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Alienation in Bian Zhilin's Fragment and Sherko Bekas's Now a Girl is My Homeland: A comparative literary analysis

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ABSTRACT

Comparative studies of Chinese and Kurdish poetry remain scarce, particularly those exploring how poets from different historical and cultural contexts represent political disillusionment, identity fragmentation, and belonging. Addressing this gap, this study compares Bian Zhilin's Fragment and Sherko Bekas's Now a Girl is My Homeland through existentialist and postcolonial perspectives. Using a qualitative comparative literary approach based on close textual, thematic, and contextual analysis, the study examines how imagery, symbolism, silence, fragmentation, and representations of homeland construct meanings of alienation. The findings show that although the poems emerge from different political realities post-revolutionary China and the Kurdish experience of exile both portray alienation as an existential condition that reshapes identity and belonging. However, they differ in their poetic strategies: Zhilin employs silence, fragmentation, and introspection, whereas Bekas relies on symbolic representations of homeland, memory, and cultural resilience. By bringing Chinese and Kurdish poetry into dialogue, this study contributes to comparative literary scholarship by demonstrating how distinct poetic traditions converge in expressing universal experiences of loss, identity, and the search for meaning.

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INTRODUCTION

Poetry has long served as a medium through which writers respond to political upheaval, cultural transformation, and personal crisis. Experiences such as alienation, loss, exile, and the search for identity frequently emerge when individuals confront fractured social realities and changing historical circumstances. Rather than merely documenting historical events, poetry reconstructs these experiences through imagery, symbolism, metaphor, and other literary devices that reveal the emotional consequences of political and cultural disruption. Consequently, the study of poetic representations of disillusionment and loneliness provides valuable insights into how literature negotiates the relationship between individual experience and collective history.

Within modern poetry, the themes of alienation and identity have received considerable scholarly attention across different literary traditions. Although these themes emerge from diverse historical contexts, they often reflect comparable human experiences of displacement, uncertainty, and the struggle to reconstruct meaning after ideological or social rupture. Comparative literary studies therefore offer an important means of examining how writers from different cultural backgrounds articulate similar existential concerns while employing distinct poetic strategies (Kholodniak, 2023). By placing works from different literary traditions into dialogue, comparative analysis extends understanding beyond national literary boundaries and highlights both shared human experiences and culturally specific forms of expression.

Among poets whose works engage profoundly with political and emotional displacement are Bian Zhilin and Sherko Bekas. Bian Zhilin occupies a significant position in modern Chinese poetry, where his later works reflect the intellectual uncertainty and emotional fragmentation associated with revolutionary disillusionment in twentieth-century China. His poem *Fragment* portrays the collapse of idealism through restrained language, fragmented imagery, and symbolic silence, illustrating the psychological consequences of ideological failure. Although Bian Zhilin is now regarded as a major figure in modern Chinese poetry, recognition of his work developed gradually due to its distinctive aesthetic style and limited political engagement. Chen (1999) observes that subsequent scholarship has highlighted the artistic complexity of Bian's poetry, particularly its modernist techniques and intellectual influences from Western literature, classical Chinese philosophy, and contemporary Chinese writers. Nevertheless, these studies have largely examined his poetry within the framework of modern Chinese literature.

In contrast, Sherko Bekas, one of the most influential voices in modern Kurdish

literature, explores exile, homeland, and cultural identity in response to the historical experiences of the Kurdish people. In *Now a Girl is My Homeland*, homeland becomes a symbolic rather than geographical space, allowing Bekas to express longing, displacement, and the persistent search for belonging through highly evocative poetic imagery. Although the two poets write from different historical and cultural contexts, both transform political disruption into reflections on loneliness, identity, and the human search for meaning.

Previous scholarship has examined the two poets extensively, although primarily within their respective literary traditions. Studies on Bian Zhilin have focused on his modernist aesthetics, symbolism, poetic language, and responses to revolutionary disillusionment, highlighting how his poetry reflects the intellectual crisis experienced during periods of political transformation (Inwood, 2014; Santangelo & Boros, 2020; Song, 2018; Zhou, 2021). Likewise, research on Sherko Bekas has predominantly investigated themes of exile, Kurdish nationalism, identity, resistance, and homeland, demonstrating how his poetry represents both individual suffering and the collective memory of the Kurdish diaspora (Asaad, 2020; Tabbert & Ibrahim, 2023; Ali, 2024; Abdulqadir, 2019). Collectively, these studies have significantly enhanced scholarly understanding of each poet's literary achievement and socio-political engagement.

