GLIMPSES OF THE PHENOMENON OF ROMANIAN EXILE

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Abstract: *In today's society, the main areas of general interest, whether they are social, cultural or political, tend to focus on concepts such as: globalization, multiculturalism and transnationality. Under such circumstances, there are voices claiming that terms such as: exile, displacement or otherness are in a way obsolete and unjustifiable. In view of all these, my paper intends to define the concept of exile, justifying its presence in relation to other terms, such as: emigration, migration or postmodern tourism, trying to establish the main coordinates of the Romanian phenomenon, referring to its social and historical context, causes and controverses, chronology and literary canon.*

Key words*: exile, displacement, otherness.*

The main condition of a nation's survival is the preservation of its own individual, social and cultural identity. There are many influences nowadays, all of them aiming for the concept of *globalization*, aiming to create the so-called "global citizen". But in order to become part of this diversity, one has to recover and assert his or her own identity, whether it is national, cultural or even personal.

When speaking about concepts such as: *nation*, *people*, *ethnicity* it is important to understand their meanings, their evolution in time, and their relationship with the controversial issue of identity, these being essential when analysing a certain country's openness towards globalisation and multicultural integration. Exile, as a political, economic and social phenomenon is mainly defined through notions such as: dislocation, displacement, abandonment, negation, assimilation, integration, and only by understanding the entangled complex of values that govern someone's life and their mentality, can we attempt to reach an almost complete projection of the entire structure.

In his book *Neam, popor sau Naţiune. Despre identităţile politice europene* (*Kinship, People or Nation? On the European Political Identities)*, Victor Neumann comments upon different theories and different interpretations of social and political concepts which, during time, have led to a series of misunderstandings and wrong attitudes in what concerns a country's or a nation's social, cultural and national reflection in the world.

Centring his analysis on Europe, Victor Neumann (2005:103) defines the concept of *nation* in relation to various factors, all having a certain influence in the evolution of this term: cultural traditions, administrative and institutional evolution of society, economic climate, intellectual activities, religious orientations, literary and philosophical works. The consequence of all these catalysts results in a certain diversity worth being taken into consideration. Thus, the Western European concept of national identity has a totally different interpretation in Central and Eastern European cultures. This is obviously reflected in the new social and political attitudes adopted by the Western half of the continent during the last decades, namely: new laws concerning the protection of cultural and religious minorities, a social-civic identity instead of the former traditional ethno-cultural identity, the disappearance of borders as a substitute for the usual territorial frustrations, an emphasis on tolerance towards different individual cultures and respect for intellectual effort (NEUMANN, 2005: 105).

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In comparison with the above mentioned situation, Central and Eastern European realities still underline the importance of an *ethnic nation* , thus promoting countless cultural differences and a constant discrimination among linguistic groups. Analysing various theses and points of view, Victor Neumann mentiones Vladimir Tismăneanu and his book *Fantasies of Salvation*. According to the latter's opinion, the end of communism was followed by a collective anxiety and a state of disorientation, attitudes which created the perfect context for the revival of a new ethno-nationalist myth, whose immediate consequence was the worship of the past, this being considered the only capable of restoring the *Nation*'s hope, pride and dignity (qtd. in NEUMANN, 2005: 114). There are other voices, such as: Ilya Prizel and Maria Todorova, who consider that, in some Central and Eastern European countries (for example: Poland, Romania and Bulgary) the revival of Ethnic Nationalism was the direct result of Russian domination. This acted as an interdiction in the development of those nations'cultural and historical values, after the second world war (qtd. in NEUMANN, 2005: 115). This is exactly the situation that characterises our country, which has understood the concept of *nation* in terms of *ethnicity*, evidently exaggerating the role of the ethnic group. The communist ideology took advantage of this political and social orientation, placing the emphasis on ethno-linguistic discrimination and monocultural tendencies, adopting a discriminating policy towards minorities, with obvious and imminent consequences, for example: the forced exodus of Germans and Jews from Romania and other Eastern European countries.

