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Strangers at Home: A Psycho-Cultural Study of Selected Irish and Kurdish Poems

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#### **Abstract**

Literature of resistance occupies a large and wide space in the world literature and draws a great deal of interest and attention due to the nature of its content and message. In this respect, a vast rate of the Irish and Kurdish literatures is devoted to this aspect since the nature of their political, social, and cultural circumstances call for it. Taking these facts into consideration, this paper studies selected Irish and Kurdish poems from the psycho-cultural interpretation perspective. It supposes some ranges of resemblance between the contents and messages of the two poetries based on the similar multiple-sided conditions of the two peoples and their homelands. The article studies the mentioned poems using the Psychocultural Interpretation Theory because it is supposed that this theory is most suitable due to the reasons mentioned above. It is divided into three sections; The first section is an overview of the theory above along with some critics' viewpoints concerning the theory and its suitability for such studies. The second one tackles cultural conflicts in both poetries, while the last section scrutinizes the selected poems from a psychological perspective. Using a number of the most modern sources, the studies concluded a number of points of resemblance and variance simultaneously, the most noteworthy among them is the sense of estrangement and not belonging at home that is felt and expressed by many poets from both sides. The article ends with the conclusions arrived at and the list of works cited.

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## I. Introduction

Though connected in one way or another to psychoanalysis and its related theories; yet cultural-based psychoanalytic interpretation theory takes wider ranges of assumptions and multiple goals and perspectives as well. The theory is established, it seems, thanks to the political scientist Marc Howard Ross (b.1942) who is interested mainly in ethnic conflicts and the way of achieving peace in societies and places in the world where people are plagued with this malady. He calls it "Psychocultural Interpretation Theory" and stresses his authority to it saying: "The term 'Psychocultural Interpretation Theory' is mine and refers to a fusion of contemporary psychoanalytic ideas about human development with psychological anthropology's emphasis on shared culture to explain the origin and development of shared worldviews which provide both shared accounts of, and shared motivations for, social and political action (524). Ross applies his theory in the source mentioned, to ethnic conflicts which, unfortunately, exist in many parts of the world and people have suffered and are suffering from it in Palestine, the Balkans, Rwanda, Afghanistan, and Iraq, to mention just a few cases. Such conflicts result, undoubtedly, in the loss of stabilization and as Tina Kempin Reuter states, "gross human rights violations, such as genocide and crimes against humanity". These and other results and consequences are reflected not only upon the physical make up of its sufferers; rather, they extend to inflicting deep psychological injuries and reactions that remain with them and pass over even to their next generations. This leads to the belief that cultural outline frameworks play a crucial role in addressing them" (Ross: 531).

Among the advantages of this theory, whenever it is employed, could be the non-violent consequence of ethnic conflicts that it can be said to tackle in the form of obvious or hidden cultural and literary wars. This case is of extremely significance when the oppressed individuals and communities are forcibly silenced and the one possible outlet would be cultural-based or literary-based. Nevertheless, the psycho-cultural approach touches upon historical, economic, social, national, demographical, and even religious aspects since all such aspects could be potential causes that bring about the cultural and psychological frustration to the individuals and their related communities. The causes of these cultural and psychological frustrations do not come about as flashes or momentous accidents or actions; rather, they are formed as a result of accumulation of a long series of oppressive measures and grievance in the

influences, to a great extent, the course of the individuals' actions and reactions to the events and measures inflicted upon them as individuals and as a collective community as well. The clear threat those individuals and their communities at large are afraid of and cautious at is, in reality, the identity that they feel they are about to lose or be deprived of through assimilation and other harsh treatments like genocide as mentioned above. This fear goes back, in many cases to the losses they bitterly witnessed in the past and the probability of losing more in the present and even in the future.

