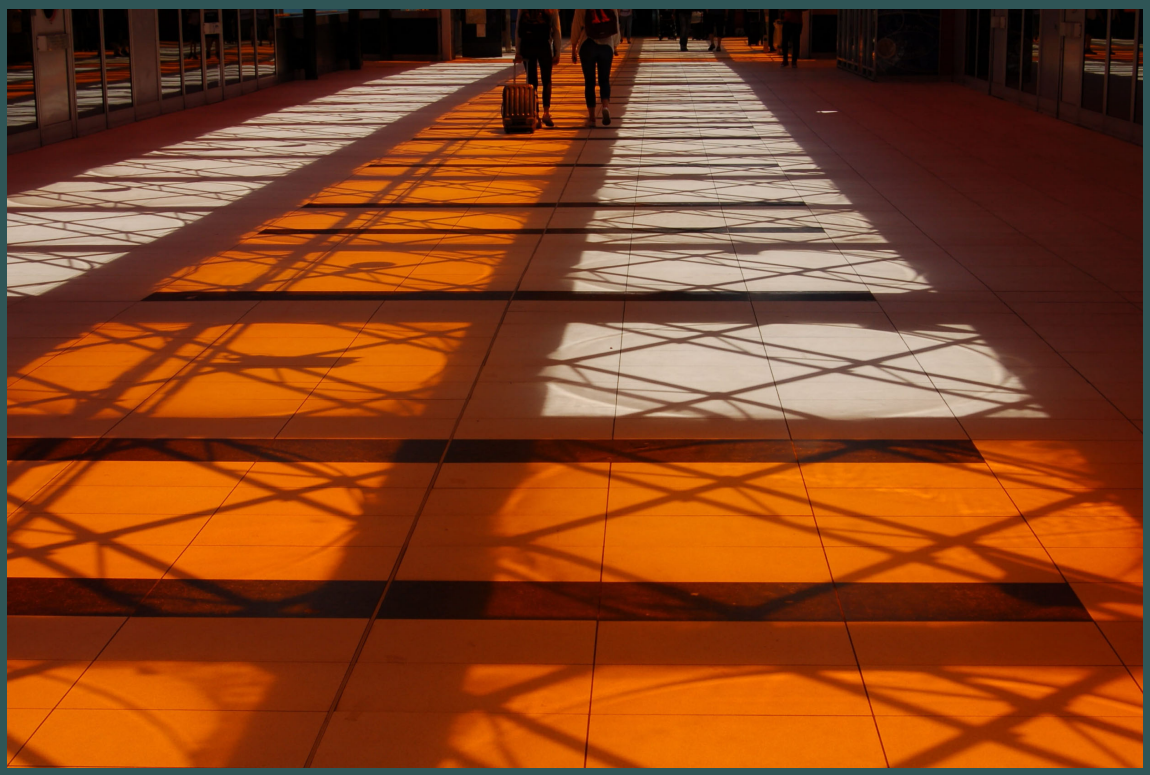
Crossing the Shadow Lines: Essays on the Topicality of Amitav Ghosh's Modern Classic

edited by
Esterino Adami, Carmen Concilio and Alessandro Vescovi



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I «QUADERNI DI *RICOGNIZIONI*»

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di Torino

Dipartimento di
Lingue e Letterature straniere e
Culture moderne

The published contributions have been submitted to blind *peer review*.
The editors are responsible for this procedure and testify to its validity.

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THE SHADOW LINES AS A WORK IN PROGRESS

A Genetic Approach to some Pages from the Typescript

Alessandro VESCOVI

ABSTRACT • This paper presents some pages from the original typescript of *The Shadow Lines*. The typescript has been transcribed in order to make it available to scholars. A few comments have been added about the differences between the typescript and the final version. The differences here discussed refer to changes in the plot, in the characters' names, and to stylistic choices.

KEYWORDS • Amitav Ghosh; Shadow Lines; Typescript; Genetic Criticism; Naming.

At the time when a group of scholars from Milan and Turin were organising a Conference to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the publication of *The Shadow Lines*, we wrote to the author to ask if he could give us his blessings and contribute a few welcome words for the attendees. Ever kind, Amitav Ghosh mailed us the lines that open this issue of *QuadRi*. Furthermore, he also sent the digital version of a few pages from the original typescript of the novel. This essay therefore consists of two distinct parts: the first is a philological transcription of the typescript, the second a critical discussion of some variants.

The Typescript

The typescript consists of nine sheets that were revised, xeroxed and then once more revised bearing witness to the way the author, and possibly his editors, worked all the way to the published version from the original manuscript. I have transcribed the typescript tracing three different levels of revision, which are marked here with the capital letters A through C. The first revision of the typescript (A) includes the correction of some typos and other amendments made with the typewriter itself, often between the lines. The second revision (B) is written in pen and was made on the original typescript before it was photocopied. The third revision (C), apparently by a different hand, is made in blue, working on the xeroxed version. The first two sheets, which carry no corrections, were evidently re-typed after much B revision in order to offer a more polished text. This looks evident from the third sheet, which contains a much-revised passage completely crossed out and rewritten in the first two sheets. Therefore the subsequent revisions can be thus ordered chronologically: typescript A (from sheet 3 to 9); manual notes B (sheets 3 to 9);

typescript B_1 (sheets 1 and 2, which do not contain any handmade notes); manual notes C (made on a xeroxed version of typescripts A). Both the typescript A and the hand notes B show instances of indecision and corrections, while manual notes C appear to be a revision carried out once most decisions had been made.

Hereafter I offer a transcript of the text marking variants between angular parentheses (<xyz>) followed by a capital letter pointing at the time of intervention. Deletions are transcribed with strikethrough characters. All annotations and corrections in pen are made over the line, and must be intended to be so unless otherwise specified. Arrows pointing left or upwards indicate that the annotations are made above the line (used only for typewritten corrections) or in the left margin. A square around a word stands for a circle – used only in C. A word between two daggers (†xyz†) is my guess when the original is unreadable, while the comments within square brackets are my own.

We know that Ghosh was living in a Delhi *barsati*[1] at the time when he wrote *The Shadow Lines* and typed the manuscript on sheets that probably exceed the ordinary letter format of photocopies (even now in India several different paper formats coexist); this may account for some missing words from the B revision that were written on the margin.

