

**MOTHERLANDS/OTHERLANDS:
READING 'EXILE' IN THE POETRY OF DEREK WALCOTT, JOSEPH
BRODSKY, SEAMUS HEANEY AND REINALDO ARENAS**

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Motherlands/Otherlands: Reading 'Exile' in the Poetry of Derek Walcott, Joseph Brodsky, Seamus Heaney and Reinaldo Arenas

The present dissertation proposes a comparative reading and examination of the poetry of exile as manifested in the works of four poets in the second half of the twentieth century, to identify certain points of convergence as well as divergence between them. It will try to compare the poetry of Derek Walcott (1930-2017), Joseph Brodsky (1940-1996), Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) and Reinaldo Arenas (1943-1990) as varying specimens of writing that responds to the condition of exile in the second half of the twentieth century. In doing so, the project shall also hope to accomplish an extensive survey of exile not merely as a political condition imposed upon an intellectual along broadly geo-spatial lines, but also as an ontological condition of both being and writing.

For the purpose of properly situating my study within the body of theoretical work concerning exile, I have used two essays by Edward W. Said, "Reflections on Exile"¹ and "Expatriates and Marginals"² to formulate a basic conception and schema of what the experience of "exile" transmutes into in the twentieth century, and used them as points of departure for comparing the literary oeuvres of the aforementioned poets. In other words, in order to demonstrate four differing instances where exilic subjectivity is constructed and manifested in poetry, I have used these two essays by Said as representative of a broad template of exilic subjectivity in the second half of the twentieth century.

Since exilic experiences commonly involve displacements from a previous place or space (imagined and perceived as "home") to a different one (perceived as the "place of exile"), both the spatial and temporal aspects of exile must be considered in unison, since they concern the material and emotional difficulties encountered by the exile owing to this severance from their "home" or *patria*, now re-imagined through its absence in the new, relatively alien "place" where the migrant has to settle in. In a comparable manner, one might be also able to conceive of a temporal displacement where the memory of the *patria* inscribed within the exile freezes at the point when they take

¹ Edward E. Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 180-92.

² Edward W. Said, 'Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals', *Grand Street* 47 (Autumn 1993): 112-124.

the said “leap”, thus initiating a rift between the lived live of the *patria* at present and the said memory. However, the traditional understanding of ‘exile’ is built on an idea of “forced displacement”—often owing to factors which lie outside the scope of the individual’s active volition.

I provide below a brief account of the chapters of my dissertation, and their corresponding content below:

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the introduction to this dissertation, I go on to gloss over the etymology of the word “exile”, and thereafter, consider in detail the dominant ancient and medieval prototype of exile as forced banishment. Since poetry is the genre in which this dissertation has grounded itself, I have considered in detail the examples of Ovid and Dante, and analysed the exilic subjectivity they had foregrounded in their poetry. Ovid was banished in 8 A.D. from Rome to Tomis, near the shores of the Black Sea by royal decree of Emperor Augustus, and the cause of his exile was “*carmen et error*” (“A poem and an error”)³. I first analyse Ovid’s exilic subjectivity as evidenced through the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae Ex Ponto*, focussing specifically on the segregation attempted between Ovid’s lived historical persona and his literary persona, demonstrating his strategies of poetic hyperbole and his constant pleas before Emperor Augustus to shorten the span of his exile among the “barbarous” Getae at Tomis. I draw critical insights from the work of Rachel Severynse Philbrick⁴ to understand Ovid’s literary project during his exilic years. I then go on focus upon Dante’s exile from Florence in 1302, as he ended up on the losing side in the civil war between the White and the Black Guelphs.⁵ Accused of financial mismanagement during the time he had served as the Prior of Florence, Dante was sentenced to “perpetual exile” and disallowed from returning to Florence without paying the fine, failing which he would be burnt at the stake.⁶ I foreground the exilic elements which find representation in Dante’s *Commedia*, focussing on how the

³ See Ovid, “His Plea: *Carmen et Error*”, *Tristia* II: 207-252, <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/OvidTristiaBkTwo.php> and “Publius Ovidus Naso (Ovid)” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th edition, eds. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 506.

⁴ See Rachel Severynse Philbrick, “Disruptive Verse: Hyperbole and the Hyperbolic Persona in Ovid’s Exile Poetry” (PhD diss., Brown University, 2016), <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:674268/PDF/> (accessed May 03, 2022).

