Coda: Eleven Stars
Over the Last Moments of Andalusia

Devleena Ghosh

Abstract

Concluding this volume is a meditation from Devleena Ghosh on the relationship of exile to place, and about exile as a leitmotiv of contemporary displacement in an increasingly transnational world. For Ghosh the fundamental question posed by exile is, "How does one define the multivalent, multiplex condition of exile?" Ghosh identifies four nodes of exilic aspiration and struggle—exile as the future "will be"; exile as a nostalgia for privilege; exile as geography; exile as language—which either singly or in combination enable and disable the capacity for those in exile to be politically engaged, hence the global imperative for that engagement.

> Our tea is green and hot: drink it. Our pistachios are fresh; eat them.
> The beds are of green cedar, fall on them,
> following this long siege, lie down on the feathers of our dreams.
> The sheets are crisp, perfumes are ready by the door, and there are
> plenty of mirrors:
> Enter them so we may exist completely. Soon we will search
> in the margins of your history, in distant countries,
> for what was once *our* history. And in the end we will ask ourselves:
> Was Andalusia here or there? On the land…or in the poem?
> *Agha Shahid Ali, Rooms are Never Finished*[1]

"Exile culture," writes Hamid Naficy, "is located in the intersections and the interstices of other cultures" (1993: 2). It has, according to Richard Eder, a climate, an ecology, an archaeology, a national smell (1999: 1). He adds: "Those little firm facts, stamps in our passport,

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[1] This is an uncredited translation of a 1992 poem by the Palestinian Mahmoud Darwish, "Eleven Planets in the Last Andalusian Sky" (Ali 2002). A different translation by Clarissa Burt is included in Darwish's collection *The Adam of Two Edens* (2000).

accumulate and at a certain moment they become illegible lines. Then they suddenly begin to trace an inner map, the map of the unreal, the imaginary. And it is only then that they express precisely the immeasurable experience of exile" (1999: 1). Dubrovka Ugresic, a refugee from the repressive nationalist politics and culture of post-Yugoslav Croatia, writes of the subtle persistence of exile:

> It is the history of the things we leave behind, of buying and abandoning hair driers, cheap little radios, coffee pots. Exile is changing voltages and kilohertz, life with an adapter, the history of temporary rented apartments, the first lonely mornings of spreading out the map of the town in silence, to find the name of a street and mark it with a cross in pencil, repeating the history of imperialism, with little crosses instead of flags. (cited in Eder 1999: 1)

Edward Said thinks that exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience, and goes on to ask: "If true exile is a condition of terminal loss, why has it been transformed so easily into a potent, even enriching motif of modern culture?...Modern western culture is in large part the work of exiles, émigrés, refugees" (2001: 172). Exile, by this account, is usually an outcome of unfree migration since typically, violence (potential or real) propels people into exile. Thus people in exile are living documents, obsessed with fixing an image or a moment (Octavio Armand, cited in Gener 2003: 30).

For exiles home exists in the gaps and fissures between territories and time because the homeland is never one's present country. People scattered in a process of nonvoluntary displacement, usually created by violence or under threat of violence or death, have a consciousness that highlights the tensions between the common bonds created by shared origins and other ties arising from the process of dispersal and the obligation to remember a life prior to flight (Gilroy 1997). Exile contains within it a complex of values and meanings: intellectual, social, and cultural. Even if the move is a life saving necessity, the shift in location also involves major changes such as "learning how to live with, inside and through another language; adapting to the folkways of another culture, finding a place in the new land's social and economic structure and adapting to new political circumstances" (Schlesinger 2004: 46). As Schlesinger points out, an exile fleeing to another country seeking permanent domicile and citizenship will need to be "naturalized." Before this process occurs, that exile is constructed as "un-

natural," an alien or asylum-seeker, a foreigner, immigrant, or refugee, because "exile" is not a recognized status. Thus Schlesinger describes exile as a rite of passage, a process of symbolic transition that involves stages of separation, marginality, and reaggregation. An exile enters the liminal space of "the waiting room of statelessness" by losing her/his national identity and citizenship (2004: 46-47). S/he passes through time and space, crossing borders, reconstituting his/her relations to the past and the future, to the old home and the new, seeking to understand how the new ties formed in the adoptive home remake exilic identity. Bryan Turner calls this ethic of exile a "cosmopolitan virtue," one that, under the conditions of globalization, locates itself in an ironic distance from one's own traditions and respect for other cultures and human rights (2002: 59). Does voluntary or imposed exile offer the "silence, exile and cunning" that such cosmopolitans require?

