

## IDENTITY AND SUFFERING

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*Abstract: The question of the wandering writer becomes one of the wandering writing. The writer finds his shelter in difference and double identity. Banishment may be a new birth, a founding energy. The contemporary cultural orphanage eludes the terror of temporality, it became emancipated from the metaphysical oppression and goes straight to concomitance, that means a new perception of the world, an assumed banishment and an easy resignation. Leaving away is not any more a trite spirit of adventure or race maintenance, but becomes, more and more, a stylistic composition of living. While misplacement is not anymore the reason of all the troubles of creature, its benefit is a more comfortable manner of living inside the ontological landscape. The result means a new way of ambiguity, freedom and creativity. Creature wins the privilege of looking back not with rage, but with irony, his glance is cured by the tatters of the abandoned landscape. Ubiquity becomes a way of life.*

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For a man of exile the theme of identity accumulates such obsessions that trigger the identity crisis. This identity crisis can be associated with the ill-suited hypostasis of exile. Even voluntarily assumed, exile do not exclude the diseases of alienation. Any dislocation is followed by consequences. What opens up suddenly to a more verifiable native pathology. The "epistemological perspectivism" to which Sorin Alexandrescu refers<sup>1</sup> is drawn from the lack of contiguity of being, the rupture pushing the identity interrogation to its playful stage. Identity can always be made up and reconfigured from a game of glass beads. Reshaping them in always other and other combinations, refracts the light of introspection in always other reflections, transforms the identity search in an infinite combinatorium, a kaleidoscopic perpetuum of the hazard. This "cheerful" estrangement is also an unlikely, though optimistic, face of exile.

An alternative solution to solving the existential and cultural situation of uprooting is suggested, among others, by Tzvetan Todorov<sup>2</sup>: "exile is fertile if you belong at the same time to both cultures without identifying you with any one". *Heterology*, the difference of voices, can give the existence an extra experience and insolence. The *transcultural mentality* which Milan Kundera spoke in his essays can decompress the psycho-social tensions triggered by uprooting, at least in the particular situation of the writer. In any case, the idea of wandering is part of a deviant, sensitively modified pathway, preoccupied with the continuity of the mentality and sensitivity of the "new man", a "modern" or post-modern one. So even the writer is not exempt from existential readjustments, he is even at the forefront of the changes. He is the golem that reappears obsessively, always in a different form and increasingly difficult to recognize, but at every moment as a true portrait of the collective soul. He is the emblematic figure of guilt hidden in the folds of a plural memory, he is his

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<sup>1</sup>Sorin Alexandrescu, *Identitate în ruptură. Mentalități românești postbelice*, Edit. Univers, București, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Cucerirea Americii. Problema Celuilalt*, Edit. Institutul European, Iași, 1994, p. 21.

exponent, he wants-he does not want: "And as certain signs proclaim the imminence of lightning, so also here, signs of evil betray the appearance of a ghost in the world of deeds. On an old wall, scorched, the dampness is writhing in the shape of a man walking "<sup>3</sup>. It's memory and prediction at the same time.

Ultimately, the writer is the man who always wanders in accord with the sensibility of time, sensitivity that not only anticipates, but also produces it or, in the words of Guy Scarpetta, " A writer should know that he is always lonely, without roots and without family, and that the only tradition that counts to him is the one that allows him to move on: not «beyond» language (another regressive mirage), but in it and against it, in a strategy of confrontation, deception and deviation. Because, on the one hand, there is no language (and territory) but the Master; on the other hand, to write is to become the minority of any minority, rebellious against all unions, even against those of «differences » and «peculiarities »"<sup>4</sup>.

Contemporary philosophy, aware of the stringency of elucidating the chaotic path of being in the world, pays special attention to the idea of exile. There is a symptomatic interest in this aspect of life. The attention given to the theme of uprooting, wandering, the problem of hospitality, living, the alienation, the otherness comes also from the individual, subjective, expatriate experience of most of them. Generated by, and generator of anamnesis, the Wanderer remains, however, the mirrored image of collective biblical guilt. As the lightning of memory, it is double exiled to itself and to the world, but also to its exemplary exponent, "the Hebrew Aleph, conceived in the image of man, with a hand pointing to heaven and the other down, wanting to say: «How up, so it's down, how it's down so it's up »"<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, contrary to the "cheerful" approach, the situation is not very comfortable, "because man is hunted by the deepest powers that dominate him and wakes up in front of his own double, endowed with his energy; or the legend shows that the appearance of the double represents death "<sup>6</sup>. The condition of the uprooted gives to the human being an undesirable transitivity; in fact the duty to pay tribute through the eternal posture of the Other, the blame of an entire tribe driven by the bits of a full nonsense. " Wandering, becoming pure tangle and aimless movement, detached from any finality, is no more than an emblem of the absurd "<sup>7</sup>. A fault that does not belong to him, but which can be metamorphosed, through artistic transubstantiation, into productive anxiety, strongly leading to semiosis. The lack of finality of the earthly derivation is misleading and must not cause uneasiness in the case of the one who testifies to his passing. His route, starting from a false Arcadie to an illusory Eldorado, though marked by an overwhelming shadow of despair, finds its goal in that Anthropocentric Garden, even if it is too far from its paradisiacal model: "when man was put in the garden of heaven, he was put to work *ut operaretur eum*; this proves that man was not created to rest "<sup>8</sup>. Rest means rooting, but at the same time maladjustment, insularisation of the experience of the man without a country.

