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## **THE INTERACTION: BANO ZAN'S SONGS OF EXILE IN BHABHA'S POST-COLONIALISM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Diasporic Literature goes beyond the difference of culture and provides the space that an immigrant can present him/herself in a new identity. Songs of Exile is an instance of this kind of presentation of an Iranian poet Banoo Zan landed in Canada in which she presents the different form of narration) that unearthes the layers of her identity and culture in exile. In fact, through the lens of Bhabha, Banoo Zan challenges the integration of the convention of confirmed selfhood and heritage of the colonizer in the crashes happening between two different cultures. Her poems demonstrate the subjectification process through her past and the stereotype of the new culture based on Bhabha's hybridity in order to provide us with a better view of international culture. Therefore what makes this research significant is Bhabha's approach to interpret the conflicts by which the meaning of home and belonging transfers into the concrete one rather than a national fact which gives the colonized a state of suspension, so she can fill the gaps of the colonizer's cultures with whatever she is carrying from her past to form a new version of hybrid identity.

**Keywords:** Hybridity, Stereotype, Mimicry, Uncanniness,

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## GENERAL OVERVIEW

By reviving the past, an Iranian poet named Banoo Zan who experienced tension in her life time, challenges her national identity which can be a definable movement toward the post colonial thinking. In her songs of exile, she describes the process of her inner emigration from Iran to Canada that has different layers demonstrated in 77 poems. In this paper the “combination of past and present” of these poems is interpreted through the lens of Bhabha’s postcolonialism (Ghandeharian, and Farshi 2016:495). To Bhabha, one can challenge the integration of confirmed” identity, nation and culture” of the colonizer in the “interaction” happening in the crash of two different cultures (Bhabha 1994: 75,38 Habib 750). This interaction leads to a process of “subjectification” that has a particular aspect in Banoo Zan’s poems since she is what her past implies in the new concept (Bhabha 1994:67). While this notion is reflecting itself in an “unrepresentable” space named the “third space”, it leads to the state of “in betweenness” (ibid 37,39,38 ). This openness gives the colonized a state of hybridity therefore he/she can fill the gaps of the colonizer’s cultures with whatever he/she is carrying from her hybrid past to form a new version of hybrid identity which is influenced by whatever her chance and choice bring to her as an open entity no matter how strong the ideology is or how long it is there. What matters in this paper is the importance of the culture and identity in the scale of individuality to open up the idea of individual subculture instead of the national one.

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Since diasporic literature gives the impression of the better understanding one’s own culture, usually the Iranians find themselves in memoir such as Marjan Satrapi’s *Persepolis* and Firoozeh Dumas’s *Funny in Farsi*. However this research would go further to consider the poems of Banoo Zan, an Iranian poet landed in Canada, who gives the different form of narration in this regard which unearthes the layers of her identity and culture in exile. As the review of Emily McGiffin demonstrates in ‘Writing their Way Home’ that *Songs of Exile* is “the questions of place, belonging, and the effect of history in the present” or in the review of Kate Sutherland she mentions the “richness of allusion” in the “meta-poems” of *Songs of Exile*. What makes this research significant is Bhabha’s approach to

interpret the conflicts by which the meaning of home and belonging transfers into the concrete one rather than a national fact(2017:177).