Despite these valuable contributions, the existing scholarship remains limited in several respects. First, previous studies generally examine Bian Zhilin and Sherko Bekas independently, leaving little opportunity to explore how similar emotional experiences emerge across different literary traditions. Second, while alienation, exile, and political disillusionment have been widely discussed, relatively little attention has been given to the comparable poetic strategies through which these themes are constructed in Chinese and Kurdish modern poetry. Third, existentialist and postcolonial perspectives have usually been applied separately rather than integrated within a single comparative framework capable of explaining both the psychological dimensions of alienation and the cultural implications of displacement. Consequently, the intersection between political disillusionment, identity fragmentation, and poetic representation across these two literary traditions remains insufficiently explored.

Responding to these gaps, this study offers a comparative literary analysis of Bian Zhilin's *Fragment* and Sherko Bekas's *Now a Girl is My Homeland* through the complementary perspectives of existentialism and postcolonial theory. Rather than examining each poet within an isolated national context, the study investigates how similar experiences of loneliness, political alienation, and identity fragmentation are expressed through different poetic forms, cultural histories, and symbolic structures.

Integrating these two theoretical perspectives enables the analysis to consider both the existential struggle for meaning experienced by the individual and the broader cultural consequences of exile, displacement, and historical disruption.

Accordingly, this study pursues three objectives. First, it examines how disillusionment, loneliness, and identity fragmentation are represented in the selected poems through imagery, symbolism, metaphor, and other poetic devices. Second, it compares the ways in which Bian Zhilin and Sherko Bekas construct experiences of political alienation and belonging within their respective historical contexts. Third, it interprets these representations through existentialist and postcolonial perspectives to explain how different literary traditions negotiate comparable experiences of emotional and cultural displacement.

This study contributes to comparative literary scholarship in several ways. It expands existing research by bringing modern Chinese and Kurdish poetry into a shared analytical discussion, an area that has received limited scholarly attention. It also demonstrates the complementary value of existentialist and postcolonial approaches in interpreting literary representations of alienation, identity, and displacement across different cultural contexts. More broadly, the study illustrates how geographically, and historically distinct poetic traditions converge in their exploration of loss, belonging, and the search for meaning, thereby contributing to broader discussions of cross-cultural literary criticism and modern comparative poetry. Although these studies have considerably enriched understanding of Bian Zhilin's poetic aesthetics and intellectual influences, they largely examine his work within the tradition of modern Chinese literature. Comparisons with poets from other cultural and literary traditions remain relatively limited, leaving opportunities for broader cross-cultural analyses.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative comparative literary approach to examine the representations of disillusionment, loneliness, and identity in Bian Zhilin's *Fragment* and Sherko Bekas's *Now a Girl is My Homeland*. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study seeks to interpret meanings embedded in poetic language rather than measure observable variables. The comparative literary design enables the analysis to identify both shared and distinctive ways in which the two poets represent political alienation, exile, and the search for meaning within their respective historical and cultural contexts.

The corpus of this study consists of two poems: Bian Zhilin's *Fragment* and Sherko Bekas's *Now a Girl is My Homeland*. These poems were selected because they occupy significant positions within each poet's literary oeuvre and provide comparable representations of emotional fragmentation resulting from political and historical upheaval. Although they originate from different literary traditions, both poems transform personal experience into broader reflections on identity, loss, and belonging, making them appropriate texts for cross-cultural comparative analysis.

The primary texts were analyzed through close reading, an interpretive method that examines how meaning is constructed through language, imagery, symbolism, metaphor, and textual form [Greenham \(2025\)](#). This approach was complemented by comparative, thematic, and contextual analyses to explore both the shared and distinctive features of the two poems. Particular attention was given to recurring motifs, symbolic patterns, silence, fragmentation, and emotional expression as key elements through which Bian Zhilin and Sherko Bekas represent alienation, political disillusionment, and belonging. These textual features were interpreted in relation to the poets' respective historical, political, and cultural contexts, allowing the poems to be understood not as isolated literary works but as responses to broader experiences of ideological collapse, exile, displacement, and identity reconstruction.

The comparative analysis was conducted by examining the two poems through several analytical dimensions: representations of disillusionment, constructions of loneliness, expressions of identity and belonging, symbolic imagery, and the relationship between personal experience and historical reality. These categories provide a common framework for identifying similarities and differences between the poems while recognizing the distinctive cultural contexts from which they emerge. The analysis therefore seeks not only to compare themes but also to examine how different poetic strategies communicate comparable emotional experiences.