⁵ See Guy P. Raffa, “Dante’s Exile”, *Lapham’s Quarterly*, June 05, 2020, <https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/roundtable/dantes-exile> (accessed May 06, 2022)

⁶ Ibid

experience of exile transmutes from a tangibly lived material experience within the socio-political realm to a mythico-literary theme, one which allowed him to see a Christian afterlife as a continuation of this life.

The second sub-section concentrates upon the confluences between European Romanticism, exilic subjectivity and representations of the non-European “Other” in the works of poets such as Percy Bysshe Shelley, George Gordon Byron and Alexander Pushkin. The third sub-section provides detailed accounts of prominent poetic exemplars of exile in the twentieth century, emphasizing the shift from the prototype of exile as banishment to a proliferation of diverse forms of exile. The universalism frequently encoded in ancient, medieval and the Romantic literature of exile now gives way to a certain “relativism”, and the singular prototype of exile as banishment or self-withdrawal cannot adequately explain the ubiquity of dislocation in the twentieth century. I analyse the cases of exiled artists from the twentieth century, from diverse ethnic contexts (European and non-European) such as Osip Mandelstam (Soviet Union), Czeslaw Milosz and Zbigniew Herbert (Poland), Paul Celan (Romania), James Joyce and Samuel Beckett (Ireland), George Lamming, V.S. Naipaul and C.L.R. James (the Caribbean) and go on to discuss contexts such as Cuba and Palestine which have produced significant volumes of émigré literature in the second half of the twentieth century. The fourth sub-section provides a theoretical overview of exile in the twentieth century, elaborating on the work of Edward W. Said⁷, Salman Rushdie⁸, Homi K. Bhabha,⁹ Claudio Guillén¹⁰, Julia

⁷ Edward E. Said, “Reflections on Exile,” in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 180-92; Edward W. Said, ‘Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals’, *Grand Street* 47 (Autumn 1993): 112-124.

⁸ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays on Criticism 1981-1991* (New York: Viking, 1991)

⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1990)

¹⁰ Claudio Guillén, “On the Literature of Exile and Counter-Exile”, *Books Abroad* 50, No. 2 (Spring, 1976): 271-280: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40130427> (accessed May 21, 2022).

Kristeva¹¹, Sophia A. McClennen¹², Paul Tabori¹³, Andrei Cordescu,¹⁴ Rosi Braidotti¹⁵, R. Radhakrishnan¹⁶ and Binesh Balan.¹⁷

I now introduce the scope of my dissertation, my research questions and specify the research methodologies used here:

The Scope of this Dissertation: A Brief Exposition

One can foresee, in the literary careers of these four poets, a form of exilic and multicultural confluence taking shape in the United States of the 1980s, where all of them found themselves. In the case of the first three poets discussed under the scope of this dissertation, there is ample evidence to suggest a their common belonging to an affective community of literary artists, displaced from four different corners of the world and re-uniting in the United States of America during the 1980s. Walcott began to explicitly refer to the exilic fate of Brodsky in his poems such as “Forest of Europe” in *The Star Apple Kingdom* (1979) and then again in many different poems from *Midsummer* (1984) and *The Bounty* (1997). His review essay on Brodsky’s poetic volume *To Urania* (1988), “Magic Industry”, introduces Brodsky to the Anglo-American reader, and praised Brodsky’s “self-conscription, his daily soldiering with no army behind him except the phantoms of the race’s greatest poets” .

The poetic “triangulation” of exilic voices of Walcott, Brodsky and Heaney occurs through their critical, and meta-textual poetic commentaries they wrote on each other. As I will go on to show in the course of the subsequent chapters, As Robin Hanford has revealed, Brodsky came to know of Walcott’s poetic work through their mutual acquaintance, the poet Robert Lowell, in 1977. In course of time, Brodsky would also

¹¹ Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Univ. of Columbia Press, 1991);

¹² Sophia A. McClennen, “Introduction,” in *The Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time, Language, and Space in Hispanic Literatures* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2004)

¹³ Paul Tabori, *The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study* (London: Harrap, 1972)

¹⁴ Andrei Cordescu, *The Disappearance of the Outside* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1990)

¹⁵ Rosi Braidotti, “The Exile, the Nomad and the Migrant: Reflections on International Feminism”, *Women’s Studies International Forum* 15, Issue 1 (1992):7-10,

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/027753959290027S> (accessed May 23, 2022).