Victor Neumann's conclusion is essential in this context:

> The meanings of *Citoyenneté* or *Citizenship* from Western European political and legal languages were granted a very different interpretation in Central and Eastern European Cultures on the grounds of ethno-differentialism. Instead of the idea of equality of all inhabitants, Central and Eastern European intellectuality preferred to promote the idea of identity based on origin, continuity, blood (race), space and language criteria. This clarifies why yesterday's and today's Central and Eastern European nation is no more than a *Kulturnation*, that is, an *Ethnic Nation*, respectively, a nation of the majority ethnic group. Subsequently, the nation is an equivalent to the state only to the extent it refers to a traditional culture seen according to the romantic paradigm (2005: 226).

Having analysed the implications of this theory, it becomes much easier to understand the concepts of exile, searching for identity and survival. It is, of course, easier to explain why Romanian nation still finds it difficult to integrate into Europe (seen as an entity bringing countries and nations together in an attempt to eliminate borders and extremist ideologies) or into a multicultural society.

Romania has always had a complex of inferiority in what concerns Europe, feeling excluded or neglected. The reasons are mainly economic and political. Being situated in the Balkans, bearing the Turkish and Soviet humilliations during years of domination, having a language of restricted circulation which could not give them any guarantee of an international recognition, the Romanians have always felt underestimated. Their underdeveloped economy has never offered them the opportunity of reaching the Western standards of welfare and prosperity, and the communist dictatorship was always a barrier in their way towards freedom.

The ways in which Western and Eastern Europe address the same problem or situation are different and the most obvious difficulty in the attempt of drawing them closer consists in changing their values and spiritual beliefs. In their turn, the concepts of *multiculturalism* and *transculturalism* have difficulty in imposing their features, especially in those countries where the idea of democracy is not very accurately understood and put into practice. Firstly, because the monocultural and totalitarian tradition has not been totally forgotten and secondly, because non-government institutions are not efficient enough in promoting the idea of cultural and political pluralism. Instead of choosing an attitude

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oriented towards future, the current tendency is that of rediscovering the origins, the once forgotten tradition (NEUMANN, 2005: 197).

The major problem encountered is the so-called *difference of mentality* between the Western European realities on the one hand, and the Central and Eastern European realities on the other hand, and this evidently triggers off a certain difficulty of adaptation. In this context, an exile's situation is even more problematic and complex. The above mentioned difference of mentality is still the same, but it is doubled by a real physical impossibility.

The problem of exile is a very controversial one and has been widely discussed lately. The subject is very up-to-date if we take into account the constant interest and desire of reinstating a whole gallery of writers and that of recovering the once lost cultural and literary values which give uniqueness and consistency to a nation. It is enough to mention some of the critics who have analysed this phenomenon in Romania, in order to understand its importance: Cornel Ungureanu, Mircea Popa, Laurentiu Ulici, Adrian Niculescu, Nicolae Florescu, Gheorghe Glodeanu and many others.

The controversy surrounding this subject is the result of some more or less openly manifested vanities concerning the problem of cultural, political and social affiliation. To what extent does Romanian diaspora in general identify itself with Romanian nation? Or, restricting the area of interest to literature, to what extent does the literature of exile identify itself with the national literature, or does it really belong to our national cultural and literary values?

In the article "In Exile and at Home Literature Has Only One Country: the Language", Monica Lovinescu (1992: 7) refers to this controversy and to the accusations that have been made against Romanian exile, underlining the idea that, belonging to different social backgrounds and being fueled by different motifs (political, cultural, economic, existential) the exiles of Central and Eastern Europe are characterised by their differences and not by their similarities. Not every literary work written in exile is valuable but, as the literary critic states: "in exile and at home literature has only one country: the language", so the exiled writers' integration into Romanian literature "should happen naturally, without priorities", but also without being treated as if they were some "poor relatives".

