

Looking At Roma Tearne's *Brixton Beach* And Sharon Bala's *The Boat People* From Ecocritical Perspective

Arpita Roychowdhury*

*State Aided College Teacher, Bhairab Ganguly College, WBSU, Research Scholar, Adamas University

arpitas1980@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between migration, trauma and ecocriticism in Sharon Bala's "The Boat People" and Roma Tearne's "Brixton Beach". By combining postcolonial and trauma studies with ecocritical theory, it takes an interdisciplinary approach to investigate how environmental displacement significantly influences the psychological and cultural experiences of refugees. Although the ecological impact of their displacement is frequently disregarded, both novels feature characters who are compelled to flee their native countries, Sri Lanka in both cases, due to civil unrest, violence and persecution. This study makes the case that ecological severance exacerbates the trauma of migration and alienation by examining the loss of natural landscapes, climate and environmental familiarity. According to the paper, eco-trauma is a significant but little-studied aspect of refugee narratives drawing on theories by Graham Huggan, Rob Nixon and Ursula Heise. The protagonists' fractured identities and cultural disorientation in unfamiliar places parallel their disengagement from their natural surroundings. The study concludes by showing how the environment plays a crucial role in comprehending the deeper psychological effects of forced migration rather than just serving as a setting. It demands that refugee literature be reexamined via an ecocritical perspective that recognizes the connection between identity memory and land.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Refugee, Environmental Displacement, Postcolonial Trauma, Eco-trauma, Migration and Identity, Diaspora Studies, Nature and Memory, Environmental Belonging, Climate and Conflict, Literary Ecology

Readers and academics can now analyze how texts depict the intricate relationship between human societies and the natural environment thanks to the powerful literary lens of ecocriticism which has grown in popularity in recent decades. Beyond traditional nature writing, ecocriticism grew out of the environmental movements of the 1970s to examine how literature depicts ecological issues, environmental deterioration and the moral ramifications of human interference in the natural world. Ecocriticism is defined as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment by Cheryl Glotfelty (1996), one of the pioneers of the field.¹ Despite its simplicity, this definition offers a wealth of interpretive options, particularly when used in stories that deal with issues of postcolonial identity displacement and war, elements that inevitably intersect with ecological disruption and environmental trauma. "The Boat People" (2018) by Sharon Bala and "Brixton Beach" (2009) by Roma Tearne are two recent books that provide a rich environment for an ecocritical interpretation. Although the themes of forced migration, war and exile are prominent in both books, they also delicately and effectively illustrate how the natural world turns into a storehouse of loss, memory and identity. Even though these books are set in different geopolitical contexts, Sri Lanka and the UK in "Brixton Beach" and Sri Lanka and Canada in "The Boat People", they both deeply address the ways that political violence and displacement upend social and familial structures as well as peoples' relationships with natural environments. In both texts, nature actively participates in the emotional and cultural lives of the characters rather than just serving as a background for human activity. Concerns about environmental justice and postcolonial ecologies which explore the effects of colonialism's legacy and the violence of contemporary nation-states on both, people and the land, have become part of contemporary ecocriticism. In this context, Rob Nixon's idea of slow violence is especially pertinent. According to Nixon (2011), it is a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight.² While "The Boat People" depicts the systematic erasure of ecological and cultural belonging for Tamil refugees in Canada, "Brixton Beach" shows the slow violence of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka reflected in the destruction of familiar landscapes, beaches and homes. In addition, postcolonial ecocriticism contends that colonial and postcolonial experiences of migration diaspora and land dispossession are profoundly ecological challenging the Eurocentric interpretation of nature as distinct from

¹ Glotfelty, C., & Fromm, H. (Eds.). (1996). *The ecocriticism reader: Landmarks in literary ecology*. University of Georgia Press.

² Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press.

human history. **Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin** state that postcolonial ecocriticism is concerned with the links between colonialism, the environment and cultural representation focusing on the displacement of both people and environments.³ This framework is helpful when reading both Tearne's and Bala's novels as the characters forced adaptation to new and frequently hostile environments and their disassociation from their native landscapes, beaches, coastlines and tropical vegetation, intensify their sense of alienation from their homeland. The beach ocean and monsoon rains in particular play a major role in Alice, the main character, remembering her home in "Brixton Beach". These organic components are ingrained in her identity and serve as metaphors for longing loss and tranquility. She is estranged from both her cultural heritage and the natural environment that influenced her early years due to her migration to the UK after civil unrest. Throughout the book, there is a subliminal undercurrent of the ecological trauma of war, the destruction of landscapes, the razing of villages and the symbolic violence inflicted on places of worship. In a similar vein, the vast ocean journey in "The Boat People" represents the frailty of both the environment and human life. The sea turns into a transitional area where peoples' chances of surviving are uncertain and where nature takes precedence over human desires. Bala illustrates the ecological aspects of exile through the refugees' physical voyage across the ocean and their mental confusion upon arriving in Canada. Thus, both books provide a chance to examine how stories of forced migration involve the natural world. In Tearne's book, the beach is more than just a location, it serves as a metaphor for all that is lost including identity, freedom and belonging. The ocean is portrayed in Bala's work as both a danger and a means of escape, reflecting the conflicting feelings that many refugees have about their travels. Through ecocriticism, we are able to recognize how nature functions as more than just a setting in these works, it is a character in and of itself, interwoven with the traumas and histories of the human protagonists. This study makes the case that an ecocritical analysis of "Brixton Beach"⁴ and "The Boat People"⁵ shows how postcolonial refugee narratives inherently connect displacement and environmental degradation. Both authors show that exile is not just a cultural and psychological upheaval but also an ecological one by emphasizing the ecological loss that comes with forced migration. Consequently, these books add to a broader perspective on ecocriticism that takes into account memory, migration and the politics of place. The paper will examine each novel in detail in the sections that follow contrasting how nature, environmental trauma and the migrants' relationship to ecological belonging are portrayed. The conclusion will be that ecological justice and refugee justice are inextricably linked. The field of ecocriticism has broadened to encompass more varied and interdisciplinary concerns as a result of the growing international attention being paid to issues of ecological collapse, climate change and forced migration. Ecocriticism has expanded beyond its original focus on examining Romantic poetry or American nature writings' depictions of nature to include works that discuss postcolonial ecological crises, environmental justice and migration brought on by climate change. This more comprehensive framework, especially in relation to displacement, sheds light on how literature can be used to comprehend the ecological and human costs of colonization, war and globalization. The understanding that displacement, particularly in postcolonial and refugee narratives, is not only a social or political event but also an ecological rupture is fundamental to this evolution. People who are forcibly removed from their lands also lose their ecological identities that are anchored in particular geographies such as farms, beaches, forests or mountains. Therefore, displacement leads to a disoriented relationship with place or tropophobia as cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan refers to it, in which a person's relationship with their surroundings becomes strained, frightening or fragmented.⁶ The loss of cultural memory, identity and a sense of home are frequently depicted as being closely linked to this ecological disorientation in refugee literature. A vital lens for this conversation is provided by postcolonial ecocriticism as defined by academics such as Helen Tiffin and Graham Huggan. Since colonial and imperial histories changed land-use patterns, exploited natural resources and disregarded indigenous and local knowledge systems, they contend that environmental destruction is not a singular problem. According to **Huggan and Tiffin (2015)**, their work in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* highlights the double displacement that postcolonial subjects go through: one from their ecological environment as a result of exploitation and degradation and

³ Huggan, G., & Tiffin, H. (2015). *Postcolonial ecocriticism: Literature, animals, environment*. Routledge.

⁴ Tearne, R. (2018). *Brixton Beach*. Gallic Books.

⁵ Bala, S. (2018). *The Boat People*. McClelland & Stewart.