¹⁶ Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, *Diasporic Meditations: Between Home and Location* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1996)

¹⁷ Binesh Balan, “Making of Comfortable Exile through Sanskritization: Reflections on Imagination of Identity Notions in India”, *Contemporary Voice of Dalit* 11, no. 2(November 2019): 84-93,

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2455328X19859192> (accessed May 23, 2022).

write a critical essay on Walcott’s work, titled “The Sound of the Tide”¹⁸. The important poetic link between Heaney and Brodsky is the British expatriate poet W.H. Auden, whose lifelong espousal of “self-restraint” was able to achieve such a standard of aesthetic precision where “sentiments inevitably subordinate themselves to the linear, and unrecoiling progression of art”¹⁹. In Heaney’s reading of Auden too, the “poetic authority”(in Heaney’s phrasing, “the rights and weight which accrues to a voice”) of the latter consists “not only because of a sustained history of truth-telling, but by virtue also of its tonality, the sway it gains over the deep ear...”²⁰. As soon as one is able to envisage this form of triangulation taking place here, between three “émigré” poets—Heaney, Auden and Brodsky—a mutually shared belief between Heaney and Brodsky, regarding the virtues of maintaining artistic economy comes to the fore. In particular, a chain of elegies connect the three poets, where Heaney’s elegy “Audenesque”²¹ from *Electric Light* (2001), by paying tribute to Auden’s verbal restraint, mourns the death of Brodsky. Auden, who in his own turn, had composed his elegy “In Memory of W.B. Yeats”²² occasioned by the latter’s death, provided Brodsky with the poetic model for writing his elegy “Verses on the Death of T.S. Eliot”²³ while in internal exile at Norenskaiya. The mutually shared affective kinship among the three poets culminated, in 1996, with the publication of *Homage to Robert Frost* (1996)²⁴, a volume which showcased their admiration for Frost, a towering figure in the history of American poetry.

My decision to include the poetry of Reinaldo Arenas within this dissertation is informed by the need to highlight the subtle interplay between sexual and exilic marginalisation, demonstrated through models of political, sexual and aesthetic dissidences enacted in Arenas’s poetic oeuvre. Reinaldo Arenas, in view of his homosexual identity and his irreverence for institutional forms of literary canonisation,

¹⁸ See Joseph Brodsky, “The Sound of the Tide,” in *Less than One: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998), 164-175.

¹⁹ Seamus Heaney, “Sounding Auden”, *London Review of Books* 9, No. 11 (June 1987), <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v09/n11/seamus-heaney/sounding-auden> (accessed June 04, 2022).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Seamus Heaney, “Audenesque,” in *Electric Light* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2001) 77.

²² W.H. Auden, “In Memory of W.B. Yeats,” in *Selected Poems* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 83

²³ Brodsky, “Verses on the Death of T.S. Eliot,” in *Joseph Brodsky: Selected Poems*, 99-102

²⁴ Joseph Brodsky, Seamus Heaney, and Derek Walcott, *Homage to Robert Frost* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996). Joseph Brodsky, Seamus Heaney, and Derek Walcott, *Homage to Robert Frost* (New York: Farrar, 1996). This co-authored volume contains three essays: Brodsky’s “On Grief and Reason,” Heaney’s “Above the Brim,” and Walcott’s “The Road Taken.”, all of which try to engage with, and critically appraise the literary achievements of Robert Frost, an eminent pre-cursor poet who influenced all three of the above poets.

serves as an interesting counterpoint against the aforementioned triad of poets, all of whom privilege a recourse to literature. Arenas's Cuban context, with its instances of persecution of poets by the dictatorial state (notably in the case of Heberto Padilla) is geographically very close to that of Walcott's own. Walcott does make reference to Padilla's persecution in poem VIII of *Midsummer* (1984)²⁵ and was aware of the Castro regime's intolerance of its dissident intellectuals. He had also authored a review of Guillermo Cabrera Infante's self-translated memoir, *Guilty of Dancing the Chachachá*, titled "The Great Exile"²⁶. Thus we can say that the aforementioned poets are part of a global community of émigré and expatriate writers in the second half of the twentieth century, serving as important exemplars of the power of resistance and redress offered through poetry in the second half of the twentieth century.

