home are “messily at odds” (149) with each other. Dhaka comes up as another reality across the border that she fears to unfold because that discovery might displace her rootedness and belonging. Her nationality is Indian but her home is in Dhaka, which was then East Pakistan, a distinct “Other” whose separate positioning determines her national “self”. Thus, she fears to remember that the present “Other” is also her past “self”, a realization that creates an impasse unconsciously for her to surpass such illusionary forgetfulness. The narrative of the upside-down house might also be a mockery of the partitioning of the nations, a form of mockery that interrogates the binary logic and construction of Other/s by amputating the “self”. The metaphorical representation of such “unhomely” devices in the narrative questions the authenticity and authority of the normative discourse of home. However, J. E. Mallot finds a “syncretic sentiment” in the longing of two sisters “to cross or disregard that metaphorical border”, and this yearning can refer to “the desire to connect the subcontinent together again” (271).

“The partitioning of the Bose family house in Dhaka” (Gabriel 45) is a symbolical representation of the 1947 partition of the subcontinent. The presence of “a wooden partition wall” (121), which bifurcates the shared house to cause the domestic partition, becomes a metaphorical border between two nations. Here, the domestic division mocks at the arbitrariness of the partition by being “exact down to the minutest detail” — so much so that “the wall […] had ploughed right through a couple of doorways so that no one could get through them
anymore; it had also gone through a lavatory, bisecting an old commode” (121). Thus, the upside-down house falls into a category of non-home and becomes a representative of fear within Thamma and Mayadevi’s mind, partly because the partitioned half has lost the authority as a whole unit in the functionality of domesticity and kinship, and finally because the separation has been a threat to unity and uniqueness of familial identity and belonging. These two reasons reappear when Thamma enters the same ‘upside-down house’ with her sister Mayadevi in 1964. However, surprisingly they find that nothing is upside down there; rather, the house is like its other half. This sameness is significant because it counters the legitimacy of a borderline outside of which the difference lies.

What is happening is that one side is othering the other side and vice versa in order to construct and give meaning to one’s own identity. In that case, the condition generates a paradoxical situation: while the line or the wall has originally been established to decline ‘otherness’, in reality it is a way of re/inventing numerous ‘Other/s’. This ambivalence of borders is best exemplified in Thamma’s home and the idea of the ‘upside-down house’ after Jethamoshai and her father built up a wall in between their parts. The other half where Jethamoshai’s family live seems an aberration from the norm. As a result, the other half is frightening and at the same time fanciful to Thamma and Mayadevi. The place has become so entangled with Thamma’s memory that in her old age she feels sad thinking that “[…] it’s all gone. They’re all dead and I have nowhere to invent stories about and nowhere to escape to” (124). Her frustration has increased even more after she hears from her relatives that “[…] the whole house had been occupied by Muslim refugees from India — mainly people who had gone across from Bihar and U. P.” (132).
Thamma’s ‘upside-down house’ functions as the best example that shows how the self is made distant from the Other/s. As her nationalistic spirit stems from the normative nationalistic discourses of India, her middle-class mind does not permit her to integrate with the Other. As a result, when Jethamoshai is seen living with a refugee Muslim family in his Jindabahar Lane home in Dhaka, Thamma’s sense of home is halted with fear. In her understanding, the Other turns into a category which will always already be different, and thereby not ever selfed.

The “otherness” seems to be an anomaly in Thamma’s narrative of home, which exclusively represents the value of kinship and identity formation. But the appropriation of the home by “Others” distances her “self” in a way for which her insecurity tends to mark off the place in a non-functional category. The transformation of home into a non-home in this situation entraps her into the sense of “unhomely”. Her previous “belonging” leads to a risk to confront the disruptive condition of her present “non-belonging”. Thamma’s expression of saving Jethamoshai from that “non-home”, thus, might give her a sense of hope to fulfill the obligation of kinship, but Jethamoshai’s constant denial not to go across the boundary leaving the “home” (already partitioned once) comes into a conflict with Thamma’s interest/desire.

3.2 Maps, Borders, and the Other/s
I will discuss the carto-politics and the process of othering in this section. Here, I attempt to show that how nationalist political identity is in certain ways tied to the process of othering and cartographic distancing. For that reason, I will examine Tridib’s death from the perspective of carto-politics and divisive tendency attached to borders. Tridib’s Bartholemew atlas also
provides me with a tool to analyze the process of distancing and othering carried out by maps and similar mechanisms.

3.2.1 Cartographic Distance and Othering

According to Dora-Laskey, “cartography is a method of Othering. The distancing lines across the map symbolize a permanently transformed national identity” (35). Also, cartography or political maps cannot represent the world and its borders properly. Placing the curved world onto a flat surface is, therefore, a failed attempt to translate the physicality of the world into a miniature form of lines and dots. The diversity of a landscape is lost in such imperialistic navigation science called cartography. As Zia Haider Rahman points out in his debut novel:

A cartographer doesn’t give you a miniature globe with all the same details on it as the globe of the world itself has. Nor does the translator simply give you the poem in the original language along with a Hungarian dictionary. Both of them face the same problem, namely, that they cannot capture everything exactly and they have to give up some things in order to convey anything at all. (335)

