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Christopher D'Addario

Excerpt

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INTRODUCTION

*The “remanence” of the past:
the early modern text in exile*

After a lifetime of wars and conflicts the sixteenth-century Italian writer Matteo Bandello reflected on the disturbances of his native land from exile in Agen, France. Bandello, monk, diplomat, soldier and author, ruminated that, with all of the displaced Italians now living far from their patria, an entire city of exiles could be founded and populated.¹ However, the aging monk does not dwell long on this imagined city, rather letting it fade from the page and from memory. The ephemeral appearance of this city is typical of the imagined geographies of exile, geographies that emerge more often as figments of space and time rather than as realistic, concrete memories. This is not to say that memories do not drive the exile's imaginings; indeed, it is the rupture of departure, and the lingering shadow of the homeland left behind, that gives rise to Bandello's imagined city.² Yet Bandello, who left Florence when the Spanish invaded in 1522, does not envision or reconstruct his lost patria in the text, but rather imagines a city characterized primarily by the collective experience of exile, its inhabitants not reminiscing about the lost quotidian particulars of Florentine life, but rather about their various stories of displacement. Almost five hundred years later, Russian exiles in New York City would similarly recreate stories about their exiles as they collected “diasporic souvenirs” that displayed their wanderings while admitting a multiple, transient belonging that lay somewhere between New York City and St. Petersburg.³ Outside of London, Polish exiles from World War II remained in refugee camps until late into the 1950s, seemingly afraid to forget their displacement, as if this forgetting might mean that they could never go back.

For these exiles, as well as for Bandello, the present is marked by a provisionality necessarily veiled by the rupture of exile, their recreations and memories necessarily piecemeal and complexly layered by the transitory experience of displacement. As they walk in the present, these exiles see, hear and smell both the immediacy of their newly foreign

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existence and the silhouette of the day before their exile. As the Egyptian émigré André Aciman admits, his New York is the “shadow of the shadow of Alexandria, versions of Alexandria, the remanence of Alexandria.”⁴ It is this layering of here and there, as well as the sense of provisionality, that often drives the various creations of exiles. The desire to create in exile comes from both the necessity of reorienting oneself somewhere between the lost past and the immediate present, and the need to fashion a peaceful space in which the author can operate away from the unsettled, difficult reality of daily life. Bandello’s city of exiles exists only in his imagination, free to be built and peopled however he likes. In many ways, the exilic creation seeks to counter, although never completely successfully, the repeated impressions of provisionality that displacement leaves upon the exile. The Russian exiled poet Joseph Brodsky acknowledges this when admitting that the writer always “knows how willful, how intended and premeditated everything he has manufactured is. How, in the end, all of it is provisional.”⁵ While the ability to recognize the provisionality that Brodsky elucidates drives the various grand literary constructions of exile, it also adds a poignancy and doubt that serves as a counterpoint to the willfulness of the exilic creation.

The events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England cast many of Aciman’s shadows, shadows of old Englands, across the minds of its exiles. Indeed, by the last decade of the seventeenth century, these Englands lingered in the memories of men and women as various as the second generation New England governor in Boston, John Winthrop, Jr., the converted Catholic at the Jacobite court in St. Germain, Jane Barker, and the exiled and unrepentant regicide in Vevey, Switzerland, Edmund Ludlow. Throughout the century, men and women were forced to recognize that the old England that they had known and to which they had attached themselves was now merely a shadow of a memory that had been indelibly marked by one form of departure or another. So, the memories of George Goring’s life of military honor before 1640, tainted by defeat and exile at the hands of the New Model Army, seem to have chased him across the Continent as he eventually drank himself to death, in what the fellow exile Ann Fanshawe would later call a “debauchery beyond all precedents.”⁶ So, the memories of the high republican rhetoric of the Parliament of 1650 lingered in the ears of John Milton as the poet was inundated in 1660 with the ringing shouts for the return of the Stuarts and the burning of Milton’s *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. The “confusions and revolutions” of governments occurred with such frequency, and enacted such wholesale change, that most exiles, excepting