The same controversy appears in Ileana Corbea and Nicolae Florescu's book: *Resemnarea Cavalerilor (The Knights' Resignation)*. Having a symbolic title, the book brings in front of the reader a series of interviews with some of the representatives of Romanian exile: Constantin Amăriuţei, Theodor Cazaban, Monica Lovinescu, Virgil Ierunca, Nicu Caranica and many others. Confirming the reality expressed in the title, the exiled writers'general attitude is that of resignation. Explaining his intention in choosing the title, Nicolae Florescu identifies the 'knights' with a spiritual aristocracy, with a symbolic fight against evil forces which promote a wicked policy of oppression and terror, with the supreme sacrifice in the name of an ideal. On the other hand, their resignation might suggest a consciousness of their defeat, of their hopeless and useless spiritual fight (CORBEA, 2002: 5-6). Discussing the problem of Romanian literature in one of the interviews gathered in the book, Monica Lovinescu confirms the existance of a unique and singular literary context, this being nevertheless conditioned on the acceptance of exile's literature. The first step towards unity requires the publication of this literature in the country and its proper reception (qtd. in CORBEA, 2002: 118). Mentioning the same problem, Cornel Ungureanu draws the attention to the risk involved in this process of integration: the enthusiasm manifested in discovering and rediscovering new values should not shadow the aesthetic criterion used in judging the literary value of these books and their critical analysis (1995a: 9).

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Asserting his belief that the exiled writers represent a constituent part of Romanian literature, Mircea Anghelescu considers that their work cannot be read or interpreted according to the principles used and applied to the writers who have never left the country and have never experienced Heracle's tragedy of being poisoned by Nessus's shirt. Transposing the Greek legend into the harsh reality of Romanian diaspora, the writer sees the fate of an exile as a tragic exhaustion, a continuous vacillation between the image of the lost country and the one of the country he now lives in, but which will never become his or her home. Everything signifies in this literature of exile, beginning with the actual need of writing, the atmosphere in which they write, so everything has to be known, discussed, analysed, because hardly can we find another condition – and another era – in which a human being's normality might have been more severely damaged, and on such a great scale. As a consequence, any answer, any fragment of an answer is essential in understanding it (the literature), and in understanding ourselves (ANGHELESCU, 2000: 6).

According to Mircea Eliade (1990: 84), the problem of exile in Romanian culture is not something recent, this being rooted in the very essence of our folk tradition, in the "tension" between the sedentary way of life characterising the peasants working their land and, the active life of shephards moving their flocks according to some unwritten laws of nature. Translating this tension in literature, Eliade makes a clear-cut distinction between "sedentary" writers, who place the accent on traditional values, folk wisdom and customs and the so-called "universalists", i.e. writers adopting a more critical attitude and an interest in science. This point of view leads to the conclusion that exile has never been an isolated event in our history, so in order to get a better understanding of this complex phenomenon it is essential to take into consideration the causes that led to it, its chronological delimitations and its main features and traits.

Helpful in this respect is Eva Behring's book: *Scriitori români din exil 1945-1989. O perspectivă istorico-literară (Romanian writers in exile: 1945-1989. A historical and literary perspective)*. As the writer confesses, this research is mainly meant to German readers, so the author tries to give detailed explanations in order to simplify the understanding of the phenomenon and thus, she identifies the main causes of exile: oppression, discrimination, prison, threatenings, interdiction of publication and censorship, in other words, political reasons that represent the main points of defining exile. But these were not the only possible reasons. The writer brings some other examples which come to emphasise, once more, the complexity of this cultural and social process, in our country.

Firstly, there were writers who chose to live in another country not because they were forced by different political circumstances or influences, but simply for personal reasons. Iulia Haşdeu, Elena Văcărescu or Marta Bibescu are among the representative names worth being mentioned in this respect, writers who contributed through their work to Romania's cultural and national recognition in the world.

Secondly, there were writers who totally opposed our country's traditional culture and literary style, feeling constricted and limited to a language and to a system of values almost unknown to other writers and artists in the world. They were the representatives of the avant-garde (Tristan Tzara, Gherasim Luca, Paul Păun) and their work found its best expression outside the borders of our country. In comparison with the group of political exiles, these avant-garde artists never felt the need of returning home, never felt the experience of an outcast (BEHRING, 2001:13-15).