The same idea is enunciated in *The Shadow Lines* when the narrator draws a circle on a map, the Bartholomew’s Atlas, which he has inherited from Tridib and which “occupies a distinct and palpable space in the novel” (Mukherjee, “Maps and Mirrors” 256). The narrator discovers that the locations of places on the map offer an elusive understanding of geographical settings of real places:

His atlas showed me, for example, that within the tidy ordering of Euclidean space, Chiang Mai in Thailand was much nearer Calcutta than Delhi is; that Chengdu in China is nearer than Srinagar is. Yet I had never heard of those places
until I drew my circle, and I cannot remember a time when I was so young that I had not heard of Delhi or Srinagar. It showed me that Hanoi and Chungking are nearer Khulna than Srinagar, and yet did the people of Khulna care at all about the fate of the mosques in Vietnam and South China (a mere stone’s throw away)? (227)

The distance and closeness, projected on this map between one place and another, is an illusion of political and cultural realities. Thus, the narrator understands how the representations of cartographic distance/s on maps display a false authority in constructing orders and others across the world, and how the maps, as Henk van Houtum claims, silence and dehumanize the landscapes they want to portray (52). Mukherjee writes that “distance in The Shadow Lines is […] perceived as a challenge to be overcome through the use of imagination and desire until space gets dissolved” (“Maps and Mirrors” 256). Hence, the imaginative journey of a Bengali middle-class boy is able to break down the myth of distances imposed by the authoritative fixity of national boundaries. The narrator’s travels to far-away places hint at geographic inclusiveness, suggesting a harmonious co-existence of space and time rather than linearity.

However, the separation lines inculcate a pattern into the psyche of the people because maps in the context of South Asia represent the colonial and imperial agenda:

For South Asians subject to the British crown, maps told a story of ‘‘legitimate’’ conquest and rule. For nationalist movements before and after 1947, maps sought to prove the permanence of Hindu or Muslim peoples, stretching back to an eternal geographic past while gesturing toward a limitless, yet territorial future. (Mallot 261)
They function as a designed system locating ‘self’ and ‘Other’. The narrator himself has put his faith on these drawn lines etched on the maps, believing “in the reality of nations and borders; that distance separates, that it is a corporeal substance; that across the border there existed another reality” (214). “Such a conflation of cartography (‘the border’) and experiential subjectivity (‘another reality’) is constant in nationalist narrative” (Dora-Laskey 35). The mention of “another reality” is important here, because this reality is so flimsy in our understanding that only thin lines etched onto the maps can give a meaning to it. The realities are separated by the border, and there is no room for any possible relationship in between them, apart from two things: “war and friendship” (214). If anything could take a position in-between, it is “the chasm of that silence” (214). The space in-between is, thereby, the space of the silence that cannot interpret “another reality” which, in the text, refers to Tridib’s death that took place on the other side of the border.

Mallot suggests that “Tridib’s death teaches him [the narrator] that maps matter, that memory and imagination might stand powerless against nationalist hatred” (270). So the narrator, unable to accept the cause for which Tridib had to die across the border in a different land that looks the same from the distance, is later forced to make an eerie connection between the lines on the maps and the prehistoric ever-shifting continent of Gondwanaland. By this comparison, what comes out is an image of a looking-glass border that rules out the measurement of any illusionary proximity or distance being projected on the maps:

They had drawn their borders, believing in that pattern, in the enchantment of lines, hoping perhaps that once they had etched their borders upon the map, the two bits of land would sail away from each other like the shifting tectonic plates of the prehistoric Gondwanaland. What had they felt, I wondered, when they
discovered that they had created not a separation, but a yet-undiscovered irony – the irony that killed Tridib: the simple fact that there had never been a moment in the 4000-year-old history of that map when the places we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines – so closely that I, in Calcutta, had only to look into the mirror to be in Dhaka; a moment when each city was the inverted image of the other, locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free – our looking-glass border. (228)

“Tridib’s death is an ‘irony’ because the act of cartographic distancing compulsively links India and Bangladesh as a seam would” (Dora-Laskey 37). So whether we are talking about Dhaka and Calcutta or Shanghai and Hanoi, they are inverted images of each other. What is going to happen in one city might affect the other, as if the borders now came closer to one another than they were before. In that case, Tridib’s death is an example that reflects the uncanny closeness of the two cities — being perfectly distant on the maps, perfectly separated by the lines, and even being the perfect alter image. If that is the case, the separation lines drawn between the cities are in fact manifestations of an act of ‘othering’ and ordering.

This process is carried out as to establish a nationalist political identity tied to the practice of othering and ordering. The agency of such arbitrary drawn lines is a matter of political whims to the extent that Robi, Tridib’s brother, has to raise the self-evident question: “[…] why don’t they draw thousands of little lines through the whole subcontinent and give every little place a new name?” (241). There is no easy answer to that, but the non-deictic “they” refers to the political agents implementing their own agenda by constructing a binary politics around the borderlines.
3.2.2 Distancing Self from the Other/s

The politics based on the ‘self’/’other’ or ‘us’/’them’ does not have to be confined to border areas. It gradually becomes a psychological phenomenon that goes beyond any race, ethnicity, nationality, and so on. In J. B. Harley’s words, “[c]artography deploys its vocabulary... so that it embodies a systematic social inequality. The distinctions of class and power are engineered, reified and legitimated in the map” (“Deconstructing the Map” 7). The distinction of class and power is not always a state-centric production or a collective manifestation; rather, the mindset of such a binary fetish can be much more individualistic. For example, Thamma’s old home at Dhaka has experienced a partition, which is no lesser an excruciating experience than the 1947 partition between India and Pakistan. While one is a family issue and the other a country issue, both of them reach the same consequence, that is, a permanent establishment of a dividing wall or a border, whatever we call it, continually generating a numerous production of ‘Other/s’. Shameem Black’s comment is illuminating in this regard: “both the architecture of dwelling and the social ties of kinship can enable distinctly uncosmopolitan walls that imprison certain subjects while keeping others out” (48).