Research Questions

The chief research questions likely to be asked in the course of this study are:

- (i) How does political exile as an experience peculiar to the vast demographic and geopolitical shifts in the twentieth century get represented in varying specimens of twentieth century poetry across the globe?
- (ii) Is it apt, in context of the ubiquity of exilic dislocations in the second half of the twentieth century, to regard "exile" as an experience specific to the circumstances of material estrangement from one's country, or is it more of an ideological question (leading invariably, to an informed, but nevertheless individual choice) related to the exiled poet's own sense of 'home'?
- (iii) Is the exilic space—inscribed in the *exsul's* memory—subject to modification through historical time, or is it rather an insular space inscribed within their subjective consciousness?
- (iv) Can the writing of poetry—against the ravages of war, dislocation and forced banishment—be considered as an alleviating force in exacerbating the trauma of exilic separation?

²⁵See Derek Walcott, "VIII," in *Midsummer* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984), 9.

²⁶ Derek Walcott, "The Great Exile", *The New York Review*, March 28, 2002, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2002/03/28/the-great-exile/> (accessed June 06, 2022).

- (v) To what extent does the dialectic of the ‘reality’ and the ‘fiction’ of the exilic experience colour the ‘aesthetics of exile’? Is the ‘real’/ ‘fictive binary sufficient to encompass the complexities of twentieth century exilic poetry?

Argument and Methodology

Having framed the research questions thus, this dissertation try to offer sustained readings of the poetic oeuvre of each of these four poets. Owing to the fact that this is a cross-cultural study representing four widely different historical, political and cultural contexts, The research methods followed in this dissertation includes close textual readings of the primary texts (i.e. the body of poetic work) and the secondary texts (critical commentaries on aforementioned primary texts) that are the object of its study. In addition, I have also conducted dense historical research pertaining to each individual context under scrutiny, in order to properly anchor my readings within them. The dominant research methodologies used are therefore “textual” and “historical” analysis, although I have made use of a host of (context-specific) theorists to defend my arguments in each case. I contend that these four poets conform to the idea of the global “exilic imaginary” in the second half of the twentieth century, a term I borrow from Silvija Jestrovic and Yana Meerzon. In their book *Performance, Exile and ‘America’* these authors explore the recurrence of the “exilic chronotope” in constructions of the experience of ‘America’—a constantly shifting *topos* comprised of imagined and lived exilic experiences.²⁷ Just as they propose “the notion of exilic chronotope as a framework within which to investigate various dramatizations of tension between imagined and lived exilic America”²⁸, I have proposed the existence and ubiquity of a “global exilic imaginary” in the second half of the twentieth century—one that is being constantly metamorphosed through newer, and yet newer representations not just within poetry but also theatre, film and the performing arts. As Jestrovic and Meerzon have written, “[e]xile reinforces the inevitable gap between what immigrants imagine of their new land and home and what they truly face after they have landed in those places”²⁹. The totality of the experience of exile therefore, gets framed through the constant interplay between the tangibly ‘real’ and the ‘imagined’. Exilic subjectivity, in case of poets such as Walcott or

²⁷ See Silvija Jestrovic and Yana Meerzon, “Introduction: Framing ‘America’ – Between Exilic Imaginary and Exilic Collective,” in *Performance, Exile and ‘America’*, eds. Silvija Jestrovic and Yana Meerzon (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3.

²⁸ Ibid. 7.

²⁹ Ibid. 8.

Heaney, is a by-product of this very “imaginary” through which they imagine, project and pose their dislocation from “home”. On other hand, this dissertation has also included Brodsky and Arenas, poets who were conditioned, by the realities of forced or coerced displacement, to write nostalgically about a “home” that once was theirs. Taken together in unison, they poetically construct and represent, during the second half of the twentieth century, the two different sides of the “global exilic imaginary”.

