

Beyond Place: Exile as Psychic and Cultural Dislocation in Selected Transcultural Postmodern Poems



ما وراء المكان: المنفى كاضطراب نفسي وثقافي في قصائد مختارة من مرحلة ما بعد الحداثة

العابرة للثقافات

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الكلمات المفتاحية: المنفى، الهوية، الغريب في الداخل، الفضاء الثالث، الشعور بعدم الانتماء.

كيفية اقتباس البحث

محمد ، آواز نجم إبراهيم علي مراد ، ما وراء المكان: المنفى كاضطراب نفسي وثقافي في قصائد مختارة من مرحلة ما بعد الحداثة العابرة للثقافات، مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، آيار ٢٠٢٦، المجلد: ١٦، العدد: ٥.

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Keywords : Exile, Identity, Stranger within, Third space, Unhomeliness.

How To Cite This Article

Muhammed ◊ Awaz Najim ◊ Ibrahim Ali Murad ◊ Beyond Place: Exile as Psychic and Cultural Dislocation in Selected Transcultural Postmodern Poems , Journal Of Babylon Center For Humanities Studies, May 2026, Volume:16, Issue 5.



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Abstract

Exilic literature holds a significant space in the world of literature. It attracts much interest and attention, especially within postcolonial studies, due to the nature of its contents as well as its thematic issues. This article investigates exile as not merely a geographical dislocation, but as a constituent form of subjectivity. It focuses on the transcultural poetics of Eavan Boland (1944-2020), Syl Cheney-Coker (1945-), and Sujata Bhatt (1956). These poets write from the edges of nationhood, exile, or colonial legacies, present a subjectivity



formed not by cultural purity but by fragmentation, negotiation, and loss. Thus, poetic language becomes a site of psychic and cultural dislocation that interrogates, reforms, and rewrites identity.

The study employs a Psycho-cultural theory, drawing upon Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories of "subjectivity", "melancholy", and the "stranger within", along with Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theories of the "third Space" and "unhomeliness". The combination of Kristeva's psychoanalytical approach, which examines the internal and emotive structures of subjectivity and loss, with that of Bhabha's postcolonial perspectives on cultural identity as a negotiated object in a contested social terrain, creates a complementary conceptual paradigm to theorize how identity in exilic and transcultural poetics is inscribed and reinscribed. The discussion advances with a close reading of Boland's "Anna Liffey", Coker's "Shadow", and Bhatt's "Whenever I Return".

The chosen poems express a poetic voice that is not only expressive but also reflective. The study concludes, among other things, that exile is a form of temporal alienation, a stranger within, and a sense of estrangement through the collapse of time.

ملخص:

يحتل أدب المنفى مكانة بارزة في عالم الأدب. فهو يجذب اهتمامًا وانتباهًا كبيرين، لا سيما في دراسات ما بعد الاستعمار والأبحاث الأكاديمية، نظرًا لطبيعة محتواه وقضاياها المواضيعية. يتناول هذا المقال المنفى ليس فقط باعتباره تشرّدًا جغرافيًا، بل كشكلٍ مُكوّنٍ للذاتية. مع التركيز على الشعر العابر للثقافات لكلّ من إيفان بولاند (١٩٤٤-٢٠٢٠)، وسيل تشيني-كوكر (١٩٤٥-)، وسوجاتا بهات (١٩٥٦). هؤلاء الشعراء، الذين يكتبون من أطراف الهوية الوطنية أو المنفى أو الإرث الاستعماري، يُقدمون ذاتيةً لا تتشكل من النقاء الثقافي، بل من التشرذم





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والتفاوض والفقْد. وهكذا، تصبح اللغة الشعرية مسرحًا للاضطرابات النفسية والثقافية، تُسائل الهوية وتُعيد صياغتها وتُعيد صياغتها.