For copyright reasons it is not possible to republish the corresponding part of the final version, which, however, is not necessary as every reader may peruse the two texts against each other. However, as a further aid to comparison, I have underlined the parts of the typescript that remain in the printed version. This does not necessarily mean that the underlined sentences are identical in both versions, as some words have sometimes been added. The underlining therefore does not reflect anything that is in the typescript but is meant to offer a synoptic view of what has not changed between the typescript and the printed version.[2]

[1] A *barsati* is a Delhi rooftop studio apartment, then usually reserved for the lower classes. It has become fashionable lately thanks to the extensive introduction of A/C. See «Amitav Ghosh and the Sea of Stories.» 2019. *Mint*, Jun 15. See also the snapshot of the author at his typewriter allegedly writing *The Shadow Lines* published by Jon Mee in his "After Midnight. The novel in the 1980s and 1990s".

[2] I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my friend and colleague at the Department of Foreign Languages in Milano, Andrea Meregalli, without whose vast knowledge of philology I would never have been able to complete this task. It goes without saying that the responsibility for any mistakes and shortcomings rests solely on myself. For the section on names I am likewise indebted to my another friend, the first class scholar of Hinduism Cinzia Pieruccini for her patient explanations and bibliographical suggestions. Also in this case the faults that remain in that section of the present paper are only my own.

Borders[3]

Some time in the early sixties the Shaheb was posted to Dhaka as Counsellor in the Indian Deputy High Commission. It was thought to be something of a minor coup as far as his career was concerned: he had risen in rank and besides, professionally, East Pakistan was acknowledged, in the Service, to be one the most challenging posts in the world. It was a sign, or so the family said to outsiders, of the Shaheb's success as a diplomat.

But my grandmother wasn't deceived. He drinks, she said, which was something nobody in the family had ever said aloud before, and when she said it her profile grew spiky with contempt in exactly the way it did whenever she spoke of weaklings and sadhus and men who went to nightclubs.

Later she often argued about this with my father, who, in his own way, liked the Shaheb, and was, besides, much beholden to him because of the hospitality he had received from him in so many parts of the world. So what if he drinks ? he would say to my grandmother. Ma, you're living in another century; nowadays everyone drinks. That has nothing to do with it; he's a very successful man.

But once, when they were alone in their bedroom, I heard him telling my mother that the Shaheb had been superceded [sic] twice by men junior to him. If it weren't for Leela-mashi, he said, who knows where the Shaheb would be ? He laughed: Mogadishu ? La Paz ?

And yet in his arguments with my grandmother on the same subject it was taken for granted that he would at some stage announce with absolute finality that it didn't matter whether the Shaheb drank or not, he was still very successful. When this announcement came my grandmother would fall silent for he was, after all, the head of the house, even if he was her son. But my father, who knew his mother no better than sons usually know their mothers, would read into that silence an acquiescence while actually it was not [2nd sheet] even intended as a parody of it, like those hopeful silences with which people receive newspaper reports of wartime casualties; it could not be for in essence my grandmother's

[3] Underlined in the typescript; there is no such chapter division in the final text.

contempt for the Shaheb had nothing to do with drink at all: it was founded on the same iron fairness which prompted her, when she became headmistress of the school she had taught in for twenty years, to dismiss one of her closest friends from her job because she knew her to be by nature unpunctual – at bottom she thought the Shaheb was not fit for his job, he was weak, his character was weak, it was impossible to think of him being firm under threat, of reacting to a difficult or dangerous situation with that controlled accurate violence which was the quality she prized above all others in men who had to deal with matters of state.

[3rd sheet]

be for in essence my grandmother's contempt for her brother-in-law had nothing to do with drink at all: it was founded on the same iron fairness that made her dimiss [sic] one of her best friends <~~from her job~~ A> <~~in the school~~ B> when she became mistress <~~of their school~~ B> – <↑at bottom A> she thought the Shaheb was not fit for his job, he was weak, his character was weak, even his body was weak (for her there was no real difference between the two), it was impossible to think of him being firm under threat, of reacting to a <↑difficult or dangerous A> situation with <that controlled B> accurate, <~~controlled~~ B> violence, <~~the ability to do which she admired above almost all others <attributes A>, not just in a man, but just in all human beings.~~ B> <which is the quality she prized above all others in who had to ‡deal with‡ matters of State.[4] B> But for all this she merely despised him. She distrusted him in equal measure and the reason for that was that she knew instinctively what my father <~~knew~~ A> <had learnt A> through the extensive circle of his acquaintances: that it was her sister Leela [C] who took his decisions, who virtually did his work for him, who <had B> politicked and manoeuvred with all the resources of her enormous intelligence to salvage something of his career; and therefore, imagining him to be nothing but a dim <~~i~~ A> irradiation of her own sister, [B] she distrusted him, for, knowing her sister as she did, she could not believe that he loved his country enough.

[4] All text from the beginning of the third sheet to this point is crossed out.

It was not that she disliked the Shaheb: she merely distrusted and despised him in a mildly amused sort of way, and she would have done neither <~~had he~~ A> if, as she often <~~sq~~ A> said, he were doing something else, though what that something was I was never sure, for she certainly would not have tolerated him as a school—teacher or revenue inspector: perhaps she would have liked him best had he been a hotelier or <*maybe* B> an artist, for <~~it was~~ B> professions such as those <~~which~~ B> were to her synonymous with <eclecticism B> <↑cosmopolitanism A> which she <~~detected in her own sister~~ A> so much distrusted in her own sister.

And yet, when she heard of his appointment something flickered within her, one of those tiny currents which suddenly fill a pool with <~~long settled~~ A> <*a cloud of* B> silt, and from the way her mind kept going back to the subject I <~~knew —~~A> could tell that the news had left her deeply, profoundly [4th sheet] excited. <~~++++~~ A> More than a year later I thought I knew the reason why when Leela-debi [C] wrote asking her to visit them in Dhaka.

After a week's hesitation my grandmother decided to go, and after that <~~all the~~ †*some*† *of those* B> little everyday household rituals, [B] like having the floors washed and the ceilings cleared of cobwebs<, ~~which were more than a religion with her~~ B>[replaced by undecipherable long writing], slipped from her mind, and I would catch her with her schoolbooks spread out in front of her, staring into space<~~:~~;B ~~or~~ *and sometimes* B>, at night, I would see her climbing out of our mosquito netted bed to go to the window and look out through the shutters at the black emptiness of the lake across the road. [Paragraph break added in B]

I watched her with delight. It was the first time in my ten-year-old life that she had presented me with response I could fully understand and approve, which was <~~nod~~ A> no different from <~~g~~ A> the way I, or any of my <~~ten-year-~~ A> classmates would have responded: <~~to me~~ B> who had never been on aeroplane, <~~it seemed the most natural thing~~ B> in the world <~~it —~~ A> that she should lie awake at night at the thought of a first flight.