To support textual interpretation, the study incorporates contextual analysis of the historical and political circumstances that influenced each poet's work. For Bian Zhilin, the discussion considers the intellectual and emotional consequences of post-revolutionary China and the decline of revolutionary idealism. For Sherko Bekas, the analysis is situated within the Kurdish experience of exile, displacement, and the continuing struggle for cultural identity. This contextual perspective provides a broader understanding of how personal experiences expressed in the poems intersect with larger historical narratives. The interpretation is guided by two complementary theoretical perspectives: existentialism and postcolonial theory. Existentialist thought provides a framework for examining themes of alienation, loneliness, uncertainty, and the search for meaning as reflected in the emotional experiences of the poetic speakers.

(Ikhlas et. al., 2024). Postcolonial theory complements this perspective by illuminating issues of exile, displacement, homeland, cultural identity, and the consequences of political marginalization, particularly in Bekas's poetry (Riyana, 2023). Integrating these perspectives enables the analysis to consider both the psychological dimensions of alienation and the socio-cultural realities that shape the poets' representations of identity and belonging.

Secondary sources, including scholarly books, journal articles, and critical studies on Bian Zhilin, Sherko Bekas, comparative literature, existentialism, and postcolonial criticism, are employed to support the interpretation of the primary texts. These sources provide historical context, theoretical grounding, and critical perspectives that strengthen the comparative analysis while ensuring that the discussion remains situated within existing literary scholarship.

The analytical procedures described above enabled the identification of recurring themes, literary devices, and symbolic patterns in both poems. The findings are presented comparatively to illustrate how Bian Zhilin and Sherko Bekas negotiate political disillusionment, identity, and belonging through distinct yet complementary poetic strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis reveals that although *Fragment* and *Now a Girl is My Homeland* emerge from different historical and cultural contexts, both poems explore the emotional consequences of political disruption through closely related thematic concerns. The textual analysis identifies three interconnected patterns that shape the two poems: the representation of political disillusionment and alienation, the fragmentation of identity accompanied by the search for belonging, and the distinctive poetic strategies through which these experiences are expressed. Rather than treating the poems as isolated literary works, this section examines them comparatively to demonstrate how similar emotional realities are articulated through different symbolic systems and poetic forms. The discussion integrates textual evidence with existentialist and postcolonial perspectives to explain how each poet transforms historically specific experiences into broader reflections on the human condition.

Representations of political disillusionment and alienation

Both *Fragment* and *Now a Girl is My Homeland* portray political upheaval not as a sequence of historical events but as an experience that reshapes the individual's emotional and psychological world. Although Bian Zhilin and Sherko Bekas write

from different political and cultural circumstances, the close reading suggests that both poems place alienation at the center of their poetic vision. Rather than foregrounding political ideology itself, the poems explore its aftermath—the lingering uncertainty, emotional isolation, and fractured sense of self that remain when familiar systems of meaning begin to collapse. This observation resonates with previous studies that describe Zhilin's later poetry as a reflection of post-revolutionary disillusionment (Santangelo & Boros, 2020; Inwood, 2014) and Bekas's poetry as a sustained engagement with exile and displacement (Asaad, 2020; Tabbert & Ibrahim, 2023). However, bringing these two poets into the same analytical framework reveals that alienation functions not merely as a culturally specific experience but also as a shared poetic response to political disruption across different literary traditions.

In *Fragment*, political disillusionment is conveyed through a restrained poetic voice that relies on fragmentation rather than explicit political commentary. Images such as "*I am lost in the ruins of yesterday's dreams*" and "*The ideal was once a glowing beacon, but now only shadows remain*" evoke a world in which revolutionary optimism has gradually dissolved into uncertainty. Instead of directly recounting historical events, the poem reconstructs their emotional consequences through broken images and subdued expression. The fragmentation of the poem mirrors the speaker's fractured perception of reality, suggesting that the collapse of collective ideals also destabilises personal identity. This reading reinforces Song's (2018) observation that Zhilin's modernist style encourages readers to perceive reality through multiple fragmented perspectives rather than through a unified ideological vision. At the same time, the present analysis extends earlier interpretations by showing that fragmentation functions not only as an aesthetic characteristic but also as a symbolic representation of emotional dislocation following political failure.

Closely connected to this fragmentation is the recurring presence of silence. Throughout the poem, silence becomes more than the absence of speech; it represents the speaker's inability to reconcile past convictions with present realities. Emotional withdrawal therefore emerges as one of the poem's defining characteristics. Wu (2019) similarly argues that silence in Zhilin's later works reflects the intellectual uncertainty experienced after the collapse of revolutionary ideals. Yet, viewed alongside Bekas's poetry, silence acquires an additional comparative significance. Whereas Zhilin employs silence to express the erosion of ideological certainty, Bekas responds to political loss through a language rich in symbols and emotional imagery. The contrast illustrates two distinct poetic responses to historical trauma: one characterized by restraint and omission, the other by symbolic reconstruction.