تعتمد الدراسة على دراسة نفسية ثقافية، مستندةً إلى نظريات جوليا كريستيفا التحليلية النفسية حول الذاتية، و"الكآبة"، و"الغريب في الداخل"، إلى جانب نظريات هومي بابا ما بعد الاستعمارية حول "الفضاء الثالث" و"العزلة". إن الجمع بين نهج كريستيفا التحليلي النفسي، الذي يدرس البنى الداخلية والعاطفية للذاتية والفقْد، ووجهات نظر بابا ما بعد الاستعمارية حول الهوية الثقافية ككائن متفاوض عليه في بيئة اجتماعية متنازع عليها، يُنشئ نموذجًا مفاهيميًا متكاملًا لنظرية كيفية نقش الهوية وإعادة نقشها في شعرية المنفى والعبارة للثقافات. ويتقدم النقاش بقراءة متعمقة لقصيدة "أنا ليفي" لبولاند، وقصيدة "الظل" لكوكر، وقصيدة "كلما أعود" لبات. تُعبّر القصائد المختارة عن صوت شعري ليس مُعبّرًا فحسب، بل مُتأملًا أيضًا. وتُشير الخاتمة إلى أن المنفى ليس مجرد نزوح جغرافي، بل هو شكل من أشكال الاغتراب الزمني، غريب في الداخل، وشعورٌ بالغربة من خلال انهيار الزمن.

1. Introduction:

Exile constitutes one of the most paradigmatic conditions of transcultural subjectivity, illustrating what happens when the fragile sense of identity and belonging is ruptured or denied. Beyond being merely a thematic issue, exile is both a historical and political condition, ultimately rooted in colonial displacement, forced migration, and the twentieth-century global upheavals; it is also a profound psycho-cultural trauma which destabilizes subjectivity at the most fundamental level. For poets such as Eavan Boland, Syl Cheney-Coker, and Sujata Bhatt, the condition of exile is a paradoxical double-edged sword: it is a geographical alienation and a cultural uprooting, yet it also represents an internal state of grief, manifesting itself in a linguistic and historical alienation, as well as estrangement from place. In *Reflections on Exile* (2000), Edward Said



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(1935-2003) vividly captures this essential paradox in the exilic condition, which argues that exile is "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home," yet it is also "strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience" (173). This duality casts exile as simultaneously a wound and a resource, a state of loss and alienation that, at the same time, catalyzes new forms of cultural and poetic production. The following analysis investigates how each poet performs the inscription of exile as a state of split mourning and creative alienation.

The study promotes a psycho-cultural approach that inherently informs a multidisciplinary framework in which two domains of the study, internal psychic formation and external cultural influences, work in parallel to examine the selected texts. Therefore, the study views the given texts through two different critical lenses.

Kristeva's notion of "melancholy" as a psychic reaction to the loss of origin and belonging offers a psychoanalytic understanding of the psychic costs of what she calls "maternal chora", which can never be regained. Much of this somber nostalgia is frequently enacted in the poems as an attempt to recapture the loss of languages, motherlands, and cultural traditions. Her concept of "stranger within" as outlined in her *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) identifies an intrapsychic "Other", who every person carries with him or her; that is to say, an unconscious, ambivalent aspect of the self that does not allow one to fully understand oneself. This acknowledgement of an internal foreignness is an act of psychoanalysis (admission of one's own fragmentation as opposed to its rejection) as well as an act of ethical-political intervention. To put it





briefly, the foreigner is an internal creation, and the recognition of this fact is a foundation for broader definitions of identity and hospitality (Kristeva: 191-193). Simultaneously, the “third Space” is proposed by Bhabha as a place of belonging in the transcultural context that can no longer be encapsulated in nostalgia or essentialist assertions but is constantly being generated in the hybrid zone, which displaces binary oppositions between self and other, home and exile. It is often in this in-between space that the voices of poets reside, where the sense of fragmentation exists alongside other formations of cultural memory that are imaginative and combinatory. Unholiness is another concept promoted by Bhabha, relevant to the theme of the study; it is not simply a geographical dislocation, but a psychic dislocation that occurs when the lines between the private sphere of the home domain and the public space are blurred. The individual in these situations undergoes an identity schism where the domestic space, which is traditionally perceived as the place of solace and identity, acquires an uncanny and alien nature. The subject feels that the so-called worldly familiar is another world that is at once full of cultural otherness and colonial histories. Unhomeliness has a close connection with hybridity and the “third space” concepts of Bhabha. New hybrid identities are born within this dislocation; identities that mediate between cultures and put in question fixed ideas of belonging.