Chapter 2: “The bowsprit, the arrow...the lunging heart”: Exile, Perpetual Flight and the Poetic Self in Derek Walcott

In the second chapter on Derek Walcott, I begin with a few remarks from William Logan’s 2007 review of Walcott’s *Selected Poems*, which conceptualises the trope of “perpetual flight” in Walcott’s poetry as indicative of the historical factors of collective exile and dispossession within the Caribbean context.³⁰ I then go on to provide an account of relevant theoretical frameworks that may be used to understand the Caribbean context, replete with its histories of trauma and dislocation owing to slavery, indentureship and the history of European colonialism. After using the theoretical models of Franz Fanon and Octave Mannoni³¹ to understand the psychosocial effects/affects of colonisation, I go on to elaborate on “Schizoanalysis and Nomadology”³² (a model proposed Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their work *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*) to demonstrate later theoretical frameworks which conceptualise trajectories of “re-territorialisation” followed by Caribbean writers. I shall closely follow the conceptual models of Eleanora Natalia Ravizza³³ and Michael J. Dash³⁴ to arrive at the conceptions of latency, formlessness and the plurality of Caribbean subjectivity. Exploring the work of twentieth century Anglophone Caribbean writers in exile such as George Lamming, C.L.R. James and V.S. Naipaul, and a Francophone Caribbean poet such as St. John Perse, I ground my analysis of Walcott’s early career poems from *Selected Poems (1964)*, *The Castaway and Other Poems (1965)*

³⁰ William Logan, “The Poet of Exile,” review of *Selected Poems*, by Derek Walcott, *New York Times*, April 8, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/08/books/review/Logan.t.html> (accessed June 07, 2022).

³¹ See Franz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008) and Octave Mannoni, “The Decolonization of Myself”, *Race VII* (1966):327-35

³² See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2000), xii.

³³ Eleanora Natalia Ravizza, *Exile and Return as Poetics of Identity in Contemporary Anglo-Caribbean Literature: Becoming Home* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019).

³⁴ See Michael Dash, “In Search of the Lost Body: Redefining the Subject in Caribbean Literature,” *Kunapipi* 1, no. 1 (1989), 17, <http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol11/iss1/5> (accessed June 08, 2022.).

and *The Gulf and Other Poems* (1969) through their complex inter-relationships with the theme of historical exile and dispossession in the Caribbean, and thereafter, with an Adamic reclamation of the “New World”. The chapter then provides close readings of poems from *Sea Grapes* (1976) which engage with the work of Osip Mandelstam, an archetypal poetic model for exile in the twentieth century. Next, the long narrative poem “The Schooner Flight” from *The Star Apple Kingdom* (1979) is analysed and discussed within the broader theoretical framework of exilic voyaging provided by Edouard Glissant in the *Poetics of Relation*.³⁵ The final two sub-sections respectively concentrate on Walcott’s poetic projection and performance of exilic subjectivity in *The Fortunate Traveller* (1981) and the transcultural poetic affinities sought by Walcott with a host of other exiled poets such as Joseph Brodsky, Thomas Venclova and Heberto Padilla in poems from *Midsummer* (1984) and *The Bounty* (1997).

Chapter 3: “[T]he tongue of a man who’s departed thence”: The Poetics of Exile, Estrangement, Self-Deprecation and Banishment in Joseph Brodsky

In the third chapter on the poetry of Joseph Brodsky, I begin with an attempt to look at the marginalisation of Brodsky in the Soviet society of the mid-twentieth century owing to his Jewish identity. I then go on to build on Brodsky’s artistic postulation of “estrangement”, understandable in relation to theoretical models proposed by Viktor Shklovsky³⁶ and Svetlana Boym.³⁷ The chapter then turns to a historical account of the Khrushchev regime and the “Thaw” years in Soviet Russia, focussing upon the marginal poetic group, the “Avvakumites”. I have made use of the work of Alexei Yurchak to understand the “authoritative discourse” of Stalinism which debased the use of language in Soviet Russia and have thereafter gone on to demonstrate the ways in which a reclamation of the language was attempted by the Avvakumites in these years, concentrating on the deliberate adoption of “foreignness”—if only as a temporary reprieve—from the monotony of “authoritative discourse” in Soviet Russia.³⁸ I then discuss, in considerable detail, the twin phenomena of jazz music and Hollywood movies

³⁵ Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1997).

³⁶ Viktor Shklovsky, “Art, as Device”, trans. Alexandra Berlina, *Poetics Today* 35: 151-74. https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduate/modules/fulllist/first/en122/lecturelist2017-18/art_as_device_2015.pdf (accessed June 08, 2022.)