⁶ Tuan, Y. F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. U of Minnesota Press.

another from their homeland as a result of political and economic violence.⁷ This idea is especially pertinent when examining the ecological aspects of forced migration as they are portrayed in Sharon Bala's *"The Boat People"* and Roma Tearne's *"Brixton Beach"*. The framework of this paper is also based on Rob Nixon's theory of slow violence. Nixon challenges traditional ideas of violence as instantaneous or spectacular by emphasizing slow, imperceptible and spatially distributed forms of harm. The poor, displaced and environmentally marginalized are disproportionately impacted by slow violence, which he defines as environmental degradation, toxic dumping, climate change and resource scarcity.⁸ In literature, slow violence frequently operates in the background while significantly influencing the realities of the characters underpinning the obvious trauma of migration or war. This concept is especially relevant to *"The Boat People"*, whose journey is a result of decades of structural and ecological degradation in Sri Lanka in addition to direct war violence. Scholars such as **Serpil Oppermann (2016)** have also called for ecocriticism to adopt a planetary and transnational viewpoint. Oppermann's notion of material ecocriticism emphasizes how human subjectivity, history and memory are intertwined with materiality including soil, water and climate.⁹ According to this perspective, landscapes actively participate in human narratives rather than serving as passive backgrounds. This viewpoint is demonstrated in *"Brixton Beach"* where Alice's identity is shaped by the beach which serves as both a literal and symbolic location. The emotional disarray she goes through as a migrant in the UK is comparable to how the war destroys this area. Memory studies and ecocriticism can also work well together particularly when discussing stories that deal with trauma and exile. According to **Ursula Heise (2008)**, who has studied the function of ecological memory in diasporic literature, memory, imagination and narrative mediate the experience of place.¹⁰ Recalling landscapes such as beaches, mountains and gardens helps migrants reestablish a sense of identity in unfamiliar places. This is particularly important for the characters in both Tearne's and Bala's books, whose memories of their native land are frequently laced with ecological symbolism and natural imagery. The characters in the two novels under consideration are influenced by a deeper environmental alienation in addition to sociopolitical displacement. A breach of ecological identity is represented by their inability to access familiar landscapes whether it be Mahindan's tropical homeland or Alice's Sri Lankan coastline. In these texts, nature frequently represents both trauma and loss as well as consolation, connection and nostalgia. An ecocritical reading of refugee literature must therefore take into consideration how landscapes both bear witness to the silent trauma of environmental severance and carry the scars of human history. This intersection of ecocriticism and displacement is significant because it highlights how literature can highlight forms of violence that are mostly ignored in the media and in discussions of public policy. Novels like *"Brixton Beach"* and *"The Boat People"* serve as a reminder that the effects of migration and war go beyond national boundaries and physical locations to affect forests, coastlines and oceans by incorporating ecological loss into refugee narratives. These natural areas are infused with cultural significance, memory and identity making them anything but neutral. Overall, the theoretical framework that guides the paper's examination of *"Brixton Beach"* and *"The Boat People"* has been delineated in this section. A rich interpretive lens that can be used to uncover the environmental aspects of displacement is provided by ecocriticism particularly in its postcolonial and material forms. This framework will be applied to each novel in the sections that follow looking at how ecological memory, environmental trauma and the symbolic use of nature contribute to the understanding of the human experience of exile. Alice Fonseka, a young girl of mixed Tamil-Sinhalese ancestry, is the protagonist of Roma Tearne's *"Brixton Beach"* which provides a moving account of trauma, displacement and identity. The novel employs nature, particularly the sea and beach imagery, as a potent ecological metaphor for memory, loss and exile, set against the backdrop of Sri Lanka's civil war and later life in the UK. *"Brixton Beach"* highlights how environmental landscapes serve as both symbolic terrains, bearing the scars of displacement and war as well as locations of childhood nostalgia from an ecocritical perspective. The 'beach', a place of innocence exploration and familial ties is featured in Alice's early recollections at the beginning of the book. Sensual details are used to depict the beach: *"The water shimmered and the scent of salt permeated the atmosphere."* While laughing into the wind, they chased crabs as they ran along the shore. According to Ursula

⁷ Huggan, G., & Tiffin, H. (2015). *Postcolonial ecocriticism: Literature, animals, environment*. Routledge.

⁸ Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press.

⁹ Iovino, S., & Oppermann, S. (Eds.). (2014). *Material ecocriticism*. Indiana University Press.

¹⁰ Heise, U. K. (2008). *Sense of place and sense of planet: The environmental imagination of the global*. Oxford University Press.