2. Results and Discussions:

2.1. Boland’s Sense of Estrangement and Liminality

The Irish poet Eavan Boland is a highly regarded and controversial figure. She is openly known for her critical views and challenges to the





male-dominated Irish literary canon. Her poetic representation is profoundly shaped by themes such as uncertain identity, transition, longing for origin, exile and displacement. All these themes stem from her early childhood experiences. When her family migrated from Dublin to London, she encountered emotional and cultural estrangement, as well as alienation, particularly a real instance of mockery from her teacher due to her accent. This was a form of discrimination against her, which contributed to her feeling like an outsider in a foreign place. Her relocation from Ireland to England marked more than a mere change in geography; it also sparked a lyrical and psychological reorientation. After getting married, Boland moved from Dublin, the capital city, to the suburb of Dundrum, which represents another instance of a life transition that had a big impact on her conceptualization of poetry (Akram. et al, 2019).

In "Anna Liffey," Boland locates exile not in literal terms as an expulsion from a homeland, but in a more pervasive, psychic and cultural alienation that permeates everyday life. The assertion of the speaker, "A woman in the doorway of a house. /A river in the city of her birth"(Boland: 9-10), explores a deep sense of estrangement and alienation at the heart of the poem. It also strengthens the feeling of exile. The door symbolizes a threshold zone; neither inside nor outside, neither a secure home nor completely outside, a negotiated realm that illustrates the Irish women's liminal position in Irish history and culture. By using this image, Boland dramatizes how women are frequently marginalized in the main narrative of nationhood, and also how they are unable to return to an imagined pure origin. In this way, she underlines a form of exile that occurs within one's own country: a sense of not belonging to a place despite being physically





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there. According to Julia Kristeva, in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991), the concept of foreignness concerns not only being foreign to our native country, but also something that exists within us, something that lurks inside us and unsettles our sense of identity (191). This internal foreignness is personified in the speaker of Boland. She is an outsider to the mainstream, patriarchal Irish history and is simultaneously out of touch with her envisioned origins. This dual alienation is captured through her stance in the doorway, which represents both a psychic exile and a cultural one. She further reflects on the women's exilic state in the linguistic realm, or what she calls "symbolic order":

An ageing woman
Finds no shelter in language
She finds instead
Single words she once loved (Boland: 115-118).

These lines summarize a deep state of psychic and cultural exile that Boland often attributes to women for their failure and disrupted relationship with language and history. The impossibility of the woman seeking refuge in language aligns with Julia Kristeva's concept of melancholy, which she describes as a psychic state of bereavement where meaning is "condensed into silence" and language struggles to accommodate loss. In *Black Sun*, she extends:

The spectacular collapse of meaning with depressive persons—and, at the limit, the meaning of life—allows us to assume that they experience difficulty integrating the universal signifying sequence, that is, language. In the best





of cases, speaking beings and their language are like one: is not speech our “second nature”? In contrast, the speech of the depressed is to them like an alien skin; melancholy persons are foreigners in their maternal tongue. They have lost the meaning—the value—of their mother tongue for want of losing the mother. (42).