However, exile does not necessarily produce liberal cosmopolitan citizens; it may easily create unreconstructed nationalists and fundamentalists. The crucial role of memory in constructing an exilic identity means that a renovated idealized version of the originary nation may be valorized. For example, many Japanese artists and writers exiled themselves in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century to find a refuge from Japanese provincialism. But these people returned home in the 1930s to a Japanese nation that was being whipped into a mood of xenophobic hysteria. Some became the fiercest war propagandists once they returned (Buruma 2001).

How does one define the multivalent, multiplex exile condition? Living in the cracks between nations, cultures, and languages means inhabiting an uncertain present and future and often an unspeakable past. Paul Tabori defines exile as an "impenetrable jungle, a kind of super-maze" for which "no perfect or complete definition is possible—or perhaps, even desirable" (1972: 26). Joseph Brodsky proposes exile as nothing beyond "the very moment of departure, of expulsion" because what occurs after that moment "is both too comfortable and too autonomous to be called by this name…If we have a common denominator, it lacks a name" (1990: 107).

Exile is not a once-and-future state; it is a dynamic process with a history. An exile's status can change; mentally s/he can become an immigrant, just as in other circumstances migrants may become exiles (Shahidian 2000: 71-72). Exiles always internalize the double consciousness of their originary place and their present location, carrying

with them "their homes: the language, customs, traditions of their countries. They transpose and translate: they live between two shores. Their homes and landscapes live within them, although they are no longer places of physical dwelling" (Armand cited in Gener 2003: 22).

The condition of exile also reveals a crucial geopolitical fact. It is often created by the inability of the state or ruling power to coopt or accommodate emerging differences, changes, or challenges in their societies. Totalizing state policies may attempt to silence opponents by making them invisible or out of place. Shu-Yun Ma observes that whatever the Chinese state's intention, "exile has helped the Chinese government reduce domestic [oppositional] voice" (1993: 375). In post-coup Chile, Pinochet offered exile as a "humane alternative to prison, or a worse fate, for 'enemies of the nation,'" and relied on the mass exile of the Chilean Left to consolidate his dictatorship (Wright and Oñate 1998: 171). Thus exile may reflect the power struggle over cultural and symbolic representations of society, a double consciousness that exists inside and outside the state. This double consciousness may be limiting but it also has a liberating potential, opening up spaces for different kinds of knowing, "an opportunity to view society from bottom up, through the wide angle of having seen and experienced the suffering of being exploited, oppressed, persecuted and ousted" (Shahidian 2000: 78). Many scholars have emphasized the importance of unsettling the essentialism of the Self-Other division and acknowledging that all contemporary cultures are comprised of flows, circulations, contaminations, and hybridities. Thus the notion of exile shuttles back and forth between various worlds, not in terms of opposition but rather of epistemic complicity (Bongie 1998: 13).

Exile as the future "will be"

As Gerise Herndon points out, the literature of migration often includes not just the departure from home, but the mythic evocation of the subsequent return to what once was home (2001: 1). Alterity is inscribed on the "native" when s/he enters exile in the metropolis. Herndon concludes that on returning home, the native undergoes a re-migration, not to the home, but to a state of liminality. The feeling of being in between, without a home, neither here nor there, is the borderland that exiles inhabit. Appadurai calls this ethnoscape "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live:

tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers" (1990: 297). The Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat defines this border as a veil not many people can wear (1998: 264). This liminal state of being, of feeling not quite at home, is a reality for many people as territorial and ethnic boundaries become more porous, enabling the increase in legal and illegal movement. As Hélène Cixous says, this sense of feeling not at home also occurs to women in patriarchal societies:

> There is something of foreignness, a feeling of not being accepted or of being unacceptable, which is particularly insistent when as a woman you suddenly get into that strange country of writing where most inhabitants are men and where the fate of women is still not settled...So, sometimes you are even a double exile, but I'm not going to be tragic about it because I think it is a source of creation and symbolic wealth. (1991: 12-13)

But the double exile of return involves a reshaping of identity: the immigrant becomes either the prodigal daughter bearing the gift of foreign knowledge or values into the native land or the bearer of an imagination who exists as a mnemonic trace and cannot live in the present moment (Herndon 2001: 3). This layered multiplicity of locations and identities implies that "there's no place to speak from except from somewhere. But at the same time as somebody has to speak from somewhere, they will not be confined to that person or that place" (Stuart Hall, cited in Herndon 2001: 3).

