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# Displacement and Fragmented Identity A Critical Analysis of Samir Baya's Fiction

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# النزوح والهوية المجزأة: تحليل نقدي لرواية سمير بايا

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المديرية العامة لتربية صلاح الدين

Abstract:

In this study, the researcher critically investigates Samir Baya's two novellas, *You Will Not Remain Alone Like a Stone* (2024) and *The Real Heroes Don't Fall* (2024). He focuses on the themes of fragmented identities, exile, and cultural dislocation. The study examines, through an exploration of the protagonists' existential struggles, Baya's characters. He responds to how these characters grapple with both internal and external conflicts in their search for meaning and identity within unfamiliar and alienating environments. The study has employed *Transformation Theory* to trace the psychological and personal development of the characters. This is to know how they respond to cultural and existential pressures. The study moves on to draw on Edward Said's notions of exile and hybridity to frame the identity of those characters. Further, it provides a deeper analysis of the characters' crisis through psychoanalytic theory and Jacques Lacan's concepts of identity formation and the Other. The study illuminates the complexity of Baya's exploration of displacement and identity formation.

**Keywords**Samir Baya, exile, identity, alienation, transformation, literary criticism, cultural displacement

المستخلص

تدرس هذه الورقة النقدية موضوعات الهويات المجزأة والمنفى والتشرذم الثقافي في روايتي سمير بايا القصيرتين، "لن تبقى وحيدًا كالحجر" (٢٠٢٤) و"الأبطال الحقيقيون لا يسقطون" (٢٠٢٤). من خلال استكشاف الصراعات الوجودية التي يعيشها أبطال الرواية، تبحث الورقة في كيفية تعامل شخصيات بايا مع الصراعات الداخلية والخارجية في بحثهم عن المعنى والهوية في بيئات غير مألوفة ومُنفّرة. لتأطير هذا التحليل، تُستخدم نظرية التحول لتتبع التطور النفسي والشخصي للشخصيات أثناء استجابتها للضغوط الثقافية والوجودية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يتم دمج نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار، وخاصة مفاهيم إدوارد سعيد عن المنفى والهجين، ونظرية التحليل النفسي، المستمدة من مفاهيم جاك لاكان عن تكوين الهوية والآخر، لتوفير نظرة أعمق لأزمات الشخصيات. من خلال الجمع بين هذه المنظورات النظرية، تسعى هذه الورقة إلى تسليط الضوء على تعقيد استكشاف بايا للنزوح وتكوين الهوية، مع وضع صراعات شخصياته في سياق أوسع لما بعد الاستعمار والاغتراب النفسي**الكلمات المفتاحية:** سمير بايا، المنفى، الهوية، الاغتراب، التحول، النقد الأدبي، النزوح الثقافي

## Introduction

The two powerful novellas written by Samir Baya, *You Will Not Remain Alone Like a Stone* and *The Real Heroes Don't Fall*, offer stories blended with psychological complexity. They narrate stories of people feeling out of place and lost. The characters struggle between who they are and where the belong. This enables us to investigate the tensions between identity, displacement, and existential struggle. Baya's protagonists are caught between two worlds. They have left their old homes, but don't feel at home in their new surroundings. This makes their lives feel fragmented. They are constantly searching for meaning in places that feel unwelcoming.These ideas connect to bigger issues found in postcolonial literature. The books show the real impact of migration and living between cultures.To understand these stories, we can use Transformation Theory. This theory is a useful tool. It helps us follow the characters' inner journeys. As they face outside pressures and inner conflict, they change. The theory shows us how they try to rebuild their sense of self in a confusing world.