### **BHABHA'S POST-COLONIALISM**

The elements of past and present in Bhabha's opinion are the concepts which have a decisive role in the formation of an identity. To Bhabha identity is always mingling in different time and space of a person's lifetime not to cling to any special "way of being" since it is the "negotiation" of different narrations of "nationality"(Ghandeharian, and Farshi 2016:3, Homi K. Bhabha 1994:25, Huddart 2006: 74). In the process of this negotiation the subject faces "the complex mix of attraction and repulsion" that Bhabha calls it the ambivalent state to the culture of the colonizer, and in the fluctuation of a new culture the subject resists sometime and mimics the other time. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin: 2007:10). As a result of this mimicry the subject turns to the ambivalent "two-powered" one in that country and culture that is against "the linear" line of "historicism"(ibid 10,Bhabha 1994:140). What happens in this process is the deconstruction of the colonial expectation which impacts both the colonizer and the colonized's identity by changing the connotation of "home and belonging" in them (Bhabha 1994:140). As Bhabha believes, the subjects are not "at home in themselves" and never do they arrive there so they are caught up in the position of "in betweenness" between cultures because "hybridity" lies in their very root of subjectivity and culture (Habib 2005:750, Tyson 2006:421). As Bhabha believes cultures and subjectivity are not like the "bordered mosaic", instead they are dynamic issues which are always in their "ongoing process" of being ( Mituzani 2008:158, Huddart 2006: 4). This process happens unrepresentably in the space called "the third space" as a temporary state which resists any authenticity. Bhabha challenges the stable background in forming a new identity by demonstrating that the third space is a part of hybridity that "'displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority'" (Huddart 2006: 85). This unfixedity provides the identity with the opportunity to continue "a life lived in the country of origin" although this repetition is along with the "transformation" of the meaning of the past life which Bhabha calls it the uncanny experience(ibid 53). Bhabha believes that the transformation of a subject happening

in the process of subjection through the conflict of different culture, is not something that can be totally different from or totally the same as the past and present cultures. In fact the subject misrepresents the imagined of both cultures that in Bhabha's term is the stereotype of them that can generally affect both the colonized and colonizer and put them in the circular relationships.

### **BHABHA IN SONGS OF EXILE**

From the very first of *Songs of Exile* the narrator opens the ideas of the fluctuation of the identity and the presence of the conflicts and counts the book and poetry as the way to enable the subject to deal with his/her state of exile therefore the narrator foreshadows the ending of one's interpretation of identity as a fixed issue and the beginning of the open-ended one. This beginning is along with the poems named *Phoenix* (I, II, III) which is a symbol of rebirth itself as the narrator faces the conflict of the mortality and the immortality of the identity as the phoenix. In fact the narrator's image of the whole and nationality "is threatened" by being placed in the process of rebirth (Huddart 2006: 30). The rebirth is along with the awareness of the floating of the identity that starts from an internal war in the price of the relative freedom of nation and nationality. This first climax of the process of subjectification appears in *Mirage* and goes ahead in *Journey 'to nowhere'* proposing a concept of the never ending identity as the narrator mentions 'this letter, will never reach destiny'(5). Little by little as Bhabha believes the subject who has started the interaction in exile comes "into a nightmarish chaos" that is reflected in *Yalda* that she requests herself to just stay in touch with whatever she has had in order to trigger the 'self-birth' no matter what "home" means in her flag and nationality (Mizutani 2008: 55). What becomes remarkable here is the openness that subject applies to be part of the colonials which is a 'universal language' however in the next poems *Words* (II, III) she feels no homogenous relations between the culture of the colonizer and hers so as Bhabha mentions she becomes part of the "heterogeneity of its population" (Bhabha 1990: 148). From where she is standing, by receiving the words from the colonizer, she can not find any touchable relations to follow it deeply but to mimic it, in fact mimicry is the only element to overcome her confusion since the subject says 'we talk to different voices' which refers to the flux of

getting to know herself in the new position and new culture. The new relations and mimicry give her the instability not to belong to any of them so she prefers to release herself to the flow of the mimicry which is like an open-ended journey in which she desires grasping the new identity although she knows she cannot be one with the interaction or the journey. The accepting process of hybrid identity takes a while to present its nature to the narrator that in this case the subject writes her emotions and in three poems comes to conclusion that even the power of mimicry acts as a mask which is not as deep as what she expects of the identity.