These fears and anxieties happen in the level of individuals and are consequently conveyed to the community at large and form what can be called a collective concern. This is what Ross means when he stresses that "at the core of Psychocultural Interpretation Theory is the notion that the inner worlds of people in a culture are social constructions rooted in the earliest social relationships (526). The quote alludes to the point that this theory, like almost all the other ones, is built around practical notices and contemplations. Given the above comparison, the logical question would be: In what aspect does this theory differ from the previous ones? One of the possible justifications may be the range of the varieties it tackles within each case study. In this respect, one critic goes further deep in elucidating the disparity when he states that "the mode of psychological explanation employed in such studies . . . is exotic and implausible to persons freshly exposed to it. . . . The psycho-culturalists employ and give a considerable we

ight to variables with which the economist, historian, and political scientist are not accustomed to deal" (Bauer: 120). Among the variables Bauer hints at are surely the psychological status of the individuals of the given sample that is automatically reflected in their behavior and consequently in the behavior of the community. This behavior takes the form of reaction to the opposing and colonizing power with which it is at odds. The overall culture of the oppressed community which in most of the disputed cases differs from that of its foe, could be another factor that the quote above hints at vaguely. These factors are of a great rate of significance and effect in the ensuing conflicts that are brought about at the military, economic, social, religious, and even literary levels among the conflicting parties. The father of psycho-cultural approach himself alludes to such ideas, stating that "at the center of psycho-cultural interpretation theory is the idea that because ethnic conflicts evoke powerful emotions in highly ambiguous situations, internal interpretive

distinguished values and regulations of their cultures and make up along with any offenses performed against them. This, in fact, forms one of the prominent non-violent measures of resistance that proved its usefulness historically and it is, sometimes, received by even the oppressing powers.

## II. Cultural Conflict

Before indulging in detail in any case study, it is significant to refer to the specialty of each one of such cases within its overall makeup of the community it belongs to. This hypothesis makes it clear that finding a full-fledged compatibility between two cultural cases is quite improbable since that concordance is absent when the minutes of each community is scrutinized closely. In this respect, two critics write: As a rule, those who believe in the uniqueness of each case of conflict enjoy a certain intellectual advantage over those who seek to argue that patterns of variations appear across time and space. With so much historical detail that generalizations and comparisons seem artificial, oversimplified, and silly. Indeed, ... no two cases of cultural conflict are really alike (Crawford and Lipschutz: 7).

The Irish trouble has become a quite familiar phenomenon whenever ethnic and religious conflicts are discussed or even mentioned. With a deeply rooted history going back to the Celts and even before that time, Ireland has been a case study for ethnic conflicts. The country, now divided to a free state (Republic of Ireland) and a part annexed to Britain (Northern Ireland) has suffered from violent conflicts that took different shapes and forms. Its men of letters and especially its poets had their share in reaction to the conflict which, in the main, took the form of cultural clothes.

Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) is one of the Irish poets who contributed in the ongoing 'cultural' war that his people launched for freedom. His bog poems became, in this respect, influential landmarks. Most of these poems, but not all, were published within the slim collection *North*, where the poet goes deep back and takes his readers with him to the history and culture of his people. Concerning this aspect and the range of his side-taking throughout the troubles in his country, he tells an interviewer:

I think we had to learn how to incorporate the matter of the Troubles—bombs, killings, the actual landscape of contemporary Ulster—into the kinds of things we were writing. I found a way of letting some people speak in a poem called "Station Island," which was a kind of a dialogue between a

minds and psyches of the individuals and then the community at large.

Gradually, the feeling of grievance and oppression changes into a strong and severe emotion by the oppressed party, and in fact, by both parties towards each other. Consequently, reaching a point of agreement or at least a shared view becomes quite difficult and complicated, whatever the cause of the conflict is. A stark example, is the territorial, national, lingual, cultural, and sometimes religious conflict between the Kurds on one side and the Arabs, Turks, and Persians on the other side which is deep rooted in history and is turned so intricate that a possible resolution upon it seems almost impossible theoretically and practically.