So it always puzzled me that the questions she asked my father never had anything to do with the kind of information I thought she would find useful. For instance, she wanted to know whether one could really see the border from the plane. When he laughed and said, why, did she really think it was a

long black line with green on one side and red on the other like it was in the maps on her school room wall, she was not offended but puzzled. That wasn't what she had meant, she said, of course not, but surely there was something, trenches, or soldiers, or guns pointing at each other, or even just barren strips of land ? But he only laughed again and said, no, she wouldn't be able to see anything, except perhaps some green fields and a few clouds.

This time she was angry, not because of what he had said, but the way he had said it. Be <~~q~~ A> serious, she snapped, don't forget I'm your mother, not one of your <~~chums~~ *yaars* B> in the office.

He was offended himself now, because he didn't like her to [5th sheet] speak to him sharply in my hearing. That's all I can tell you, he said shortly. That's all there is.

My grandmother thought over this for a while and then she said: But if there aren't trenches or soldiers, how are people to know ? I mean where's the difference then ? How can it be ? If there's no difference both sides would be the same; it'll be just like it used to be before when we used to catch a train to Dhaka in the morning and get off in Calcutta next <~~n~~ A> day, without anyone stopping us.

The difference isn't on the border nowadays Ma, my father retorted in exasperation. The border isn't the same thing as a frontier <~~nowadays~~ *any more* B> : the border's inside, you'll see, when you have to fill in all those disembarkation cards and forms and things.

At that my grandmother grew very nervous. What forms, ?[5] she said. What do they want to know about on those forms ?

Let me see, he said, scratching his head; they want your nationality, <~~you wo~~ A> your date of birth, place of birth, that kind of thing.

~~<My grandmother stiffened suddenly and the schoolbooks slid off her lap and lay around her feet in a tidy fan.~~ *My grandmother's eyes suddenly widened and the schoolbooks slid off her lap and lay around her feet in a tidy fan* B>. What's the matter ? My father said, but she only shook her head,and [sic] so it fell to me to ask my father for all the important information about

[5] Apparently, the question mark was inserted at a later moment in the space between the preceding comma and the following word.

aeroplanes that I felt she ought to know <about B>, like what button one had to press if one wanted the seats to tilt backwards, how do buckles were fastened on seat-belts and whether it was really true that the pilot kept parachutes hidden under his seat and everyone had to run up and snatched them from him if it seemed as though the plane was <~~really~~ A> going to crash, and in my anxiety for her safety I tried hard to make sure that she took it all in. It wasn't until many years later that I realised that it had suddenly occurred to her <~~then~~ B> that she would have to fill in 'Dhaka' as their birthplace on that form and that the prospect of this worried her in the same way that dirty schoolbooks worried her, because she liked <~~things to be neat and in place~~ B> [6th sheet] things to be neat and in place, and for a moment <†even† B[6]> she <~~could not~~ had not been able to B> understand how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality.

My father smiled, for he could see that the forms were <†~~so~~† B> worrying her: Don't worry, you won't have to do anything; the moment they hear you speak they'll know you were born there and they'll be so pleased they'll take you straight through.

She smiled but my father knew that something was still nagging at <~~her~~ B> obscurely <at her mind B>. But Ma, he said, teasing her; why are you so worried about this little journey ? You have been travelling between <~~co~~ A> countries for years without knowing it. Don't you remember ? When I was a child.

She was puzzled for a moment and then she understood: my father had been born in Mandalay when my grandfather was an engineer in the railways, and every year, of the ten she had spent there, my grandmother had taken him back to Dhaka to stay with her family for two months in winter.[7]

But it wasn't the same thing, she said, shaking her head. It was easier then. When you were a child we just had to take a steamer and a train and within a week we were back hom<e B>

[6] A word has been clearly inserted between "moment" and "she", but it is very difficult to read; "even" looks like a possible interpretation. In the final version this word has been expunged.

[7] This paragraph has been excised in the printed version, yet a similar one was inserted a hundred pages earlier in the context of Tha'mma's youth. The final version points to some analogies between Tha'mma's attitude towards travelling and Ila's.

in Mandalay. And when we were children, every now and again my father would say - Let's go to visit your uncle – <~~ti~~ A> and we would all go off, and when we <~~e~~ A> wanted to come back, <~~home,~~ A> we'd take a train and a day later we were back home in Dhaka.

I laughed, delighted at having caught my schoolmistress grandmother out. <~~Didu, didu~~ *Tha'ma, Tha'ma* [sic] B>, I cried, pounding on the arms of the sofa; <~~didu~~ *Tha'ma* B>, you don't know the difference between coming and going. How can you 'come' to Dhaka ? You don't know whether you are coming or going. For me that phrase was to become as intimate and inseparable a part of my grandmother as the jingling of the keys which hung knotted to her sari on her shoulder. I teased her with it for years: [7th sheet] <~~for example,~~> if she happened to tell me that she was going to take a lesson in Bengali grammar, <*for example,* B> I'd burst out laughing and say: But <~~Didu~~ *Tha'ma* B>,[8] how can you teach grammar – you don't know the difference between coming and going<~~.~~ ? B> Eventually the phrase passed on to the whole family and became a part of its secret lore; a barb in that fence we used, like every real family, to demonstrate our uniqueness to others. So for instance, when Ila was in Calcutta, if we happened to meet an acquaintance who asked her: When are you going back to London ? we would launch at once into a kind of practised patter : But she has to go to Calcutta first; Not if I'm coming to London; Nor if you are coming to Calcutta… And at the end of it, sobbing hysterically with the laughter which must have seemed as affected as it was inexplicable to all those who heard it, I would say: You see, in our family we don't know whether we are coming or going; it's all my grandmother's fault.

But the fault wasn't hers at all. It lay in the language. Every language assumes a centrality, a fixed and settled point to go away from and come back to , while what my grandmother was looking for was a <~~verb~~ *word* B> for a journey which is not a coming or going at all but the search for that fixed point which will permit the <~~prp~~ B> proper use of verbs of movement<~~,~~: ~~and~~B> <(B>I cannot reproach her for not finding one for <~~(~~ B> [← C maybe †print†] <I do not know of one myself [underlined in B].) B>

[8] Here "Didu" is capitalized, while it is not in the previous occurrences.