Trying to realise a chronological delimitation, Eva Behring (2001:16-17) begins her analysis with the 17th C Romanian nobility, mentioning the names of Grigore Ureche, Miron Costin, Ion Neculce and Dimitrie Cantemir, important historical chroniclers who

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lived their lives as exiles due to the unfavourable political circumstances dominating our country at the time. The second wave is situated somewhere around the year 1848 and the names of Nicolae Bălcescu and Cezar Bolliac are to be placed among the most important representatives of Romanian cultural and literary life during that period. They used the exile as a pretext for presenting and explaining the problems the country was facing and, their letters and memoirs depicting their experiences are nowadays considered important sources and testimonies of Romanian literary history .

Dedicating a whole book (*The Disappearance of the Outside. A Manifesto for Escape*) to this complex social, political, and economic disease – the exile – Andrei Codrescu realises a detailed presentation of the term, commenting upon its countless meanings and significances, relating it to his own experience of exile, to different foreign writers and to different local or international events. Directing his attention towards the historical context which was defining for our country around the year 1848, the writer states that:

> Romania was not a country until the mid-nineteenth century. After the revolution of 1848, which ended hundreds of years of Turkish and Turco-Greek domination, it hastened to join Europe. Its literature rose fiercely from historical chronicle and pamphlet into poetry. Between 1910 and 1948 Romanians absorbed books the way eggplant absorbs olive oil, and produced them as well, a literary gush comparable to that of their contemporaries, the oil wells of Ploieşti. When the communists came to power after the war, the flow of books was stemmed, both from within and from without. State policy at the time of my birth in 1946 was a Dracula-like activity of cultural impalement. First, the authors were victimized (prison, murder, silence), then their books (burning, banning, oblivion) (2001: 16-17).

Taking into account the writers' dramatic situation and fate during the communist system, it is easier to realize why the most important stage of Romanian political exile starts around the year 1945 and lasts until 1989. According to Eva Behring, this period succeeded to gather a well-defined body of features, a valuable and authentic literature and a voice impossible to ignore. Nevertheless, the tragic situation of two categories of emigrants seemed to be in disagreement with the general tendency, namely: the cruel treatment of Romanian writers of Jewish origin, forced to leave the country due to the communist policy of racial discrimination and its anti-Semitism, and that of Romanian writers from Basarabia (territory that used to be a contituent part of the country) whose situation was identical to that of an exile, if we take into account the USSR's constant attempts of assimilating Romanian language, culture and traditions.

Returning to the period under discussion, 1945-1989, Eva Behring (2001: 24-44) divides it into three major waves, each of them having their own traits, characteristics and representatives.

The best defined stage in terms of of ideology and common aims includes the 40s and the 50s, a historical period dominated by the fall of the Iron Guard and that of Ion Antonescu's military dictatorship and the already obvious pressure exerted by the communists in all the social and cultural areas of the country. The most famous representative of this period is Mircea Eliade, his name being surrounded by many other well-known figures of Romanian exile: Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu, Vintilă Horia, Aron Cotruş, Pamfil Şeicaru, Emil Cioran, Horia Stamatu, George Uscătescu, Monica Lovinescu, Virgil Ierunca. Initially working in diplomacy as cultural attachés, after choosing the exile they were considered either collaborators (in the view of the adoptive country) or traitors and war criminals (their own country's point of view). They chose as their main destinations France or Spain, the latter being the only country in Europe, at the time, welcoming and naturalizing exiles who openly manifested their fascist affinity.

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The second stage of Romanian political exile groups around the 60s and 70s, a period of time which, unlike the previously mentioned contex, cannot reach a consensus in terms of ideology, the writers having their own individual aesthetic and literary values. Although they shared the same traumatic experiences during the communist oppression, although they stepped forward voicing their dissatisfaction, their resistance to the socialist realities of the day, they had no common ideology to offer them the necessary cohesion of the group. Being misled by Nicolae Ceaușescu's policy and having the conviction of a future democratization of Romania's social and cultural life, many young writers agreed to become members of the Communist Party (see the case of Paul Goma). The new cultural and political context gave vent to a new generation of writers interested in exalting their subjectivity, in rediscovering new psychological dimentions, in directing their quest towards mythology and in following the models and influences of modernity. The series of names worth being mentioned now includes: Marin Sorescu, Nichita Stănescu, Ana Blandiana, Dumitru Țepeneag, D.R.Popescu or Ștefan Bănulescu. They experienced an unexpected freedom which, nevertheless, lasted only for a short period of time. The beginnings of a new wave of terror were announced by increasing ideological pressures, constraints concerning political and cultural compromises and they all materialized in the final decision of choosing the exile, this being fueled by the writers' insecurity and impossibility of thinking and honestly expressing their own ideas. Dumitru Țepeneag, Ilie Constantin, Paul Goma, Matei Călinescu, Virgil Nemoianu are just some of the representative figures of this period.

