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THE IMPLIED EXILE IN NARRATIVE TEXTS

Vladimir Zorić
**THE RHETORIC OF EXILE:
 DURESS AND THE IMAGING OF FORCE**

Cambridge: Legenda, Studies in Comparative Literature, 2016.

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience.

Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile*

Exile brings you overnight where it would normally take a lifetime to go.

Josif Brodsky, *Condition We Call Exile*

These quotes lines by two modern writers, theoreticians, and essayists – Edward Said and Joseph Brodsky – from their respective essays *Reflections on Exile* and *Condition We Call Exile*, contemplating the nature of displacement as a part of their own experience, describe exile as a condition that is at once attractive and frightful, restrictive and liberating. Although prone to ambiguity and paradoxes, the notion of exile is deeply rooted in the history of humankind, which in its mythical interpretation begins with the exile from the garden of Eden. The motif of exile holds its place in literature, literary and cultural theory, philosophy, anthropology, social studies and numerous other disciplines. Their mutual aim is to define the meaning

and significance of exile, to explain its consequences and to describe both the individual and the collective experience of exile.

Because of its relation to real life or (auto)biographical experience, exile is frequently encountered as a topic of literary texts. In literature, exile is narrated through different levels of fiction and reality, individual and collective experience. It is the duality between fiction and non-fiction, individual and collective perspective that represent the nature of exile. The narration of exile includes the (re)interpretation of the past through memory and imagination, which represents the true nature of the literary text. On the other hand, writing about exile includes narration of individual

experience related to similar perspectives: the exile writer speaks not only for himself, but in the name of all those that surround him, and those that are left behind. This is why it is challenging to write about exile both in the literary and theoretical domain. Although it represents experience or – to quote Joseph Brodsky again – a metaphysical state based on the concept of displacement and unbelonging, the understanding of exile varies depending on its causes and consequences.

The notion of exile in changing social, political, cultural and literary contexts is the topic of Vladimir Zorić's study *The Rhetoric of Exile – Duress and the Imaging of Force*, published in 2016 by Legenda, the Modern Humanities Research Association. Zorić describes the challenge of writing about exile as an encounter with a forest of metaphors in which everything is related to something else, an endeavour related to different and often confronted theoretical contexts and concepts. Hence the introduction of the book entitled *The Death of the Exile and other Riddles* represents a blueprint for an interdisciplinary theoretical exploration of the concept. Zorić's writing about exile begins by stating its theoretical uncertainty and paradox: in the effort to define or even describe it, it is al-

most impossible to answer the questions that would describe its nature: is it spatial or spiritual? Enforced or voluntary? Individual or collective? A practice or a condition? Locating the notion of exile between its historic cultural and political heritage and contemporary social and political status, Zorić describes the main paradox of exile, stating that "the word which semantically denotes boundaries and the deprivation of land creates a metaphoric universe of virtually boundless latitude." (Zorić 2016: 3)

Because of its ambiguity and metaphoricity, the theoretical notion of exile finds its place in different forms and meanings in numerous social and humanistic disciplines and genres: literary theory and criticism, theatre, psychoanalysis, psychiatry, legal studies and political philosophy. Zorić's analysis of the theoretical contextualisation of exile as a language phenomenon, rhetorical strategy, political praxis, social experience and finally also the subject of literary narration lies at the intersection of these disciplines with an excellent, deliberate and critical interpretation of different theoretical concepts.

Zorić initially explores the relation between exile and punishment, stating that "exile does not have demonstrable punitive effects – and

therefore does not convince the standard dispensation of the law” (2016: 6), considering nevertheless how “one can still argue that it is efficient in those cases when the law has to be suspended in its entirety” (ibid: 6). Exile is then related to the concept of political duress, not only as its consequence, but also its active principle: “the force of exile is not simply a retrospective abstraction but an actual practice which has its what, how, and who” (ibid: 9).

The study then turns to its specific main focus: texts about exile arising from the real experience of exile. Zorić is interested in theoretical description and analysis of a particular type of exile defined throughout the book as “implied exile” that “is neither delivered as a statutory punishment nor enforced as part of a state of emergency” but “based on a bilateral and willing communication between the sovereign (or his/her proxy) and the exile” (ibid: 10) Implied exile works retroactively as a consequence of certain procedures such as evasion, foreclosure and informal duress. Analysed literary texts that describe this principle range from Ancient Rome to modern literature and include various writers and poets from Cicero, Dante and Rousseau to Brecht, Nabokov and Kiš.