The nature of distancing the self from the ‘Other’ is a continuous process, and Thamma’s Zindabahar Lane home in old Dhaka is a perfect example of this. After the 1947 partition, the old home has become a shelter for Muslim refugees, and seeing two Muslim families living in her old home she becomes really shocked and asks how Jethamoshai can allow Muslims to live and take care of him since his religious orthodoxy was once so prominent that he even could not “let a Muslim’s shadow pass within ten feet of his food...Ten feet!” (205). Precise use of such a measurement makes Robi, the narrator’s uncle, respond in an amazement:
“How did he measure? Did he keep a measuring tape in his pocket when he ate? […] Trigonometry! like a sum: if the Muslim is standing under a twenty foot-two foot building, how far is his shadow? (205-206)

In this case, the cartographic distancing of the “Other” has been meshed up with Jethamoshai’s “bodily Othering” (Dora-Laskey 38). Here, the ten-foot distance is a social enforcement of the other than a political/cartographical factor. It has outlined a pre-independent mindset of the people like Jetamoshai who “segregate[ed] the populations long before actual partition” (Dora-Laskey 38). According to Sengupta, this divisive mindset stems from

[...] a separatist political logic of the nation-state [that] can never enforce cultural difference. Some things will always connect Dhaka to Calcutta, Bengali Hindu to Bengali Muslim and Indian to Pakistani as images and their reflections in a vast mirror. (508)

What it proves is that distancing through ‘othering’ is just not a political mystery or exclusion/containment project of mapping the borders. Rather, there lies the psychological divisive tendency of people in colonial India. Therefore, Thamma’s desire to build a strong nation and give it a history through an anti-colonial struggle and bloodshed is a telltale sign of strengthening the fixity of border. It others in order to unite and “to mold an internally coherent national identity” (136), as suggested by Kaul. This view shared by Thamma and Jethamoshai is similar, as both stick to their ‘self’ by distancing themselves from those who are different or have already crossed the border/s.

We all know that partition history has affected millions of people “who fall literally or figuratively between national borders and are unable to claim the shelter of national belonging” (Dora-Laskey 38). Therefore, in the text the narrator searches for a subjectivity, which will not
in any circumstance be subjected to any identitarian politics. Rather, his search for an identity is meant to dissolve the hierarchy of the self/other binary, and such attempt falsifies the partition’s emotive foundation, that is, to make distances from the Others.

3.3 Where is Thamma’s Border and Nation?
This section tends to explore the question of where is Thamma’s border and nation by examining the ambivalence of Thamma regarding home, nation, and border. Her incessant search for a ‘home’ manifests in different forms in the narrative of The Shadow Lines. Therefore, to understand the dilemma of Thamma, regarding the visibility of borders and the functionality of the nation, is the major aim of this chapter. I will try to show the existence of the self/other binary in Thamma’s sense of belonging.

3.3.1 Thamma’s Nationality and Birth place
In The Shadow Lines, the most important quest was to track the journey of Thamma whose belonging is an ambiguous phenomenon. Her sense of belonging is stuck to an in-between space when she finds out that her birth place and her nationality are “so messily at odds” (149) with each other:

She would have to fill in ‘Dhaka’ as her place of birth on that form, and that the prospect of this had worried her in the same way that dirty schoolbooks worried her – because she liked things to be neat and in place – and at that moment she had not been able quite to understand how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality. (149)
Thamma is placed in between Dhaka and Calcutta, the former being her birth place while the latter her city of residence after the partition of 1947. She is not certain of what the border in between two cities has caused in the meantime, although she understands, when wondering about the prospect of filling in the immigration form, the possibility that her sense of belonging may become ruptured. Anjali Ray writes:

Thamma’s education in the fictiveness of the nationalist construct begins with her preparations for her journey back to her birthplace, Dhaka. Her neat ordering of the world is disturbed, when she realizes that, by filling in Dhaka as her place of birth on her passport. (39)

Her uncertainty of her own status, nationality, and home is halted at this juncture because she cannot understand the functionality of the border and its paradoxicality. There was no border before 1947, and she could “come home to Dhaka” (149) whenever she wanted, without needing a visa and filling in any form at the airport, but today the presence of this border manifests the predicament of a displaced person with “no home but in memory” (190). In this case, “new national maps have stood at odds with [her] individual memories” (Mallot 261). Every time she wishes to get certain of her nationality and home, her feeling is ruptured because of a cartographic intervention in between Dhaka and Calcutta. It is as if a newly created Indo Pakistan border in 1947 were complicating the nationalist geopolitics and confusing Thamma’s identity.