During the last decade of Ceaușescu's dictatorship (the 80s), a new wave of emigration, politically and culturally motivated, can be identified. Romania's harsh realities, a tiring insecurity and the grotesque demands of censorship, the interdiction of publication – a direct result of an 'inadequate' behaviour, the economic crisis reaching all sectors of mass consumption, all these contributed to a tragic feeling of moral and physical misery, disgust, repultion and resignation. The deep scars of countless humiliations and endurance, the terror of brutality, the constant contempt for human beings in general and a permanent anxiety played a decisive role in creating the last wave of emigration, writers belonging to a young generation, already recognized by the literary forums of the country. Among the victims of this last outburst of resentment and oppression, the names of : Norman Manea, Ion Caraion, Alexandru Papilian, Matei Vişniec, Bujor Nedelcovici, Nicolae Balotă or Mircea Zaciu, Lucian Raicu or Mircea Iorgulescu are not to be forgotten.

When analysing the exile in his book: *Incursiuni în literatura diasporei şi a disidenţei* (*Glimpses of the literature of the diaspora and dissidence*), Gheorghe Glodeanu mentiones Laurențiu Ulici and his conclusions concerning this subject. Thus, Ulici concludes that the phenomenon, although having its roots in the 18th century, is best illustrated during the 20th century, in two periods: the first one, between 1945-1949 and the second one between 1972-1989. In both cases, the Romanian writers' option represented a refusal of the compromise and of the gradual destruction of any sense of cultural consciousness (qtd. in GLODEANU, 1999: 6).

Referring to the same periods and to the same ideological context, Cornel Ungureanu gives a very good explanation to this phenomenon.

> After 1945, the exiled writers are those who lost the war. Their world, just like Atlantis, sank. Some of them are still fighting to regain their country, and their literature is a war journal. But after 1948, the harsh reality of starting from scratch became more and more obvious for most of them. To revive in another country. The experience of death and the experience of Revival – this is the fundamental experience defined by the exile literature of the 20th century (1995a: 8 – translation mine).

Returning to Eva Behring's book, the writer continues her theoretical debate with an attempt of identifying the exiled writers' attitudes and reactions at their encounter with

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the concept of *otherness*. The sudden change of cultures, perceived as an internal shock but also as a release was the starting point of a new life and a new mentality, or attitude. The first normal reaction was that of refusal and defence, and the process of reorientation towards the host country's culture, language, traditions and customs came with difficulty. The most important elements of this equation are the writers'reserve in adopting the new culture and their possibility or impossibility of handling the new language. Their integration is dominated by the pressures of every day material necessities and, their ambivalent tendencies (to preserve their national and cultural identity, on the one hand, and to comply with the influences of their present backgroung, on the other hand) transform their existance into a dramatic dilemma (BEHRING, 2001: 69). Trying to escape the constraints of a totalitarian political system the exiled writers perceive their condition as a "catalyst for identities" as Monica Spiridon considers (qtd. in GLODEANU, 1999: 16).

From this point of view, a new culture, a new spiritual context is beneficial and essential in providing them with the necessary and long-desired freedom of thinking and feeling. The exiled writers are free to search for their own identity, they are free to look for ways of expressing their inner selves. In this context of searching for identity and looking for ways of expressing the once repressed feelings and anger, the exiled writers' status is not simple at all. Once away from their birth place, some of them continue to write using their own language, others try to adopt the language of the new country and others use a double voice. There is also another category, namely: those who find it impossible to overcome the difficulties encountered in a new social and cultural context, totally abandoning the idea of writing (SASU, 2001: 5). But, irrespective of their choice, their work must be analysed according to its real value.