Heise, this idyllic imagery is more than just ornamental, it is a form of ecological memory which is a method of preserving identity in landscapes that are subsequently lost or altered.¹¹ She feels rooted and connected to her mother, her Sri Lankan culture and her innocence before the conflict at the beach. But this same landscape becomes a site of rupture as civil war intensifies. The once tranquil beach is now the scene of growing violence, tension and surveillance. Alice and her family are forced to leave their homeland which is both a geopolitical exile and an environmental severance. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's idea of double displacement is highlighted here: Alice loses both her ecological and national ties to Sri Lanka's coast, flora and climate.¹² Once Alice is in London, the importance of this ecological upheaval becomes even more apparent. The cold, dreary and frequently alienating urban landscapes of London are contrasted in the book with the sensory richness of Sri Lanka's coastal environment. Alice's home is described as cement-grey, the air is filled with the smell of petrol and the sea which was once a nearby presence has been reduced to a faraway memory. This change is an example of Yi-Fu Tuan's topophobia theory,¹³ in which the unfamiliar environment is felt uncomfortably and nature is perceived as unfriendly or unreachable. Thus, Alice's identity crisis and depression are linked to environmental estrangement as well as racism and cultural loss. Roma Tearne purposefully employs nature as an emotional register and mnemonic device. Tropical storms, sea wind and plumeria blossoms, for example, are frequently woven into Alice's memories of her mother. In addition to evoking a sensory memory of home, these also express what Rob Nixon refers to as slow violence.¹⁴ These fragmented nature-inspired memories reveal the long-term trauma of migration and war. Her alienation from the places that used to provide her with emotional and spiritual stability is a reflection of the loss of her mother, her native land and her identity. Alice's trip to the English beach is one of the book's major turning points. Despite their similar physical characteristics, this foreign coast does not make her feel connected again. It's cold, barren and indifferent. Beaches are not universal, they are culturally encoded, remembered and inhabited differently. This comparison highlights the affective and cultural aspects of place. Serpil Oppermann's theory that landscapes contain storied matter, including the traces of ecological significance, cultural history and individual memory is best illustrated by this instance.¹⁵ Because it lacks the embeddedness of memory and identity, Alice believes that the English beach cannot replace the Sri Lankan coast. Tearne also gently criticizes the way that landscapes have been manipulated during colonialism and postcolonial periods. The book shows how traditional relationships with nature are shattered by both modernization and war. Traditional coastal life is being replaced by urbanization and political upheaval in Sri Lanka while nature is being regulated, commercialized and frequently devoid of cultural significance in London. "Brixton Beach", thus, highlights the fact that displacement involves not only moving bodies but also shifting ecologies, worldviews and ways of being. Overall, the ecocritical narrative presented in "Brixton Beach" presents displacement as a form of ecological and human trauma. The natural environment, particularly the beach, serves as a living repository for loss, identity and memory. Tearne illustrates how environmental detachment exacerbates the refugee experience through Alice's journey transforming exile into a crisis of both citizenship and earthly belonging. A gripping story that examines the refugee experience through the eyes of Sri Lankan Tamils who fled to Canada in search of safety is Sharon Bala's "The Boat People" (2018). Even though the novel mainly deals with legal, political and humanitarian issues, it also provides room for an ecocritical interpretation showing how the story of forced migration intersects with ecological memory, environmental displacement and the trauma of being cut off from one's land. Mahindan, a Tamil mechanic and single father, serves as an example of how ecological displacement both supports and exacerbates the psychological and cultural effects of exile. An important ecocritical symbol at the center of "The Boat People" is the voyage of hundreds of asylum seekers across the Pacific Ocean. It portrays the ocean as a place of danger as well as change. It signifies the line separating death and survival, imprisonment and possible freedom for Mahindan and the others. Rob Nixon's idea of slow violence is especially pertinent in this context.¹⁶ The character's decision to depart Sri Lanka by sea is the consequence of decades of political and

¹¹ Heise, U. K. (2008). *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford University Press.

¹² Huggan, G., & Tiffin, H. (2010). *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Routledge.

¹³ Tuan, Y. F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. U of Minnesota Press.

¹⁴ Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press.

¹⁵ Oppermann, S. (2016). "Material Ecocriticism and the Creativity of Storied Matter." In *Material Ecocriticism*, Indiana University Press.