What has already been mentioned in the theoretical chapter is that the ambivalence of a border crosser lies in the uncertainty of whether the border has been crossed or not. Thamma’s ambivalence refers to the same kind of predicament because she has never returned her old home in Dhaka after the partition, and so she has never faced any immigration authority at the airport
with a paper to be filled in. The border has changed the sense of her nationhood and she cannot explain why her Indian nationality is at stake when she has entered the name of Dhaka, the city of East Pakistan, as her birth place in the immigration form.

As an Indian citizen, it is usual that she wants to contribute to the welfare of her nation. Her feeling for her own nation is so desperate that she even gives away her favorite gold chain to contribute to the war against Pakistan. Suvir Kaul tries to reason it out: “perhaps […] Tridib’s death at the hands of a Dhaka mob confirms her in a pathological hatred of ‘them’” (141). However, apart from considering her feeling as a hatred of ‘them’, this incident may be viewed as a dilemma, which manifests clearly when she holds the same loyalty to her birth place, Dhaka, which has now become an alien enemy nation to India. This is a paradox that she is contributing to the war against the country where she was once born. Mallot explains:

> Th’amma, having once believed that she could overcome the power of borders and maps by invoking old family memory and convincing her relative to relocate, insulates herself in more comfortable nationalist rhetoric, ensconced behind her own border. (272)

The border severs the connection between her old home and her nationality, placing one against the other and, thereby, splitting her identity by placing it in a state of constant negotiation. She might be a naturalized Indian, but her memory of Dhaka, her home and family in East Pakistan, constantly questions her national identity. Thamma, who believes in the rigidity of borders and linearity of a nation, ends up fixing (unconsciously though) the ruptures in her understanding of the border and nation.
Both Pakistan and India, one being the mirror image of the other, are tied to Thamma’s sense of belonging. It becomes a strange phenomenon that her birth place produces the same feeling that she feels for her home at Gole Park, Calcutta. She feels rooted to both places, irrespective of their locations, but the problem occurs when she ends up between her birth place and nationality, being unable to locate the reason why her nationality and birth place are “messily at odds” (149) with each other. She cannot choose one over the other because home is a home, but when it is a question of nationality, she stumbles upon the thought of displacement. To understand such bafflement in her sense of nationhood, we must look what nation means to her:

It took those people a long time to build that country; hundreds of years, years and years of war and bloodshed. Everyone who lives there has earned his right to be there with blood: with their brother’s blood and their father’s blood and their son’s blood. They know they’re a nation because they’ve drawn their borders with blood. (76)

As for Thamma, nation is made, not naturally achieved. A nation is formed through blood, war, and the sacrifice of the people. Her militant nationalist spirit desperately approves of war and bloodshed as the signs of a nation-in-making because those who have sacrificed bloods and lives, they have the right to the country, and “her faith links the national and the domestic, public service and personal activity” (Kaul 135). The country is not for all; it is only for those who are not ‘other/s’. Hence, Thamma’s idea of a nation is fulfilled through a “binary representation of social antagonism”, (Bhabha, Location 19) organically embedded within the normative concept of a nation.
From that perspective, Thamma’s essentialist view of nation is based on the construction of the Other/s. Her idea of nation is fulfilled when borders are drawn on every side of it. It is at this point that her conceptions of home and nation do conflict with each other. When she considers Dhaka to be her old home where she always wants to return, she does not locate her birth place as an enemy state; rather, she recollects and re/invents the memory of Dhaka as her home. In this case, her feeling of home opposes the idea of her nation that requires bloodshed and borders to be formed. When it comes to home which is on the other side of the border, she can include the place in her sense of belonging, without thinking of it as a betrayal of her nation and country. In that case, it becomes clear that Thamma’s concept of home is actually more linked up with the idea of “natio”, (Brennan 45) which is an ancient form of nation, referring to family, home, and community other than a country or a state. This term is important to understand that her concept of nation like her sense of belonging and identity is also ambivalent. She holds the two views at the same time; as a result, she does not have to think twice before contributing to the the war against Pakistan because this aims to save her country. But when it comes to her sense of belonging, she cannot reject her home located in the enemy country against which her current nation is in a fight.

3.3.2 Physical Border and Abstract Nation

Thamma’s imagined nation necessitates the visual representation of borders drawn with blood. In her view, borders are the physical representation of an abstract nation. The visibility of the borderlines, as she has found them drawn on maps, is, therefore, a way of cementing the foundations of India as a nation. It is the sameness and togetherness within each and every nation achieved with the construction of the borderlines and their visibility. As a result, when she plans
to visit her Jindabahar Lane home in Dhaka, the capital city of East Pakistan, she sounds eager
to see the borders from the plane:

For instance, one evening when we were sitting out in the garden she wanted to
know whether she would be able to see the border between India and East
Pakistan from the plane. When my father laughed and said, why, did she really
think the border was a long black line with green on one side and scarlet on the
other, like it was in a school atlas, she was not so much offended as puzzled.

(148)

According to Mukherjee, “the grandmother’s expectation of the visibility of the border between
India and East Pakistan grew indirectly out of her experience of the territorial division she had
witnessed in childhood” (“Maps and Mirrors” 264-265). However, her bafflement results from
knowing that the visibility, as it appears on the map, is, in reality, an illusion. As she cannot
accept that the reality the maps represent is simply a fabrication of truth, the difference between
the border and a map of it remains beyond her understanding. She wants to replace the gap with
the presence of trenches, soldiers or anything that marks off the border by making it visible to
everyone: “but surely there’s something – trenches perhaps, or soldiers, or guns pointing at each
other, or even just barren strips of land. Don’t they call it no-man’s land?” (148).