Therefore, exile here is not a geographical one, but a psychic displacement of voice and of meaning; it encapsulates the same loss of signification that Kristeva identifies: words that ought to instantiate identity, instead fail into estrangement (*Black Sun*: 41-43). Like the melancholic subject who speaks of a “dead language” that hides the unspoken loss, the speaker in Boland’s poem embodies a state where meaning is suspended, silenced, and unreachable. In this way, Boland’s character “the ageing woman” has lost the intimacy that she once found in words, and becomes a melancholic foreigner that Kristeva describes in the above quotation: “melancholy persons are foreigners in their maternal tongue. They have lost the meaning the value of their mother tongue” (*Black Sun*: 42). In this respect, Noëlle MacAfee’s (1960-) interpretation of Kristeva may support this view. She declares that the melancholic individual has no interest in objects and lacks interest in participating in the symbolic realm:

Lacking an interest in any objects, the melancholic lacks motivation to engage in the symbolic realm – that is, to speak or write. Words seem pointless, for they are not connected to the subject’s affects, desires – in short, to the





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semiotic chora. The depressed person is like an orphan in the symbolic realm (*Julia Kristeva: 63*).

In this way, the speaker's remark: "She finds instead, / Single words once she loved." (*Collected Poems: 117-118*), heightens the state of melancholy and alienation at the heart of exile. Since words, which used to carry a sense of belonging, have become foreign elements, they no longer carry an emotional or historical sense. The single words that she used to love are the sad remnants of a lost language. This situation may be further intensified and corresponds to what Kristeva identifies as "asymbolia"; she adds, "Melancholia then ends up in asymbolia, in loss of meaning: if I am no longer capable of translating or metaphorizing, I become silent and I die" (*Black Sun: 33*). Relating to the liminal and unhomely state of women in cultural realm, Boland remarks:

There is now
A woman in a doorway
It has taken me
All my strength to do this.
Becoming a figure in a poem
Usurping a name and a theme (*Boland:59-64*).

In these lines, Boland explains the crucial point at which the female subject has entered into language and visibility, a point which is both empowering and displacing. The door is a metaphor as a threshold which evokes the contrast between the domestic interior and the public symbolic exterior. According to Homi Bhabha, these thresholds form the ground of the unhomely, a place where the boundaries between self and



world, as well as the boundaries between the private and the public, are erased. In this respect, he explains:

The unhomeliness- that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations. To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the ‘unhomely’ be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow [...] in that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting” (Bhabha: 9).

Thus, the woman in the doorway, whom Boland portrays, lives exactly in this non-homely place; she is simultaneously in the domestic world that had traditionally determined the role of women, and at the border, facing the discourses of culture that have marginalized her. To stand in the doorway is the liminal space that Bhabha refers to as the “third space”, where identity is not firmly grounded nor absolutely alienated, but rather exists in a state of constant negotiation. The speaker’s confession, “it has taken me, / all my strength to do this,” (Boland:61-62), is an admittance that it has cost her psychic and cultural labour to cross that boundary. Then, her description of becoming part of a poem can be seen as an illustration of Bhabha’s idea of translation, where the subject is forced to recreate herself using the same discourses that had previously suppressed her. This action is not only an intrusion on poetic form, but represents a form of entry into the world of history, authorship, and subjectivity that women have been excluded from since the dawn of time.





Moreover, the image of the door can be interpreted similarly as a bridge, which emerges as a performative threshold, a third space where identity can be renegotiated. It is less a stable position than a site of negotiation between exclusion and belonging, origin and displacement. Bhabha looks back at the notion with more ethical urgency; he states: “The third space is a challenge to the limits of the self in the act of reaching out to what is liminal in the historic experience, and in the cultural representation, of other peoples, times, languages, texts” (*Communicating in the Third Space*: xiv). This late formulation highlights the fact that the third space is not merely a place of cultural negotiation; it is also a highly dialogical and self-reflexive practice. In this respect, the image of the doorway of Boland dramatizes the estrangement of exile as well as the moral challenge of self-transformation of liminality. The exile of the speaker is not resolved, but re-staged as a passage-way place, an interstitial place where cultural authority is destabilized and identity is renegotiable.