¹⁶ Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press.

environmental deterioration including destroyed homes, polluted urban areas, war-ravaged land and declining agricultural incomes. People are displaced by these subtle slow forms of violence which also destroy the ecosystems that sustain their way of life. Previously portrayed as a verdant tropical setting, Mahindan's memories of Sri Lanka are fragmented and sensory-rich. He remembers ecological indicators of a place he used to know well such as the smell of jasmine, the buzzing of insects and the feel of warm soil. These incidents are similar to what Ursula Heise calls ecological nostalgia¹⁷ in which displaced people recall the environment they lost as a component of who they are. Mahindan's ties to his native country are profoundly environmental in nature, in addition to being national and cultural. In addition to the war, his loss is linked to a broken bond with the land, the seasons and the rhythms of rural life. The story also gently criticizes Sri Lanka's post-war industrial and environmental collapse. In addition to political persecution, Mahindan's community is experiencing ecological collapse as a result of forest destruction or bombing farmland destruction or inaccessibility and militarization of fishing zones. In *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, Huggan and Tiffin (2010), make the compelling case that colonial and neocolonial interventions frequently result in environmental destruction and dispossession.¹⁸ The refugees are partially environmental exiles but legal discourses hardly ever recognize this fact. A distinct form of environmental alienation is experienced by Mahindan and others after they arrive in Canada. Sri Lanka's dynamic ecosystems stand in sharp contrast to Canada's sterile detention facilities, snow-covered streets and dreary institutional interiors. This stark ecological contradiction exacerbates their cultural displacement. This brings up Yi-Fu Tuan's idea of topophobia,¹⁹ according to which the new environment is not just strange but actively alienating. Their separation from significant ecological relationships and the bureaucratic indifference they encounter are reflected in the environment's coldness. The climate and weather serve as metaphors for Sharon Bala's characters' emotional states. The protracted Canadian winter comes to represent emotional stagnation and limbo. When Mahindan observes the snowfall outside the detention facility, the whiteness is a metaphor for erasure rather than purity, it represents his invisibility and the erasure of his past. Serpil Oppermann's theory that landscapes are storied matter that carry trauma and memory is in line with this.²⁰ Because of their dislocation from the natural environments that once grounded them, the refugees' stories are incomplete in Canada due to a lack of ecological familiarity. Furthermore, the actual detention facilities are ecologically sterile, confined spaces lacking in environmental or sensory diversity. In keeping with Marc Augé's idea of non-lieux, spaces that do not promote identity, memory or relationships, these institutional settings serve as non-places.²¹ In these settings, the denial of nature contact which would otherwise promote emotional and psychological healing exacerbates the trauma experienced by the refugees. It is also important to note how ecological continuity and intergenerational memory are used to depict the refugee experience in *"The Boat People"*. In addition to ensuring his son Sellian's physical survival, Mahindan also wants to preserve his cultural and environmental knowledge. He recalls tales about the land, the sea and the monsoons, knowledge that grows hazier and more dislocated, the longer they are held captive. The incapacity to transmit knowledge about land, farming and weather patterns to the following generation gradually weakens identity which relates to the ecological aspects of exile. In conclusion, an ecocritical interpretation that emphasizes the environmental aspects of forced migration is made possible by *"The Boat People"*. Bala's story creates a potent subtext in which nature, memory and displacement are intricately entwined even though it does not overtly prioritize ecological discourse. By revealing how exile is not only social and political but also profoundly ecological, an alienation from the very landscapes that make up one's identity and community, the book deepens our understanding of the refugee crisis. *"The Boat People"* by Sharon Bala and *"Brixton Beach"* by Roma Tearne both use an ecocritical lens to shed light on the refugee experience, emphasizing how ecological memory and environmental displacement exacerbate the trauma of exile. Both books highlight the interdependence of place, nature and identity even though their

¹⁷ Heise, U. K. (2008). *Sense of place and sense of planet: The environmental imagination of the global*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁸ Huggan, G., & Tiffin, H. (2015). *Postcolonial ecocriticism: Literature, animals, environment*. Routledge.

