

CHAIR OF YOUNG SCIENTIST

EXILED WRITER IN MIGRANT LITERATURE

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to reveal the phenomena of the exiled writer in migrant literature. The perceptions of homesickness, identity, belonging, multiculturalism, otherness, and exile help us to highlight a number of psychological realities that the exiled writer faces becoming a migrant. With the help of mythological, sociological and psychological categories, we tried to open hidden layers of migration. Migrant literature is individual, subjective, diverse, but the causes that make writer become migrant are sometimes similar.

Keywords: exile, migrant literature, homesickness, identity, multiculturalism, psychological self-image, integration, assimilation, stranger, otherness.

In the contemporary world of rapid transformation, the problem of belonging remains imperative. However, our roots try to keep us in our place. The main protagonist in turns to be the migrant.

Migration has actually become a norm and has resulted in a profound renegotiation of the concepts of identity, belonging and home. Generally speaking, the migrant experience is reflected in literature in terms of three major categories – mythological, sociological and psychological (King, Connell, & White, 1995, p. 163). Of course, it depends on who you are, but the fact that the 20th century was an age of migration is out of the question. But let us start from the questions with the help of which we will reveal what is migrant literature.

1. From where migrant literature came?
2. Where are the roots of migrant literature?
3. What problem does it solve?
4. Why do we need migrant literature?
5. Is it a separate type of literature or not?

6. What is the language of migrant literature?
7. What culture does the migrant writer belong to?
8. How will history solve the problem of small nations?
9. What language and how is the writer going to tell the world about his culture?
10. How do we distinguish is the migrant literature or not?
11. What units authors and their works?
12. Will the migrant literature disappear one day or not?
13. Who is a migrant writer?
14. What is it like to be a migrant writer and be or not be?

The term migrant literature was first introduced in the early 1890-s by French-Canadian critics searching for a moniker to distinguish the poetry and prose of a new generation of immigrants to Quebec who could neither be categorized as Canadian nor Quebecois (Connell, King, & White, 1995, p. 216).

Are migrant writers only victims of social processes or the voices of their homeland?

First of all, they are part of the community, nation, society. But becoming migrant, they cut off from history and from a sense of place. It fails to portray nostalgia, anomic, exile, rootlessness, restlessness.

The migrant writer is seen as the critical participant-observer into his own condition, enabling powerful insights to be made into the insider-outsider dichotomy and the real lived experiences of migration. The emigration perspective is self-reflexive about the society of origin. Once migration takes place, the migrant may never be quite sure where home is, ever again. Migrant literature is individual, subjective, diverse (Longhi, 2014). It reflects but also may exaggerate or even invert the social experience that drives it. Migration is not a mere interval between fixed points of departure and arrival but a mode of being in the world – migrancy.

Migration can change people and mentalities. The changes we can see in culture – new forms of dress, new styles of music and poetry, new forms of literary production. What happens with the migrant, his personality or psychological self-image? Can we say that the migrant is already lost long before he left? Can the words migration and change be regarded as synonyms in this context? Can the word otherness describe the migrant? Migrants have several options – to re-create elements of former lives, to attempt to integrate or assimilate completely, to create a new identity that is characterized by a feeling of independence from both the society of origin and the social structures of the destination. A common feature of many migrants is ambivalence. The ambivalence towards the past and present, towards the host society, standards of behaviour, choices.

The migrant voice tells us what it is like to feel like a stranger and yet at home. To live simultaneously inside and outside one's immediate situation, to be permanently on the run to think of returning but to realize at the same time the impossibility of doing so since the past is not only another country but also another time, or of the present. It tells us what it is like to live on a frontier that cuts through your language, your religion, your culture. It tells of long-distance journeys and relocations, of losses, changes, conflicts, powerlessness, and of infinite sadness that severely test the migrants emotional resolve. It tells of new visions and experiences of the familiar and unfamiliar. For those who come from elsewhere and cannot go back, perhaps writing becomes a place to live. They start to re-establish their home in their literature, and it becomes a kind of consolation.

We have another problem as well. Literature that is called native vs universal at least internationally. International migration has long been a dominant feature of world literature from both post-industrial and developing countries. Migration has many roots, which can be both individual and an aspect of societal makeup or even of a groups cultural identity. It can be considered as a normal life path. In fact, we live in the age of migration. Transformation occurs not only in the lives of migrants but of all those who directly or indirectly are affected by social, political and economic changes induced by migration.