Describing the principle of the metaphorical construction of du-

ress, Zorić explores the literary and social form of implied exile in five chapters. The study of the rhetoric of exile in Cicero’s orations is discussed in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 explores the notion and deployment of fire in the Roman Republic and the Inquisition and then in the poetry of Dante, Brecht and Brodsky. Chapter 3 explores the socio-political templates that emerge in the works of implied exile and establishes a link between the concealment of force in the political discourse and its reconstruction within a paranoid world of exiled subjects. Chapter 4 describes socio-political templates that emerge in the works of implied exile, shifting the focus to the figures of textual force, especially the figure of the paternal metaphor. Finally, Chapter 5 explores metaphors of force at the level of language in lyrical poetry.

He locates the notion of exile as a metaphorical principle in Jakobson’s analyses of the systemic interactions between metaphor and metonymy along paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes of language, and also in the cognitive perspective of metaphor based on Lakoff and Johnson’s theory, but shifting the balance in favour of metonymy. Describing the metaphorical and metonymical force of implied exile, Zorić claims “that it is the sovereign power’s displacements of force on

chronological and spatial proxies that prompts the authors to strike back with condensed metaphors of force.” (Ibid: 14)

In the Chapter 1, entitled “Banished With No Force: Implied Exile in Cicero’s Pro Caecina Oratio”, Zorić revises the traditional division on enforced or compulsory and voluntary exile (banishment vs. expatriation), introducing the intermediate model of exile, in which “the duress is not imposed by physical force, or for that matter juridical decision, but is encoded and decoded by an underlying consensus of all involved agents.” (Ibid: 18) Zorić explains the intermediate form of exile on the basis of legal conventions and fictions of Ancient Rome, but also includes its implications in other contexts, such as modern politics. The most intriguing part of this chapter considers revisiting Giorgio Agamben’s interpretation of *homo sacer* from the perspective of implied or indirect exile. This interpretation is based on two case studies of implied exile: the convention of *aquae et ignis interdictio* in criminal law, and *deiectio* in property lawsuits as two models of indirect expulsion. Zorić’s comparative approach shows how the praxis of implied exile evolves around metonymy

Chapter 2, “Firebrands of the City: Vicarious Functions of Fire in

Exile” revolves around fire as a constituent element in the rhetorical mechanism of implied exile. Zorić situates the rhetoric of fire within contemporary theories of fire and then seeks similarities between fire practices and citizenship practices and explores how they are carried out in two different metonymic codes of exile (the Roman Republic and the Inquisition). This theoretical approach is concluded with analysis of three poems written by three exiled poets: Dante Alighieri, Bertolt Brecht and Joseph Brodsky, proving that exile is “more of a *homo faber*, man the maker, than a *homo sacer*, the proscribed man.” (ibid: 46) In this chapter Zorić also establishes two metonymical paradigms that connect fire to exile. The first paradigm is situated in the Roman republican period, in which “fire is imagined as a standing feature of the polity in political, sacerdotal and ethical sense, and exile is encoded as denial of this element on a pars pro toto basis under the pretext of avoiding conflagration” (ibid: 52). The second paradigm considers late medieval and early modern Europe, where fire has two metonymical meanings and is understood through light as a spiritual and heat as a corporeal component.

In Chapter 3, “The Furies of Orestes: Persecutory Agency in the Narratives of Exile”, Zorić examines

the structural similarity between paranoia and exile, asking “how the concealed element of force that accompanies every implied exile relates to the paranoia of the exiles and, also, to what extent the condition is aggravated by the inimical attitudes of their host communities” (ibid: 73). This discussion is grounded in the theory of narrative and rhetorical figures, and analysis is focused on two literary narratives, Aeschylus’ tragedy *Libation Bearers* and Vladimir Nabokov’s novel *Pale Fire*. Other literary narratives included in this argumentation are the autobiographical texts of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the legend of the Wandering Jew in Danilo Kiš’s novel *Garden, Ashes* and Stefan Heym’s novel *The Wandering Jew*. Zorić’s analysis shows how literary texts form a link between exile and paranoia and at the same time represent distinct political constellations through different narrative patterns.