It turned out that my grandmother need not to have worried about travelling to Dhaka alone. A few days later my father had a letter from Leela-debi which threw our whole household into excitement, but me more than anyone else: and my grandmother was to have two companions on her trip and both of them were to stay with us for a few days before going on to Dhaka one was Leela-debi's second son, who<←m C> I had never seen, because he had been away for years at an American University, but with whom I had the same kind of wondering familiarity that I had with Angkor Wat and Quetzalcoatl partly because of his name,which [sic] I had once seen on the fly-leaf of a book a beautiful ringing name from another century, [8th sheet] Radhikaranjan, which I would roll around my tongue like sugar syrup; and partly because, like those distant places, I knew him through photographs, though not his own, but those of his grandfather, the High Court Judge, to whom he was said to bear an uncanny resemblance<, B> because of which nobody ever spoke of him by his real name but as Judge-da[9]: for that reason any mention of him was, for me, always tinged with an intense disappointment, but therefore also a curiosity, much as I would have felt had Quetzalcoatl been renamed Pyramidville. [Paragraph break added in B]

The other, who was to arrive first, was Miss [sic] Price's niece. My father told us many things about her, that she was twenty and had recently taken a Bachelor's degree in Art History at Edinburg<h B> University, that she was travelling around India for a few months before going on to join an art college in London and so on, but of all these only one interested me and that was her name, which was May. It had never occurred to me that a person could be named after a month, and puzzling over it, the only answer I could find was that she probably looked like a buttercup, for I had read in some primer of botany that in England buttercups flowered in May. After that curiosity about her appearance burned in me like a flame, mainly because I had never seen a buttercup, but also because I longed to know <~~what~~ how B> a person <looked, B> who might so easily have been called March or October had she <at all B> resembled a sweet-pea or a begonia. <~~looked like.~~ B>

[9] Circled in C; on the margin a question mark is written with the same pen.

<~~But when~~ When B> I first saw her at the station she looked nothing at all like I had expected, though to me, with a short, brown hair, her long, oval face, so pale that you could see the veins beneath the skin, and her transparent, melancholy blue eyes, she looked so utterly unfamiliar, so exotically beautiful that it made really, [sic] no difference. Long afterwards, <~~when she had already become Ila's aunt~~ ↑?>[10], Ila said to me: She's got the air of provincial mayor's daughter who's gone down to London on a weekend return to 'do' the National Gallery: all that blue-eyed eagerness. I said nothing then, because Ila was the sophisticate, the one who had seen the world, but to me May's endless questions, [9th sheet] the bewildered curiosity with which she regarded the world, seemed a sign of a kind of [blank space] unworldly and forthright<~~,~~ ↑innocence A>, which I had never before seen in a woman, for among my female relatives <(I knew no other women) B> I could think of none who was wholly free of that particular worldliness which comes from <~~manoeuvring~~ making—[unreadable word] B> within <a B> large <~~families~~ family B>, at which seems to grow, in those women, in direct proportion to the degree to which they are secluded from the world.[11]

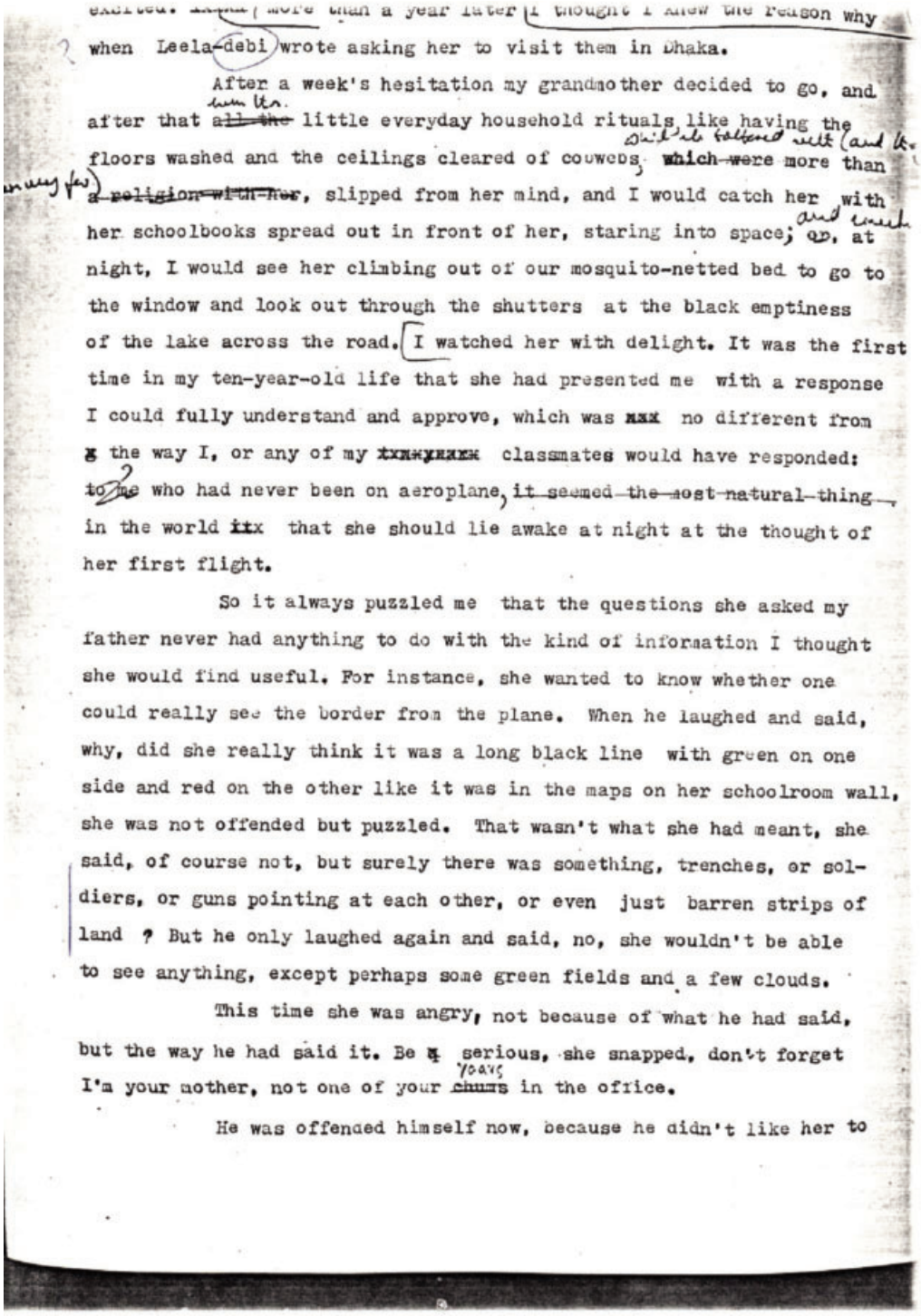
One morning, two days after May had arrived, my father suggested that she go to see the Victoria Memorial and that I go with her. I was delighted because for me a trip to the Victoria Memorial was a treat associated with festivals and holidays. But May hesitated, perhaps because she had grown tired of having me following her around the house and staring at her. I caught her hand and pleaded and then she smiled ruefully and agreed. But she would not let my father send a car. No, she said; we'll go in a taxi. That worried my mother because for her taxis were symbols of all the shadowy and unnameable dangers of the outside world from which it was her duty to protect her family. Still, after a short argument she agreed, although I knew that all the time that we were away she would be waiting and worrying.