Another field of literary analysis that falls within the general scope of migration studies is that of exile literature. Edward Said (1990) defines exile as the unhealable rift posed between a human being and a native place, the self and its true home, as well as a condition of terminal loss (p. 70). He says exile is, most of all, a form of resistance (Said, 1990, p. 70). There are scholars

who bring together exiles, migration and even cultural diversity.

Being foreign or otherness of migrant authors impact the dissemination and consumption of their works in a literary marketplace. And one of the reasons is the text. Migrant text is not only a literary category but also a mode of writing that is independent of the ethnic or national origins of any author. Here negotiating culture starts to work. This is one of the key ways in which migrant texts turn foreign cultures into literary commodities by invoking a sense of belonging in cosmopolitan communities, carving out ethnocultural spaces from which their authors can speak.

The majority of migrants had to become migrant. It was not their decision. Two world wars, the countless number of regional wars, the process of decolonization played a big role in bringing about the waves of migrants, refugees and exiles that crisscrossed the globe during the 20th century. People are passing borders, local becomes global, and it is a time of redrawing maps. World-scale events mentioned above also had a deep impact on literary history. Day by day, the number of authors belonging to two or more countries is growing. The literature on migration is not written by migrants alone. Migration literature refers to all literary works that are written at the age of migration. Authors choose the language of their newfound home, not their native one, so in their text, the national identity, heritage is not seen. Literary theorists who write about immigration often refer to it as minor literature. Migration studies in literature have been confined to the context of various national literature or postcolonial literature in general.

The relationships of both modernism and postmodernism to migration are strong. Fragmentation, dislocation and alienation are all com-

mon for migration. Migration is generally about dislocation and potential alienation of the individual from both old norms and new contexts. It is about change and identity. It is about movement. In terms of the outcomes of migration, there are also strong relationships between the establishment of migrant or ethnic communities and the legitimization of otherness in postmodernist discourse with the search for an individual and group identity as a prime objective. In the age of migration, these are themes that affect everyone, directly or indirectly, and put migration at the forefront of everyday influences in a role that is often disruptive. Wars and the progress of time always transform the old, and it is difficult for the migrant to see the change. Migration is a process occurring on two levels, both outward and inward.

A very high proportion of creative writing relating to migration and its impacts is, however, strongly autobiographical. The motives of writing can be varied, both commercial and personal. The material is directly based on lived experience. It is basically a blending of literary styles from different cultural origins. The experience of flight, of exile as a refugee of dislocation and of abandonment. The postwar population gave a certain significance to the migrant culture. The literature of migration deals with the ideas of return, either actualized or imaginary. To return may be to go back, but it may equally be to start again – to seek but also to lose. The return has both a temporal and a spatial dimension. For the individual returning to their own past and place, it is rarely fully satisfying – circumstances change, borders in all senses are altered, and identities change too. But for many in the age of migration, the time and place to be returned to are ill-defined. For those brought up in families with a background of migration, conceptualiza-

tions of here and there, of home and away, are confused. After going back, migrants find themselves alienated and unable to relate to reality. Here Eliot's words, "In my end is my beginning", become too much realistic.

Creative or imaginative literature has the power to reflect complex and ambiguous realities that make it a far more plausible representation of human feelings and understandings. In migration, above all topics, the levels of ambivalence, of plurality, of shifting identities and interpretations are perhaps greater than in many other aspects of life. Migration has often been conceptualized as being an outcome of tensions between the individual's desires and opportunities as a reflection of past circumstances and of expectations for the future. The postmodern world of a greater diversity of experience is reflected in the growing variety of literary outputs, with migration and its outcomes as one of the dominant contemporary themes.

The process of going to exile is very interesting. The first stage in migration is the decision to go. The night before departure is full of symbolism. Based on much sociological research, we can say that the migration decision-making process is never clear-cut or black-and-white. Many migrants, if not most, are torn by conflicting emotions before they leave. There is the pull of friends and family to remain, the push of dullness and boredom, and there is the pull of possible excitement and freedom in the city, the push of fear of the unknown. There is a range of literary sources which can be used to see how writers as artists, writing from their time and place, help us to understand the process of migration. Autobiographical sources are, as expected, more factually descriptive. The exile motif continues. The attachment to home is still significant; the secret wish to come home persists. This must have

been especially important in preventing the full assimilation of migrants into the host society. In the case of American emigration, today, displacement and lack of integration are exacerbated by illegal status. There is also, however, evidence of continuing ambivalence in attitudes to emigration exile is often juxtaposed with escape. On the one hand, migrant literature is social evidence, and on the other hand, literature is individual, subjective and diverse. It may reflect but may also exaggerate, challenge or invert the social experience.