A different pattern emerges in Bekas's *Now a Girl is My Homeland*. Here, alienation is inseparable from exile and the experience of displacement. Homeland no longer exists as a geographical location but survives as an emotional and symbolic space preserved through memory. The recurring image of the girl illustrates this transformation. By identifying the beloved with the homeland, Bekas collapses the boundary between personal affection and collective history, suggesting that the loss of place inevitably becomes the loss of self. Expressions such as "*I search for a place to belong*" and "*She is not just a woman; she is my world*" demonstrate that exile extends beyond physical separation to encompass emotional and psychological dislocation. This interpretation is consistent with [Asaad's \(2020\)](#) argument that Bekas repeatedly reconstructs the idea of home through metaphor rather than geography. Likewise, [Tabbert and Ibrahim \(2023\)](#) observe that symbolic language enables Bekas to preserve Kurdish cultural identity despite displacement. The present study builds upon these observations by demonstrating that such symbolism also functions as a literary strategy through which political exile is transformed into a universal meditation on belonging.

The poem further develops this sense of alienation through recurring symbolic images associated with absence and memory. The lines "*The air in exile carries no fragrance, only the ghosts of what was*" and "*I have no home but the moon*" replace physical landscapes with remembered ones, illustrating how memory gradually assumes the role once occupied by homeland itself. Rather than depicting exile solely as geographical displacement, Bekas portrays it as a continuous negotiation between remembrance and reality. This finding complements [Ali's \(2024\)](#) discussion of self-alienation in Bekas's poetry, where exile is understood as both a political condition and a process of redefining identity. The present analysis, however, suggests that this redefinition is achieved primarily through poetic symbolism, allowing homeland to persist as an emotional reality despite its physical absence.

Despite their contrasting historical experiences and stylistic preferences, both poets arrive at remarkably similar emotional landscapes. Neither poem relies on direct political narration; instead, historical change is filtered through individual consciousness and expressed through symbolic language. In Zhilin's work, revolutionary failure generates silence, fragmentation, and introspection, while Bekas responds to exile through recurring metaphors of homeland, memory, and longing. These differences should not be understood as oppositional but complementary, illustrating how distinct literary traditions negotiate comparable experiences of political disruption through different aesthetic choices.

Taken together, the comparison demonstrates that political disillusionment operates as the emotional foundation of both poems. Whether represented through silence and fragmentation or through symbols of homeland and exile, alienation ultimately reflects the individual's attempt to negotiate a world in which familiar sources of identity and belonging have been fundamentally altered. While previous scholarship has largely discussed these themes within separate national and literary contexts, the present analysis shows that the two poems converge in their portrayal of political loss as an existential condition that transcends cultural boundaries. By examining them comparatively, the analysis offers a broader understanding of how modern poetry transforms historically specific experiences into enduring reflections on identity, uncertainty, and the human search for meaning.

Identity fragmentation and the search for belonging

Identity emerges in both poems not as a stable personal attribute but as a condition continually reshaped by historical disruption. The comparative reading suggests that political upheaval alters the relationship between the individual and the social world, compelling both speakers to renegotiate their sense of self through memory, absence, and belonging. While *Fragment* portrays identity as fractured by the collapse of revolutionary ideals, *Now a Girl is My Homeland* reconstructs identity through the experience of exile and the persistent longing for homeland. Despite these different historical trajectories, both poems depict identity as a dynamic process rather than a fixed state.

In *Fragment*, the disintegration of ideological certainty is accompanied by an equally profound crisis of selfhood. Rather than defining identity directly, Zhilin presents it through fragmented perceptions and emotional distance. The line "I no longer recognize myself in the reflection of the world" captures the speaker's inability to reconcile personal experience with a social reality that no longer reflects the ideals once believed to be enduring. Similarly, the recurring contrast between remembered aspirations and present uncertainty suggests that identity has become suspended between past conviction and contemporary disillusionment. This interpretation complements Song's (2018) discussion of fragmented perception in Zhilin's modernist poetry while also echoing Inwood's (2014) observation that his later works increasingly shift from collective revolutionary optimism toward inward reflection. The present analysis, however, suggests that fragmentation should not be understood solely as a stylistic feature; it also represents the gradual dissolution of identity when political ideals lose their authority.

Memory consequently assumes a central role in sustaining the speaker's sense of self. References to "*yesterday's dreams*" and the lingering presence of abandoned ideals indicate that the past continues to shape consciousness even after its political significance has diminished. Rather than offering comfort, memory intensifies the speaker's awareness of loss because it continually juxtaposes earlier hope with present uncertainty. In this sense, identity is reconstructed not by recovering the past but by negotiating its emotional remnants. This finding extends previous interpretations of Zhilin's poetry by suggesting that remembrance functions not merely as nostalgia but as an ongoing process through which the speaker attempts to redefine personal meaning after ideological collapse.

