

**Chitra Sankaran, ed. *History, Narrative and Testimony in Amitav Ghosh's Fiction*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2012. pp. 239. ISBN 978-1-4384-4181-8.**

This collection of international scholarship on the fiction of Amitav Ghosh was much needed, in view of the fact that Ghosh is one of the most prolific and acclaimed contemporary Indian English writers. A recipient of several literary awards he has also been conferred the Padmashree award by the President of India.

In addition to the Introduction by Chitra Sankaran aptly titled “Beyond Borders and Boundaries,” the volume comprises fourteen critical and scholarly essays, wide ranging and eclectic in scope and interest. Each one of them addresses one or the other of Ghosh’s recurrent themes in his entire corpus of writing. Sankaran’s interview of Ghosh perhaps touches the core of the concerns reflected in the volume focusing as it does, on diasporic predicaments. Three essays of a total of fourteen in the volume, by Rajesh Rai and Andrea Marion Pinkney, Nandini Bhautoo-Dewnarain, and Shanthini Pillai, engage with Ghosh’s fictional representation of the *girmityias*, the old diaspora of indentured workers who were forced to go from India to various parts of the erstwhile British Empire in conditions of extreme material and cultural dispossession. Frederica Zullo and Crystal Taylor, in their articles are concerned to investigate the subject of communities within the national body and the role of fictional narratives in constructing new national realities. As a result of Ghosh’s postmodernist focus on language and his innovative and experimental use of it, the subject of language and the use of language have been of persistent interest to scholars. Thus it is not surprising that three scholars, namely Tuomas Huttunen, Ismail Talib and Shao-Pin Luo, in their essays explore Ghosh’s thematic treatment of language and his complex relationship with English, writing in it, yet questioning its ability to authentically reflect alternate sensibilities. Ghosh’s enduring concern for the marginalised, concomitant with his persistent attempts to question and foreground the apparent neutrality of discourses of power, form the subject of Chitra Sankaran’s and Lou Ratte’s essays. In a similar vein Tammy Vernerey positions Ghosh as the “resisting, travelling ethnographer” highlighting and foregrounding subaltern histories and transcultural identities. Both Ruby S. Ramraj and Robbie Goh engage in exploring transgressive generic forms and narrative structures in their respective essays, positing that Ghosh uses science fiction conventions to explore postcolonial issues.

Undoubtedly, the contributors to this volume effectively and eruditely showcase current, worldwide scholarship on Ghosh and do justice to the multiple dimensions of Ghosh’s rich and complex narratives. However, I have

some reservations about the claim made by the editor of the volume, Chitra Sankaran, who in her Introduction to the volume states that: “[P]ublished outside India, with only Indian diasporics or non-Indian scholars contributing, this volume can legitimately lay claim to being the first truly international critical volume on Amitav Ghosh” (xiv). In my view, the volume would have perhaps gained in substance and richness if it had included an article or two from scholars residing in India. After all, India is also a part of the international terrain!

**Rajyashree Khushu-Lahiri**  
**Indian Institute of Technology Ropar, India**