2.2. Coker’s Self-Imposed Alienation

Regarding Syl Cheney Coker, exile is a comparable situation, yet set within a different contextual background. For him, identity and belonging are complex notions and matters that are characterized by a hybrid essence and complex heritage. His personal life, as well as his geographical origin (born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, to a Creole family, a lineage descended from freed African-American slaves and European settlers), can be seen as a pivotal factor that significantly influenced and reflected in his worldview, beliefs, and poetic representation. Firstly,





growing up in a family where both poles of colonizer and colonized coexist (His father was an African free man who had been enslaved, and his mother was a British woman), thus inherits a dual legacy. Secondly, he was immersed in a heterogeneous linguistic and cultural landscape of Sierra Leone. These factors contribute to a multifaceted sense of being and a confused identity, subjecting him to a kind of misidentified identity that is informed by colonial mimicry and spiritual estrangement. These tensions are thematically reflected in his poetry and fiction, in which he probes themes of cultural alienation and spiritual exile and attempts to come to terms with an authentic African identity amidst the after-effects of imperialism. (Palmer and Ernest, viii)

Coker's poetry is profoundly influenced by his self-imposed exile in 1975 in Sierra Leone. For him, exile is not a simple matter of geographical displacement, but also an existential departure. In an interview with Stewart Brown, Coker admits that "Exile is both physical and spiritual. To suffer spiritual exile is worse than to be physically exiled" (Qtd in, Palmer and Ernest: 11). This assertion places Cheney-Coker in a long lineage of African authors for whom exile is as much a condition of alienation and dislocation as it is a condition of physical displacement. The process of spiritual exile for him starts before he leaves Sierra Leone. Even he refers to Sierra Leone as a "ghetto of silence". And declares that "I felt so alone, in my pursuit of the word" (Palmer and Ernest: 14). This existential loneliness (spiritual displacement at home) turns out to be the main theme of his poetry.

Concerto for an Exile is one of his influential collections of poetry, which expresses the suffering of displacement and the struggle to adapt





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personal identity to the collective and historical legacy. It is a presentation of the self as a symbol of greater collective trauma. This depiction is achieved through a series of fragmented narratives and images. Exile itself is a prism through which the poet addresses the disjunction of home and self, and reproduces the kind of alienation in the poetic character. "Shadow", which is one of the poems of this collection, addresses the same theme of spiritual exile and alienation. It starts with a cosmic image:

The day
pregnant with the sun
the night pregnant with
the moon
have the shadows
behind
my mother was
pregnant with my race
she carried a black
seed
which blossomed
without the shadow of
the race (Coker:1-8)

One can easily consider the sense of alienation, bereavement, and estrangement in the poem. Pregnancy in the lines "The day, / pregnant with the sun, / the night pregnant with the moon / have the shadows behind" (1-4), serves as a reminder of origin and continuity. However, the recurrence of the word shadow in this context indicates that origins



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are already accompanied by their corresponding shadow and alienation. Even those that produce and give birth to light (sun, moon) generate darkness and shadow as well. In other words, they are characterized by an inherent absence. This corresponds with what Kristeva indicates, loss is the foundational principle that shapes identity; it generates both subjectivity and the capacity for language and love. (*Black Sun*: 3)

In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva posits that subjectivity itself emerges from such ruptures: “the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode” (191). For Cheney-Coker, this constitutes the fundamental essence of spiritual exile: the subject is born into a state of estrangement. Thus, in the cases of both Kristeva and Cheney-Coker, loss comes with origin. Exile is therefore not merely a matter of location, but it is marked in the very structure of the identity. This interpretation may be further supported by Knipp (1992) as he states: “it is not just geographical or cultural but genetic, carried in his "tainted" Creole ancestry [...] The only way he can end his exile is to "return" to Africa as a poetic man of action, a poet of revolution” (117).