Bekas approaches the question of identity through a different symbolic framework. In *Now a Girl is My Homeland*, identity is inseparable from homeland, yet homeland itself is no longer accessible as a physical place. Instead, it survives through memory, imagination, and symbolic representation. The metaphor of the girl transforms an intimate personal relationship into a broader expression of collective identity, collapsing the distinction between individual affection and national belonging. This reading corresponds with Asaad's (2020) observation that Bekas consistently reconstructs homeland through emotional rather than geographical imagery. Likewise, [Tabbert and Ibrahim \(2023\)](#) argue that symbolic language enables Bekas to preserve Kurdish cultural identity despite displacement. Building upon these studies, the present analysis demonstrates that the metaphor of homeland also functions as a strategy for negotiating identity, allowing the speaker to maintain continuity with a homeland that can no longer be physically inhabited.

The recurring images of the moon, memory, and absent companions further reinforce this process of reconstruction. Statements such as "*I have no home but the moon*" and "*I carry my people with me, though they are not here*" suggest that belonging is no longer rooted in territory but in shared remembrance and cultural continuity. Rather than portraying exile solely as loss, the poem reimagines belonging as something sustained through emotional attachment and collective memory. This interpretation supports Ali's (2024) discussion of self-alienation in Bekas's poetry while extending his argument by showing that exile simultaneously becomes a creative space in which identity is continually redefined rather than permanently diminished.

Although the two poets respond to different political realities, their representations of belonging converge in several important respects. Neither poem presents belonging as something that can simply be recovered once historical disruption has occurred. Instead, belonging remains an ongoing aspiration shaped by memory, loss, and hope. Zhilin locates this struggle within the collapse of ideological

certainty, whereas Bekas situates it within geographical displacement and cultural exile. In both cases, identity survives not because historical conditions return to normal but because individuals continue to negotiate relationships with memories that remain emotionally significant. This shared perspective suggests that belonging is less dependent upon external circumstances than upon the capacity to preserve meaningful connections despite political and historical change.

The comparison nevertheless highlights distinct poetic responses to identity fragmentation. Zhilin's speaker turns inward, confronting uncertainty through silence, introspection, and emotional restraint. Bekas, by contrast, externalizes loss through recurring symbols of homeland, transforming absence into a continuing emotional presence. These different aesthetic choices illustrate how comparable experiences of political rupture generate different literary responses while ultimately addressing similar existential concerns. Rather than presenting identity as either recovered or irretrievably lost, both poems depict it as a continuous process of negotiation shaped by memory, history, and the enduring desire for belonging.

These findings broaden previous scholarship on both poets by demonstrating that identity fragmentation is not merely a consequence of revolution or exile but also a productive space in which new forms of self-understanding emerge. Earlier studies have largely examined these processes within separate Chinese and Kurdish literary traditions (Asaad, 2020; Inwood, 2014; Song, 2018; Tabbert & Ibrahim, 2023). The comparative perspective adopted in this study shows that, despite their different historical experiences, both poets portray identity as an evolving construct sustained through remembrance rather than certainty. In doing so, the analysis contributes to comparative literary scholarship by revealing how modern poetry from distinct cultural traditions converges in its exploration of belonging, memory, and the reconstruction of self after political disruption.

Poetic strategies in representing disillusionment and belonging

While both poems are rooted in experiences of political disruption, their emotional force derives less from historical references than from the literary techniques through which those experiences are represented. Neither poet adopts an explicitly political voice. Instead, political experience is mediated through poetic language, symbolism, and metaphor. Instead, both rely on poetic language to translate historical realities into emotional landscapes, inviting readers to engage with political experience through suggestion, symbolism, and imagination rather than direct narration. The comparison therefore demonstrates that literary form is inseparable

from meaning; the way each poet constructs images, metaphors, and symbolic patterns shapes how political disillusionment and belonging are ultimately understood.

A notable feature of *Fragment* is its economy of expression. The poem rarely states its emotional concerns directly. Instead, silence, broken images, fading light, and fragmented spaces become recurring motifs through which ideological uncertainty is communicated. The symbolic landscape appears incomplete, compelling readers to infer meaning from absence as much as from presence. This stylistic restraint reflects what [Song \(2018\)](#) identifies as a defining characteristic of Zhilin's modernist aesthetics, where fragmented imagery challenges linear interpretation and encourages multiple layers of meaning. The comparison further suggests that these fragmented images do more than illustrate modernist experimentation; they recreate the emotional instability experienced when collective ideals cease to provide coherence. In this sense, poetic fragmentation functions simultaneously as form and meaning.