"In the Pleasures of Exile", Lamming writes "To be colonial is to be in a state of exile. And the exile is always colonial by circumstances". For Lamming, the experience of exile is an essential and inescapable element in the histories of colonial peoples. It is, moreover, not merely a state of being but of incessant movement, of repetition and of transformation. Exile can be described as a sense of unhomeliness, a permanent state of becoming, which mediates and transmutes the perception of place and time, origin and belonging. Lamming writes, "The pleasure and paradox of my own exile are that I belong wherever I am. My role, it seems, has rather do with time and change than with the geography of circumstances and yet there is always an acre of ground in the New World which keeps growing echoes in my head" (King, Connell, & White, 1995, p. 59).

All migrants have their past behind. It is the fate of migrants to be stripped of history, to stand naked amidst the scorns of strangers upon whom they see the rich clothing, the brocades of continuity and the eyebrows of belonging. All migrants occupy a vulnerable position.

Weather, starvation, war, necessity, the spirit of adventure, curiosity, prospects of a better future (American dream), love, tragedy, being

exiled in the own land all can cause migration.

All people are emotionally attached to their homeland. Consequently, emigration has always been a necessary evil, an act regrettable in itself, although unavoidable. The moment of farewell represents the first bitter pill. The parting process is deeply emotional. You know that it is the last time you see your native land. All of a sudden, you feel uprooted. One of the most painful experiences of the emigrants is undoubtedly the loss of old values. They sometimes lose the sense of belonging and tell themselves, "I am Nobody".

Sometimes a change of identity is symbolized in the change of name. Emigrants do not want to be noticed. Of course, they want to maintain their religious and ethnic identity, but sometimes they must undergo some transformations. Both cultural and social adaptation process can be longer than the emigrant imagines. There are two types of emigrants - those who stay and those who return.

The country where they migrate represents the new and the modern. The homeland stands for the old and the traditional. In the former, they can make more money, but in the latter, they can abide. The new land embodies changes in progress and materialism, the homeland, stability, tradition and spirituality: migrants who prefer the former remain, those who value the latter return. Homesickness, in fact, is a very dangerous sickness. The desire to return grows and grows. The emigrant wants to see his house, familiar faces and above all to find younger self. They will be going home beaten and humble but home. Sometimes they return because they have failed and given up hope. They never feel completely at home. Those who actually return value what they have lost more than what they have found.

We also have repeat migrants who migrate for the second time. Many migrants make a deci-

sion and continue to wonder if they have chosen correctly. Those who become return migrants seem to have decided, despite whatever doubts and uncertainties they may have had, that they belong in their native lands. They prefer to return because tradition, stability, the old and the past matter more than progress, change, the new and the future. More than that, their personal ties and relationships to people back home are stronger and more important than their ties and relationships to people in the new world. Those who become emigrants and remain have the opposite feelings and preferences. But there is one more interpretation that they have two homes and that there is no need to choose one or the other. They can partake of both, can move back and forth (both mentally and physically). They see the advantages and disadvantages of both societies, and they can enjoy the advantages of both. Maybe they want the opportunities of the future but the traditions of the past, the stability of the known but the excitement of the strange, the love of those back home but also the love of those here at home. It is really very difficult to live in both of these worlds simultaneously or to choose between them.

There is no certain name for those people who are in exile. Whatever the proper name for these people, whatever their motives, origins, and destinations, whatever their impact on the societies which they abandon and to which they come may amount to - one thing is absolutely clear: they make it very difficult to talk about the plight of the writer in exile with a straight face. Since there is not much on which to rest our hopes for a better world, since everything else seems to fail one way or another, we must somehow maintain that literature is the only form of moral insurance society has. The exiled writer is running away from the worse towards the better.