The case is not exclusive to the sample above, rather, a large number of peoples and communities suffer from it all over the world. In this respect, the critic Marc Howard Ross presents an example of a religious-based conflict when he writes, "although both Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland each [sic] see themselves as a threatened minority, each has trouble accepting that view of the other. One party's own emotional concerns make it very difficult to accept another's account, especially when their own action may be the root cause of the other's fears" (532).

Generally, the psycho-cultural theory could be described as a more preoccupation of the psychologists than the anthropologists, taking into consideration that both fields share that theory. Each systematic study from the psycho-cultural viewpoint should, naturally, consider individuals or, as in most cases called personality, and society. This aspect is regarded by some critics as one of the weaknesses of this theory. In this respect, Bauer believes that "an additional weakness of the psycho-cultural approach is the failure of its practitioners to keep explicitly aware of the fact that the psychological and the cultural dimension are not identical. It is not the same thing to be talking about rather deep-seated traits of personality which in some combination distinguish individuals or groups of individuals and to be talking about an historically established set of values or rules of conduct" (131). He should have the concept of the individual Vs. culture in mind when he presented this view; a concept called by some critics 'personality in culture studies' (See Hennessy for example).

Bauer's note above is plausible, yet it is not beyond dispute, especially if the individuals he is stressing at and their traits, refer to that of the elite genius and men of letters. In addition to being part of the 'values or rules of conduct', they are mostly counted as the mouthpieces of their societies, communities, and cultures and they reflect through literary products, the

Bridegroom to the goddess,  
She tightened her torc on him  
And opened her fen,  
Those dark juices working  
Him to a saint's kept body.

([www.poetryinternational.org](http://www.poetryinternational.org)).

Through using the pronoun (I) which could refer to himself or the 'Tolland man', the poet identifies himself absolutely with the victim who was a 'bridegroom' to the bride 'goddess', definitely the bogland where the mummy was discovered in 1950. The second stanza sexualizes the sacrifice that the man did so that the earth gets fertilized for the future generations, and this could be interpreted as a parallel for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sake and welfare of his people. In this case, Heaney could be accused of favoring primitive religions to Christianity. Yet, another parallel line is more probable here. The Tolland man can symbolize the Irish leaders of the revolutions and violent events that accompanied the troubles there and lasted for about thirty years. Through this period and even earlier to it, a number of leading Northern Ireland characters were killed or died and were immortalized by the writers and poets including the present one.

Much earlier to Heaney and others, the forefather of the nationalists and revolutionists, W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) paved the way to such a kind of belief and thought. As Justin Quinn states, "from the 1890s to the end of his life, Yeats came under strong attack for his ignorance of Irish (he could neither speak nor read it), and this draws attention to the paradox at the centre of his poetic achievement: his poetry, at least in the first three decades, proclaimed its profound connection with the country, and yet he could only get at this material through interpretation and translation" (60). Quinn's last part of the speech quoted above give Yeats his deserved tribute. In "To Ireland in the Coming Times" from his collection, *The Rose*, Yeats proves his association with and connection to his mother tongue despite the fact that he could neither read nor write in Gaelic:

Know that I would accounted be  
True brother of a company  
That sang, to sweeten Ireland's wrong,  
Ballad and story, ran and song;  
(Finneran: 45).

The company to which he is a brother is most probably composed of the Irish nationalist poets and friends: Thomas Osborne Davis, James Clarence Mangan, and Sir Samuel Ferguson who 'sang' to support and encourage the Irish revolutionists against the British rule. This strong connection is further proclaimed when the poet immortalized his country's

poet/protagonist and various ghosts—some who had been killed in the Troubles, some who had been involved in Irish life in the nineteenth century. (Wachtel:12)

In "Bogland" (a poem published in 1969 in the collection *Door into the Dark*), the poet introduces his country (Ireland not England) as a kind of prey: "Our unfenced country / Is bog that keeps crusting / Between the sights of the sun" (<http://greatpoetryexplained.blogspot.com>). This 'unfenced' land is the preserver of a rich and antique culture that belongs, according to Heaney, to times beyond that of England itself. A symbol of this deep past of the Irish culture is presented in the third stanza:

They've taken the skeleton  
Of the Great Irish Elk  
Out of the peat, set it up  
An astounding crate full of air.  
(Ibid).