Trinh Minh-ha reflects on the dilemma of the writer in exile by saying that the moment the insider steps out from the inside, she is no longer a mere insider (and vice versa). She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. When she inhabits the space of the outsider, she steps back and records what she would not consider recording as an insider. But unlike the outsider, she also resorts to multivalent, nonexplicative, and nontotalizing strategies that suspend meaning and resist closure. She thus refuses alterity since her reflections are not merely an outsider's objective reasoning or an insider's subjective feelings. She drifts in and out of the undetermined space of the threshold (1989: 218).

Shahidian similarly describes exile as the redefining and remapping of borders, homelands, and hostlands (2000: 76). These borders become "the sites of differences between interiority and exteriority;

they are points of infinite regressions" (JanMohamed 1992: 103). But
the process of recasting borders does not eliminate the reality of geog-
raphy. Borders remain real mental and physical spaces constituting a
corporeal presence, emphasizing that border crossing is a protean
process, a relationship of continuous concern and challenge. Dis-
placement and disjuncture demand that a person attuned to the local
pay attention to the universal cognitive map, producing a global con-
sciousness that incorporates both home and exile, creating a personal-
ity that speaks in the spaces between these different topographies.

Exile as a nostalgia for privilege

Carol Bardenstein, in her analysis of Claudia Roden's *A Book of Mid-
dle Eastern Food* (1974), describes how Roden, a Sephardic Jewish
émigré from Egypt to France, regards her engagement with food and
cookbook-writing both as a direct result of the experience of being in
exile and as the "fruit of nostalgic longing" for a world from which
she, like others, had been absented. Roden narrates her Parisian fam-
ily's consumption of the Egyptian peasant dish *ful medames* in rever-
ent silence, "experiencing private ecstasy in tasting a food that meant
much in the Middle East and has come to mean even more in exile"
(Bardenstein 2002: 353). At first this seems to be the familiar nostal-
gia of migrants for a lost world, and a poignant attempt to commune
with that world by partaking of a disconnected fragment of it, but as
Bardenstein points out, the picture is more complicated. Roden, during
her stay in Egypt, "like many similar 'cosmopolitan' elites (before
nationalism's homogenizing discourse left little room for them), did
not belong in any unambiguous or straightforward sense to the "poor
man's Egypt" signified by the *ful* that is so sentimentally and sincerely
evoked and consumed in exile" (Bardenstein 2002: 353). Bardenstein
emphasizes that the affiliative and identificatory practices of these
elites were layered and complex, including their clear repudiation of
Egyptian, Arab, or even Middle Eastern identities in some instances.
Roden, for example, never learnt Arabic in Egypt, because it was con-
sidered a cultural contaminant in a setting where French was valorized
as the most prestigious language, and "not knowing [Arabic] even af-
ter residing in Egypt for fifty years could be paraded as a source of
pride and status." Bardenstein points out that in Roden's household of
privilege there were networks of servants and cooks preparing elabo-

rate and lavish meals who had to learn to cook European ("our") dishes (353-54). Bardenstein concludes by posing the significant question: if Roden's cook was Egyptian, what was the difference between his (Egyptian) food and our (Roden's) food, to the extent that he had to be taught to cook the latter? What are the collective and affiliative contours of the "we" as distinct from the implied "they" who are Egyptians? Thus expatriate communities may invest local dishes with value as they move into nostalgic European contexts where such food become signifiers of exilic authenticity.