However, the inability to locate the physical border prompts her to interrogate the
implication of “partition and all the killing and everything” (149). The absence of “something
in between” (149) makes her feel perplexed. She thus wants to know from her son that:

[…] if there aren’t any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean,
where’s the difference then? And if there’s no difference, both sides will be the
same; it’ll be just like it used to be before, when we used to catch a train in Dhaka and get off in Calcutta the next day without anybody stopping us. What was it all for then – Partition and all the killing and everything – if there isn’t something in between? (148-9)

Surprisingly enough, Thamma’s knowledge of a border is fundamentally connected with the construction of the Other/s. Her separationist approach resonates with what Kaul suggests about the functionality of the “shadow-lines etched on maps”: “borders and frontiers, shadow-lines etched on maps, sustain political separation, but even more strongly, teach the inevitability, and even absoluteness, of socio-cultural difference across nations” (138).

Hence, she fears that “if there’s no difference, both sides will be the same” (148), and that sameness is a crucial factor because it rules out the necessity of a border in between. The fear of Other/s is so rife in her mind that she says to her relative about Jethamoshai, still living in East Pakistan, that: “Imagine what it must be like to die in another country, abandoned and alone in your old age” (132). If her response is slightly twisted, it hints that her fear is more of dying “in another country” than dying abandoned and alone at an old age. Here, “another country” seems a frightening space even to die in.

At this point, we can return to Henk van Houtum’s idea suggesting that that the Other/s generate/s both fear and desire. This is the case with Thamma because she also has the fear and desire for Other/s: fear for no-border in-between and incessant desire to confront the Other/s, either by crossing the border or re/inventing the narrative and memory of home. Whatever form of her fear and desire take, they are always contingent upon each other, properly formulating her sense of belonging.
3.3.3 Arbitrary Mapping of Borders and Nations

As “borders with blood” create a nation, the non-visibility places the whole concept and functionality of the nation on a tenterhook. It is not the visible absence of borderlines that produces the bafflement in Thamma; rather, it is the inability of these borderlines to re/produce the Other/s. We know that borders create order and the Other/s, but if there are no borders, the possibility of the Other/s is completely missing. This deviation from the norm is what is baffling to Thamma. Therefore, the normative structure and functionality of borders breaks down when the borders drawn on maps do not appear as visible markers/signs of difference in between.

Thamma’s concept of a nation and a border is founded on linear space, time, and history, and both fixity and unipolarity are socio-cultural constructs based on the productions of institutionalized images such as dots and lines on the maps and walls, fences and trenches. This dilemma is emphasized further when she is told that today the border is not located in the borderlands; rather, it has been reduced into an abstraction felt in the airport with all the disembarkation cards to be filled in and with all immigration formalities to be performed:

This is the modern world. The border isn’t on the frontier: it’s right inside the airport. You’ll see. You’ll cross it when you have to fill in all those disembarkation cards and things. (149)

This reductive way of locating borders at the airport re/invents them as being rigid spaces, thereby denying the possibility of a border with multipolarity. The border inside the airport is a fixed space with no mobility. This unipolar border, thus, makes no difference from the visible borderlines on the maps. In both ways, their position is fixed and they are based on linearity.
The constructed images bolstering the concept of the borders’ fixity and linearity are arbitrary. For instance, random lines and dots can be so powerful to cause a cartographic separation between nations. Although most of the maps are colonial projections of landscapes, their impacts are significantly dominant in the socio-cultural politics of a nation. Today borders have become more than a real phenomenon, the perennial abstract entity penetrating everyday into socio-political, cultural and economic life of the people around the globe.

In the novel, the nations are in conflict with each other only because of “something in between”, that is, the shadow lines which function by producing essential binary oppositions. If the construction of binary oppositions acts like an axiomatic function of the borders, then Thamma’s fear is surely viable to the point that the non-visibility of the lines etched onto the maps must break the status quo of the binary establishments of the society, thereby making it difficult for the essential self/other binary to operate. And if the self/other binary does not work, then the whole edifice of the institutionalized process of making nations by drawing borders — political, social, economic, cultural, geographic and so on — crumbles down. This utopian borderless world that does not operate within any binary project might sound dreamy at this point, but the real picture is different because the borders’ dissolution is an impossibility.

In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari question the utility and purposes of such arbitrary re/arrangements through mapping the border and mapping the nation: “What are your lines? What map are you in the process of making or rearranging? What abstract line will you draw, and at what price, for yourself and for others?” (203). Interestingly, the same thought has been resonated in Jethamoshai’s voice when he responds to Thamma’s urge to move from Dhaka to India for his own safety:
Once you start moving you never stop. That’s what I told my sons when they took the trains. I said: I don’t believe in this India-Shindia. It’s all very well, you’re going away now, but suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? Where will you move to? (211)

Here, Jethamoshai’s reasoning is clear enough to understand the political whims behind these arbitrary lines drawn here and there. The use of non-deictic “they” might refer to the colonizer who robbed the agency of the colonized by placing borders in between. His view, thus, makes a counter-discourse to this forced mobility across the borders. Unlike Thamma, he does not believe “in India-Sindhia” (211), and through this denial he tends to take back the agency lost in the partition of 1947.