[10] On the margin in the same blue pen of C are the words: "def. cut".
[11] This paragraph is marked on the margin as above with the words: "†aw†kward †s†yntax & †t†one". The left part of these words has not been scanned.

That afternoon a taxi was called for us. When we went down, the driver, a short tubby man with large, curling moustaches ran around to hold the <back A> door open for us. I jumped in and slid <*bouncing* B> along the seat<~~, bouncing~~ B>. Then I turned around, waiting for May to follow. She was standing outside, hesitating, chewing a fingernail with <~~a look of~~ B> intense concentration <~~on her face~~ B>. Then she opened the front door and got in, next to the driver's seat.

The taxi-driver started forward as though to stop her, and then stood quite still, staring at her. At the same moment I cried out to my mother in utter astonishment: What's she doing ?

My mother shook her <*head* B> sharply at me and said: It's [space added in B] all right, it doesn't matter; she's different, she's a foreigner. Then, switching [end of the 9th sheet]



exiled. [illegible] more than a year later I thought I knew the reason why when Leela-debi wrote asking her to visit them in Dhaka.

After a week's hesitation my grandmother decided to go, and after that all the little everyday household rituals like having the floors washed and the ceilings cleared of cobwebs, which were more than a religion with her, slipped from her mind, and I would catch her with her schoolbooks spread out in front of her, staring into space; or, at night, I would see her climbing out of our mosquito-netted bed to go to the window and look out through the shutters at the black emptiness of the lake across the road. I watched her with delight. It was the first time in my ten-year-old life that she had presented me with a response I could fully understand and approve, which was no different from the way I, or any of my classmates would have responded: to me who had never been on aeroplane, it seemed the most natural thing in the world that she should lie awake at night at the thought of her first flight.

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This time she was angry, not because of what he had said, but the way he had said it. Be serious, she snapped, don't forget I'm your mother, not one of your chums in the office.

He was offended himself now, because he didn't like her to

Fig. 1. The fourth sheet of the typescript.

The Work in Progress: A Discussion

In the second part of this essay, we shall consider the differences between these earlier versions and the printed one, trying to ascertain if there is a discernible logic in the direction of the variations. While during the writing process the selection of certain words or structures may sometimes result from unconscious processes, every variant made at the time of typing and afterwards is the result of a process of conscious decision-making. Given the complexity of the narrative material and its arrangement in *The Shadow Lines*, we can consider the typescript as a clean slate where the mind of the author, unencumbered by the fatigue of the writing process, may concentrate on single items and make decisions according to certain poetic principles (Ferrer 2016). As Goodman (1988) maintains, variations interpret the themes. In fact the later variant interprets the former, but for the genetic critic the process may work the other way round as the older variant may sometimes be considered as an interpretation of the newer one. More precisely, both possibilities may be considered not as variants, but rather as variations that interpret the same theme (Ferrer 2016). Thus a knowledge of previous authorial solutions allows a deeper insight into the subject matter.

In order to discuss the principal differences between the typescript and the final version, we shall group the variants under three headings, that we shall consider separately: Naming, Plot, and Stylistic Patterns.

Naming

Reading about familiar characters with different names is probably one of the strangest of readers' experiences. It is particularly surprising that even major characters like Tridib were first conceived by their author under different names. In the pages transcribed above, only Ila, May, and the Shaheb already had their original names, while Tha'mma, Mayadebi, and Tridib were called respectively "didu" (usually non capitalised) in A and "Tha'ma" in B, Leela (with the variants Leela-mashi and Leela-debi), and Radhikaranjan. These changes invite a speculation on the criteria that Ghosh adopted in naming his characters and on the meaning that names may carry in the novel.

Generally speaking, names are related to the characters in at least three different ways: they may be semantically connected with some theme or motive through their etymology (e.g. Alu in *The Circle of Reason*); they may be connected with some historical, mythical character or to some beloved person (e.g. Arjun in *The Glass Palace*); or the author may choose them as they are indicative of a particular social milieu (e.g. Fokir Mondal in *The Hungry Tide*). In the Ibis trilogy, where most characters are socially mobile, many of them have several names according to the circumstances.

The change from "didu" to "Tha'ma" and "Tha'mma" is not a major one and does not much affect the connotative value of the name. "Tha'mma" (actually "Tha'ma" in B) is short for *thakuma*, which is grandmother on the father's side. "Didu" is short for *didima*, which is grandmother on the mother's side. The use of "didu" in the typescript is surprising because the character is clearly the mother of the protagonist's father. One can speculate that initially the whole architecture of the Datta-Chaudhuri family was different and that

"didu" survived that genealogical changes until the B version. Certainly, the Price family had a different genealogy in the typescript version, since May is introduced as the niece of Miss Price and not as the daughter of Mrs Price.

Although both "didu" and "Tha'mma" are familiar, affectionate modes of address, the former is technically a diminutive and was spelt with a small "d", while "Tha'mma" with its six large letters and the capital "T" sounds and looks more solemn. Besides, "thaku-ma" is the feminine form of "thakur-dada" (grandfather), which is built on the Sanskrit word "thakur", which means master, elder, guru, which is consistent with the father's higher status (and of his elders with him) in Bengali traditional families (Das 1968, 25; Sarkar 2000). This connection with the word master resonates with the position of the character in her family and as headmistress in her school.

There is another reason, I believe, why Tha'mma had better be associated with father than with mother. While the narrator's father is, after all, a vague, absent parent, it is Tha'mma who embodies many of the values that are often associated with masculinity. She is a nationalist, she sympathises with freedom fighter terrorists, she upholds a cult for strong bodies and hard labour, and she is not particularly keen on religious practices. The narrator does not seem to appreciate these values, and his adolescent rebellion, or even Oedipus complex, seems directed more against his grandmother than his father.