The complexities and ambiguities of movement between places are often blurred by the nostalgic workings of memory that present a predictable version of the originary home for people, many of whom no longer think of themselves as belonging there. In my own interviews with British people who migrated to Australia after India's independence, I repeatedly found these contradictory emotions; the perfection of the place left behind to which they do not want to return. As Bardenstein (2002: 353) emphasizes, this inconsistency does not invalidate feelings of exile; rather it highlights some of the unique operations of memory and collective identification in the context of radical displacement. New configurations of memory take shape and new performances and presentations of identification emerge, inflected in terms of gender, class, and ethnicities in displacement.

Exile as geography

According to Eder, exile is the only country with no geography (1999: 1). Identity is not based solely on genealogy or history, but also on geography, location, and space, hence the social relations of migrants and refugees are transnationally not territorially defined. Exilic consciousness foregrounds the ambiguities that arise when attempting to reconcile shared histories with relationships produced by migration and the memory of life in the homeland. This is especially so when people leave a contested place, and where memories are jolted through the "vehicles of mass media." The creation and maintenance of these transnational, cosmopolitan communities demands and celebrates geography, rather than discarding it (Cox and Connell 2003: 330).

For exiles, identity and location are symbiotic. The homeland may be secured by territorial boundaries but its perpetuation lies both within the state and also beyond national boundaries (Bottomley

1992). Exiles may find the connection between place and identity ambivalent and problematic because "the presumed certainties of cultural identity, firmly located in particular places which house stable cohesive communities of shared tradition and perspective, have never been a reality" (Carter et al. 1993: vii). Cox and Connell (2003: 331) point out that this predicament is even more pronounced for communities like the Palestinians for whom exile is experienced without recourse to a functioning nation-state (or even a locality defined within internationally recognized boundaries), however distant, that might offer a stable center for identity. They cite an example of this conundrum. When an Israeli nationalist asserted that if Palestinians want to return to their homeland they should retrospectively declare themselves to be Israelis, Sari Nasr, a Palestinian born in Jerusalem but resident since 1958 in Amman, Jordan, replied:

> I am Palestinian, I was born in Jerusalem, I started out to be a Palestinian, then they started calling me someone who does not have a country. They called me a refugee. After that I was stateless. Then I was called Syrian, a Lebanese, a Jordanian, what have you. Today I learned from Professor Khayutman that I am originally Jewish. (Cox and Connell 2003: 331)

Such complexities have meant that Palestinians are defined in terms of the geopolitical transformations in the Middle East. The continuous redrawing of the territorial borders in that region through war, expulsion, and overt and covert state violence constructs Palestinians as refugees, Israeli-Arabs, Jordanians, Egyptians, Lebanese, and even, most recently, fanatics or terrorists (Cox and Connell 2003: 331).

Yet such exiles have to somehow integrate into new territory, simultaneously and deliberately restoring the cultures and practices of their homeland, food habits, clothing, religion, and language, through remembering and nostalgia. Their memories are jolted and intensified when crises occur in their homelands, especially as contemporary technology enables tangible and intangible transnational connections. Neither here nor there is imagined as it once was. Place, identity, and diaspora take protean shapes as circumstances in the originary and adopted countries change. Memory is an artifact that rusts. Just past the toll gates of the global village, Europe's displaced and dispossessed—Ukrainians, Bosnians, Africans, Gypsies, Turks—peddle a tumulus of memory as objects in the global flea markets.

Exile as language

"Linguistic deprivation," according to Polish writer Horst Bienek, "is probably the most decisive factor in determining exile" (1990: 41). In effect, it constitutes a re-exiling, combining the corporeal banishment with intellectual distancing. This transition to a new language and idiom is a challenging and alienating process since language is the one tangible residue of homeland that the exile can carry, keeping the memories and roots alive. On the other hand, fluency in the language of one's adopted home can enable the making of meaning and transition to the new culture and society easier. Various exiles have reflected on their experience with the new language and the old. Ariel Dorfmann recounts how he renounced his mother tongue and tried to immerse himself in the English language and U.S.-Anglo culture, before realizing his visceral commitment to Spanish (1999). Nedim Gürsel, a Turkish writer living in Paris, says: "The truth is, I do not live in a city or in a country. I inhabit a language. Turkish is the cave, where I live like a stone in the fruit. The French language, that ultimate place of exile, is beginning to structure my phrases" (1990: 60) Lithuanian Czesław Miłosz discovers that, after living for a while, among people who speak a different language, he senses his native tongue in a new manner with new aspects and tonalities (1994: 40). But "language," he says, "is our only homeland" (quoted in Umpierre 2002: 8). And according to Joseph Brodsky, a writer in exile "is like a dog or a man hurtled into outer space in a capsule (more like a dog, of course, than a man, because they will never retrieve you). And your capsule is your language" (Buruma 2001: 5).