Even though the carto-politics has been an institutionalized process and today is structured as a cultural and political ideology, the arbitrary lines and dots in the process of nation-making are able to produce a sense of connectedness among the national subjects as we see in Thamma’s case. Hence, the idea of imagining ‘something’ in between two distinct nations is meant for her a solid ground to identify her ‘self’ from the Other. A borderline that functions as a difference, therefore, works as a perfect image of the nation whereby she is able to distinguish between self and the Other. She would like to see the border on her journey just because this division marker is the signifier of the nation she belongs to. This self/other binary is vividly playing a role in her unconscious. Like any other nationalists, she is, therefore, over-protective of her nation by keeping the dividing line in between so that she can easily identify her ‘self’ from the Other/s.
3.4 Imagining a Transcultural Space

In this section, I would like to propose the idea that Tridib inhabits a transcultural space. This means that Tridib dreams of a borderless world, a kind of hybridized space with no history. Such a world order that he thinks about runs counter to the production of the Other/s. In fact, he epitomizes the desire to cross the shadow lines of borders, history and nation without any fear. He overcomes the distances and separation anxiety by re/inventing the places through memory. In his memory, all sorts of human and cultural contact are possible because nothing is history or time specific there. Therefore, his love for an English girl May Price is not restricted by any national fervor or racial hatred.

3.4.1 Self-Transcending World of Tridib

*The Shadow Lines* challenges two common aspects through its vivid cartographic narrative: i) the fixity of borderlines, and ii) the fear of confronting the ‘Other/s’. As for the narrative, it disseminates an anti-establishment or non-normative observation regarding borders and ‘Others’, and the ground for this counter-discursive approach is presented by the narrator and Tridib who travel into their own constructed world based on imagination.

It is worth noticing that Tridib’s world is not the world travelled by Ila, Nick, May Price or Thamma. Rather, his world is one that may produce a desire for self-transcendence, being borderless and free floating. Tridib’s imagined world, the world the narrator lives in, if not always physically but at least in memories, is, therefore, not based on the construction of ‘Others’, since it does not aim to preserve boundaries “between oneself and one’s image in the mirror” (29). Since there is no border, the fear of the ‘Other’ on the other side becomes an impossible phenomenon. The established myth of fear and desire regarding the other side of the
border is, thereby, delimited in Tridib’s and the narrator’s borderless space. In this case, by omitting borderlines from his imagination, Tridib takes a revolutionary step to unlearn and defy the normative production of ‘Others’ on the other side of the borderline.

For Tridib and the narrator, “a place does not merely exist”; rather, “it has to be invented in one’s imagination” (21). This idea of an imagined world emerges as a counterpoint to the discourse of a bordered world quite often travelled in and believed by Ila. To draw a clear demarcation line between Tridib’s and Ila’s world, the narrator describes her world as being mockingly transformed into

a worldwide string of departure lounges, [...] each of them strikingly different, distinctively individual, each with its Ladies hidden away in some yet more unexpected corner of the hall, each with its own peculiarity, like the flushes in Stockholm’s Arlanda, so sleekly discreet that she had once missed two flight calls because it had taken her so long to understand how the handle worked. (20)

The landscapes Ila has visited are shifting with her and undergo a comic metamorphosis due to lack of imagined precision. Her childhood has, therefore, missed the opportunity to experience the power of space and time constructed through imagination.

Even though Ila’s landscapes move with her, they are fixed and unchangeable. Later, the places in her memories reduce into lavish modern departure lounges, only remembered as fixed points when moving toward a different destination. Whatever way her memory works, this reduction of places into supermodernistic lounges inside airports reflects the void in her attempt to see without desire. According to Marc Augé, these are all non-places:
The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which, unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory', and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position. […] the airports and railway stations, hotel chains, leisure parks, large retail outlets, and finally the complex skein of cable and wireless networks that mobilize extraterrestrial space for the purposes of a communication so peculiar that it often puts the individual in contact only with another image of himself. (78-79)

As a result, “though she sees the world through her travels, she remains trapped within an imaginative paralysis that prevents her from embracing the new communities she inhabits” (Black 58). According to Tridib, she lacks “real desire, which was not the same thing as greed or lust; a pure, painful and primitive desire, as longing for everything that was not in oneself, a torment of the flesh, that carried one beyond the limits of one’s mind to other times and other places” (29).

The possibility of inventing multi-layered spatio-temporal landscapes beyond the visible scopes of maps is what Tridib has tried to teach the narrator. His teaching does not resemble traditional ideas concerning bordering and othering. Rather, what makes Tridib’s imagination accurate in constructing a transcendent world without any borders is always a mystery. He becomes a mentor to the narrator, who declares proudly that “Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eyes to see them with” (20). The narrator becomes an “imaginative traveler” because of Tridib’s insistence “on a precision of observation and recollection” (Kaul 127). Suvir Kaul writes: “even as he is rooted in Calcutta, his imaginative universe knows few
boundaries - he is transported by Tridib's stories, and by Ila's, to places and times which come alive for him with a powerful immediacy” (127). It suggests that Tridib’s position is one that is against the traditional understanding of the world that precludes any inventions by limiting the spaces through projections of lines and dots, as if they were fixed realities determined by their boundaries.