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the Jacobites at the end of the century, had the opportunity to return to their homeland. Many other prominent exiles, including Edward Hyde, Henry Vane, Algernon Sidney, Edmund Ludlow, and James II and his most loyal Stuart retainers, fled into exile more than once or else returned only to be imprisoned or executed at a later date. For all of these exiles, the disjunctions between "here" and "there" remained constant during their displacements, reinforcing the arbitrariness of their own existence and identities.⁷

We are just beginning to comprehend the psychological, communal and literary terrain of the experience of displacement, mainly because voices from exile are finally being heard and listened to. We only know the story of the first exile, the ancient Egyptian Sinuhe, because he returned to his homeland to communicate his story.⁸ In the twentieth century, displacement and exile has become the common fate of groups and individuals too numerous to mention as the ravages of totalitarianism, genocidal ideology, fundamentalism and nationalism have bereft scores of communities of their homes and homelands. Because of the frequency of displacements in the past eighty years, and because of the prominence of the political and literary endeavors of some of these exiles, we have grown increasingly attuned to the experiences and literatures of dispersed communities. Yet we have yet to apply this increased knowledge of and sensitivity to the ruptures of exile to the early modern period, where, particularly in seventeenth-century England, an unprecedented number of men and women were forced to flee England or to remain in an "internal exile," unreconciled to the ruling authority. The broadness of the phenomenon of exile in early modern England has largely gone unrecognized beyond a passing mention in studies that concentrate on one specific community. Yet the conflicting judgments of the 1630s, 1648–9, 1660 and 1688 of what and who "England" and its government represented (and we might also add the judgments of 1641–2, 1653, 1667, and 1680–2) ensured that widely divergent groups were forced from their homes and former ways of life. This study seeks to redress the neglect of the formative psychological, social, affective and literary experience of exile in the lives of these divergent groups. Further, it seeks to outline, at least provisionally, the importance of exile to our understanding of prominent literary, religious and philosophical texts, indeed some of the foundational elements of the early modern canon. In undertaking this study, I wish to emphasize that the experience of exile, of being removed to the margins of the English-speaking world, either geographically, politically or religiously, inflected and influenced in specific ways a series of

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English literary traditions and forms, from lyric poetry to political philosophy, from epic to translation.

My move from the experience of exile to the text written in or imagined under the pressures of exile in the previous paragraph should not go unremarked. The studies that follow both examine the experience of exile by reading imaginative texts, and interpret imaginative texts as, crucially, written from one form of exile or another. My approach assumes a particular conception of the written text, one that foregrounds it as a social and cultural phenomenon embedded in the circumstances of its production and consumption, and relatedly as an object that can provide us with a particular knowledge of these circumstances. That is, the written text should be seen both as a social process, an object within the material exchanges of everyday life, and as an immediate and important insight into and formative agent for the social or cultural moment with which it is concerned.⁹ I thus view the texts that I examine in the following chapters as both determiners of social and cultural exchange, and also as scripts arising out of the particular effects of banishment from one's home or former way of life. Not only did the text written from a real or imagined exile register the distinct sense of loss, the profound uprootedness, and the novel set of social and political circumstances that attended the author's exile; it also importantly negotiated and attempted to configure these consequences for both the author and his or her audience.

Studying what are social, affective, political and religious experiences through the written word, as I do in the following chapters, draws attention to the centrality of language to the perception of displacement by the exile. Language, crucially, remained the exile's most immediate link to a lost homeland or life that he or she had previously known, the most insistent reminder of the exile's banishment or marginalization. A twentieth-century German exile once expressed the attenuated relationship that the exile maintains with his or her homeland's language: "German, for me, has become a foreign language to which I know all the words."¹⁰ Early modern writers, and we could assume, audiences, also seemed to have been fully aware of the deep effects exile had upon the exiled community's language, as well as the English language's importance to their identity. In *Richard II* for example, upon learning of his banishment from the realm, Thomas Mowbray largely understands his misfortune in terms of the loss of his mother tongue:

The language I have learn'd these forty years,
My native English, now I must forego:

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And now my tongue's use is to me no more
 Than an unstringed viol or a harp,
 Or like a cunning instrument cased up,
 Or, being open, put into his hands
 That knows no touch to tune the harmony

.....