**Emotional Isolation and Nostalgia**In the novella, *You Will Not Remain Alone Like a Stone*, the opening vividly captures desolation and longing, set against a barren landscape that mirrors the protagonist's inner turmoil and profound sense of isolation. The stone imagery, central to the novella's title, represents not only the physical endurance of the protagonist but also his emotional and existential detachment from the world around him. This depiction aligns with Edward Said's concept of "exile as a condition of terminal loss," where the individual remains forever disconnected from both their past and present realities (Said, 173). The protagonist's homeland, once a source of identity, has become distant and unreachable, leaving him in a state of emotional paralysis.The setting of the story amplifies the theme of alienation. Although physically present in a new environment, the protagonist remains emotionally tethered to memories of a lost past, making it impossible for him to form meaningful connections in the present. This resonates with Marc Augé's notion of "non-places," where spaces of transit or dislocation reflect an individual's fragmented identity and inability to belong (Augé, 34). As Baya writes, "The feeling of nostalgia washed over me, as the memories of my past flooded in with the rising winds" (Baya, 9). This passage emphasizes the cyclical nature of memory, with recurring motifs of wind and water symbolizing the constant yet futile flow of time. Like the wind, which shifts and never settles, the protagonist's memories trap him in a loop of emotional stasis, unable to move forward.The motif of the stone also brings to mind Gaston Bachelard's ideas on the "poetics of space," where certain objects or environments reflect the individual's inner world (Bachelard, 47). The cold, unmoving stone reflects the protagonist's static emotional state—detached yet enduring, weighed down by memories that serve as both comfort and burden. The protagonist's stasis also reflects what Jean-Paul Sartre described as "bad faith"—the refusal to confront one's freedom and responsibility to change, instead hiding behind roles or past identities (Sartre, 101). In the novella, this inability to embrace the new and let go of the past ultimately traps the protagonist in his isolation.The symbolic use of the environment in *You Will Not Remain Alone Like a Stone* aligns with many post-colonial narratives that deal with the trauma of displacement and the loss of identity. Critics such as Homi Bhabha discuss how the migrant or exile often exists in a liminal space, where the past is ever-present, but the future remains elusive, leading to a fractured sense of self (Bhabha, 56). Baya's novella portrays this liminality through both the character's internal struggles and the external setting, where the protagonist is forever caught between two worlds.In contrast, *The Real Heroes Don't Fall* delves deeply into the psychological turmoil of individuals who, despite their outward appearances of strength, remain internally fragmented. The protagonist of this novella wrestles with the burden of societal expectations and personal desires, finding himself caught in a liminal space between tradition and modernity. In this regard, we find ourselves in connect with Victor Turner's concept of "liminality". This means that we could see individuals exist in an in-between state, neither fully part of the old nor yet integrated into the new (Turner, 94). This is a state of being in-between. The character is no longer part of his old world, but hasn't found his place in a new one. His personal confusion is more than just his own. It symbolizes a larger societal tension. It's the struggle between holding onto cultural traditions and the desire for individual freedom.The story's settings shift from city to countryside. This acts as a metaphor for the protagonist's inner conflict. He is torn between a desire for freedom and the pull of his roots. The urban environment feels suffocating. It represents the pressures of modern life and society's rules (Simmel, 14). In contrast, the open countryside stands for escape and a more authentic way of living.Baya writes, "The suffocation of the city streets overwhelmed him, as he longed for the open space of the countryside where he once roamed freely" (Baya, 11). This line perfectly captures the character's struggle. The city is the weight of expectations. The countryside is a yearning for freedom and control. This duality reflects an existential tension. It is similar to what Albert Camus described in the conflict between the search for meaning and the absurdity of life (Camus, 44).The protagonist's battle is between his present reality and his cultural past. This symbolizes the bigger conflict between tradition and modernity. As Homi Bhabha suggests, a "third space" is often created (Bhabha, 55). This is a hybrid identity, formed from negotiating both worlds, rather than choosing one over the other.The protagonist, caught in this third space, must navigate the pressures of cultural heritage and personal desires, ultimately revealing the fragmented nature of identity in a rapidly changing world.The novella's portrayal of this internal and external tension offers a reflection on how societal expectations can suffocate individual desires, leading to a fragmentation of self. In many ways, the protagonist's journey mirrors Frantz Fanon's analysis of the "divided self" in colonized individuals, where external pressures create an inner dissonance that can only be resolved through self-liberation (Fanon, 218). In *The Real Heroes Don't Fall*, this dissonance manifests through the protagonist's longing for the open countryside, where

he once roamed freely—symbolizing his search for autonomy and escape from the constraints imposed by both society and his inner turmoil.

**Character Development and Transformation**

The protagonists in both novellas undergo significant transformations, though these journeys are fraught with internal conflict and disillusionment. Their evolution can be analyzed through the lens of Hatem Al-Shamea's Transformation Theory, which outlines "six critical stages of character development: Status Quo, Catalyst, Internal Conflict, Journey of Discovery, Transformation, and New Status Quo" (2).

**Status Quo and Catalyst**

In both novellas, the protagonists begin in a state of stasis or entrapment, reflective of their inability to move beyond their pasts. In *You Will Not Remain Alone Like a Stone*, the protagonist's initial state of isolation is disrupted by memories of his homeland, serving as the catalyst for his emotional journey. The nostalgia acts as a powerful force, dragging him back into a past that he cannot reclaim, as Baya poignantly describes, "He wandered through his memories as if they were ghosts, clinging to him, never letting go" (Baya, 12).Similarly, in *The Real Heroes Don't Fall*, the protagonist's catalyst is a moment of personal failure that forces him to confront the gap between his internal desires and the societal expectations placed upon him. His journey begins with this rupture, propelling him into a state of internal conflict as he questions the values, he has long held dear.