The main stanza of the poem relates maternity to race: "my mother was pregnant with my race / she carried a black seed / which blossomed without the shadow of the race." (Coker: 5-8). In this case, the maternal body is both generative and disruptive. She is the carrier of life, but the life is already broken; "without the shade of the race," without the continuity of ancestry. This implies the Creole heritage of Cheney-Coker, whose racial identity is cut off from their African ancestral root. Kristeva defines the melancholic subject as one who carries the lost mother within him: an internal stranger, the absent object of mourning that cannot be completely mourned. As she declares, “The Thing is inscribed within us





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without memory, the buried accomplice of our unspeakable anguishes” (*Black Sun*: 10). In the same manner, the “mother” by Cheney-Coker is not only generative but estranging. She is the bringer of life, yet is also the bringer of disruption; here, the alienness of an identity begins, whose birthplace is in exile. Such loss is the texture of melancholia to Kristeva. In *Black Sun*, she writes, “Knowingly disinherited of the Thing, the depressed person wanders in pursuit of continuously disappointing adventures and loves; or else retreats, disconsolate and aphasic, alone with the unnamed Thing” (MacAfee Qtd in Kristeva: 19). The thing in this case is the maternal thing that cannot be reclaimed, in the same manner that the speaker in Cheney-Coker laments a race that is growing in the absence of the shadow that gives it its life. It is bereavement without closure: lamenting over a lost source that is nameless. In this way, Kristeva’s concepts of melancholy and the stranger within help clarify how Coker’s poetics of shadow and fracture portray a melancholic subjectivity: one that is not just displaced by home, but lost permanently from origin, self, and belonging.

This existential and spiritual exile leads to a permanent alienation, as in the last line of the poem, he condenses: “the end may be the beginning / a bleached man has nothing to lose / but the curse of his alienation!” (Coker: 14-16). Here Cheney-Coker defines exile as a permanent state: his race journey, marked to perpetuity without a beginning. It is not as if it is a personal statement but a collective one; the river is a symbolic representation of the alienation that has happened to a people whose history has been broken by slavery and colonial displacement. This motif of alienation, therefore, becomes genealogical: to be Creole is to be born without roots, flowing but disconnected.





Now the poem could be studied through Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theories of unhomeliness and estrangement. The chosen lines can dramatize a postcolonial subjectivity.

“my mother was pregnant with my race, / she carried a black seed, / which blossomed without the shadow, / of the race” (Coker: 5-8). Considerably, the opening lines reveal a sense of alienation from birth. The speaker's race comes out already in a state of dispossession; the fact of being born “without the shadow of the race” implies the loss of cultural heritage. In this case, the maternal womb does not stabilize heredity, but instead conveys a sense of displacement, implying hereditary exile.

This corresponds with the concept of ‘unhomeliness’ by Bhabha, when the border between individual life and cultural belonging collapses: He declares:

The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting” (*The Location of Culture*: 9).

Accordingly, such a breakdown splits the subject between home and world, leaving the identity uncanny. This tension is seemingly reflected in the poem: the moment of the intimate birth is being violated by the racial history, and what is expected to be called home already contains the exile. Then, this sense of departure of the source and origin





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leaves individuals in a profound state of bereavement; the latter stanza supports the analysis as Coker uses the metaphor of “my race a stream, / listen a river without a source” (10-11), revealing the lack of origins, roots, and homeland. the river imagery represents both grief and perseverance: it flows endlessly yet aimlessly, lamenting a mourning for the lost past and the impossibility of recovering an untainted origin. According to Bhabha, cultural identity in the third space is never whole or “original” but always negotiated via loss and re-articulation; as he emphasizes that, “no culture is full unto itself... its own symbol-forming activity... always underscores the claim to an originary, holistic, organic identity” (*The Third Space*: 210). Therefore, the river with no source serves as a symbol of what Bhabha terms the intrinsic forms of translation in cultural life; a state of identity is constituted in displacement, plagued by loss, and shaped in the ambivalence between memory and forgetting. Overall, combining the imagery of birth into exile, a river with no source, dramatizes what Bhabha theorizes as the conditions of postcolonial subjectivity. Combining Bhabha's observations that no culture is complete in itself (*Third Space*: 209) and hybridity as the creation of something new and unidentifiable (*Third Space*: 211) into the interpretation of *Shadow*, the poem becomes a strong performance of exile, estrangement, and the dubious possibility of renewal.