¹⁹ Tuan, Y. F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. U of Minnesota Press.

²⁰ Oppermann, S. (2016). 14 From Material to Posthuman Ecocriticism: Hybridity, Stories, Natures. *Handbook of ecocriticism and cultural ecology*, 2, 273.

²¹ Augé, M. (2010). Retour sur les «non-lieux». *Communications*, 87(2), 171-178.

²² O'Beirne, E. (2006, January). Mapping the Non-lieu in Marc Augé's writings. In *Forum for Modern Language Studies* (Vol. 42, No. 1, pp. 38-50). Oxford University Press.

geographical settings and narrative scopes are different, *"The Boat People"* follows Tamil asylum seekers journey to Canada while *"Brixton Beach"* follows a Sri Lankan girl's journey from Colombo to London. Stories of forced migration all share themes of ecological estrangement, ecological identity loss and the symbolic power of nature according to a comparative ecocritical analysis. The use of the landscape as a storehouse of identity and memory is a noteworthy area of convergence. *"Brixton Beach"* is more than just a location, it's a sensory archive connected to Alice's mother culture and purity. Similar to this Mahindan's recollections of his Sri Lankan village in *"The Boat People"* are replete with images of tropical vegetation, warm soil and coastal life. These landscapes serve as internalized symbols of what has been lost and anchor characters in their pre-migration selves. Here Ursula Heise's concept of eco-cosmopolitanism²³ is pertinent since both characters must balance the conflict between being a part of their local communities and being displaced by forces from around the world. However, Bala takes a more subtle approach employing ecological motifs to portray emotional fragmentation and legal liminality whereas Tearne focuses on the lyrical reconstruction of lost nature. The sea as a representation of trauma exile and transition is another common theme. In *"Brixton Beach"*, the sea symbolizes freedom in childhood but later turns into a symbol of being away from one's family and home. Between identity and anonymity, between safety and war, Mahindan and his fellow asylum seekers see the Pacific Ocean as a literal and symbolic barrier. However, the sea is contradictory as it is both dangerous and promising. In both novels, the ocean represents this slow violence, not as an abrupt disaster but as a protracted process of erasure and estrangement, as Rob Nixon contends in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*.²⁴ Environmental trauma is frequently cumulative and invisible. Different facets of ecological exile are highlighted by Bala's vast, unpredictable and depersonalizing sea in contrast to Tearne's familiar and intimate beach. Additionally, both books emphasize the contrast between Sri Lanka's sensory richness and Western landscapes portraying them as emotionally and ecologically alienating. In *"The Boat People"*, Canada's prisons and snow-covered streets are sterile stressing bureaucratic control and psychological limbo while in *"Brixton Beach"* London is chilly, gray and devoid of natural life. Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of topophobia aids in defining this uneasiness in strange settings.²⁵ In addition to lamenting the loss of their homeland, the characters also lament the loss of their ecological familiarity and closeness to the land. This environmental disruption exacerbates the psychological effects of migration indicating that the breaking of ecological ties is just as much a cause of trauma as political violence. Within institutional systems, there is a subtle difference in the way nature works. Institutions such as prisons routinely deny access to the natural world in *"The Boat People"*. The sterile settings are an example of how the refugee system disembodies and dehumanizes migrants. Mahindan's physical detachment from the land, sea and sky is a reflection of his confinement. *"Brixton Beach"*, on the other hand, examines nature more through nostalgia and desire than through physical imprisonment. Because of her more internalized trauma, Alice has a psychological rather than a physical disconnection from nature. This distinction highlights the fact that ecocritical issues can function on numerous levels including institutional, emotional and physical. The generational transfer of ecological knowledge is another topic covered in both books. The obstacles of detention and cultural assimilation make Mahindan's attempts to preserve his memories of Sri Lanka's natural environment for his son more difficult. Alice, on the other hand, has a fractured identity as a result of her inability to reconcile her youth's ecological roots with her life in London. Here Serpil Oppermann's concept of storied matter is helpful²⁶: landscapes are not merely blank spaces rather they are repositories of culture, narrative and meaning that endures across generations. Not only does migration cause cultural amnesia but it also causes ecological loss. Lastly, both writers make the argument that one frequently disregarded facet of the refugee crisis is ecological displacement. *"Brixton Beach"* and *"The Boat People"* show how exile also involves environmental estrangement in contrast to the dominant narratives of migration which center on war, persecution and legality. The characters' sense of loss is heightened by their inability to reconnect with nature, connect with local ecosystems or re-create their ecological selves in a different setting. Their grief is ecological embodied and sensory rather than abstract. To sum up,

²³ Heise, U. K. (2008). *Sense of place and sense of planet: The environmental imagination of the global*. Oxford University Press.