What is thy sentence then but speechless death,

Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath? (I.3.160–66, 172–3)¹¹

Mowbray's lament figures the lost homeland as the loss of his ability to breathe or speak with his native tongue, the silencing of spoken interactions in English standing in for his exile generally. Displacement removes the exile indelibly from the living stream of the English language. The English exiles that fled to the Continent were forced to recognize the contingencies of expression as they were removed from the language that they had learned as children, and thus had unconsciously associated with direct reality. It is not without reason that the fall and subsequent banishment of Adam and Eve has also been told as a tale of the fall into human language. The "fruit of that forbidden tree" necessarily entailed the transformation of words from mimetic sacrality to corrupt allegory. Their exile ensured the disjunction between the world as is and the world as represented, a problem of which Milton was all too aware, even as he grappled with the story of that first fall into allegory. The editors of the Geneva Bible similarly immersed themselves in the comforts and difficulties of their English translation as they lived in a Swiss canton, far from the interchanges of a Marian England that itself often spoke a language at odds with their own. A constant awareness of the contingency of language would have reminded the exiles at all turns of their banishment or marginalization as they fulfilled their quotidian tasks, and as importantly, those in authority conversed in a language in many ways foreign to them. As much as the nobility and gentry exiled might have been conversant in French or Dutch, those who were banished consistently registered the loss of their native tongue. Ralph Verney, in exile with the Stuarts in the 1640s and '50s, admitted in a letter to his friend back in England that, while he knew French well enough to translate two anti-papist books into French, he still could not speak it easily and relied on servants and others to help him with spoken exchanges.¹² Edmund Ludlow, in the Swiss town of Vevay after the restoration, was thankful that he lodged with a merchant whose wife was English, since they spoke the same language; when he lodged at Dieppe he could only converse with a French doctor in broken Latin.¹³

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Beyond the inconvenience that the language barrier posed for English exiles, it also foregrounded a more metaphysical separation from the living exchange of their mother tongue as well as more generally from the past homeland they had known. In the final two lines from Mowbray's lament above, Mowbray conflates the loss of language with a more metaphysical separation from breathing English air. Language, even at this early stage in the formation of a standardized idiom, was a carrier for English traditions and cultural identity, as the phrase "mother tongue" suggests. The upheavals and exiles that ruptured the English nation throughout the early modern period came at a time when growing print production and the move to a vernacular administrative language drove the standardization of English, particularly in and around London, where the print market and political authority lay.¹⁴ But, without placing these exiles in a specific narrative concerning the spread of a uniform language throughout the country, we can recognize that the English language was the medium through which the displacements of exile, however variously defined, were most acutely felt. For Ralph Verney, unfamiliarity with the French language shades over into a distaste for French custom and a yearning for English schooling for his children. Similarly, Ludlow's relief at housing with an Englishwoman with whom he can converse comes alongside a relief over their possession of English beer, rather than the French wine which had so damaged his health.¹⁵ More basically, the removal from the circulation of written materials in and around the print community of London drove the exiles' constant desire for more news from their departed homeland and exacerbated the perception of their displacement from the immediate events of the English nation as well as the living interaction of the English print community.¹⁶

For interior exiles, such as the defeated republicans who remained in England during the restoration, the experience of immediate removal from the quotidian use of the English language obviously did not occur. Indeed, prominent interior exiles such as John Milton and John Dryden continued to read avidly and were acutely aware of the specific movements of the learned London reading community. However, for these interior exiles the language that they used necessarily remained politically or religiously distant from the discourses of those reconciled to the present authority or even those tacitly accepting of the status quo. Charles Simic, in describing the Romanian exile Norman Manea's increasing alienation under Ion Antonescu's regime, notes that Manea came to find an "unbridgeable gulf between the language he used in public with its canonic certainties and the words he kept to himself."¹⁷