In his book suggestively entitled *Exile*, Camilian Demetrescu (1997: 164) gives an interesting interpretation of this complex phenomenon, naming it "the tragedy of roots". Being uprooted, a tree needs some new ground in order to survive. Taking this image as a starting point, the author identifies three possibilities of action: the cutting of the roots, their dragging along the roads of exile, and their final planting. The first situation is that of an economic exile who leaves his or her native country in search of a better place to live and the roots are just an obstacle in their way. The second and the third situations are defining for a political exile (the artist, writer or intellectual choosing this alternative as the only possible moral and physical survival) who tries to preserve his or her roots, but at the same time tries to understand and take advantage of the new cultural, social and political context he or she has been thrown in.

Speaking about the attitudes which an exiled writer can adopt, Mircea Eliade (1990:85) mentions two names: Dante and Ovid. The second figure is that of an outcast and his literary work is dominated by lamentation, regrets and nostalgia for the forever lost country, while the former accepts his fate with resignation, aware of the fact that his exile was actually his main source of his inspiration. For Eliade, Ulysses represents the prototype of the human being in general, but also the prototype of the man projected into the future; it is simply the image of the so-called "hunted traveller". His journey signifies the constant search of identity and parts of this restless wanderer can be identified in every human being. What best defines human nature is a series of initiation attempts, a continuous succession of deaths and revivals, the symbolic representation of this process of initiation being the labyrinth. The experience of exile is, actually, the experience of the labyrinth. There is always a possibility of getting lost, but at the same time, there is always a possibility of finding your way home. The choice belongs to everyone apart.

In his article "The Exile is One of the Toughest Trials that an Intellectual can Bear", Bujor Nedelcovici continues Mircea Eliade's idea of 'labyrinth', overlapping the

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experience of exile with a labyrinthine endeavour, a journey from darkness to light, from bewilderment to tranquillity, from gloomy and entangled moods to bright and lucid moments. As the title of the article states, "the exile is one of the toughest trials that an intellectual can bear" but, once the difficulty surpassed, the whole experience becomes a spiritual boom, a moral revival, a "redemption" distributed on different levels. The first level underlines the importance of "there" – an equivalent of the lost country, the second level underlines the importance of "here and there", the third one coincides with the sintagm "neither here nor there", while the last one emphasises the idea of universality, of "everywhere". Thus, the author proclaims his total freedom of thinking and acting, being no longer "conditioned" by a certain place, area or country. "I feel fine in Mexico and in England and in Romania, without ever forgetting that I am a Romanian writer, without forgetting my origins and the books that I write and continue to publish in the country" (NEDELCOVICI, 1997: 12). One might suspect a certain kind of indiference in these words, a total or partial detachment. In comparison with the above mentioned attitude, Norman Manea's opinion contradicts the image of the writer released from all kinds of constraints. This fact intends to highlight, once again, the already mentioned diversity which characterises Romanian exile. "My relationship with Romania has not reached yet the point of indifference, in spite of the bitterness which has become deeper and deeper during the last few years" (MANEA, 1992: 7). What the writer names "violent dislocation", has nowadays become a commonplace experience, and exactly this modern "trivialization of evil" has brought about the feeling of resignation and has been a catalyst in discovering the benefits of dislocation.

Returning to Eva Behring (2001: 70-71), it is important to notice the way in which the author analyses and comments upon various aesthetic influences and tendencies the exiled writers were subjected to. The first and most important change appeared in their process of creation. Referring to the first wave of emigrants, worth being mentioned was the fact that they were not forced to adjust their stylistic devices to a new aesthetic canon as long as they had previously been acquainted with the Western European literary traditions. For example, Marcel Proust's literary technique had already influenced the Romanian interwar novel, Transylvania's poetry was marked by expressionist impulses and the avant-garde movement had been successful in promoting Romanian national culture in the world. The constant interest manifested in Joyce and Kafka, in the new French novel and in the aesthetic disputes on themes such as: unlimited realism and existentialism was not foreign to the Romanian literary and academic circles in the country. As a consequence, the first notable reaction of our exiled writers was to adopt a certain restraint or hesitation in what concerned the modern theories and methods of Western Europe. This was the result of a different mentality, of a personal vision of the world, of a tradition based on Christian orthodox precepts, in direct contradiction to the principles that animated Western European consciousness at the time. The loss of religious thinking, the modern man's lack of, and disinterest in values, the exhaltation of individuality and freedom, all these features were in stark contrast to the Romanian exiled writers' personal image on man and world.

