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Introduction: Exile-and-Emigration

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Exile and emigration currently intertwine in many destinies. Inasmuch as those who embrace political exile nowadays are no longer the aristocrats whose material independence allowed them to exclusively pursue political projects aimed at powerful comebacks (this was the case of the French aristocrats during the Revolution, or of those who fled Russia in 1905 and 1917), and because, with a few exceptions, such as the Jews or the Armenians, exiles only developed a limited network of institutions able to systematically take over and help in the process of accommodation, the burden of survival and the exile quests came to be unavoidably associated. If one tries to understand the exile phenomenon, one can ignore no more the emigration features that frame and modulate it most of the time.

Globalization, on the other hand, hardens and amplifies temporary emigrations (*migrations*). These engulf at present both urban upper professionals and youths from rural areas, construction workers, drivers and so on. Understanding the unprecedented diversity of exile, migration and emigration forms and the multiple ways in which they interpenetrate becomes, with each passing day, a pressing duty for all those wishing to account for the Romanian present: sociologists and anthropologists or folklorists, specialists in oral history or in contemporary literature, linguists and semioticians alike.

The first and currently most needed level of analysis could be represented by an alert morphological approach. Exile and emigration (which are often designated in Romanian by the neutral anticlimactic term *plecare*, meaning just „leaving, going away“) equally presuppose the basic stages of *breaking off* with a familiar space; *wandering* in search of a new life, with temporary settlings down that may at times become permanent; and, finally, *discovering* that point on the globe, that niche, that will prove itself auspicious and future-generating, either in the manner vaguely anticipated before leaving, or in never imagined, emergent forms.

Thus envisioned, the experience accumulated during exile or emigration lets itself be narrated in ways that appear to obey the classic structure of fairy-tales, as defined by Vladimir Propp. A female or male protagonist confronts a lack (material or moral, personal or communitarian) and engages oneself in the adventurous journey that will bring about either a triumphant return, or a happy and carefree life somewhere else. This was often the way in which, before 1989 or immediately after, those who had left tended to tell (or to write) the story of their lives for those who had stayed behind. Things, however, are far from happening in a fairy-tale manner in real life. Returns tend to bring mixed emotions and one always misses something. This is why, more recently, subtle and soft ironic accents were

found to speak about wandering and living far away amid different people, with a different *Weltanschauung*. I would simply refer here to Paul Miron's ice-breaking *Maipuțincaperfectul* (that we could render, with its play on the Romanian word for pluperfect—*maimultcaperfectul*, „more than the perfect“—by „Lessthanperfect“), where, for the first time, the tone changed and the comical aspects and diminished egos of exiles and emigrants were truthfully brought to fore.

The *breaking off* stage may be temporary or it may be prolonged indefinitely. Those who exile themselves anticipate at times the moment of their active return to the country they left because they could not serve, dominate or exploit it the way they wanted. Even if their return may never take place, the breaking off of the exiles is minimal, it is a *zero degree split*, a permanent and tantalizing aspiration to keep being somewhere else than they are or, more exactly, in two places at once. Whether in a neighboring country or somewhere close by (in Switzerland, Germany or England in the case of the aristocrats fleeing the French Revolution), or far away from their homeland (as was the case of the French aristocrats who arrived, at approximately the same time, in North America), the exiles are uninterruptedly living in their country of origin as well. They establish relationships, develop and institutionalize projects, imagine and shape the short or long-term future while always having their home country in mind, as a secret horizon. Temporary emigrants (we may as well call them *migrants*) such as the inhabitants of the Transylvania and Banat regions—famous, at the beginning of the 20th century, for their line *Merem la America* („We're agoin' to the America“)—likewise oscillate between a country with needs galore and the bountiful U.S. where they can earn the magic one thousand dollars needed to start up a household, found a prosperous marriage, or build a solid abode. On the contrary, *emigrants of no return*, such as the Irish or the Italians in the second half of the XIXth century, break off for good and leave this consummate fracture as an inheritance to their children and children's children.