Bekas, by contrast, develops a poetic language that is emotionally expansive without sacrificing symbolic complexity. Images of the girl, the moon, the wind, and the homeland recur throughout *Now a Girl is My Homeland*, gradually forming an interconnected symbolic network through which exile is imagined rather than merely described. Instead of representing homeland as a physical destination, Bekas reconstructs it through emotional relationships and remembered experiences. This observation supports [Asaad's \(2020\)](#) argument that Bekas consistently transforms geographical loss into symbolic expression. Likewise, [Tabbert and Ibrahim \(2023\)](#) note that his poetry employs metaphor to preserve Kurdish cultural memory across conditions of displacement. Extending these interpretations, the present analysis demonstrates that Bekas's symbolic language not only preserves memory but also enables the speaker to negotiate an enduring sense of belonging despite physical separation from homeland.

The contrast becomes even more evident in the poets' use of metaphor. Zhilin's metaphors repeatedly evoke instability and dissolution through references to ruined dreams, fading light, shadows, and broken ideals. These images resist closure, leaving the speaker suspended between memory and uncertainty. Bekas's metaphors, however, move in the opposite direction. Rather than emphasizing collapse, they transform absence into presence. The central metaphor of the girl as homeland redefines national identity through intimacy and affection, allowing personal experience to carry the weight of collective history. Although both poets employ metaphor to address political disruption, they assign it different narrative functions: Zhilin uses metaphor to expose the erosion of certainty, whereas Bekas uses it to preserve emotional continuity in the face of exile.

Another important distinction concerns the role of silence within the two poems. In *Fragment*, silence is woven into the poem's structure through omission, ambiguity, and incomplete expression. Meaning is generated as much by what remains unsaid as by the words themselves, creating an atmosphere of introspection that reflects the speaker's emotional withdrawal. Wu (2019) similarly argues that silence in Zhilin's later poetry should be understood as a conscious artistic strategy rather than a rhetorical absence. Bekas's treatment of silence differs considerably. Moments of absence are continually interrupted by remembered voices, imagined encounters, and recurring symbols of homeland. Rather than allowing silence to dominate the poem, Bekas fills it with emotional resonance, suggesting that memory can sustain cultural identity even when physical presence is no longer possible. The comparison illustrates how two poets confronting political loss employ contrasting aesthetic strategies to negotiate absence.

Equally significant is the way each poem positions the relationship between individual experience and collective history. Zhilin approaches political change through the inner consciousness of a solitary speaker. Historical transformation is never narrated directly but is perceived through emotional uncertainty and fractured self-reflection. Bekas reverses this perspective. Individual longing repeatedly expands into collective memory, allowing the speaker's personal emotions to embody the wider experience of the Kurdish people. These contrasting narrative movements reinforce Santangelo and Boros' (2020) observation that Zhilin's poetry privileges interiority, while supporting Ali's (2024) argument that Bekas consistently situates individual identity within broader cultural narratives. Read together, however, the poems suggest that personal and collective histories are not opposing categories but mutually constitutive dimensions of poetic experience.

Despite these stylistic contrasts, both poets ultimately share a similar understanding of poetry itself. Historical events remain largely outside the poems; what occupies the foreground are the emotional and psychological consequences of those events. Symbolism, imagery, and metaphor therefore function not as decorative devices but as interpretive frameworks through which readers encounter experiences that resist direct representation. This observation reinforces Inwood's (2014) view that modern poetry frequently privileges symbolic mediation over historical narration, while also extending previous studies by demonstrating that this tendency is evident across both Chinese and Kurdish poetic traditions.

Viewed comparatively, these different poetic strategies reveal that literary expression is profoundly shaped by cultural and historical experience without being confined to it. Zhilin's restrained language, fragmented imagery, and pervasive silence

articulate the emotional aftermath of ideological collapse, whereas Bekas's symbolic richness transforms exile into an enduring dialogue between memory and belonging. Although their poetic techniques differ considerably, both poets demonstrate that literary language possesses a unique capacity to preserve emotional truth when political realities become difficult to articulate directly. By examining these strategies side by side, comparative reading not only highlights the aesthetic diversity of modern Chinese and Kurdish poetry but also shows how distinct literary traditions converge in their ability to transform historically specific experiences into enduring reflections on identity, memory, and the human condition.

The analyses presented in the preceding sections demonstrate that *Fragment* and *Now a Girl is My Homeland* converge in their exploration of political disillusionment, identity, and belonging, despite arising from distinct historical and cultural circumstances. At the same time, each poem employs different poetic strategies to articulate these shared concerns, reflecting the influence of their respective literary traditions and socio-political contexts. To provide a clearer overview of these convergences and divergences, the principal findings of the comparative analysis are summarized in Table 1 before proceeding to a broader discussion of their implications for comparative literary studies.