²⁴ Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press.

²⁵ Tuan, Y. F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. U of Minnesota Press.

²⁶ Oppermann, S. (2016). 14 From Material to Posthuman Ecocriticism: Hybridity, Stories, Natures. *Handbook of ecocriticism and cultural ecology*, 2, 273.

"Brixton Beach" and "The Boat People" broaden the scope of refugee literature by incorporating ecocritical issues into trauma and migration stories. Both novels emphasize how forced displacement is an ecological crisis as well as a human one through striking natural imagery, environmental memory and exiled landscapes. Their experiences demand a more comprehensive definition of environmental justice that takes into account the displaced, the land abandoned and the ecosystems upended by migration and violence. "Brixton Beach" by Roma Tearne and "The Boat People" by Sharon Bala are examined ecocritically to highlight the complex and frequently disregarded connection between forced migration and environmental displacement. In addition to focusing on political violence and legal trauma, both novels depict the refugee experience as a significant ecological upheaval. Sri Lanka's beaches, monsoon seasons, rural fields and coastal ecosystems are all integral parts of the characters' identities and their sense of displacement and alienation is greatly exacerbated by the loss of these natural settings. Both authors emphasize how exile is not just cultural or social but also ecological by evoking landscapes. Memories of well-known landscapes, vegetation and land-based livelihoods turn into potent representations of loss, identity and belonging. The chilly sterility of London where nature is muted and foreign stands in sharp contrast to Alice's yearning for the sunny salty beach of her youth in "Brixton Beach". Similar to this, Mahindan's psychological and emotional suffering in "The Boat People" is strongly linked to his alienation from nature, both in Canada where institutional settings further dehumanize him through ecological disconnection and in Sri Lanka where conflict has destroyed his ecological home. The sea's symbolic significance in both novels is also highlighted by this comparative reading. It is both a metaphor for the liminality of the refugee condition and a boundary between the known and the unknown. The ecological stakes associated with forced migration are highlighted by the sea which is both a place of hope and fear. The ecological aspect of refugeehood frequently takes the form of cumulative imperceptible losses, soil degradation, habitat destruction and severing of ties to the land, rather than one catastrophic event as Rob Nixon's idea of slow violence eloquently demonstrates. In addition, these books criticize the institutional spaces that refugees enter upon arrival as well as the ecological sterility of the West. From council apartments to detention facilities, these areas lack the natural texture that characterized the characters' prior lives. Since reestablishing a connection with nature is frequently essential to psychological healing and identity reconstruction, this absence exacerbates their trauma. A deeper inability of contemporary refugee systems to acknowledge the comprehensive needs of displaced people is reflected in the absence of natural space in exile. A reconsideration of environmental justice is advocated by "Brixton Beach" and "The Boat People", who highlight the ecological aspects of exile. They urge both readers and academics to broaden the focus of ecocriticism beyond conventional themes of wilderness and conservation and instead take into account the lived environmental experiences of the marginalized especially those who have been displaced by persecution, war and climate change. Both books demonstrate how ecological identity and memory play a crucial role in the refugee narrative, neglecting these elements runs the risk of simplifying the nuanced experiences of migrants. Global migration is increasingly characterized by ecological displacement in a world increasingly shaped by environmental crises. For us to comprehend the intersectional nature of these experiences, literature such as that of Tearne and Bala is essential. Their writings imply that reestablishing meaningful connections with nature is a prerequisite for post-exilic identity construction and trauma healing in addition to obtaining legal asylum. As a result, applying ecocriticism to refugee literature broadens the conversation about justice, belonging and sustainability in a time of ecological upheaval while also deepening literary analysis.

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