Leaving one's country may be perceived as a temporary or permanent separation not only for personal reasons, but also depending on the historical moment and the psychology of the time. When, after WWII, safe planes and pilots necessary for fleeing Romania became an expensive desired commodity in Bucharest, those who chose to contract such services were still convinced that „the Americans are going to come“ (*Vin americanii* was the phrase of the moment) and their exile will soon be over. Thirty years later, on the contrary, the idea that the communist regime was immortal became so strong in everybody's mind, that both exile and emigration came to be lived as *plecări definitive* („definitive leavings, leaving for ever“) and seeing the departing ones to the train station or to the airport converted into almost funereal ceremonies. The Romanian exiles were at this point assuming more modest missions: maintaining and passing along the memory of what happened in their and their parents' lives, speaking the truth about what was going on in the country they had left (this is how „The Truth About Romania“ association, founded by Brutus Coste came to be), representing points of competent and correct information in luckier states and cultures. The legal emigrants of the seventies and the eighties used to visit Romania on a regular basis, send their children to the free and prestigious Medicine Schools in Bucharest, Cluj or Iassy, spend their vacations in the Romanian mountains or at the Romanian sea-side, while the exiles, who „fled“, „remained“ or left after extended public wars with the authorities, vowed to never return, expressing through this self-inflicted painful deprivation their non-acceptance of the regime in power and of its institutions. In contradistinction to the detached and rather apolitical emigrants, for the exiles of that period every gesture was politically significant and had thus to be carefully scrutinized.

Once, and in certain countries, officially imposed, the breaking off of the exile remains a characteristically *forced move*, even when, after WWII, it is personally revendedicated as a gesture of protest and irreducible political opposition.

Life itself is at times at stake—in the case of the exiled of all revolutions, civil wars, regime changes who ask for political asylum; its professional core or its religious drive are risked by many—from the British puritans who exiled themselves to North America, to the extraordinary Romanian mathematicians who left to the four corners of the world after the Mathematics Institute of the Academy in Bucharest was closed. Those who emigrate due to poverty or absence of civil rights, such as the young sons with no inheritance rights in the 17th and 18th century France or the Romanian peasants in the Austro-Hungarian empire at the beginning of the 20th century, are obliged to go into the wide world (*în lumea cea mare*) as well. But, in their case, departing occurs in order to give a new impetus to idle luck, and the initiative of leaving, with its mixture of hopelessness and hope, is entirely theirs.

Those who break off may be *young, adult or old, women or men, rich or poor, trained or uneducated, healthy or ill*, part of the *majoritarian or minoritarian, dominating or dominated* population in the country of origin. All of these factors will have consequences over their exile or emigrant destiny. Each wave of departures is in fact defined by their specific combination in a general typology still to be established. At the beginning of the 20th century, before WWI, Romanian emigrants from Transylvania and Banat (then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire) were mostly peasants, young, men, part of the dominated majority, poor and uneducated. Some-

times, rather seldom, they would „bring“ their spouse abroad or go back to the old country in order to get married and then return to the United States, as shown in their research by both Christina Galitzi and Anca Hartular. The Romanians exiled after WWII belong instead to all generations and to both sexes. They either „remained“ abroad, refusing to return when called

back from their assignments at the end of the forties, or ran away during the short period between 1944 and 1947 when this was still possible, most often together with their whole family. And they represent the middle and upper middle classes of the majoritarian population, in general highly educated, materially well provided and with a supple network of acquaintances in the countries in which they settle during the second part of their lives. Compared to them, those who leave Romania exiling

themselves during the eighties belong, most of the time, to proletarian intellectual families, are past their prime and have no means of subsistence or contacts, relying solely on their high education and professionalism. If breaking off before WWI was usually done in Romania by single persons and for a limited period of time, in the forties, seventies or eighties families as a whole were typically leaving for good.

For those who lived there as *minorities*, breaking off with their native country may offer the opportunity to reach a space where people from their ethnic group represent the dominating majority. This is the case of the Romanian Jews who left for Israel starting with the sixties,



and of the Germans who went to West Germany at roughly the same time. For them, the breaking off is only apparent; their departure reverses in fact a previous breaking off operated by their forerunners and represents the final chapter of *parenthetic exile and emigration processes*, that change their course and bring people back, after several generations, to their ancestors' point of departure. Even if a minority person does not leave for a country where people from her or his group represent the majority, s/he will be able to aptly use for survival the pluricultural experience accumulated in the country of origin and, from this point of view, will prove better prepared for what lies ahead than those who have known a single culture from the position of a majoritarian.

The period of *searching* for a new place to live may begin, for those who are both cautious and able to do so, *before their departure*. The forms such *pre-search* is taking are yet to be studied. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Romanians who temporarily emigrated to the U.S. simply prompted their acquaintances and friends to look for possible jobs and dwellings. The political refugees of the forties, seventies and eighties addressed themselves to national or international exile institutions to obtain admission and work places for them. An important role was played, beginning with the seventies, by special Free Europe broadcasts that publicized the difficulties encountered in the process of breaking off by the exiles (emigrants) to be. In all these cases, by preparing well beforehand, the families (or the individuals) are spared the anxieties of wandering from one place to another and the effort of looking for initial living resources.