Though the 'Great Irish Elk' is part of the poet's culture and history; he uses the pronoun; they' instead of 'we' as a clear reference to the fact that he does not count himself as belonging to that 'they' which refers to the colonizers of his land and past. On the other hand, the 'Elk' symbolizes the Irish culture raped by outsiders, and the speaker does not shun that symbol; rather, he denounces its abduction by a power to which he considers himself a stranger. This identification with Ireland and its history goes on in other poems as well. In "Viking Dublin; Trial Pieces" (a poem from *North*), for instance, he tries his hand in a different way: "I am Hamlet the Dane, / Skull-handler, parable, / Smeller of rot" (Heaney, 1975: 14). He tries to illustrate that he prefers to be part of the Danish culture and history rather than the English one and consequently, it takes him in a curved line to be identified with the Irish culture where he feels he belongs.

In "Tollund Man", the speaker goes in a pilgrimage to Aarhus (the second largest city in Denmark) to visit the mummy of an unnamed victim which was found in a bog. This victim is covertly identified with the victims of the Irish Troubles in Northern Ireland whom Heaney seems to sympathize with. The man of the poem died through a religious ritual of the ancient times (conversely belonging to the original people of the poet's land) but the speaker of the poem confuses the reader in telling the story of the Tolland man:

Naked except for  
The cap, noose and girdle,  
I will stand a long time.



lies in the people's culture and history before the bitterness of living under foreigners' control.

A parallel line of similarity to the above briefing could be found in the works of the Kurdish poets from different ages and periods. Perhaps the most obvious grievance in the Kurdish poetry could be discerned in the mother tongue which was prohibited from being used as a means of education and formal communications for a long time and is still banned three out of four parts of their land. The language is allowed only in the Iraqi part of Kurdistan, while Persian, Turkish, and Arabic are imposed upon the Kurds in Iran, Turkey, and Syria respectively. For this reason, the Kurdish poets expressed their abhorrence furiously at those who do not know or do not use their mother tongue whenever and wherever possible. Haji Qadir Koyee (1816-1897) for instance addresses his fit of fury in this way: "If a Kurd does not know his father's tongue, / His mother and father, for sure, adulteress & adulterer." (Sardar & Kareem:146). The classic poet new the value of his mother tongue as the most significant element of the culture of his people. For him, absence of the mother language equals the mortality and even the whole existence of its history and culture. In the 36-line poem quoted above, he refers to some famous Kurds who played essential roles throughout history but alas-he wants to say- they did not add to the Kurds' history and culture because: "Had books, texts, and history / been written in Kurdish / Our clerics, princes, and kings / Would stay immortal over ages" (Ibid). This enthusiasm for the mother tongue as the language of education and literary products was the innermost of most Kurdish intelligentsia whether they gave it mouth or not. The revolutionary and patriotic writer, poet, essayist, and lexicographer Hazhar Mukriani (1921-1990) felt frantic at the state of his mother language and the barriers put on the way of its being used by his people. As early as 1948, he concludes an 8-line poem which he says that he wrote on the back of one of his photographs, with,

Whether on a class place  
Or roaming districts in distress  
Am Kurd and for Kurdistan  
Ready to expense head & hand.  
I will die and live  
Tomb's request as a Kurd to give.  
(Ruhani:13).