³⁷ Svetlana Boym, ‘Estrangement as a Lifestyle: Shlovsky & Brodsky’, *Poetics Today* 17 no. 4 (Winter 1996): 511-530, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1773211> (accessed June 08, 2022).

³⁸ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything was Forever, Until it was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006).

of the 1950s from the United States and their “exotic” appeal for audiences in the Soviet Union, in particular the “Avvakumites”. The chapter then concentrates on the existential dimensions of exilic subjectivity available to Brodsky through the work of Lev Shestov and Soren Kierkegaard. Using David M. Bethea’s insights on the literary ramifications of Brodsky’s internal exile to Norenskaya, I then go on to demonstrate Brodsky’s initiation to the canon of Anglo-American elegiac verse through the model of the ‘Audenseque’ elegy.³⁹ The next sub-section of the chapter concentrates upon poems directly dealing with Brodsky’s banishment in 1972 from Soviet Russia, building on poetic strategies such as self-deprecation and figurations of the ‘outsider’. The final two sub-sections respectively deal with the impossibility of homecoming and Brodsky’s own considerations on the “metaphysical” dimensions of exile. It also needs to be stated that in complementing my analysis of Brodsky’s poetry from *Selected Poems* (1965) *A Part of Speech* (1980), *To Urania* (1988), *So Forth* (1996) and *Collected Poems in English* (2000), I have relied extensively on his critical prose, anthologised in *Less than One* (1986) and *On Grief and Reason* (1995) to support my claims throughout this chapter.

Chapter 4: “An inner émigré”: Exile, Aesthetic Distance and Poetic Responsibility in Seamus Heaney

The fourth chapter looks at Seamus Heaney’s negotiations with exilic / émigré subjectivity, and its representation in his poetry, trying to reach an elusive balance between enabling forms of artistic distancing and self-exile, and the resulting guilt and realisation of poetic responsibility. It maps the early identity of Heaney as an “Ulster poet” (as evidenced in poems of his first two poetic volumes) affiliated to “the Belfast Group” and charts the trajectory of his movement from “place” to “placelessness” over the course of the next two decades. Drawing upon the work of Heather Clark⁴⁰, John Boyd⁴¹, Philip Hobsbaum⁴² and a few others, I then go on to demonstrate Heaney’s self-distancing, and defamiliarising poetic manoeuvres, in poems from *Wintering Out* (1973) and *North* (1975) and his gradual dissociation of himself from the compulsion of choosing among the rivalling demands of Unionist and Nationalist camps in Northern

³⁹ David M. Bethea, *Joseph Brodsky and the Creation of Exile* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994).

⁴⁰ Heather Clark, *The Ulster Renaissance: Poetry in Belfast 1962-72* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁴¹ John Boyd, ‘The Ulster Novel’, *Rann* 20 (1953): 35-38.

⁴² Philip Hobsbaum, ‘The Belfast Group: A Recollection’, *Eire-Ireland* 32, no. 2-3(1997): 173-182.

Ireland against the context of “the Troubles”. The models of the émigré consciousness available to Heaney includes that of Osip Mandelstam, Joseph Brodsky and the Polish poets Czeslaw Milosz and Zbigniew Herbert. The chapter thereafter concentrates on Heaney’s *apologia* for poetry offered through the “Glanmore Sonnets” from *Field Work* (1979), elaborating upon his inner anxieties and guilt on choosing voluntary exile to Wicklow. Subsequently, I examine at Heaney’s adaptation of the myth of the exiled Irish bird-king Sweeney in his poetry as a poetic gesture in which the experiences of this voluntary exile are superimposed. The chapter then explores Heaney’s “penitential peregrination” in the twelve-part long poem “Station Island” and his negotiations with exilic subjectivity in Dante, an important European poetic precursor. The final subsection of the chapter deals with literary constructions of exilic longing, metaphors of frontier-crossing and imagined spaces in *The Haw Lantern* (1987). As with my previous two chapters, I have tried to ground my analysis of the primary texts with an adequately diverse range of references from Heaney’s critical prose, anthologised in *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968–1978* (1980), *The Government of the Tongue* (1988), *The Redress of Poetry* (1995) and *Finders Keepers: Selected Prose 1971-2001* (2002).