2.1.3 Bhatt’s Temporal Dislocation

The experience of exile in the poetry of the Indian poet Sujata Bhatt is articulated not only in terms of geographical exile, but also in a melancholic dislocation of memory, temporality, and identity. “Whenever I Return” is one of her poems that situates the experience of exile within both realms of memory and childhood, evoking a sense of





the maternal presence and the estranging impact of historical change. The poem embodies what Julia Kristeva describes as the condition of bearing the ‘stranger within’, an uncanny foreignness within the core of identity. In the first stanza, the speaker states:

Whenever I return to this garden
I am ten or eleven —
Sometimes even twelve
but never older —
This time, I come alone.
I find the corner
where I always sat (Bhatt:1-7).

The poem begins with the speaker seated in a nostalgic landscape, ‘the garden of childhood’, but immediately breaks the linear time. The speaker is about ten or eleven years old, but never older than twelve. The ‘adult self’ revisits her childhood and appears as strange to the child-self. Yet they coexist simultaneously within the same time of their recollection, furthermore, the very act of going back alone, “I come alone”, strengthens the feeling of alienness and the stranger within her: According to Kristeva in *Strangers to Ourselves*, the foreigner exists within us: “Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity” (1). In this way, by re-adopting the child’s perspective and reinhabiting childhood, the speaker confronts her inner foreignness, the uncanny doubling of self across time. Moreover, the rejection of time on these lines is an embodiment of the melancholy, which is the garden





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that is not recalled, but experienced as something constant. The following lines present a temporal dislocation:

Although I know
other people live here now —
Although it is my daughter
who is eleven,
almost twelve now,
today, I am alone
I am ten, barely ten: (Bhatt: 51-56).

Even the grammar used in this stanza keeps the capitalized 'I' akin to a young girl, thereby emphasizing the child self; despite acknowledging the presence of the daughter, it also insists on an act of subjective alienation from one's own present. Kristeva defines this sense of foreignness as a state whereby one lives as a stranger, detached from a particular place or time. This state is characterized by a present in abeyance, or in other words, time in suspension.

Not belonging to any place, any time, any love. A lost origin, the impossibility to take root, a rummaging memory, the present in abeyance. The space of the foreigner is a moving train, a plane in flight, the very transition that precludes stopping. As to landmarks, there are none. His time? The time of a resurrection that remembers death and what happened before, but misses



the glory of being beyond: merely the feeling of a reprieve, of having gotten away (*Stranger to Ourselves*: 7-8).

As we see, the speaker reduces her current age to that of her daughter as she recalls her childhood, thus forming a double identity that is both a mother and a child simultaneously. This strange division is clarified by Kristeva: the self finds its otherness within itself, with the backdrop of memory, time, and generation.

We all know the foreigner who survives with a tearful face turned toward the lost homeland. Melancholy lover of a vanished space, he cannot, in fact, get over his having abandoned a period of time. The lost paradise is a mirage of the past that he will never be able to recover (*Stranger to Ourselves*: 9-10)

In this way, the melancholic feeling about the maternal garden dramatizes exile not only as a geographical departure, but also as an inner state. In the following lines, the speaker affirms this concept: “Don’t speak to me of exile. / Don’t question my memory” (*Pure Lizard*: 62-63). The strength of the denial here is significant for our analysis: since this denial, in itself, acknowledges its persistent and haunting presence. Kristeva, in *Black Sun* (1989), characterizes melancholy as a grief “incorporated into the self without words, a shadow cast upon the ego” (12). Bhatt’s rejection reflects this dynamic, which implies that exile assumes a





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melancholic state that is never assimilated but inscribed within the psyche.