The significance of the mother tongue should have been obvious for the strict nationalist who was ready to suffer dearly for that great aspect of the culture. It was this feeling, no doubt, that thrust the poet to think of and later work on a Kurdish-Kurdish dictionary where the Kurdish reader can come across the huge number of the words that were about to die

martyrs in dirges like "Easter 1916" where: "Too long a sacrifice / Can make a stone of the heart / O when may it suffice? / That is Heaven's part" (Finneran: 180). It is of little perplexity, therefore, to see and come across such a kind of feeling and inner frustration by generations of poets that followed him. Thomas Kinsella (b.1928) is just one of the followers. It is in his seminal book-length essay, *The Dual Tradition* (1995) where he exposes how stiff it is to be deprived of what you really own and be exiled from your home literally or psychologically. The most precious cultural stuff he laments is clearly the Gaelic mother tongue that gave way to the upper English colonizing language. "The relegation of the language and the poetry" Donatella Abbate Badin states, "to the West and to 'the under-privileged and dispossessed' is equated by Kinsella to their going 'into a kind of internal exile'" (216). This sense, he expounds in more than one occasion. In "Ritual of Departure" from his collection *Nightwalker and Other Poems* (1968) for instance, his personal farewell and departure to the United States become metonymic to the plights and predicaments that caused forceful migration of many of his Irish people:

A man at the moment of departure, turning  
To leave, treasures some stick of furniture  
With slowly blazing eyes, or the very door  
Broodingly with his hand as it falls shut.  
([www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)).

The 'stick of furniture' he laments leaving it, could well stand for the whole surrounding and the overall culture he will miss while away in America. Shutting the doors of the homeland upon him, even though with no physical dismissal, fills him with bitterness and his eyes with rage and wrath. This frustration is caused not just by leaving some furniture pieces; rather, it extends deeper into the culture of the country and people. Kinsella recalls bitterly "Pale wet potatoes / break into light. The black soil falls from their flesh" (Ibid). A great part of his people's culture, the potato famine or (in the Irish language *An Gorta Mor*) ([www.history.com](http://www.history.com)), is strongly present in the poet's innermost on the eve of his departure. For him, the grounds of that famine still exists but in different methods. Furthermore, "the potato fields", Badin stresses is "so closely linked with the Irish history of exile" (219), since it forced around one million Irish people to leave the land in addition to claiming the life of another million poor farmers and their families. Leaving homeland forcefully or deliberately, is caused by feeling that they have already lost the greatest part of their existence which

title for a large number of poems by the Kurdish poets in different ages.

Abdulla Pashew (b.1946) is an example of millions of the self-migrant Kurds; yet, this did not alleviate his enthusiasm for his homeland and lament of being a stranger to it. He even titled his collected poems *Back to Haven and Face to Storm* as a clear reference and acknowledgement of what he feels about both his homeland and Sweden, the country he chose to settle in; 'haven' being his own country and 'storm' referring to where he lives now.

He extolled the festival and its hero in a short lyric: "I asked Kawa, the grandfather / Father! I am powerless / Tell me how to get to 20<sup>th</sup> century Nawroz" (Abdulla: 263). The speaker identifies himself with the legendary Kurdish patriotic and revolutionary hero, Kaveh and asks him for guidance and encouragement though he acknowledges that, unlike his 'grandfather', he is helpless and impotent. He hints at the resemblance between the situation of his people now and that at Kaveh's time. Tyrants are ruling the Kurds and the oppressed people seek another combatant to rescue them from the miseries they are subjected to by the Arab, Persian, and Turkish tyrants. The speaker, here, stands for all the Kurds and wants to show that unless another Kaveh appears, his people are toothless. The speaker, nevertheless, is not altogether dark pessimist since he is seeking advice and encouragement for another uprising that, he hopes, could regain their home and rid them from being strangers in their own land. In the second part of the short lyric, Kaveh replies: "My son, if you make Kurdistan / A mass fire / Not a Zahak / Thousand Zahaks will surrender" (Ibid).

The message could not be missed; revolution and resistance, and these concluding lines pave the way for necessary measures to be taken if the people want freedom from tyranny and regaining homeland. These lines and, in fact, the poem per se is an example of the role a poet should play in the ongoing struggle for independence. The poet, here, takes refuge in the history and culture of his people is an evocation for the necessary steps by the Kurdish people towards regaining power and authority over their homeland in order to be once more at home in home.