For those who leave „unexpectedly“, acting on existential impulse or seizing an opportunity, the search for an adequate niche may continue for a long time, either within the space of a single country, or while moving from one country to another (one remembers the joke with the poor emigrant asking the officials who expell him for another terrestrial globe to pinpoint his next destination). I have written on several occa-

sions about such *zigzag exile or emigration processes*: the emigration of the French to Canada during the 17th and 18th centuries and their leaving, after 1860 and again pushed by poverty, toward New England which was then at the peak of its industrial revolution; or, on a personal level, the exile of the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson, of the Romanian historian of religions Mircea Eliade or of the Romanian ethnomusicologist Constantin Brăiloiu, that numbered many years of living in many different countries before finally settling down (in the U.S. for the first two, in France for the third).

By taking into account the distance between the departure point and the arrival country, we can come to distinguish between what I propose to call a *near exile*, a *middle exile* and a *far exile* (in the same way in which we speak of the Near, Middle and Far East) and, likewise, between *near*, *middle* and *far emigrations*. The Romanians exiling themselves may choose a relatively close country (such as France, for example, where, due to successive generations of notorious writers and politicians who came to live in Paris in 1848, after WWII and after 1980, there is already an institutional tradition and a certain level of visibility for them) or, on the contrary, a truly distant space (the U.S.A. for example, where those who left in 1940, 1970 or 1980 hoped to set up institutions that would be positively contaminated by the dynamism and efficiency of the New World; or Australia, which got its share of Romanian immigrants, especially in the eighties.). A good example of middle emigration is that of the departures for Israel, where many people still speak, write and read Romanian, Romanian newspapers, magazines, exhibitions and shows abound and the connection with the country of origin is not radically discontinued, despite the geographical and cultural distance. Or Canada, where, despite the geographical distance, pluriculturalism and French define a space in which it is easier for Romanians to establish their niche.

If we are to ponder the *success* or *failure* of both emigration and exile processes, the political, cultural and economic dimensions of the

hiatus between the departure point and the arrival point must be carefully evaluated. The question also arises of what in fact counts for success or failure and why. Which are the parameters that could guide us in such an evaluation? Is it the efficiency of the bodies created by the exiled and the fertility of their contacts with the country of origin? Or, on the contrary, the degree of assimilation of the emigrants to the country where they established themselves? A close study of the institutions of the Romanian exile and emigration still needs to be done. Does the material, professional, existential success matter, and if so, to what extent? Is the visibility (or invisibility) of those who established themselves in another country a true dimension of their success? It is high time we begin to answer such questions both in Romania (for our own immigrants, especially after 1989) and in the archipelago of Romanian emigrant islands scattered by now in so many other countries.

After the morphological (and phenomenological) description sketched above and its general interpretation in terms of success or failure of the exile/emigration process, the issue arises of evaluating, from an economic, cultural and political point of view, the cost and benefit exiles and emigrations represent both for the country of origin and for the country of destination. Romania, France and Germany are currently losing an entire layer of educated young professionals who used to emigrate to the United States until most recently. In exchange, they gain an extended network of connections within which their estranged specialists become, whether they perceive it or not, unpaid diplomats without portfolio, proving on a daily basis the quality of education and the capacities of the country of origin. On the other side, the host countries lose

workplaces for their own population, but gain, without investing in their education or training, valuable professionals whose formation would have been most expensive.

In order to understand its present and future perspectives, Romania needs to know its emigration as a whole, the so-called Diaspora, and to maintain an active contact with it, by using it as a vanguard for its international projects, as a potential market abroad for specifically Romanian products, and as an economic, political and cultural bridge to the countries where most of the emigrated Romanians live nowadays.

The way attitudes about exiles and emigrants vary in time and within different cultures both in the country of origin and in the country where they settled, cannot be known without a special research. The openness, the reticence or the fear with respect to emigration, migration or exile in the prosperous targeted countries are most of the times due to the image or the absence of an image about the country of origin of those that knock on their door. In order to be able to elicit an image and in order for this image to be a positive one, small and medium sized countries such as Romania need long-term perseverance in the economic and cultural battles of the present and future, as well as an alert inventivity and a smart way of speculating anything that could help in the unequal David vs. Goliath confrontation that awaits them. Inventivity, in turn, needs to be prepared through close gathering of information, learning how to interpret it and the contrastive study of the way cultures, religions and political systems connect in the minds of those whose attention and interest we wish to attract.