Tha'mma's sister Mayadebi has undergone an interesting metamorphosis from her former name "Leela". In the novel she is called "Mayadebi" by the narrator and everyone else, while her sister calls her simply "Maya". In fact the narrator says that he never called her Mayadebi, but Maya-thakuma, being his grandmother's sister, but he remembers her as Mayadebi at the time of writing. This seems to imply that she has passed away at the time and has remained in his memory as a rather formal, lofty character. The suffix -debi (literally "goddess") adds formality to a woman's name and is usually reserved to the upper classes (Das 1968, 24; Sarkar 2000, 57).

In the typescript, Leela is called Leela-debi, with a hyphen which is not used in the case of Mayadebi. The names Leela and Maya are cognate. They are both of Sanskrit origin and point almost to the same cosmogonic concept. According to Maneka Gandhi Leela means "play"; in the Sanskrit tradition the term refers to the divine play through which God engenders the universe. According to this notion, God creates the universe like a child builds a sandcastle by the sea; without any real act of volition and without any human logic or purpose (Dimock 1989). Maya refers to the act of creating the universe too, and it may take on a positive or negative connotation depending on the viewpoint. From an *advaita* (non-dualistic) viewpoint, it carries the negative connotation of delusion, something that prevents us from seeing the real metaphysical Truth. From a *dvaita* (dualistic) viewpoint, Maya is the creation, the embodiment of the supreme creative energy (Shakti) and carries therefore a positive connotation (Bose 2018). Both Leela and Maya may undergo a similar semantic shift whereby the act of creating becomes the created universe itself. Why then would Ghosh choose Maya over Leela? I can only think of two reasons: either Leela resonated too strongly with Ila, which might create actual linguistic mismatches or an undesired connection, or Ghosh wanted the Sanskrit term to stand out either as a token of Brahmanical culture or as the very embodiment of Shakti. Mayadebi, like her sister in fact, is indeed very energetic, and much stronger than her husband, the

Shaheb, as one reads in these very pages. Apparently both Tha'mma and her son agree that it is Mayadebi who manoeuvres to advance her inept husband's career. The concept of "Leela" is famously employed by Tagore to describe the divinity of children (Dimock 1962), but is otherwise far less known than the concept of Maya; so maybe the shift was intended as a transparent way to underline the strength of the feminine world in which the narrator grew up.

While "Maya" and "Leela" belong to the same semantic field, social sphere, and Sanskrit descent, the difference between "Radhikaranjan" and "Tridib" is almost unbridgeable. The narrator, ever intrigued by names and words,[12] introduces the name in a way that is reminiscent of *Lolita*'s incipit: "a beautiful ringing name from another century, Radhikaranjan, which I would roll around my tongue like sugar syrup". It is difficult to speculate why Ghosh would think of this particular name. Possibly it is a kind of private reference. It is well known that the first germ of the novel lies in the anti-Sikh riot in Delhi following Indira Gandhi's assassination. In "The Ghost of Mrs. Gandhi", the author recounts how he was obliged to stay at his friend Hari Sen's because of the riot and how they concealed a couple of Sikh neighbours, saving their lives. *The Shadow Lines* is dedicated to "Radhika and Harisen" without any further explanation. In fact, Radhika (Chopra) is Hari Sen's wife. Hari Sen is a historian and Radhika Chopra an anthropologist who used to study with Amitav Ghosh when they attended their MA courses at Delhi University. "Radhika-Ranjan" means "he who makes Radhika happy", or "dotes on Radhika". The name is often referred to Krishna, who was Radha's lover according to the myth. Likewise, the name Hari refers to God and is normally used to designate Vishnu, and hence Krishna. Hence we may infer that initially Ghosh had named the protagonist's mentor, who is also a historian, after his friends. The name is obviously of Sanskrit origin and sounds very aristocratic, as the narrator underlines.

There is no sign of indecision about the name of Radhikaranjan in the typescript, while Leela and Tha'mma are both marked in either B or C. The decision to change it must have come rather late in the elaboration of the character, whose peripeteia undergoes a dramatic change from the typescript version to the final one. Ghosh may have decided to modify the name for the same private reasons that initially prompted him to use it (e.g. because he decided to use the dedication of the novel to acknowledge his friends rather than a character) or because the further development of this character was no longer consistent with either his friend's personality or the name itself. While a Sanskrit name would become a character like Mayadebi, it would hardly suit a non-conformist like Tridib. Incidentally, one must notice that, after *The Circle of Reason*, whose three parts were named after the three *gunas*, Ghosh rarely refers overtly to the Sanskrit tradition. The name of Arjun in *The Glass Palace* is an exception and so is Babu Nob Kissin in the Ibis Trilogy.

[12] Similar in this to his counterpart in *Remembrance of Time Past*, see Eleonora Sparvoli's essay in this same volume.

The name "Tridib" is not immediately associated with any Sanskrit myth, although the word is of Sanskrit origin and means heaven or sky.[13] This may be a reference to Tridib's own lack of concreteness, or to his detachment from the material preoccupations of his friends. The choice for this name may have been influenced by its contrary, Ila, which means earth in Sanskrit.[14] As Ila and Tridib are opposite forces that shape the personality of the protagonist (like Albertine and Swann in Proust's *Remambrance*), so their action is opposite and complementary. Attributing spirituality to the masculine gender (Tridib) and energy to the feminine (Ila in primis, but also May and Tha'mma) is, a common assumption of Indian thought which attributes the energy of Shakti to Goddesses and asceticism to Gods such as Shiva (Zimmer and Campbell 1963; Bose 2018).

Ila has never fared well in Ghosh criticism; many scholars seem to agree with Tha'mma about her appraisal (see for instance Mongia 1992). And yet, when we think of Ghosh's own biography, his life was more similar to Ila's than to the protagonist's, let alone Tridib. Like Jatin (Ila's father), Ghosh's father was a diplomat who worked in Dhaka and in Colombo before moving on to Iran. Amitav himself did not spend his teens in Calcutta, as he attended the Doon school from the age of thirteen and then moved to St. Stephen College in Delhi, before doing his PhD in Oxford. And even then, he did not stay in the UK all the time but went to Egypt for a year instead. On the way back from Egypt, young Amitav hitch-hiked all the way through Libya, in a bohemian mood that Ila would certainly approve of. Like Ila, Ghosh felt constrained in Calcutta, he married a Western partner and settled in a Western country. Ila is everywhere as displaced or dislocated (Spyra 2006; Roy 2014; Mannan 2017) as Tridib seems to be at home. Consistently she looks for tiny practical certainties, while Tridib seeks evasion.