**Internal Conflict and Journey of Discovery**

The internal conflict in both novellas is shaped by the characters' struggles with identity and belonging. Edward Said's concept of "contrapuntal consciousness" is especially relevant here, as both protagonists navigate the conflicting demands of their cultural heritage and their desire for personal freedom (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 55). The characters' journeys are marked by moments of profound introspection and alienation, as they grapple with their sense of displacement.In *You Will Not Remain Alone Like a Stone*, the protagonist's journey is characterised by a cyclical pattern, with efforts to progress consistently hindered by the influence of his memories. As Baya observes, "He was attacked by his memories in the night, as they rose up like shadows, refusing to let him sleep" (Baya, 13). This excerpt highlights the protagonist's internal conflict, where recollections from the past act as persistent obstacles to living fully in the present.Conversely, in *The Real Heroes Don't Fall*, the protagonist's path of self-discovery is shaped through interactions with various figures, each embodying distinct aspects of their society. These interactions compel the protagonist to acknowledge personal limitations and the ultimate futility of certain ambitions. Baya remarks, "His dreams began to crumble under the weight of reality" (Baya, 15), underscoring the protagonist's increasing disenchantment with previously held ideals.

**Transformation and New Status Quo**

The characters change by coming to terms with their broken identities. In *You Will Not Remain Alone Like a Stone*, the protagonist's transformation leads to acceptance rather than resolution; he resigns himself to solitude, identifies as a stone—solid, unmoving—and endures through time and memory. As Baya concludes, "And there he stood, unmoving, accepting his fate as the stone he had become" (Baya, 21).In *The Real Heroes Don't Fall*, the protagonist's transformation is similarly one of acceptance, though tinged with a sense of defeat. He recognizes that the ideals he once held are unattainable in the face of the realities of his society, and he settles into a new status quo where he must live with this knowledge. J. C. Davis argues that "every man becomes his own utopian" (13). This mean that the protagonist attempts to form his ideal world that he constructed in his consciousness. For that, Baya's description of the protagonist's final moments captures this sense of resignation: "He turned away from the city, no longer looking for answers in its streets" (Baya, 24). Baya's narrative raises a question about the status quo; Is it better? In this Davis says that "if the concept of 'betterness' leads us to see utopianism as implicitly or explicitly a rejection of the status quo, the problem remains to whether all rejections of the status quo are utopian, or only some" (14).

**Exile and Cultural Displacement**

Both novellas are deeply concerned with the theme of exile, not just in the physical sense but in the emotional and psychological sense as well. The protagonists are exiles in their own lives, disconnected from their pasts and unable to fully integrate into their present environments. This sense of exile is compounded by their cultural displacement, where the values and traditions of their homelands no longer provide the stability they once did.Jacques Lacan's theory of the "mirror stage" is useful in understanding the protagonists' sense of fractured identity. According to Lacan, a person's self-image is shaped by an external picture, which is often broken and

incomplete (Lacan, *Écrits*, 97). The main characters in Baya's novellas feel this same brokenness. They struggle to match their self-image with the realities of their lives in exile.In *You Will Not Remain Alone Like a Stone*, the protagonist's exile is both physical and emotional. He is disconnected from his homeland. He is also disconnected from the people around him. He is trapped in a state of constant longing. His attempts to connect his past with his present only make him feel more isolated. As Baya writes, "The walls of his memories closed in around him, leaving no room for escape" (Baya, 17).Similarly, in *The Real Heroes Don't Fall*, the protagonist's exile comes from his inability to fit in with his society's expectations. His feeling of displacement grows worse as he becomes disillusioned with the ideals of heroism and strength he once admired. This is captured in the protagonist's final realization: "He could no longer find meaning in the ideals he had once believed in" (Baya, 19).

**Conclusion**

Samir Baya's novellas, You Will Not Remain Alone Like a Stone and The Real Heroes Don't Fall, delve deeply into the complexities of identity, exile, and the quest for meaning amidst a fractured world. Drawing on Transformation Theory alongside perspectives from critics such as Edward Said and Jacques Lacan, Baya crafts narratives in which his protagonists confront profound cultural displacement and personal alienation.In both works, the protagonists' journeys are shaped by their attempts to navigate these dislocations. As they move through their respective stories, moments of transformation do occur, but these are not characterised by a restoration of wholeness or a triumphant resolution. Instead, the protagonists are compelled to accept the fragmented nature of their identities. This acceptance marks a turning point, where reconciliation with their fractured selves becomes an act of endurance rather than fulfilment.Baya's writing, through this lens, offers a poignant meditation on the human condition. The search for meaning, while often elusive and complicated by the realities of exile and disconnection, is not depicted as futile. Rather, Baya suggests that endurance—the capacity of the self to persist despite fragmentation and alienation—remains central. In this way, his novellas provide a nuanced reflection on the enduring struggle to find meaning and a sense of self in a world defined by displacement and uncertainty.

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