Chapter 4, “The Burden of Aeneas: Paternity and Patrimony in Family Exile”, examines the father figure in implied exile stories, proposing replacement of the traditional equation between the magistrate (representing the state) and the father (representing family) with analogy between exile and the father. Zorić’s analysis of two autobiographical texts, *Speak, Memory*

by Vladimir Nabokov and *Garden, Ashes* by Danilo Kiš, shows how in implied exile stories father figures appear metonymically, as the victim of exilic movement, and at the same time metaphorically, as timeless symbols. The father figure proves to be central to different forms of political duress to which Nabokov and Kiš were exposed through implied exile. However, in their case the figure of the father is no longer a symbol of paternal power, as he “cannot remain the magistrate of the family just as the state can no longer be the family’s father-land” (ibid: 131). As the family’s leader in exile, and later even the victim of exile, the father becomes a figure of force and subject to that force.

Interlingual poems are the main topic of Chapter 5, “Polyglot Monsters: Metalingual Tropes of Force in the Poetry of Exile”. The first part of the chapter revisits some of the main theories of poetic language (Roman Jakobson’s theory of equational relations) to show “how any interlingual sequence projects a derivative metalanguage with different codes united in an overarching metaphoric nexus” (ibid: 136). The second part of this chapter focuses on images that are specific to metalingual situations, for example in Miloš Crnjanski’s poem ‘Lament nad Beogradom’ (Lament over Belgrade), but also in

other instances of exilic interlinguality, such as Ovid, Tsvetaeva, Brodsky and Milosz. Here Zorić argues that “the apparent rhythmic and syntactic disparity of ‘Lament over Belgrade’ and other code switching poems is countervailed by a set of metaphors of outside-ness which, on the one hand, project an imagined metalanguage and, on the other hand, reflect the human trauma of enforced displacement” (ibid: 136). In the conclusion to this chapter, Zorić states that the metalingual function in code-switching poems is the field in which the poetic function asserts itself and works from outside rather than from within particular languages.

In the afterword, Zorić describes the main interests of his book as the identification of ethico-political contradictions of direct banishment and the exploration of the proposed term of implied exile through “all those alternative patterns of eviction from a country where force was not communicated directly but by detour” (ibid: 165). The theoretical background to his analysis is represented through “the literary criticism of exile, Carl Schmitt’s and Giorgio Agamben’s theories of sovereignty and exception, and the linguistic study of metaphor and metonymy” (ibid: 165) and demonstrated through case studies from antiquity to the twentieth century.

Relating tradition and modernity, literature and real life experience (fiction and faction), theoretical approach and literary analysis, Vladimir Zorić’s book represents a valuable contribution to exile studies. The methodology implemented in the book is flawless and guides the reader through the literary, political, cultural, social and rhetorical aspects of implied exile. Zorić constantly relates theory, which at the same time is interpreted and critically questioned, with the analysis of a painstakingly chosen variety of literary narratives.

The introduction in which Zorić describes the theoretical context of the study and introduces the principle of implied exile is followed by five chapters, each of them opening with a short introduction describing the main problem and hypothesis to be proved. The book is structured to ensure a high level of clarity, which enables the reader to navigate through chapters with ease and to compare hypotheses and notions presented throughout the study.

Zorić’s knowledge of exile theory and literary theory, but also linguistics, philosophy and legal studies is impressive, and his interpretation of legal and literary (prosaic and poetic) texts is intriguing.

Theoretical sources, such as (re)-interpretation of Agamben’s theory on *homo sacer*, represent new possi-

bilities of defining exile as a social, political and literary praxis in a broad historical approach from Ancient Rome to modernity. Literary texts from different historical periods and genres prove implied exile to be a general principle that emerges in different times and narrative paradigms.

In a time of great social, political and literary importance of exile,

which is more often considered through its consequences than through its causes, Zorić's book means the beginning of a new approach to and understanding of this notion, explaining its causes and shifting the focus from the traditional dualism of voluntary and enforced exile to the principle of implied exile as the dominant contemporary praxis of displacement.

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