Despite the narrator's protestations to the contrary, Tridib is not always reliable, and so is the protagonist as he appears unable to take Tridibs words critically. We have two proofs of this when Tridib makes up a story about going to London for his *adda* friends, and later, when the protagonist, Ila and Robi visit the Prices. The narrator shows off his knowledge of the place where he had never been, saying that Solent road had been hit by a high-calibre bomb. Robi objects that it could not be the case as the Germans only started to use such bombs later, and dismisses the question: "He was just a kid, nine years old. Every little bomb probably seemed like an earthquake to him…" (SL: 55). The protagonist does not falter. More subtly, in another episode, it is Ila who takes the protagonist to know one of the most interesting places in London, Brick Lane, whose existence Tridib had never mentioned and the protagonist ignored.

The novel is built on specular binaries like "coming" and "going", England and India, Calcutta and Dhaka, past and present, tradition and modernity, if only to deconstruct them.

[13] A similar name has been given to Nirmal, which means "pure", and is a kind of older avatar of Tridib.

[14] The name Ilā is very ancient and goes back to the Vedic period, however I see no reason to press the search beyond the literal meaning of the name as the myth of Ilā does not seem to have any connection with the novel.

The binary "Ila" and "Tridib", earth and heaven, may well be another instance of this same oppositional technique. It would be wrong to argue that either is better or worse. The logic of perfect binaries belongs to characters like Tha'mma, and as he grows up, the protagonist comes to comprehend their beguiling nature. If we think of the novel as a *Bildungsroman* (Almond 2004; Gahatraj 2017; Kaul 1994), the narrator comes of age as he learns to overcome these binaries by shedding light on the shadow lines that divide their continuum.

Plot

According to Seymour Chatman's seminal intuition, plots are made by kernels and satellites (Chatman 1978). The former allow the narrative to progress, creating a development, the latter are a kind of pause which hosts emotions, descriptions, dialogues, insights. Building upon this distinction, Franco Moretti has written an interesting essay included in his five volumes collection entitled *The Novel* (Moretti 2001). The chapter inspired by Chatman is devoted to what Moretti calls "serious fiction". The Italian scholar renames the concepts of kernels and satellites, calling them "scaffold" and "fillers". According to Moretti, the realistic novel of the nineteenth century is felt by readers to be "serious" as long as it does not only tell a story with peripeteias and events, but lingers on fillers, namely emotions, descriptions, dialogues, bon ton, etc. According to this theory, *Pride and Prejudice* is not interesting because Jane Austen tells about Lydia's elopement or Collins' quest for a wife, but because it portrays the manners, values, and problems of her society. In the eighth chapter of *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh discusses Moretti's essay in relation to the difficulty of imagining climate change. A novel that deals with climate change, Ghosh argues, falls outside the category of serious fiction, risking

> banishment to the humbler dwellings that surround the manor house – those generic outhouses that were once known by names such as 'the Gothic', 'the romance', or 'the melodrama', and have now come to be called 'fantasy', 'horror', and 'science fiction'. (GD: 24)

In the chapter just mentioned, Ghosh welcomes Moretti's insight and seems to agree, or to have hitherto agreed, that fillers somehow have a certain kind of priority in realistic fiction. The issues of indecision shown by the typescript seem to confirm this notion. Surprisingly at the stage of the typescript, some major parts of the plot were rather different from what they would become in the final version: the narrator did not know Tridib personally, as he did not live in Calcutta but in the US; May was not a musician, she was not Mrs Price's daughter, and was probably unknown to Tridib/Radhikaranjan; the famous visit to the Victoria Memorial took place in a taxi and without Tridib/Radhikaranjan. While in the final version May is clumsy and afraid of India, in the typescript she appeared rather confident as she insisted on taking a taxi and sitting beside the driver. One sentence deleted in C is also revealing of a different turn of events: talking of May the narrator says "Long afterwards, <~~when she had already become Ila's aunt~~↑? B>" the sentence is crossed-out in B, and a question mark is penned just above the sentence, while C responds to the question mark, confirming the deletion. Actually, the only way for anyone to "become" Ila's aunt was to marry either of her uncles, Robi or Tridib/Radhikaranjan. This suggests

that the love story between Tridib and May was far more advanced and overt than it is in the final version, where May becomes Ila's sister in law instead. Here Moretti's image of scaffold and fillers is misleading; one is brought to think that the scaffold is built before it is "filled" with anything. In fact, in the fragment that we are examining, the opposite seems to be the case. Some "fillers" – like the long dialogue between Tha'mma and the family on her perspective trip to Dhaka, or even the short (and justly much-quoted) discussion on coming and going – were already there long before the plot was finalized. Ila was introduced longer before Tridib/Radhikaranjan entered the stage, which probably gave her more space in proportion. If Tridib was not living in Calcutta, the distinctive pages on *adda* were probably missing, but we can only make conjectures on this point. However, the important impression is that some "fillers" were in the novel right from the start and the plot has been arranged to accommodate them, which actually gives them pride of place.

It is interesting to see that the figure of Tridib has emerged slowly as the novel was being written, while Ila was there right from the start. As I said earlier commenting on their complementary names, theirs are two different world-pictures and two different kinds of cosmopolitanism that the narrator strives to overcome in a sort of Hegelian *Aufhebung*. Tridib may well have given to the narrator eyes to see other worlds, but he lacks the energy that Ila does have to actually travel, mix with people and look for adventures, and try to leave a mark in the world, as she does, albeit naively, with her Marxist friends.

Stylistic Patterns

So far we have dwelt on the reasons that may stand behind some of the variants considering the possible reasons for the different choices and their articulation with the general poetics of the novel at a macrolevel. We should now focus on the level of the sentence and try to trace a pattern in the changes made on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes.

Consider for instance the following passages, the first from the typescript and the second from the printed version:

> It was not that she disliked the Shaheb: she merely distrusted and despised him in a mildly amused sort of way, and she would have done neither <~~had he~~ A> if, as she often <~~sq~~ A> said, he were doing something else, though what that something was I was never sure, for she certainly would not have tolerated him as a school-teacher or revenue inspector: perhaps she would have liked him best had he been a hotelier or <maybe B> an artist, for <~~it was~~ B> professions such as those <~~which~~ B> were to her synonymous with <~~eclecticism~~ B> <↑cosmopolitanism A> which she <~~detected in her own sister~~ A> so much distrusted in her own sister.