Descending in the most banal contingency, things change when the original sin goes through political disobedience. From this point on, exile loses all transcendent grandeur and speaks without a tragic trace, the *hybris* effect is diluted. "His final vocabulary " - in the terms of Rorty - it sinks vertically into the microcosm of the phenomenon. Only in this secular dimension of existence can we discuss the "possibility of a liberal utopia: one in which ironism, in its relevant sense, is universal. A post-metaphysical culture seems to me more

<sup>3</sup> Gustav Meyrink, *Golem*, Edit. Cartea Românească, București, 1989, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Guy Scarpetta, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Gustav Meyrink, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Sistemul obiectelor*, p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Starobinski, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> Voltaire, *Candid sau optimistul*, Chișinău, Edit. Hyperion, 1993, p. 189.

impossible than a post-religious one and equally desirable"<sup>9</sup>. But it must be said that the Rortyan vision of the possibility of irony does not completely eliminate the remains of a matrix predestination. Even irony is not a spontaneous product. It can even be said that it is actually a succedaneum. However, living in any possible utopia is not a desirable thing. Living in the language can only be accomplished after the death of the Fatherland. What exacerbates and exasperates political exile is the symbolic death of the Fatherland.

"the pathology of separation", in Starobinski's terms, consists of a temporal regression, an ever-present mental projection. The real mother country is in perpetual conflict with the ideal one. Arguing with Kant's *Anthropology*, he says that "the nostalgic does not cherish the place of youth, but youth itself, childhood. (...) Once returning to his country the nostalgic feels unhappy because he finds here people and things that do not resemble those of the past"<sup>10</sup>. Nostalgia and melancholy "are regression in the age of innocence, but also in the childhood of the world". Considering that for the civilized man the problem is reduced to the conflict between the temptation to preserve childhood privileges and the imperatives of the adult world, Starobinski will only draw a half-valid conclusion: "Exile literature, richer than ever, is mostly a lost childhood literature"<sup>11</sup>.

At least from the avant-gardes, the whole world has become a foreign country, at least in the "the republic of letters". Even Romanian literature (as a pioneer of avant-garde) can not evade this evolution, is also involved in this transitive mechanism. The whole world as a foreign country becomes the habit of a tainted absurd. In the literature of the world, the number of exiled writers is overwhelming. They testify to the fact that exile is not just a rupture, a death, it can convey a new birth and, after all, normality, in a world where distances and differences do not really matter. Summing up to our literary space, Gabriela Melinescu, to choose an example of many others, is "a way to live, a source of inspiration. It is a perpetual pain, a loss, a rupture from the mother tongue, and, precisely for this reason, a kind of awakening, a mobilization of forces and the living"<sup>12</sup>. Writing scatters, "de-embodies" "the rooting devices", it "travels, crosses frontiers, drives the continents, flies over the territories, leaves constantly, migrates, exiles, recompenses through unheard itineraries. Inebriate ships, invitations to travel, dice throws, Chinese walls, trips to Sierra Tarahumara, seasons in inferno. He gets out, plucks himself out of his mother's body, breaks it up. Compensates the limit of languages."<sup>13</sup>. Modernism, existentialism and what is called, rather lax, postmodernism are the most spectacular stops of the idea of exile more or less frowned.

Cultural orphanism deciphered in contemporary key evades the terror of temporal linearity, perhaps because this time it was emancipated from the strict control of metaphysics and goes into the more pragmatic orbit of simultaneity dictated by a new perception of the world, entering into the sign of an assumed exile with a soft resignation neighbor with ease. But it's just an appearance of relief and frivolity. The original matrix never disappears, however demanding, innovative and scholarly would be theories that tend to negate it. What really changes is always the gravity center of the approach: the leap from the exile of the individual to the exile of his work. From this perspective, leaving is no longer a traumatic action, it is becoming more and more a stylistic component of life. When the intersection of all the afflictions of the being diminishes, when the inappropriate geographical situation

<sup>9</sup> Richard Rorty, *Contingentă, ironie și solidaritate*, Edit. All, București, 1998, p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Starobinski, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 153.

<sup>12</sup> Gabriela Melinescu, *Exilul ca trăire*, în *România liberă*, 26 mai 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Guy Scarpetta, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98.

ceases to be the source of all evils, making a more comfortable installation in the ontic landscape, there is an abandoned consensus on the restrictive space of nativity in the sense of a "weakening" of firmly circumscribed membership. Gianni Vattimo, speaking about the consequences of the expansion of the means of communication in the tardo-modern society, isolates a beneficial aspect of the phenomenon, what it means "also a mobility and superficiality of experience that contrasts with the tendencies of generalization of domination, as it gives birth to a kind of" weakening "of the notion of reality itself, with the weakness that derives from it, of its entire coercive force."<sup>14</sup> "weak thought" establishes the ambiguity of a new anthropological model and of a new culture whose trademark is the lack of any brand. But it turns out over time that Vattimo's version turns out to be only a simple version, a unilateral and somewhat superficial approach to the identity issue. Seduced by his own theory of the ease of being, tends to depreciate the new forms of coercion, often more dangerous than the previous ones. "the superficiality of the experience" can lead to serious identity loss, and the "weakening of the notion of reality" can easily make room to monstrous existential artifacts, as surrogates of experience. The moment of birth of the "man without attributes", of "the approximate man" it is no happiness in itself, no feast.

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<sup>14</sup> Gianni Vattimo, *Societatea transparentă*, Ed. Pontica, Constanța, 1995, p. 189.