However, the new understanding of the world that the narrator has learnt from his uncle has inculcated cartographic details, woven through imaginary inventions into his memories so that he can walk the streets of London with a map in his head. This understanding is shaped with Tridib’s aphoristic enunciation: “[...] we could not see without inventing what we saw” (31). If this idea by Tridib is taken into account, what emerges is a view underlining maps and borders as falsifications, because what takes place through their projections of lines and dots is an immediate imposition of fixity upon places. In contrast, what Tridib’s understanding refers to is an amazing discovery of the world or places through inventions and imaginations, a world where borders and maps emerge as non-existent categories. In fact, when borders and maps do not act there as normatively as they are supposed to, the creation of ‘Others’ seems there a far-fetched possibility, the transcending capacity of his imagination opposes any binary construction of ‘self’ and ‘Other’ through borders.

3.4.2 Tridib as Tristan and the Third Space

Tridib has always travelled in his imagination and re/invented the places as precisely as anybody could ever see. The world he tends to re/invent is a borderless world without any possibility for the self/other binary. He taught the narrator how to use imagination with precision, which makes
the narrator able to incorporate “all of Tridib’s stories into a kind of memory atlas” (Mallot 270). Tridib’s stories transcend the “mind to other times and other places and even, if one was lucky, to a place where there was no border between oneself and one’s image in the mirror” (29). Thus, the place Tridib wants to create is one where to re/organize the normative structuring of places: in his imagination all places are of transcending categories without needing the support of boundaries to perform.

From this perspective, Tridib’s imagination categorically rules out the fixity of Thamma’s idea of the border and the nation which resonates with Anderson’s. Crystal Taylor says that “she also articulates a nationalism that Ghosh’s narrator himself dismisses as too violent to encourage a satisfying sense of community” (85). On the other hand, Tridib introduces to the narrator the idea of spaces as non-fixed and transcultural. Before moving on, we need to define what transcultural space means in the context of *The Shadow Lines*. According to Butt, transcultural space

[…] is addressed not only as a space of human and cultural encounters, but of overlapping histories and territories, shifting countries and continents where different people, cultures, nations and communities communicate above the “shadow lines” of social, national and territorial barriers. (4)

This transcultural space means a free world without the possibility of any binaries and a spatio-temporal constraint. It becomes a space of “cultural and ethnic transactions where characters seek to overthrow artificial frontiers to come to terms with the reality of cultural and political transformations” (Butt 4). In that case, the space functions like a “Third Space” (*Location* 37) proposed by Homi K. Bhabha where “hierarchical purity of cultures are untenable” (Ashcroft et al. 108). Rather, this space is founded on cultural hybridity and cultural differences.
In *The Shadow Lines*, the transcultural spaces are working as bridges between personal memory and collective history. Tridib and the narrator through the power of imagination and personal memories shape the national ideologies, re/living the spaces invented by their own. It is worth noticing that their invented places are quite different from the places that the narrator’s cousin, the globe-trotter Ila, visits. According to the narrator, as she does not know how to even invent places, she has to live in the inventions of others:

I could not persuade her that a place does not merely exist, that it has to be invented in one’s imagination; that her practical, bustling London was no less invented than mine, neither more nor less true, only very far apart. It was not her fault that she could not understand, for as Tridib often said of her, the inventions she lived in moved with her, so that although she had lived in many places, she had never travelled at all. (21)

On the other hand, Tridib has taught the narrator to re/live the vision of transcultural spaces for which one does not need to rely on the invention of others. Living in the inventions of others delimits one’s imaginative power to construct transcultural spaces free of any history or borders. The spaces are even free “of other people’s inventions”:

[…] Tridib who had pushed me to imagine the roofs of Colombo for myself, the Tridib who had said that we could not see without inventing what we saw, so at least we could try to do it properly […] because […] if we didn’t try ourselves, we would never be free of other people’s inventions. (31)

Tridib’s borderless world is interconnected, not divided as that of Thamma, or reduced as that of Ila, so the histories of London, Calcutta, and Dhaka can easily meet at a junction in his
memory. In this case, his memory is the melting pot for histories of different places and nations to intermingle, thereby initiating a scope for transcultural negotiations. Butt writes in this regard: “[…] the narrator and Tridib have a vision, a vision to construct a free space (in a world without binaries) which is supposed to be above all temporal or spatial constraints” (4). Perhaps this is the same free space where Tridib wants to meet May Price as a stranger. In the narrator’s words:

    He wanted them to meet as the completest of strangers — strangers-across-the-seas – all the more strangers because they knew each other already. He wanted them to meet far from their friends and relatives — in a place without a past, without history, free, really free, two people coming together with the utter freedom of strangers. (141)

“A place without a past, without history” (141) is free of any temporal or spatial constraints. This transcultural space functions as a palimpsest, the hybridized space of Anzaldúa where different people, cultures and nations can communicate and negotiate without being restrained by the shadow lines (preface, n.p.). Following Bhabha’s idea of nation as a “disjunctive narrative” (Location 232), this space also suggests that “national belonging is more of a performance — and an illusion — than it is a felt experience” (Taylor 82). This view counters the Andersonian claim that a nation progresses calendrically through a “homogenous, empty time” (26).

