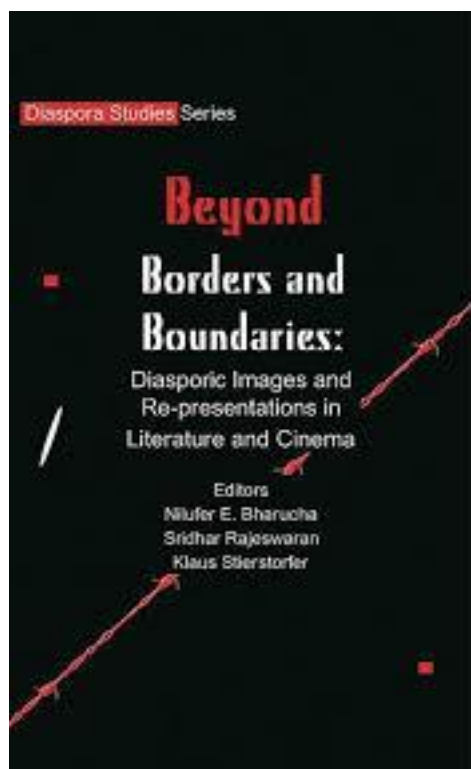


Nilufer E. Bharucha, Sridhar Rajeswaran and Klaus Stierstorfer, eds. *Beyond Borders and Boundaries: Diasporic Images and Re-presentations in Literature and Cinema*. CoHab IDC, University of Mumbai, 2018. 351 pp. ISBN 978-81-933307-6-0.



The book under review is the first published volume of the “Diaspora Studies Series” and does a commendable job in offering a kaleidoscopic perspective of the concept of borders and boundaries in diasporic imagination from a theoretical framework and re-presentations in literature and cinema critiqued from ideological, socio-cultural point of view and gender power dynamics. As the title suggests, the book aims at addressing the issues of the shifting meaning of “border” in contemporary discourses and the papers in the volume go beyond the colonial and postcolonial use of the term to address real socio-political issues thus replacing a study of mythologically ordained concept of borders and boundaries. The impact of globalisation has fostered Transnationalism and global citizenship where postmodern citizens live across borders without giving up their nationalities. Border crossing is also a major

issue and can be metaphorically seen through a gender perspective as women cross patriarchal borders into wider spaces. The twenty-four essays in this anthology are divided into three sections – Theoretical Frames, Diasporic Representations in Literature and Imaging the Diaspora in Cinema.

The four articles of the first section concentrate on the theoretical aspects of borders and boundaries. In the opening essay, Avtar Brah, a pioneer in Diaspora studies and research, observes that Borders are not merely geopolitical demarcations but means exercised by a state to take control over the movement of people, goods, trade, capital and information. The economic and political power relations are thus central to the ways in which borders are regulated. Migrations are totally determined by economic inequalities between different countries due to new modes of capitalism that brings into the major question of refugees and deportation. Craig Brandist's paper focuses on the way in which the western critique about the East developed in revolutionary Russia and traces through the Stalinist and post-Stalinist conceptions of the Orient via Said's *Orientalism* to show that major conceptions of Marxism and Stalinism are both embedded in the postcolonial theory. Discussing how the metaphor of the Laxman Rekha has been used historically and mythologically in the Hindu cultural context to promote and sanction systematic gender inequalities, Vaneja Dhruvarajan shows that in some cases the struggle to defy conventions have resulted in redefining borders while in other cases the consequences have been unfavourable. Roxana-Elisabeta Marinescu observes that the Western discourse has constructed an "uncivilised, undeveloped" Romania following the tradition of Dracula representing a difference and othering by recycling the old postcolonial discourses used against the old immigrants. These four essays are a perfect mix of theoretical perspectives on borders and border crossings in a global or local set-up that has engendered differences and discourses.

The next section has thirteen articles that engage with exploring and analysing the multiple ways in which diasporic representations in literature deal with borders of many kinds; political, cultural and patriarchal and how such borders can become conflict zones so that crossing boundaries expand and widen dialogic discourses in diaspora studies. Somdatta Mandal looks at the early 20th century sojourners from villages in Bengal who traded embroidered silks and *chikankari* work at New York's Ellis Island. These peddlers often settled and married Puerto Rican and African American women and thus the next generation became part of a mixed race community as is evident from their literary representations in films and theatrical performances. Since these early migrant peddlers created contact zones by travel and trade, Mandal hints at the possibility of speaking of these border crossers in terms of cosmopolitanism used in the discourse of globalisation. Cooking as a trope of memory and nostalgia is used in diasporic representations and Mala Pandurang looks at the "intergenerational transmission of the memory" (87) of displacement in line

with the theory of post-memory in memoirs where food becomes a strategy for reminiscing the trauma of displacement. Himadri Lahiri has focused on two different narratives of border crossing. As descendants of the indenture diaspora, both Brij V. Lal and Gaiutra Bahadur undertake a journey in their narratives to trace back the ancestral past through the stories of their journey across the *kala pani*. The reconstruction of the past when memory was not archived involved in such representations is a challenging task and the narrators are emotionally involved in such travel narratives.