Totally different was the situation of the younger writers belonging to the third wave of emigrants. Their problem did not consist in choosing traditional or modern techniques or literary devices, but in changing the perspective: from a hidden, abstruse meaning to an open representation. Speaking about the subjects and the themes chosen by the exiled writers, Eva Behring (2001: 73) outlines the general tendencies identified in jurnalism and literature, the former dealing with Romania's political and cultural situation, people's struggle in searching for identity and in finding a common denominator with their

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new social and cultural context, and the latter placing the accent on reflections upon personal destinies during the communist dictatorship, emphasising the idea of survival.

Quoting Cornel Ungureanu's words:

> exile is the first and most important punishment that has been brought about human beings. More than a punishment, it is the process through which man is brought to life. He starts living only after being driven away from Eden. The man, as we know him, the man similar to us, is placed in time and space, both of them being perceived as constrictive (1995a: 5 – translation mine).

As the definition suggests, exile is the starting point of those people's life. It is their punishment and their blessing. The act of writing becomes in their case a testimony, a confession. Analysing the most suggestive elements and features that tend to be emphasised and captured in the exiled writers' work, Nicolae Florescu gives a very complex and complete body of symbols, themes, and ideas, which coexist with other elements that offer uniqueness to each writer.

> There are, of course, common features, too, an obvious body of endeavours: nostalgia for the image of the irrevocably lost country, an anti-communist and anti-Russian consciousness of the adopted attitude; the protest against Western indifference, the exagerated emphasis on the idea of national specificity and its fundamental traditions[…]. But, maybe, the most pregnant and present attitude is the solitude, the voice uttered in the desert, the impossibility of providing a service to the oppressed country through anything else than the word. Then, the alternation of disillusionment and hope, heaven and hell…(1998: 7 – translation mine).

Showing an obvious interest in the same subject and speaking about the elements which define the corpus of this 'exile literature', Nicoleta Sălcudeanu finds a very interesting explanation to the entire phenomenon, in her article "Exilul Literar Românesc (1944-1989)" ("The Romanian Literary Exile (1944-1989)"):

> The exile literature's peculiarity may not consist in a special literary artistry, but it surely brings about a unique emotional flavour, motivated by the existential meaning of dislocation. The uprooted writer's fate repeats the mythical scenario of the Wandering Jew, meant to endlessly wait for the second coming, a damned witness, carved in time, - an expended, threatening time. The writer […] is cursed to be the last man on earth, crucified between the sense of an impending doom and the constant waiting, between immortality and continuous wandering (2003: 100 – translation mine).

Trying to systematize the concept of "cultural identity in exile", Eva Behring (2001: 74) establishes three major levels, according to the exiled writers' openess towards changing their language and their literary productivity as a result of it.

The first one is characterised by suspicion in what concerns their integration into the new culture and the new traditions of the adoptive country, and the direct consequence of this is the use of Romanian as the language of literature and a constant focus on a Romanian target public. Good examples in this perspective are: Paul Goma, Ion Caraion or Ion Negoiţescu.

The second one speaks about the writers who accepted a double identity and, as a result, used a 'double voice', being interested not only in the Romanian public but also in the public of their receiving country. The great majority of the Romanian literary exile belongs to this category. The list begins with Mircea Eliade and continues with other important figures, such as: George Uscătescu, Vintilă Horia, Monica Lovinescu, Virgil Ierunca, or the young generation: Norman Manea, Virgil Tănase, Dumitru Ţepeneag or Dorin Tudoran.

The third one mentiones the writers who succeeded in forgetting their own roots and adopted a new identity and a new language, their interest being targeted exclusively at the public of their adoptive country. Emil Cioran represents the best example in this perspective, his attitude being characterised by total negation and an irrevocable separation from his own Romanian identity. Another name claiming its place in this context is that of Eugen Ionescu, whose attitude towards Romania was identical with Cioran's.