### III. Psychological Impulse

Literatures that tackle political, social, or cultural conflicts, inevitably, invite psychological aspects and mechanisms among other methods of expression and illustration. And since the present study evolves around those conflicts; attempts at psychological interpretations in it are necessary and unavoidable.

out or words that seem strange to them due to the continuous embargo upon the Kurdish language and culture especially in the Iranian part of Kurdistan.

This bitterness extended to most Kurdish writers and poets. Hazhar's contemporaneous, Hemin Mukriani (1921-1986) expressed such a sensation even more evidently, "where'er I turn, a stranger / 'mid them living is torture" (Aziz: 21). Though he says that the people around him are strangers; yet, his real message is his feeling of estrangement at home since occupiers of his country and home consider every part of Kurdistan their homeland and simultaneously take its original inhabitants as intruders. This scene and scenario have become redundant in everyday life of Hemin and his people.

A statue was erected for the classical poet Haji Qadir who died in Istanbul-Turkey, in his birthplace in Iraqi Kurdistan. When the violence between the Kurdish revolution and the then Iraqi regime resumed in 1974, a Baathist officer shoots the head of the statue in Koya, the poet's hometown, by a pistol and this enrages Hemin severely. As he, like most Irish poets, could not react properly, he writes a short poem seemingly about love but in reality, as a grievance. The last two couplets from "Crime of Weakness" are devoted to the speaker's message: "E'en the patriot dead- head is pistol-target / Still the bold poet tells military lesson" (Ibid). The message should not be simply that a statue is shot; rather, the speaker identifies himself with it and stresses that the owner of the statue had taught his people lessons of resistance and defending one's nation and land against occupiers and foreigners. More importantly, the statue, like the Irish mummies of the bogland, is still teaching its people lessons of association and belonging to one's land inherently, even though they are estranged by the enemies.

This anti- colonialist and anti-tyranny idea and philosophy has deep roots in the Kurdish culture and calendar as well. The new Kurdish year (March 21) is associated with an uprising against a tyrant (Zahak) who, according to legends, ruled their land for 1000 years. Two serpents had grown on his head and had to be fed by the brain of two young Kurds until the people, led by the blacksmith, Kaveh (Kawa in Kurdish), revolted against his rule and marched to his castle where Kaveh himself killed the dictator by his hammer. Then the blacksmith had set fire on the hills to announce his triumph and the fall of the tyrant. It was followed by a great festival. This day was called Nawroz which means a new day. This festival is the most important event in the Kurdish culture and reminds the people that resistance is the sole path to freedom and regaining ownership upon their land and life. Consequently, Nawroz has become subject and



(<https://apoetsdublin.files.wordpress.com>). In fact, her nation did not elude her and her allegation could be interpreted another way round, taking into consideration her studying years in London and New York, her interest in the American poetry, and above all her negligence of her own mother tongue (she could not speak neither write in Gaelic). Therefore, she takes refuge in the mechanism of denial (proposed by Anna Freud (1895-1982)) to justify any defects in this respect that may have hurt her psychologically. Nevertheless, the very feeling shared by the majority of the Irish migrants can accept a self-rebuke interpretation and they expressed it repeatedly. As for Boland, Justin Quinn notes that "she dwells on the 'emigr'és'sense of loss rather than their prosperity" (186), and this is exactly what is meant by 'sense of loss' above.