Analysing a novel by the Kashmiri writer Mirza Waheed, Hameedah Nayeem observes that *The Collaborator* highlights the situation of the contested state of Kashmir and the text contests hegemonic political discourses to carve a space for a distinct Kashmiri identity free from Indo-Pakistani filial versions. Asis De concentrates on the exile of the last Burmese king Thibaw and the representation of the Burmese Royal family in exile in two narratives, namely Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* and Sudha Shah's *The King in Exile*. De shows that while Ghosh's narrative is a fictional representation that actually inspired Shah to document the historical perspectives of the exile, both the narratives attempt a critical examination of the concept of dislocation, exile and the psychological impact of displacement as a result of the political strategy of the colonial ruler. Preeti Shirodkar looks at Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* as an attempt that emerges from the intersectional space of diaspora and gender. Divakaruni locates the story of *Mahabharata* through the eyes and voice of Draupadi questioning the male perspective and contesting the male space of narration establishing women's writing in a male dominated domain. Rupam Hazarika has taken two novels by Anjum Hasan, *Lunatic in My Head* and *Neti, Neti* that explore migrant spaces created by internal borders and boundaries. The North-East is geographically isolated from the mainland that has created a physical distance and sense of alienation amongst the people of the region. Hazarika explores how the impact of colonialism has resulted in the dominant discourse of stereotyping the region that draws cultural, linguistic and ethnical borders differentiating the native. The concept of "home" becomes problematic as the migrant spaces created in the process of border crossing have become sites of cultural encounters and conflicts. Sooshilla Gopaul's paper uses Arjun Appudurai's "technoscape" and Benoit Mandelbrot's "fractal" that has contributed to the Chaos Theory to explore Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland* and proposes that the diasporic subject be given a second chance of forgetting the past and adopting new ways while learning provides a positive approach towards advancement.

Paromita Chakrabarti applies Freud's concept of the "uncanny" to the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* to show how Kiran Desai reconfigures the concept of "home" and how the diasporic subject inherits a fractured identity and rather than moving effortlessly across borders is caught between the loss of the

original home and the impossibility of a return. Tamasha Acharya investigates the changing identities and reconfigurations of the diasporic subject created by border crossings. She concentrates on the “desi” identities that evolve in the process of crossing borders, as in Gautam Malkani’s *Londonstani* where the immigrant subject reframes identity not by integrating, but assimilating to the host culture in his own terms. Syeda Nadia Ali explores the concept of the arbitrariness of borders in three novels by Amitav Ghosh to show that the narratives point at human relationships, love and emotion that can render physical borders intangible and invisible. Borders in Ghosh’s novels do not merely separate but connect; they are “shadow lines.” Travel writing is the subject of Kaushik Nagadev Bhuyan’s paper and his argument is centred on representation of geographical borders in the travelogues *From Heaven Lake* and *The Jaguar Smile*. His argument that border crossing involves the recasting of the narratorial self and enabling him to move at ease across borders seems convincing. The last paper by Maitri Vyas examines Paulo Coelho’s celebrated novel *Eleven Minutes* to explore the journey of Maria – her external journey from Brazil to Switzerland corroborates the journey of her soul from sex to higher consciousness. These thirteen scholarly papers make use of dominant theories and discourses to analyse literary texts on Borders and border crossings to provide fresh perspectives on diaspora work making the section an interesting reading.

The seven articles in the third section focus on the imaging of Diaspora in cinema and often point at the breaking of stereotypes that are projected in the latest Bollywood films. Cinema is a powerful agent of visual representation that easily connects with the masses. Bollywood films with its global reach and popularity becomes an important tool for the directors to represent the Indian Diaspora. Clelia Clini traces the journey of Hindi films and concentrates on how the depiction of the Diaspora has changed in Hindi movies with the broader changes within the Indian society as notions of home and belonging have undergone a change in the last three decades and global movement has given rise to the concept of transnational citizenship. She observes that unlike previous films on the diaspora the latest productions portray a more flexible cultural boundary that seems to be expansive of the West. Jayana Jain Punamia’s interesting paper focuses not merely on the portrayal of womanhood in recent Indian movies that break the gender stereotypes, but also explores the pleasure content of border crossing for the protagonists in films like *English Vinglish* and *Queen* drawing on Slavok Zizek’s notion of “fantasy.” Nirja Vasavada takes into account the discourses of queer theory and examines Mahesh Dattani’s film *Mango Souffle* in that perspective. She focuses on how the queer community in India is marginalised and forms its own queer space and the marginalisation often “caus[ing] a physical diasporic movement – crossing the boundary of one’s own nation” (295) to other countries where homosexuality is not

considered a crime. Ruta Dharmadhikari's paper is a reading of the Lebanese director Nadine Labaki's film *Where Do We Go Now?* (2011) that crosses gender boundaries suggesting a collapse of borders and alternate modes of resistance bridging sectarian and religious divides in the wake of 9/11 terror incident that bred global suspicion. Labaki's imaging of women who defy conventional modes of thought and action and act in collective agency to solve a local problem appropriating a "female solidarity" (312) revises notions of acculturation and attempts at imagining community in a global context.

Manju E.P. looks at post-1990s Malayalee movies that constructed binaries of tradition and modernity, rationality vs. irrationality, high and low in the cinema that problematises the othering by imposing a subaltern identity on the Tamilians. Ruby Rana uses the *autoethnography* framework to understand the emotions involved in creating or deconstructing boundaries of consciousness. She examines Gaurav Seth's film *Sweet Destiny* and relates the film to her own Indo-Canadian diasporic experience to identify parent-child boundaries with its impact on the home space thus extending the study of boundaries of nation to boundaries of consciousness. Kruti Vyas's study of Gurinder Chadha's film *Bride and Prejudice* that transforms Austen's classic text to a postmodern Indian diasporic setting with all the pomp and exuberance of Bollywood films highlights Chadha's brilliant use of mimicry of a colonial text in the film possessing a subversive potential. It is like a wonderful afterlife of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* offering a neo-colonial discourse in a postcolonial world.

Though not included in this volume, the editors are aware that there are other geo-political and ontological issues flaring across borders like political refugees, deportation and the conflict claiming the right to residence which they hope to address in forthcoming volumes of the Diaspora Studies Series.

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