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In the article: "Exile, Emigration, Diaspora", Al. Paleologu (1998: V-VI) attempts to clarify the difference between 'exile' and 'emigration'. In a very real sense, the exile was considered a terrible punishment implicitly supposing a civil death and a seizure of goods and properties. Having its origins in the Latin word "exsilium", this term is also used in French or English: "bannissement" and "banishment", these words having a more dramatic and terrible implication. Continuing his theoretical analysis, Paleologu considers that the word *emigrant* defines those people who left their country in search of a better material life, the so-called "economic emigration", and they should not be included in the category of "exile", this being reserved for the "political emigrants", their life being in a way synonymous with an "existential experience". They are the real exiles. However, if we tend to see exile as banishment it is necessary to return to Ovid, the Latin poet's experience, which represents exactly the opposite of Romanian contemporary emigration. Leaving behind the cradle of Latin culture, he is banished to an isolated, barbarian world, on the unfriendly shores of a rough sea. Leaving a communist regime behind on the other hand, the exiled writers experienced a certain kind of revival and freedom of thinking and feeling. Under such circumstances, Mircea Eliade's position in choosing Dante's attitude in exile to the detriment of Ovid's is justified. Choosing Dante as their role model, the exiled writers have transformed a negative experience into something positive, or at least into something bearable.

A human being's existance is unquestionably connected to the concept of "utopia", this actually meaning hope for a better life. According to this principle, there are two main tendencies dominating an exiled writer's literary attitude, Cornel Ungureanu mentioning both of them: on the one hand, the process of negation, of deconstruction and, on the other hand, a utopian reconstruction of the lost universe. "If the East ruins Utopia, the exiled writer tries to give it a certain meaning" (1995b: 13 – translation mine). As a result, a heavenly atmosphere surrounds the imaginary countries of Vintilă Horia or Mircea Eliade, Romanian geography seems to be a projection of paradise and every little corner of their lost country is endowed with symbolic conotations. So Cornel Ungureanu's conclusion in this context is that the literature of exile is mainly characterised by its interest in re-creating Utopia, in re-creating a dream, an illusion.

In his book suggestively entitled *The Disappearance of the Outside. A Manifesto for Escape*, Andrei Codrescu speakes about exactly the same thing: the exiled writers' attempts to re-create a new world, a utopian universe as a substitute for their lost home. The conclusion he reaches is that this re-creation, re-construction of an illusion is not necessarily the most important thing. What really matters is their "faith". This is the energy that fuels their creative resources. In a world that has everything but "faith", this inner force gives their work a particular flavour and consistency. In comparison with the artist in the West,

> the situation of the exiled writer is quite different. His entire existence is predicated on a gap. The basic, material facts of breaking with one's entire sensorial universe put a different kind of strain on the imagination, which is called to replace the lost world with another. If it fails, the artist goes under his weight of nostalgia and impotence into that well-mulched swamp of heartbreak and failure that is our century's chief product. An exile must not fail, but "not fail" at what? Making an alternate reality, a different world, one that can resemble only superficially the lost ones, is an enterprise of fundamental failure, even if by some unrelated process it does become a public success. The only thing an exile cannot fail in is his *faith* (2001: 93).

But this phenomenon, i.e. exile, is far too vast in order to be presented or rendered thoroughly. By analysing the works of some of its best representatives one can only try to hope that the entire picture will eventually take shape. Nevertheless, the process of integration seems to be more painful and much more entangled when applied to the literature of exile, this idea being, once again, beautifully rendered by Andrei Coderscu's words: "The

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map of exile resembles the radar maps used to track the movement of planes: shapes of light tracked across borders. It is all but invisible to anyone not paying close attention to it. Our fullest attention is given to other maps: the maps of multinational commerce and international tourism and terrorism, the maps of the mass media"(2001: 91). The cruel reality expressed by this quotation should become a real exclamation mark leading to a new reconsideration of positions towards exile in general and towards the literature of exile in particular. Only by adopting the right attitude and position and only by judging the exiled writers'works according to their real value, can we hope to transcend the social, cultural and political differences which still prevent Romania from joining the Western half of Europe in creating a homogeneous community with a common ideology and identity.

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