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In the case of those forced into an interior exile by the events of 1659–60 or 1688, the unbridgeable gulf between a language of private thought and public expression would not have opened gradually but widened quickly as they and their compatriots were removed from power and from a public voice. As these men and women sequestered themselves from the active life governed by the present “social contract,” and ventured less and less into public spaces to exchange goods and ideas, they also increasingly and consistently recognized the distance at which their language lived from the dominant and accepted modes of discourse.¹⁸ Milton, blind, briefly imprisoned and otherwise sequestered, would have heard keenly the drunken shouts for Charles Stuart around the bonfires that burned calves’ rumps in effigy of the Rump Parliament, as well as the reports of attacks on Puritan ministers, the burning of the Commonwealth’s arms and the extravagant pageantry of the king’s return. A year later, from his house on Jewin Street, Milton would have heard the processions of the hanging carts as the authorities dragged the exhumed bodies of Oliver Cromwell, Henry Ireton and John Bradshaw to the Red Lion Inn and the gallows at Tyburn, around the corner from Milton’s residence. Perhaps remembering the vocal support for Richard Cromwell and even the Rump mere months ago, Edmund Ludlow recalled that the “flattering of Charles Steward . . . made my eares tingle, and my heart to ake, all things running counter to what the providencies of the Lord had lead to for twenty yeares past.”¹⁹ Part of the engaged desperation that can be felt in Milton’s *The Readie and Easie Way* should be understood as the desperation of an author grasping at, or holding on to, a language of republican, reasoned citizenship that he knew no longer appealed to or held much authority for his audience (if he still had one).

In light of the events that occurred later in 1660, the second edition of *The Readie and Easie Way* has been seen as the last, desperate plea of the fading hopes of the Good Old Cause on the eve of the restoration. Much of what has puzzled or disturbed critics in Milton’s last major publication before *Paradise Lost* is its ability to reconcile a jeremiadic, rigorous independence from common conceptions and opinions with a firm belief in the reasonableness of its proposals, with which everyone should and, to a certain extent, must agree. However, we might see this rhetorical disjunction as an admission on Milton’s part of the duplicity of the English language as it turned at the moment of the restoration. In this case, his adherence to a reasoned rhetorical stance at a time when few reasoned in the same way becomes a studied resistance, an assertion of one “way” of meaning when the language of obedience, of deliverance and of

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providence was being yoked to the fortunes of the soon-to-be Charles II. As Michael Seidel has noted, writing from exile generally necessitates a “willful act of the imagination to comprehend and register the experience of exile and the lost homeland.”²⁰ In Milton’s case, and in the case of the other exiles I study here, this “willful act of the imagination” often takes the form of an adherence to idiosyncratic, nostalgic modes of speaking as the discourses of authority change around them. One of the clearest ways in which we can see the “willfulness, exaggeration and overstatement” to which exiles are prone is through their consistently peculiar, yet normative, use of the English language.²¹

When Hobbes vigorously asserted his own refiguring of the body politic and of political language as normative, or when Dryden constructed a model of the icon of imperial poetry, Virgil, for his own purposes, these writers were answering to, and importantly, constructing, the experience of exile. Further, through their presentation of idiosyncrasy – such as in Hobbes’s normative rhetoric or Nathaniel Ward’s overdetermined Marprelatian neologisms in *The Simple Cobler of Aggawam* – these exiles both insist on their remoteness and distinctness while asserting this remoteness as “true Englishness.” As Edward Said has argued, writing from exile often recreates the peripheral as the central as it challenges consensus.²² Perhaps Shakespeare was reminded of the insistent nationalism of the Marian exiles who had returned from the Continent as he imagined Coriolanus denouncing the plebeians for banishing Rome’s true defender and reversing the terms of his own exile:

You common cry of curs, whose breath I hate
As reek o’ the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men
That do corrupt my air, I banish you! (3.3.120–23)²³

By refiguring their own marginalization and exile as central, and truly English, exiles react to and seek to comprehend the experience of displacement, the physical, ideological or affective removal from their homeland. Exile is a profoundly disruptive and traumatic experience, one that entails both a sharp break in the quotidian existence of one’s life and a removal from that which is most familiar and comforting; it “involves dislocation, disorientation, self-division.”²⁴ As the exile is removed from familiar material, structural and familial surroundings, his or her sense of a coherent identity and continuous history is ruptured. The writing that arises out of this experience, writing such as *Leviathan* or *Paradise Lost*, seeks to heal, reconsider, or even elide these ruptures through the

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imaginative control of the author both over substance and, more specifically, over language. Drawing on the reflections of Walter Benjamin, Seidel calls exilic creation a "fragile, precious reality of a place where the imagination is sovereign."²⁵ The self-conscious assuredness of these texts provides a comfortable space within and from which these authors speak.