Respectively, exile disintegrates identity through time boundaries. The speaker is in a liminal place, between womanhood and girlhood, motherhood and daughterhood, and this resonates with Bhabha's concept of the "third space". For Bhabha, cultural identity occurs not in pure oppositions but in an interstitial space of enunciation, or the third space. Bhatt's poem's return to the childhood garden serves as such a space: each time the speaker returns to the garden, he is still "ten or eleven, sometimes even twelve, but never older," as though time itself is suspended. This freezing of age and memory produces the same kind of disruptive temporality of enunciation that Bhabha identifies: "disruptive temporality that displaces the linear time" (57). He further explains:

Private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy. It is an intimacy that questions binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed. These spheres of life are linked through an 'in between' temporality that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history. This is the moment of aesthetic distance that provides the narrative with a double edge, which like the coloured South African subject represents a hybridity, a difference within', a subject that inhabits the rim of an 'in-between'



reality. And the inscription of this borderline existence inhabits a stillness of time and a strangeness of framing that creates the discursive 'image' at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world (*Location of Culture*: 13).

Thus, the signification of the speaker's memory is held in suspension between past and present, neither fully one nor the other, an ambivalence that is captured in Bhabha's observation that "the meaning of the utterance is quite literally neither the one nor the other" (*Location of Culture*: 36). In this way, the garden becomes a metaphorical third Space or "in-between space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (38), where homeland and exile are juxtaposed.

Bhabha's idea of the "unhomely", the unsettling intersection of personal trauma with political displacement, dominates the atmosphere of the poem. Consequently, the garden serves as a halfway house for racial and cultural origins, an interstitial space in which the speaker's family is ruptured during the diaspora of exile and, in doing so, weaves personal and political stories together. Furthermore, each single return, as the speaker claims, "today I am alone," (55); is a form of cultural translation; the garden in establishing itself as the unit of domestic inhabitation simultaneously produces a symbol of historical fact. Thus, absorbing the narrator's childhood homeland and adult self. Then, through claiming that "Don't speak to me of exile. / Don't question my memory" (62-63), the narrator rejects the unilateral categorization and thus escapes the





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geopolitical polarities that could be imposed on her, and places her as the "other" in our collective self. Belonging, therefore, comes out of negotiation, rather than a pure homeland, but by: she lives in an interstitial temporality, constantly "translated" between cultures. Bhatt's interpretation of the garden as a third space, memory and identity become intertwined in ways that are not strictly binary within the framework of a third space, thus confirming Bhabha's assertion that postcolonial selfhood is constructed in the hybrid in-between of culture rather than at a single point.

Conclusions:

The present study demonstrates, as a conclusion, that exile, as represented in the transcultural poetics of Eavan Boland, Syl Cheney-Coker and Sujata Bhatt, no longer has a strictly geographical meaning; rather, it encompasses psychic, linguistic and cultural connotations. By integrating Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic and Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theories, the study concludes that exile becomes an existential rapture and a fertile locus for creative self-invention. The finding further suggests that the selected poems transform displacement into a place of negotiation, and the ongoing process of identity, otherness, loss and renewal is constantly mediated and renegotiated.

Among other things that the study reaches are that exile emerges as both a wound and an analytic approach; the internal exile of language by Boland, the hereditary alienation of Cheney-Coker and Bhatt's sense of temporal estrangement all affirm the study's claim that exile entails



more than a mere loss. Rather, it possesses a transformative capacity to produce something new. Ultimately, the study concludes that the above poetic gestures, taken together, explain the concept of exile as an internal geography, as a continual process of translation between linguistic codes, historical narratives and affective states.

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Journal of Babylon Center for Humanities Studies: 2026, Volume: 16, Issue: 5



**Journal of Babylon Center for Humanities Studies :2026 Volume: 16 Issue :5
(ISSN): 2227-2895 (Print) (E-ISSN):2313-0059 (Online)**