Table 1: Comparative dimensions of *Fragment* and *Now a Girl is My Homeland*

Analytical Aspect	<i>Fragment</i> (Bian Zhilin)	<i>Now a Girl is My Homeland</i> (Sherko Bekas)	Comparative Finding
Political experience	Collapse of revolutionary ideals	Exile and displacement	Political disruption becomes personal suffering.
Dominant emotion	Disillusionment	Longing	Both depict emotional consequences of historical upheaval.
Identity	Fragmented self	Reconstructed through homeland	Identity is dynamic rather than fixed.
Belonging	Loss of ideological certainty	Longing for homeland	Belonging becomes an ongoing negotiation.
Dominant symbolism	Silence, ruins, shadows	Girl, moon, homeland	Symbolism mediates historical experience.
Poetic style	Restrained, fragmented, introspective	Expressive, symbolic, emotionally vivid	Different aesthetic strategies convey comparable experiences.

Table 1 synthesizes the principal similarities and differences identified in the comparative analysis. While the two poems emerge from distinct historical and cultural contexts, they converge in their exploration of political disillusionment,

identity, and belonging, even as they employ different poetic strategies to express these experiences. The comparative patterns summarized in the table provide the basis for a broader discussion of how these findings contribute to comparative literary scholarship and deepen our understanding of the relationship between poetic form, historical experience, and cultural identity.

Comparative literary perspective: Convergence and divergence across cultural contexts

The comparative analysis demonstrates that the thematic similarities between *Fragment* and *Now a Girl is My Homeland* extend beyond the shared experiences of political disillusionment and identity fragmentation. More importantly, the two poems reveal how different literary traditions transform historically specific experiences into reflections on universal human concerns. Although Bian Zhilin writes from the context of post-revolutionary China and Sherko Bekas from the experience of Kurdish exile, both employ poetry to examine the emotional consequences of political upheaval rather than to document political events themselves. This finding reinforces [Inwood's \(2014\)](#) observation that modern poetry frequently shifts attention from historical narration to subjective experience, while also supporting [Asaad's \(2020\)](#) argument that political trauma in Bekas's poetry is primarily articulated through emotional and symbolic representation. By examining the two poems comparatively, the findings demonstrate that these tendencies are not confined to individual literary traditions but represent broader poetic responses to historical disruption.

The findings also refine existing scholarship on the relationship between politics and identity in the works of both poets. Previous studies have generally approached Zhilin's poetry through the lens of Chinese modernism, emphasizing its fragmented aesthetics and intellectual reflection ([Song, 2018](#); [Santangelo & Boros, 2020](#)). Likewise, studies on Bekas have predominantly interpreted his poetry as an expression of Kurdish nationalism, exile, and cultural memory ([Tabbert & Ibrahim, 2023](#); [Ali, 2024](#)). While these perspectives remain valuable, they have largely developed within separate scholarly traditions. The comparative approach adopted in this study reveals that both poets negotiate similar existential questions concerning identity, belonging, and emotional resilience despite responding to different political realities. The analysis therefore extends previous research by showing that fragmentation and exile should not be understood solely as historically specific experiences but also as comparable literary responses to disrupted relationships between the individual and the collective.

Another significant implication concerns the role of poetic form in mediating historical experience. Throughout the analysis, imagery, symbolism, metaphor, and silence emerge not simply as aesthetic features but as interpretive strategies through which political realities are transformed into emotional experience. This observation supports [Wu's \(2019\)](#) argument that silence in Zhilin's later poetry functions as an intentional artistic strategy rather than a rhetorical omission. Similarly, it complements [Tabbert and Ibrahim's \(2023\)](#) discussion of symbolic imagery in Bekas's poetry as a means of preserving cultural identity under conditions of displacement. This study, however, broadens these interpretations by demonstrating that the same literary devices perform different narrative functions within each poem. In *Fragment*, fragmentation and silence communicate ideological uncertainty and emotional withdrawal, whereas in *Now a Girl is My Homeland*, symbolism and metaphor reconstruct belonging by sustaining homeland through memory and imagination. The comparison therefore illustrates that poetic form is inseparable from cultural experience, even when the emotional concerns expressed by the poems converge.