The truth of the matter is that from tyranny, one can be exiled only to a democracy. A bright example is Hosseini. However, the road does not end here as every writer who migrates thinks about going back to his home. He is waiting for a better home. But he is waiting for a better home, not at his home place. And here, all psychological problems arise. Brodsky says, "If one assigned the life of an exiled writer a genre, it would have to be tragicomedy" (Brodsky, 1988). Because of his previous incarnation, he is capable of appreciating the social and material advantages of democracy far more intensely than its natives are. Yet, for precisely the same reason (whose main by-product is the linguistic barrier), he finds himself totally unable to play any meaningful role in his new society. The democracy into which he has arrived provides him with physical safety but renders him socially insignificant. And the lack of significance is what no writer, exile or not, can take. And the reality of it consists of an exiled writer constantly fighting and conspiring to restore his significance, his poignant role, his authority. His main consideration, of course, are the folks back home? But he also wants to rule the roost in the malicious village of his fellow migrants.

The re-establishment of the old you had in a new place is a very difficult process. The migrant asks himself, "Where Am I?" The most difficult thing is being a stranger among strangers. Joining a group that is not yours and never will be. If all people who have their country know that they will find themselves in an unfamiliar world, differently organized than that from which they come, and will never have the opportunity to come back, maybe they will think long before making a decision. But sometimes they are forced to leave their home. The homcomer always expects to return to an environment of which he

always had. When he loses hope, he starts to go back to the memories of his past. And the reason he starts to suffer is memory. Here are two solutions. Either to delete the memories or to live with them during the whole life.

The home is the place to which a man intends to return when he is away from it. There is a good saying, "East or West home is best". Our home is both a starting point and terminus. Geographically home means a certain place on the earth. The place where I always want to return is my home. Home means different thing to different people. It means landscape, father house, mother tongue, family, friends, national, personal habits, familiar things - briefly your life. Home means one thing to the man who never has left it and a totally different thing to one who returns. Migrant can never feel at home. There is no longer the total experience of the beloved person, his gestures, his way of walking and talking. When you change your surroundings, you start to re-evaluate what you had before. It is not so easy to re-establish what you had, and you must be ready to deal with homesickness. You try to find familiar traits. The road which leads from Paris to Chartres has a different aspect from the road, which leads from Chartres to Paris. What belongs to the past can never be reinstated in another present exactly as it was. The home to which you want to return is by no means the home you left or the home which you recalled and longed for during your absence. The homcomer can never be the same man who left. He is neither the same for himself nor for others who await his return. Each homcomer has tasted the taste of strangeness. Unfortunately, sometimes our homeland does not give us the same opportunities as the country we go to. There we can self-realize ourselves. Sometimes there can also be disappointments at home. Homer has already

told the story of the most famous home-coming in world literature. Odysseus can be a good example for a migrant who never returns home he had before leaving.

There always will be writers who will re-configure their identity by rejecting the status of exile for that of migrant. Khaled Hosseini, for example, has adopted the term migrant to describe both his literary production and personal experience of transculturation. Hosseini left Afghanistan when he was a small boy and did not see all the terrible that took place in his motherland. But he is from a place where breath, eyes, memory are one, and he describes every single part as he saw with his own eyes. It is really very difficult to tell about your nation, motherland, culture and language in other languages, but as he is no longer in Afghanistan but American English is not a foreign language anymore.

According to William Boelhower, America was an idea before it became a geographical reality (King, Connell, & White, 1995, p. 163). Is the American dream real, or is America a true Eldorado? No one can answer, but one thing is obvious emigrants believe in it. They are sure that America is a ground, amazing, fantastic place – the Golden country, a sort of Paradise, the land of Promises, huge beyond conception, thousands of miles across the ocean, untellable, exciting, explosive, quite incomparable to other parts of the world. The American dream is not dead. Emigrants project their dreams on an ideal New World. But the myth of America dies almost the moment the emigrant sets foot on foreign soil. When the emigrants feel hatred, homesickness, linguistic and religious barriers, the myth of the

American dream vanishes into thin air, and their initial response to the New World is a disappointment, bitterness and resignation (Manfred, 2018).

In conclusion, we can say that it is impossible to speak about modern literature without touching the themes of globalization and migration. To understand what is migrant literature, we had to examine the role of a migrant writer both in society and literature. The article was an attempt to open several hidden nuances and to discuss the causes that entail migration.

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