In the narrative, Tridib’s aspiration for freedom is metaphorically expressed in his interracial and inter-national relationship with May Price. “As Tridib’s imagination revels in the nexus between worldliness and domesticity, his romantic desire enhances this intricate interplay between the family and the foreign” (Black 55). In one of his letters to May Price in London, he describes her about an imaginary space which is like a debris and where they can meet as
strangers. Later, when May Price comes to visit Calcutta in 1964, he chose Victoria Memorial at Calcutta as his imaginary space of ruin which symbolically represents the contact zone for two different people coming from different cultures. In fact, all the romantic or sexual relationships in the text are consciously inter-national, thereby generating a transcultural space:

_The Shadow Lines_ describes no sexual or romantic relationship between two people who share an obvious identity of nationality, race or cultural experience-desire originates, and finds its object, across borders. (Kaul 128)

This juxtaposition of different cultures creates a possibility of imagining a borderless space like that of Tridib. He has desired through imagination to construct a place without borders and countries where, like the story of Tristan, the mobility will never be obfuscated by any colonizing or authoritative agency, thereby making this as the Third space of enunciation, to say in Bhabha’s language.
4 Conclusion

*The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh explores the “postcolonial misery” (5), as suggested by Partha Chatterjee, by critiquing the dominant discourse of nationalism and borders. It views borders, nation, nationality, and nationalism from a different angle, and it is mainly through the discussion/representation of home, family, domesticity and kinship that the narrative engages with the politics of nationalism from the colonial to the postcolonial period. In so doing, the narrative attempts to time travel history through fragments, carrying the memory of an individual and the family through generations.

My thesis has showed that the text also (re)writes the narrative of “home”, not as a signifier of cultural/national belonging as always represented in the nationalist discourse, but as a narrative of discontinuity and a fluid entity disrupting its previous normative role in relation to national and cultural politics in a current postcolonial nation state. To do so, my analysis presents an idea of heteroglossia in the functionality of home and the world, the idea which elicits ‘multiplicity of signs and meanings’ in the formation/construction of national identity. By explaining the Bakhtinian concept of ‘heteroglossia’, I showed that in the text the identity of Indian nation, thus, tends to be built upon difference rather than homogeneity.

By exploring the discourses of border and nation, my thesis looks into how *The Shadow Lines* deals with the construction of the Other. To do so, my first analytical section entitled “Home and the World/Non-Home” interprets home and national culture with reference to the idea of “home” in *The Shadow Lines*. Further, the metamorphosis of Thamma’s “home” into a “non-home” is explained to understand the roles of home and family in Indian nationalistic discourses. Also, the home/world binary in the text leads my discussion to the politics of cartographic distance in constructing numerous Other/s. In my analysis, I have questioned
Thamma’s dependence on homogenous nationalistic spirit. I showed how the Nehruvian concept of ‘one India’ is challenged with Ghosh’s inclusion of heteroglossic home and cultural multiplicity. In every way, I have directed my discussion to make the suggestion clear that the text delineates the possibility of imagining a transcultural space with no boundaries, either national or political.

Maps, borders, and nation are not at all seen in normative ways in Ghosh’s text. Rather, the arbitrariness of maps and cartography receives mockery from different incidents in the novel. For example, the partitioning of the Bose family in Dhaka takes place by establishing a wooden wall. I have showed that this is a metaphorical representation of the arbitrary national border between India and East Pakistan. As I have told earlier, Ghosh’s idea of nation does not correspond with Nehru and Anderson’s ‘imagined communities’. Therefore, through Tridib’s imagined world, Ghosh forecasts a freedom and the possibility of inhabiting a transcultural spaces in the text.

In one case, my analysis of the text has sought to make it clear that The Shadow Lines has not used the idea of cosmopolitanism as it is generally thought by the postcolonial thinkers; rather, the text suggests a possibility of a free space, which does not manufacture any identity or national subjectivity but instead are determined through constant negotiations. To prove this point, my analytical section 3.4 entitled “Imagining a Transcultural Space” applies Bhabha’s concept of Third Space of enunciation. In so doing, I have shown in the analysis very clearly that the normative reading of border and nation is not possible in case of The Shadow Lines. Therefore, my analytical chapters have progressed with exploring the non-normative impulses expressed in the narrative.
In the text, since Ghosh has juxtaposed private memories and collective history to shape the national ideologies, my analysis from time to time captures the amalgamating strategy of Ghosh. That is why I have included the memory tales of Thamma’s “upside-down house” to explain the traumatic partition history and the politics of the self/other binary. As the purpose of this thesis is to understand the construction of the Other in the text, my analytical section 3.2 aimed to reveal how cartography distances the self from the Other. This chapter also proves that the process of othering through maps and borders is actually a colonial and imperial project whose main purpose was to exert control and power over the colonized.

In my analysis, I, sometimes indirectly and sometimes directly, refer to the demarcation line between Thamma and Tridib or the narrator only to mean that the militant nationalistic spirit upheld by Thamma is presented in the text basically as a diametrically opposite version of Tridib and the narrator’s thinking. I have found in my reading of Ghosh’s text that it does not give any particular definition of a nation or nationalism, but it rather implicitly suggests is the possibility of inhabiting a world based on imagination and memory of individuals, which have no spatio-temporal constraint. I took this view from the text and constructed my analysis to prove that this imaginary space can function as a transcultural space, countering Thamma’s normative understanding of nation and home, and thereby obviating the further construction of the Other through identitarian politics by border and nation.
Works Cited


Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.