These findings further demonstrate the value of integrating existentialist and postcolonial perspectives within a single analytical framework. Previous scholarship has generally applied these approaches independently, focusing either on existential alienation in modern poetry or on postcolonial representations of exile and identity. The present analysis suggests that these perspectives are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Existentialism provides a useful lens for understanding how both poetic speakers confront uncertainty, loneliness, and the search for meaning after political disruption, whereas postcolonial theory explains how displacement, homeland, and cultural memory continue to shape identity beyond geographical boundaries. Read together, these theoretical perspectives provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the poems negotiate the relationship between personal emotion and historical experience. This integrated approach therefore responds to the conceptual gap identified in the Introduction by demonstrating that psychological and cultural dimensions of political disruption are deeply interconnected.

These findings reinforce previous literary scholarship demonstrating that poetry should be interpreted within its broader socio-historical context, where literary expression reflects collective memory, cultural identity, and historical experience rather than functioning solely as an aesthetic construct ([Shiekha & Endrayanto, 2025](#)). This perspective complements the present study by showing that both Bian Zhilin and Sherko Bekas transform political experiences into symbolic representations of identity, belonging, and memory.

From the perspective of comparative literary studies, the analysis also challenges the tendency to examine modern Chinese and Kurdish poetry within separate national or regional frameworks. Comparative literature seeks not only to identify similarities between texts but also to explain how literary works from different traditions illuminate one another through shared human concerns and distinct aesthetic practices. The comparison presented here demonstrates that historical distance does not necessarily produce literary divergence. Instead, the poems converge in their exploration of alienation, belonging, and resilience while preserving the cultural specificity of their respective poetic traditions. This finding enriches comparative literary scholarship by illustrating how cross-cultural analysis can reveal patterns of emotional and artistic expression that remain less visible when literary traditions are studied in isolation.

In summary, these discussions highlight the broader contribution of the discussion. Rather than treating *Fragment* and *Now a Girl is My Homeland* as isolated representations of Chinese and Kurdish political history, the comparative analysis positions both poems within a wider conversation about modern poetry's capacity to articulate human responses to disruption, displacement, and uncertainty. In doing so, the study not only broadens existing interpretations of Bian Zhilin and Sherko Bekas but also demonstrates the value of comparative literary inquiry in connecting culturally specific texts through shared questions of identity, memory, and belonging. By integrating close textual analysis with existentialist and postcolonial perspectives, the study offers a more nuanced understanding of how poetry transforms historical experience into enduring reflections on the human condition.

CONCLUSION

This study has comparatively examined Bian Zhilin's *Fragment* and Sherko Bekas's *Now a Girl is My Homeland* to explore how political disillusionment, identity fragmentation, and belonging are represented through poetic language. Although the two poems emerge from different historical and cultural contexts, the findings demonstrate that both poets transform political disruption into reflections on broader human experiences of alienation, loss, and the search for meaning. Rather than presenting political events directly, they employ symbolism, imagery, metaphor, silence, and fragmented expression to reveal the emotional consequences of ideological collapse and forced displacement.

The comparative analysis further shows that the two poets negotiate identity through different yet complementary poetic strategies. Zhilin portrays identity as fractured by the erosion of revolutionary ideals, using silence and fragmentation to

express emotional withdrawal and uncertainty. Bekas, by contrast, reconstructs identity through symbolic representations of homeland, memory, and cultural belonging, illustrating how emotional attachment can endure despite physical exile. These contrasting approaches demonstrate that while political experiences differ across cultural contexts, poetry provides a shared medium for negotiating disrupted identities and preserving human resilience.

The study also highlights the value of integrating existentialist and postcolonial perspectives in comparative literary analysis. Examined together, these perspectives offer a more comprehensive understanding of how personal emotion and historical experience intersect within poetic expression. The findings suggest that existential concerns such as alienation and the search for meaning cannot be fully separated from questions of cultural identity, displacement, and collective memory. Consequently, the study contributes to comparative literary scholarship by demonstrating that modern Chinese and Kurdish poetry, despite their distinct literary traditions, converge in their exploration of universal human concerns while maintaining their cultural specificity.

Beyond its comparative reading of the two poems, this study contributes to the broader field of comparative literature by illustrating how cross-cultural analysis can deepen understanding of the relationship between poetic form, historical experience, and identity construction. Bringing Bian Zhilin and Sherko Bekas into the same analytical framework extends existing scholarship, which has largely examined the two poets independently, and shows how literary texts from different traditions may illuminate one another through shared emotional and aesthetic concerns.

Although the comparative analysis provides new insights into cross-cultural representations of political alienation, it is limited to two individual poems and therefore does not seek to represent the entirety of either poet's literary oeuvre. Future research may broaden the corpus by examining additional works by Bian Zhilin and Sherko Bekas or by comparing other Chinese and Kurdish poets whose writings engage with themes of political transformation, exile, and cultural identity. Such studies would further enrich comparative literary scholarship and deepen our understanding of how poetry continues to negotiate the complex relationship between history, memory, and the human condition.

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