> It was not that she disliked the Shaheb: she merely distrusted and despised him in a mildly amused sort of way, and she would have done neither, **as she often said, if** he were **only** doing something else, **something less important**, though what that something was I was never sure, for she certainly would not **have been any more tolerant of him had he been a schoolteacher** or **even a** revenue inspector: perhaps she would have liked him best **if he**

had been a hotelier, or maybe an artist, for professions such as those were synonymous **in her mind with the most detestable kind of** cosmopolitanism.

In the final passage the words that do not appear in the revised typescript have been emphasised. The changes that take place here are observable also in several other parts of the typescript, especially where Tha'mma and her son discuss the possibility of her visiting Dhaka. Most changes occur on the syntagmatic axis and concern the free indirect speech. The latter is made less formal and more similar to the natural direct speech until it becomes a sort of transcript without the customary punctuation. Non-content words have been added such as "only" or "even", as well as non-defining subordinate clauses ("as she often said", "something less important").

On the paradigmatic axis one change is worth commenting. In A, the author after writing "eclecticism" typed "cosmopolitanism" just above it, and at a later time deleted the former with a strike of pen (and not as he was wont to do by overtyping the word with xs). The fact that "eclecticism" was deleted at a later time (in the B revision) is proof that this was a moment of indecision. It probably arose from the conflict between Tha'mma's views (as she would probably use the derogatory word "eclecticism") and the author's urge to discuss cosmopolitanism, which is one of the main themes of the novel, as many scholars have noticed. In Bakhtinian terms, one would say that eclecticism is a hybridized word – belonging to the habitual lexis of the character – while cosmopolitanism belongs to the lexis of the narrator. This adjustment requires the next one, which is not in the typescript; the reference to Mayadebi is excised in favour of a more general reference to cosmopolitanism. The phrase "most detestable kind" also suggests that there may be several kinds of cosmopolitanism; and Tha'mma appears to loath most of them (if not all) for they are the opposite of nationalism. This is yet another point where Tha'mma's mindset appears colonial – and hence paradoxically close to Ila's – as nationalism is a typical European concept, while cosmopolitanism has a long tradition in Bengal from Ram Mohan Roy to Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore.

Summing up these changes, one is reminded of Italo Calvino's *Memos for the New Millennium* (1985), especially of "Lightness" and "Exactitude". The former is displayed in freeing the text from grammar and typographical constraints as Ghosh creates a free indirect speech that could actually be written in inverted commas – thus thinning the boundary between direct and indirect speech. Like the decision of adding Tridib to the trip to the Victoria Memorial instead of letting May and the protagonist on their own, this stylistic choice reduces the space occupied by the narrator in favour of the other characters without actually silencing him like a direct speech would do.

Calvino's "Exactitude" is a quality that Tridib would sum up in the precept "use imagination with precision" (SL: 24). Here it is apparent in the selection of the term "cosmopolitanism" rather than "eclecticism" and in providing a fit context for it, passing from "which she detected in her own sister" in A, to "which she so much distrusted in her own sister" in B, to the final "synonymous in her mind with the most detestable kind of cosmopolitanism". The narrator, on the other hand, is alert to exactitude, as he immediately points out his grandmother's mismatch in choosing the verb that denotes her homecoming. The famous passage is worth a closer comparison with the earlier version:

I laughed, delighted at having caught my schoolmistress grandmother out. <~~Didu, didu~~ Tha'ma, Tha'ma [sic] B>, I cried, pounding on the arms of the sofa; <~~didu~~ Tha'ma B>, you don't know the difference between coming and going. How can you 'come' to Dhaka ? You don't know whether you are coming or going. For me that phrase was to become as intimate and inseparable a part of my grandmother as the jingling of the keys which hung knotted to her sari on her shoulder. I teased her with it for years: [7th sheet] <~~for example,~~> if she happened to tell me that she was going to take a lesson in Bengali grammar, <for example, B> I'd burst out laughing and say: But <~~Didu~~ Tha'ma B>,[15] how can you teach grammar – you don't know the difference between coming and going<~~.~~ ? B> Eventually the phrase passed on to the whole family and became a part of its secret lore; a barb in that fence we used, like every real family, to demonstrate our uniqueness to others.

I jumped to my feet, delighted at having caught **her** out – she, who'd been a schoolmistress **for twenty-seven years**. Tha'mma, Tha'mma! I cried. **How could you have 'come' home to Dhaka?** You don't know **the difference between** coming and going!
I teased her with **that phrase** for years **afterwards**. If she happened to say she was going **to teach me Bengali** grammar, for example, I **would laugh** and say: But Tha'mma, how can you teach me grammar**?** You don't know the difference between coming and going**.** Eventually the phrase passed on to the whole family and became a part of its secret lore; a barb in that fence we **built to shut ourselves off from others**.

As we have noted before, this part, which foreshadows and interprets the two sections into which the novel is divided, is thematically pivotal and the author has bestowed special care on it. Most changes are on the paradigmatic axis, although the lexis remains within the same semantic field. The same principle of Lightness seen above seems to preside over some of the choices, such as "I jumped to my feet" instead of "pounding on the arms of the sofa", while "I'd burst out laughing" becomes simply "I would laugh", likewise the lengthy sentence about Bengali grammar is shortened with the extra advantage of pointing to the relationship between Tha'mma and the protagonist. Similarly the reference to the bunch of keys has been excised. As before, the verbal space occupied by the protagonist is reduced in favour of the other characters.

Exactitude is achieved through specific lexical choices: the verb "to tease" which was there right from the start is confirmed, while "that phrase" replaces a generical "it". "The difference between coming and going", i.e. the "phrase" appears twice in order to give it due prominence and suggest the idea of a playful repetition.

As it often happens also in Proust's *Remembrance*, eventually the whole episode is turned into a kind of insight ensuing in a general speculation. The reflection is similar in the two passages and is carried by the same metaphor of the barbed wire, but the idea seems sharper in the printed version, where the first-person plural no longer points to the protagonist's family, but to the majority of families, making the specification ("like every real family") unnecessary – another instance of weight loss.

[15] Here "Didu" is capitalized, while it was not in the previous occurrences.

The foregoing notes point to some possible paths of investigation for the typescript. Unfortunately, there is no Ghoshian archive available for scholars to study drafts extensively, but other scholars better equipped than myself in linguistics may find in the pages reproduced above some useful material to guide us all through the complexities of this almost classic novel.

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