These confusing and resistance -feelings inhabit, for sure, the innermost of all the men of letters where homes are colonized and peoples are oppressed in one way or another. The Kurdish poetry and poets-under study here- are not exceptions. Hemin Mukriani (1921-1986) from the Iranian part of Kurdistan is an example in case. Following the example of the Irish poets unconsciously, he associates his homeland with his mother in a number of poems like "Homeland Mother". Through telling a dream reminiscent of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's (1772-1834) "Kubla Khan", he says "'twas midnight last eve / An old black-wearing woman I saw" (Hikmat:146). His dream including the woman in it, unlike Coleridge's one, is associated with his own land and expresses the poet's internal conflict and psychological frustration and the old wailing woman is an obvious fruit of that psychological status. In a scenario of a naïve vs. experienced talk, the speaker asks the 'mother' about her sad status and the black clothes she has on. The response comes abruptly:

"My green son, you do not know" said she,  
 "Who 'm I? Your mother land,  
 'tis for you I am blue and down,  
 For your case I am burning,  
 Seeing you so poor & sluggish (Ibid).

The extract shows the speaker's close identification with his personified homeland through the resemblance between the black-wearing old woman and 'poor & sluggish' people, including, according to the line above, the speaker himself. Yet, the speaker is never 'poor & sluggish'; rather, his intrapersonal conflict or -as it is sometimes called- goal conflict, aims at sending a significant message to his readers. The message is inherent since "goal conflict has long been considered to be associated with [psychological distress](#)" (Higginson: 251). It was the poet's personal

further. Boland compares such familiar conflicts, quarrels, and sexual harassments to what was going on at the public level to her Irish people even though the family troubles in her poems do not reflect her household situation. She stresses this in an interview: "In a private sense, those were happy times for me. I lived in the suburbs, raised my children, was happy with my husband. And yet for all that, the country, the nature, the culture beyond our four walls was poisoned. The question must be therefore? surely the life within the four walls was poisoned too? Surely no one could escape? (Villar: 61). She, therefore, identifies herself with Philomel and her critical mischief to state, in a fit of psychological distress, the range of the problems her people face and consequently, the grade of estrangement they feel even if they are not personally included as the case with her. In Ireland, Boland wants to say, nobody has the chance even to express his/her grievance, or else, they will have his/her 'tongue cut out'.

As Philomel should pay dearly for any complaint, she turns to weaving in order to tell her misery and grievance. At the end of the poem, Boland identifies herself with the victim and they seem to share the situation: "An Irish sky was unfolding its wintry colors / slowly over my shoulder" (Cooper). The poet did not lose her confidence and she is looking forward. This unprecedented subjugation should come to an end and 'an Irish sky' is ahead to reveal its 'wintry colors' not just over Philomel's shoulder; but over Boland's as well who, in a Freudian way, exchanges situation with the victim. That is why, just after two lines, the poem concludes with: "Now she is rinsing the distances / with greenish silks. Now, for the terrible foreground, / she is pulling out crimson thread" (Ibid). The glimpse of hope expressed by the speaker earlier, is stressed here and confronting the violence and tyranny is achieved through 'greenish silks' and 'crimson thread'. It is, in fact, a process of progression and renewal that is hailed by most nationalist Irish poets and critics and this is what Theo Dorgan (b. 1953) mean when he states, "we have had to painfully create a new, more complex sense of ourselves in response to concrete manifestations of destructive atavisms, and such a process of renewal has found voice in the extraordinary multi-valence of contemporary poetry from Ireland" (Argaiz: 220). Despite Dorgan's advice and Boland's excessive patriotism above; some flaws can be discerned in the poetry of the Irish poets here and there; a case that necessitates self-defense or mere justifications. Boland finds herself in such a situation in "Anna Liffey" (1997): "The city where I was born. / The river that runs through it. / The nation which eludes me"



the two devices of apostrophe and historical allusion, the speaker stresses that peoples' oppressions are not due to just skin colour. The anti-imperialist view, here, does not acquit the speaker from his national responsibility, but it stirs public agitation against tyrants who estrange people like Pashew from their homes and lands (he is living in Sweden now). The poem ends with a half-despair and half-threat message through which the poet certainly had other notes in mind: "This planet is crying out / Crying out it is / Life on me, / sole struggle & sole battle" (Ibid: 127-8). The personified earth seems as if it addresses every freedom-seeker and reveals the only path towards self-independence and self-determination: Man has to win it on the battleground. Through a complete identification with and replacement of the earth, the speaker wishes to send his message to his people and to all the struggling peoples on our planet, which is in reality, the same message that concludes the poem: You have to show your power if you dream of self-determination.