However, the very self-consciousness of Milton's poetic voice, or, to take another example, of Bradstreet's humble yet confident muse, must not be ignored. The ruptures of exile, the pressures placed on the material and affective lives of these writers through their removal from the familiar, are never fully dispelled by the act of writing; the elision of exile is never fully successful. In fact, we might cite the numerous, and frequent, failed or unfinished creative attempts of early modern English exiles, from the incomplete royalist epics of William Davenant and Abraham Cowley to the unfinished memoirs of the regicide Edmund Ludlow, as evidence of the difficulties, both practical and imaginative, of writing from exile. Even in the grand, created worlds of the early modern exiles examined here, the authors evince a consistent anxiety over the assertiveness of their presence, over the "willful acts" that underwrite their creations. Thus, while Hobbes's authoritarian political philosophy is predicated upon a normative semantics of which Hobbes arrogates control to himself, he also outlines the shaky epistemological basis for all language in his opening chapters. In fact, it is precisely because of his understanding of all language as relative that Hobbes asserts the need for sovereign – and, within *Leviathan*, authorial – control of how words mean. Nervousness over the fixity of language, over its ability to represent accurately, runs through all of the works examined here, and runs parallel to a concomitant desire to assert the author's own, often notably distinct, language as ideal. For many exiles the performative, be it the public gesture, the fashionable garment and posture, or the published written text, becomes an essential method through which identity is created and the disruptions of exile are overridden.²⁶ As much as early modern English men and women were attuned to the constructedness of all selves, to the extent to which identity was based on performance, we might see in the early modern literature of exile a stark acceptance and enactment of this fashioning of the self. The written text serves as the site for much of this exilic self-fashioning, both because of the availability of writing as an expressive and public form to the literate exile, and because language, even in the early modern period, was a critical carrier of culture.

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For seventeenth-century English exiles, the nervousness over semantics and the bold assertion of their own constructed language often came together as they reacted to and attempted to order the experience of exile. Their often idiosyncratic use of the English language arises out of the sudden movement of definitions after each major shift in government, after “loyalty,” “obedience” and “honor” leave their possession. The assertion of their own way of meaning often seeks nostalgically to reorient these terms and the English language generally to older, yet now radical, definitions. Similarly, just as the exiled author reaches backward, or perhaps forward, for a language that registers uprooting and loss of an old way of speaking or writing, this author also looks backward as he or she seeks to reconstruct a history and past that comprehends their new status as exiles. Nostalgia, a longing for a return to home, to a return to the way things were, suffuses much exilic writing, from Ovid’s *Tristeia* to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, to the poetry of Joseph Brodsky. In her recent exploration of twentieth-century exile and longing, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym notes that nostalgia, as “a historical emotion, is a longing for that shrinking ‘space of experience’ that no longer fits the new horizon of expectations.”²⁷ Although Boym places the origins of “nostalgic longing” firmly in the development of modern notions of teleological history and thus after early modern exiles, we can still understand the nostalgic desires of early modern exiles in much the same terms. After all, while a modern history of progress was yet infrequently formulated beyond perhaps Baconian empiricism, notions of providential intervention and protestant reformation, in which the current ruling powers fulfilled God’s will in England, identified the defeated parties of 1648–9, 1660 and 1688 as the irreligious opponents to the progress of God’s people on earth. As the political tides shifted with war, restoration and revolution, so English history became a contested ground upon which ideological battles were fought. The politics, religion – and narratives – of those in exile were sloughed off as a corruption of God’s will and true Englishness. Nostalgia was an expression of a continued attachment to a world, and a way of life, now lost and publicly decried and derided. At the same time, the exiles’ turn to history enabled them to control its very terms within their created worlds, thus justifying and ordering the experience of exile both to themselves and to their audience. The turn to history and the past that is so prevalent in all the writers I explore here bridged the gap between a lost homeland, be it geographic or imagined, and the upheavals of exile by denying the gap’s historical existence. And, while the nostalgic turn to the past answered to and reflected the insistent