The second climax of this subjectification appears in Gord Afarid that the narrator asks herself whether she is a winner in this process or a loser in keeping her nationality, as she recalls her country's myth of Gordafarid which can be a proof of the presence of the notions of her own culture even though she has opened herself to new identity. The uncanny experience of mimicry reveals itself in Post-Colonial and Socrates that her brown roots get the blue identity which is a symbol of the western people for the easterners. The new tree is growing in the ups and downs of the interaction and the past and present mingle with each other in the way that no one can clarify the exact lines of the beginning and the ending. The narrator is just aware and pleased of her transformation by making the past and present free to play. As she goes forward she gains the understanding that she is not able to select her identity between east and west since the hybridity is a state of in-betweenness. Although in Assimilation, Words V, and Athena she moves back and forth in the world of the two cultures hoping to be the whole with one, in Anahagh she is desperate to see herself as her self Zeus, the power that she can grasp at last. In the next step, in Homeland the narrator feels the mimicry gives nothing to her but the sense of unreality of the fantasy in the middle of nowhere which comes from getting "drawn into strange relationships – with other cultures" which can be the narrative of Bhabha's stereotype (Huddart 56). This stereotype runs through the new culture with the pieces of the past as she demonstrates the mythologic elements of her culture in the poem named Arash, moreover in Acid Attack she expresses her new discovery of hybridity of the identity as an element which has fragmented her false consciousness which is at last in her own self. By getting to know her fragmented

self in the following poems she feels the gap of the past by her present time and space with all of its conflict to form a new identity. After the recognition in Toronto 2010, the subject shows the tendency to erase the concept of definition since everything is being attacked by the new one as she mentions in Azan on a Toronto Streetcar, she hears Azan in Toronto with the mixture of different elements both the ones from the past and present. After the uncanny experience of her new identity in Smile, she does her best to expand her circle of acceptance and looks at living as a journey in 'Immigrant'. In the process of adapting the new identity the subject can not deny the fact of the presence of her past in her present, in fact she walks on the ground which belongs to neither of those cultures that makes her keep the active and passive role at the same time regarding her tendency toward the existing conflict. Heading to the transitional stage of her life, the narrator calls this satge Nowruz which is the beginning of the spring in Iran, the celebration of the rebirth of nature. The new sprout of the brown and blue root gives the subject the sympathy with Nelson Mandela in Tata, she feels that she is growing under his hand as the colonized in the colonizer's culture. In some cases as in What Am I about? and Namaz she sees no possibility to be more than enough in the colonizer's culture since she just would like to be herself as she is, whether in Iran or in Canada. Gradually the narrator accepts the world as the place she is in as she demonstrates in Birth that 'the world was nowhere to be found' without the temptation to clarify the end. Comparing herself to the narrator of Hitler's *My Battle* in Battle of Books that closed any negotiation in an abstract form while all of us are part of the hybrid nature of God. The unpredictability of this path lets her embrace the unknown which is growing as a tree. This ambivalent state is the state that she is feeding in herself as the poems are heading to the end the narrator gets the role of both "gardener and the garden" by following what is happening in Iran and living what she sees in Canada (Huddart 2006: 78). This doubled dimensions are reflected in her last poems which is the termination of the Songas of Exile. In fact the points of climax remain on top for ever since she does not belong to anywhere but lives the time and space that she has experienced in an ongoing process.



## CONCLUSION

Songs of Exile is a reflection of what happens in the process of subjectification of the colonized who matches the postcolonial thinking of Bhabha. The subject in this work is going through different steps first to accept the hybridity of her identity, nationality, and culture and then open it to mingle with the new one that results in facing suspension that is not a unified whole but an interaction which is never completed, since the interaction is presented through the item of mimicry, causing the subject to misrepresent the reality as a stereotype. As a result of this, the narrator faces a fragmented identity which belongs to nowhere but just once a while triggers its presence in the form of past or present providing the subject with moving back and forth in time and space and gives her the feeling like a journey without any clear destination. Subject comes to this conclusion that identity is not an abstract issue since the experience, time and space of the subject play a decisive role in forming a new identity which is a concrete concept and always on the way of becoming. As a matter of fact Banoo Zan finds her voice in the middle of the negotiation of different cultures, the voice which reflects the hybrid identity of each human, the identity that forms the issue of subculture in the scale of individuality.

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