Chapter 5: “I Scream, Therefore I am”: Exile and the Political, Sexual and Aesthetic Dissidences of Reinaldo Arenas

The fifth chapter concentrates upon the exile of Reinaldo Arenas, the dissident homosexual poet and novelist from Cuba who immigrated to the United States during the Castro regime. Beginning with Arenas’s meteoric rise from dire poverty and elaborating on the gradual self-perception of his homosexuality, I have tried to show his disillusionment with the arbitrariness of the dictatorial Castro regime and the exclusion of the homosexual in post-revolutionary Cuba. I continue my analysis of Arenas’s poetry in the subsequent sections, drawing from his early novels, the poetic volumes *El central* (1981) and *Leprosorio: trilogia poetica* (1990), and grounding my textual readings of them against the historical context of post-revolutionary Cuba. In order to understand the nature of totalitarian governance in Cuba, I refer to the model of totalitarianism proposed by Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brezinski⁴³ and try to apply it to Arenas’s post-revolutionary Cuban context, enmeshed in a complex network of geopolitical relations

⁴³ See “The General Characteristics of Totalitarian Dictatorship” in Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 15-27.

within the larger discourse of the Cold War. Thereafter, the chapter on Arenas expands upon the “Revolutionary Offensive” campaign of 1968 in Cuba, which signalled Cuba’s alignment with the powers of the Eastern bloc. The consequences of this choice, my chapter tries to argue, led to the adoption of the Sino-Guevarist line of facilitating labour relations in Cuba, emphasizing the greater importance of “moral incentives” over their material counterparts. I offer readings of poetic excerpts from *El central*, a poem informed with the realities of forced expropriation of labour in Cuba in the wake of the Ten Million Ton Harvest. Arenas’s defiance of authoritative discourses, and his adoption of a form of *mariconeria* which serves as an important tool of his oppositional counter-militancy to Cuban *machismo* are then approached, and the systematic marginalisations he faced within the dominantly patriarchal society of Cuba are adequately demonstrated. I have made use of the work of scholars on homosexuality in Latin American cultures such as Allen Young⁴⁴, Marvin Leiner⁴⁵, Rafael Ocasio⁴⁶, Roger Lancaster⁴⁷, Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich⁴⁸, Lillian Guerra⁴⁹ and Brad Epps⁵⁰ to support my readings of individual poems that deals with the exclusion of the homosexual subject. The subsequent sub-section of the chapter deals with the experiences of arrest, torture and incarceration of Reinaldo Arenas during 1974-76 and the poetic representations of these experiences in poems from *Leprosorio: trilogia poetica* (1990). I move on, in the next sub-section, to provide a historical account of the Mariel exodus, Arenas’s coerced or conditioned choice of exile to the United States in 1980 and his active espousal of literatures produced by émigré Cubans and fellow *Marielitos* of his generation. I conclude the final chapter by establishing the importance of Arenas’s lifelong activism for the securing of gay rights in post-revolutionary Cuba and his refusal to be co-opted into the language of passive victimhood. Throughout the length of the chapter, I have tried to

⁴⁴ Allen Young, *Gays under the Cuban Revolution* (San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1981)

⁴⁵ Marvin Leiner, *Sexual Politics in Cuba: Machismo, Homosexuality and AIDS* (London & New York: Routledge, 2019 (1994)).

⁴⁶ Rafael Ocasio, “Gays and the Cuban Revolution: The Case of Reinaldo Arenas”, *Latin American Perspectives* 29 no. 2, “Gender, Sexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Latin America” (March 2002): 78-98.

⁴⁷ Roger N. Lancaster, *Life is Hard: Machismo, Danger, and the Intimacy of Power in Nicaragua* (Berkeley, California: Univ. of California Press, 1994)

⁴⁸ Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich, “Homosexuality, Homophobia, and Revolution: Notes toward an Understanding of the Cuban Lesbian and Gay Male Experience, Part I”, *Signs* 9 no. 4, The Lesbian Issue (Summer 1984): 683-699, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173617> (accessed June 08, 2022).