In other poems, he stresses his oppressed psychological state which can serve as a cry for human rights' activists and international organizations all over the world. "Hundreds of Years" for instance opens with:

Hundred years / In my ruin house / Sultan's kitchen cat am / Hundred years / My rooms and yard are wide open / My burglars' doors do guard" (Ibid: 66). The feeling of estrangement is accompanied by that of injustice and the hypocritical cries for human's rights by the superpowers and, in fact, by all those who have power and oppress other peoples in the world. The speaker is, then, the mouthpiece of his people who guard the door of their oppressors who are, according to the poet, no more than housebreakers of the Kurdish land and nation.

## Conclusions

Studying selected poems from seven Irish and Kurdish male and female poets, the paper reached some conclusions. First and foremost, the similar political and cultural situations between the two nations deserves a great attention: The Irish and Kurdish are the official languages in parts of Ireland and Kurdistan respectively, Irish for the Republic of Ireland and Kurdish for the Iraqi part of Kurdistan. Some Irish poets knew/know Irish and composed/compose their poetry in that language (some of them could neither read nor write in Gaelic), whereas almost all the Kurdish poets knew and wrote in their mother tongue despite restriction upon that language in the Kurdish areas in Iran, Turkey, and Syria. Secondly, the self-immigrant

distress that created the scenario where the speaker replaces every Kurd. The setting of the dream-poem is close to that of Ireland in 1922 when part of the country got independence while another part remained under British control till now. The poem was composed in 1946 when part of the Kurdish areas in Iran got independence and the first 'Kurdish republic' was announced there; yet other parts were still under the yoke of the Iranian regime. The naivety above, then, was half justified and the speaker's interrogation was not completely unreasonable; therefore, an illumination was needed: "Mehabad\* I know delighted they are / Out of foe's grasp they enjoy far / But your brothers in Saquiz\*\* / reticent and per se laze" (Sayran:147). The above lines and what follows them in the poem are, in fact, not just elucidations for the poem's speaker; rather, they convey an elusive message to the Kurds everywhere that they all deserve liberation and self-determination.

\* A Kurdish-populated city in northern Iran where the first Kurdish republic in the history of the Kurds was announced in 1946.

\*\*Another Kurdish city in northern Iran close to Mehabad.

It should be such sensations that pushed towards more psychological-fed poems by various poets from different generations. The contemporary poet Abdulla Pashew used almost the same technique in conveying his message in "To Martin, the Human" (1968). The poem obviously addresses the American activist, Civil Rights Movement leader, and Noble Prize winner, Martin Luther King Jr (1929-1968). The speaker seeks to identify himself with King or convey an indirect displacement mechanism due to his shared situation with the addressee at least in one aspect;

"Oh! Luther King,  
lively superb  
You robbed of life not just because  
Dark-skin you were  
Open eyelids  
And simply look!  
Though snow and red my skin is,  
My every displaced part lies under a diverse sky.  
(Abdulla: 125).

King's achievement, it seems, invoked in the speaker a psychological state where he could have been embarrassed within. Questions like the followings could have revolved in his innermost: Why did not he face King's destiny? What should he do to his nation? What is the poet's role in such critical cases? His self-identification with the great activist allowed him at least to draw a parallel line between their respective lands and nations. Through

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cases of many Irish and Kurdish poets (including those under study here) resulted in a similar mode of expression that sometimes generalized the particular complaints. Thirdly, the sense of estrangement and not belonging to one's homeland is shared by the Irish and Kurdish poets, though the Kurdish texts under study may have been starker and more straightforward. Lastly, The Irish women poets shared the senses of oppression and estrangement with the male poets of their land and nation; while this common aspect is absent in the case of the Kurdish poetry, at least until few years ago.

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