Exile and political engagement

For exiles, there is a tension between political engagement and intellectual independence. Ian Buruma claims that one way of dealing with this is an offshore kind of engagement, a detached involvement (2001: 1). For example, intellectuals abroad, an Algerian in London, a Tamil in Toronto, or a Palestinian in New York, may call for action or revolution, to be carried out thousands of kilometers from their home. According to Buruma, engagements of this kind constitute "politics without responsibility" as the consequences of such exhortations may be metaphorical for the exile but not for those living in Algeria, Sri

Lanka, or Gaza. In Buruma's opinion, politically ambitious exiles, by identifying with the plight of oppressed minorities, obtain all the pre-requisites and privileges that go with the politics of victimhood. Buruma concludes that exiles have a responsibility to act in solidarity with the oppressed but not become symbols of the oppression, as this trivializes those who experience the actual suffering. "The soi-disant exile status might attach a certain glamour to the writer in London or New York, but it does nothing for the poor Tamil trying to get some sleep in Frankfurt Station" (2001: 8).

Esmail Khoi, the exiled Iranian poet, wrote in London, "Happy the moment, When I depart from this paradise, Towards my home, Towards the heart of my own hell!" (quoted in Shahidian 2000: 77). But in the engagements with the old society and the new communica-tion, translation, transcription, indeed speaking, cannot be trusted. Antonin Liehm, a Cold War Czechoslovakian exile, warns about the ex-ploitation of testimony: "We are asked to testify, not because people are really interested in us and our experience, but because they want us to exorcise their own fears and obsessions" (Glad 1990: 23). According to Shahidian, Iranian exiles often face the same dilemma and find it necessary to distinguish between their criticism of Islam and the Islamic state, and racist stereotyping of Middle Easterners and Muslims (2000: 82). As Danticat says, the powerful may listen to an exile's testimony but they will use it to distort and erase your history: "You tell the story, and then it's retold as they wish, written in words you do not understand, in a language that is theirs, and not yours" (1998: 246). The colonizer's narratives, idioms, and history recast the crimes of imperialism and racism so that they may become easily con-sumable products. Kincaid writes that her brother enjoyed reading the history of the West Indies; it "was primarily an account of theft and murder...but presented in such a way as to make the account seem in-evitable and even fun...he liked the people who won, even though he was among the things that had been won" (1997: 95). Kincaid adds, "People like me are shy about being capitalists because we were once capital 'like bales of cotton and sacks of sugar'" (1988: 31).

In the globalized present, is exile an isolated disease or the warn-ings of a pandemic? Perhaps the insoluble enigma in the trope of geo-graphic displacement is the timeless and eternal hostility of the state forced to offer hospitality to the deracinated intruder, the exile, the asylum seeker, the illegal migrant. What do rootedness and location,

and their potential, mean in this context? As Bruce Robbins (2002: 4) asks, "is emplacement conceivable without such bitter exclusions of the foreigner? Must community take the form, of a tendentious joke bonding those present at the expense of absent nonmembers?"

Home is a problematic site for stateless people since it involves affect and praxis, emotional engagements and pragmatic needs such as safety and security. This feeling is poignantly mirrored by Palestinian author Fawaz Turki (1994: 273), who suggests that "anywhere where one above all can work without fear of retribution is homeland enough" or by Edouard Glissant who says "For we are all gathered together on just one river bank" (Bongie 1993: epigraph). In Cixous's words, exile is everywhere and nowhere: "Neither France, nor Germany, nor Algeria. No regrets. It is good fortune. Freedom, an inconvenient, intolerable freedom, a freedom that obliges one to let go, to rise above, to beat one's wings. To weave a flying carpet. I felt perfectly at home, nowhere"(1998: 155).