⁴⁹ Lillian Guerra, “Gender Policing, Homosexuality and the New Patriarchy of the Cuban Revolution, 1965–70”, *Social History* 35, no. 3 (August 2010): 268-289, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27866661> (accessed June 08, 2022)

⁵⁰ Brad Epps, “Proper Conduct: Reinaldo Arenas, Fidel Castro, and the Politics of Homosexuality”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6 no. 2 (Oct. 1995): 231-283, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3704123> (accessed June 08, 2022).

back my analysis of primary texts with a host of references to Arenas's memoir *Antes que anochezca* (*Before Night Falls*) and selections from his critical prose compiled in *Libro de Arenas* (*Prosa Dispersa, 1965-1990*)

Conclusion: Analysis of Research Findings

I conclude that for poets such as Derek Walcott and Seamus Heaney (poets whose choice of emigration to Boston or Wicklow were not conditioned by forced displacement), forms of metaphoric or spiritual return permeate in their work. For both Walcott and Heaney, leaving their respective "first places" was paradoxically, a way to reclaim and renew the bonds of their own identification with their source cultures. But whereas for Walcott attachment to the Caribbean is such a profound bond because it consists in the inexplicable "strength and pull of longing"⁵¹, for Heaney the spiritual return consists much more in going back to the "space" of the lived and personal memory of a lost childhood in County Derry. Despite this dissonance, their endeavours to project this exilic subjectification in their poems enables them as artists whose foremost commitment lies to their craft.

On the contrary, the exilic fates of Brodsky and Arenas are united by the events of their non-return to their respective native realms. Thus, one can infer that the major divergence between the exilic "spaces" inhabited by the Walcott-Heaney pair and the Brodsky-Arenas pair consists in their ability or inability to return to their respective origins. While the exilic themes connected to a trajectory of "return" (even if only at a "metaphorical" or "spiritual" level as visible in the Walcott-Heaney pairing) can be described as those of "necessary departure in order to return", their counterparts in the Brodsky-Arenas pair are those concerning "impossible nostalgia and paradoxical 'homing'".

Through the analysis of the primary texts conducted above, I find myself more inclined to Michael Ugarte's delineation of a "shifting ground" between the "real" and the "fictive", which he explores in his work on the body of Spanish Exile literature during the Second World War⁵². As Ugarte understands, "exile", and its representation in literature often becomes tantamount to an "untameable" phenomenon that resists, by its

⁵¹ Nancy Schoenberger and Derek Walcott, "An Interview with Derek Walcott", *The Threepenny Review* 15 (Autumn 1983):17.

⁵²See Michael Ugarte, *Shifting Ground: Spanish Civil War Exile Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 1989).

very ambiguities, a clearly resolved definition and typification. In my analysis for the four poets in this dissertation, I have also tried to demonstrate, in varied ways, the strategies which they take recourse to, in order to adequately ‘fictionalise’ the lived and material realities of their estrangement from “home”, often choosing to appraise their own literary subjectivities with the poetic impersonations (or masks) of Ulysses, Ovid and Dante, as well as a host of other Romantic and modern exiled poets. In literary sub-genres such as the exilic retrospective memoirs discussed here (Brodsky’s essays from *Less than One* and *On Grief and Reason*, or Arenas’s *Before Night Falls*), the subjective report of the victimised Brodsky or Arenas also attest to a form of bearing witness. They lay bare the inconsistencies within the officially approved narratives of state-sanctioned history, from which these poets are excluded. The writing of dissent conditions their pre-exilic and post-exilic severance from the mainstream of accepted socio-cultural relations within the Soviet Union or Cuba respectively. In order to represent a “textual self” within these narrations, both Brodsky and Arenas had to take recourse to ‘fictionalisation’ and re-encode the stories and accounts of their exile with counter-hegemonic import, often by deliberately having to employ themes of divided or schismatic allegiances between two cultures, a desire to dwell in bi-location or in a cosmopolitan “world of letters” that prioritises language as the new *patria* into which one must be re-assimilated. For Walcott and Heaney too, the constant critical appraisals of exiled authors such as V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming, C.L.R. James, Joseph Brodsky, Czeslaw Milosz, Zbigniew Herbert, Patrick Kavanagh and John Montague echo this self-same idea and attest to the literary conceptualisation of language as a symbolic *patria* for exiled poets and artists: a “tributary of emigrants”⁵³ now made “classless” by their common citizenry to “language”. The writing of poetry works as a form of partial alleviation against the traumas of systematic exclusion, political disenfranchisement, exile and dislocation.

⁵³ Derek Walcott, “Forest of Europe,” in *Collected Poems: 1948-84*, 377.