

MODERN LITERARY EXILE: THE ONES WHO STAY AND THE ONES WHO LEAVE

by

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(Under the Direction of Katarzyna Jerzak)

ABSTRACT

Before the nineteenth century, exile denoted forceful banishment from one's home city or country. In the mid-nineteenth century, Charles Baudelaire redefined the meaning of exile by including internal exile as a manifestation of the condition. This displacement excludes a physical uprooting and is strictly internal. In addition to this acquired layer of meaning, the question of exile is complicated further by the modern author's assumed distance from the rest of the community. In order to explore the symptoms and consequences of physical, geographical exile, this thesis offers a comparison between Fernando Pessoa and Orhan Pamuk, two authors who are physically and creatively rooted in their native cities, and Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Brodsky, and André Aciman, three exiled authors whose work is fueled by their exilic condition.

INDEX WORDS: redefinition of exile, internal exile, geographical exile, native city, nostalgia, modernity, alienation, displacement, Baudelaire, Pessoa, Pamuk, Nabokov, Brodsky, and Aciman.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The redefinition of exile

In its multiple forms of political banishment, voluntary expatriation, or economically-driven emigration, exile has been a literary topic since the times of ancient Greece. The treatment of exile occupies a fundamental position in a number of Western literature's oldest masterpieces such as Homer's Odyssey and Sophocles' Oedipus Rex. The ubiquity of the theme announces the importance of the topic for subsequent ages, and, in a retrospective view, the ideas implied in the topic's treatment inform the path of the modern world. Already with the figure of Oedipus, one of the first memorable exiles, the world shows signs of moving toward the direction of the presently uniform modern society. The citizens of Thebes banish Oedipus, the city's initial savior and eventual disease, because he, as a powerful but deeply sick figure, cannot function in a society that emphasizes the equality and cooperation of its citizens. However, while older forms of exile presented in literature emphasize the misery of the condition, as illustrated by its use as punishment in Oedipus Rex, or the figure's desire to return home, as in the case of Odysseus' fervent wish and, consequently, perilous return journey to Ithaca, modern exile acquires new layers of meanings and definitions mainly as a result of the changing world and the transformed role of the individual in society. While exile continues to serve as a form of punishment in later ages, from the Middle Ages as demonstrated by Dante's life, to the twentieth century with its deathly political systems, the term begins to acquire new layers of meaning in the nineteenth century. Firstly, the modern version of exile becomes inextricably linked with the already alienated condition of modern man and the modern world.

Present western society seems to have solid roots and beginnings in the early nineteenth century if one designates the ages and periods of history according to the characters and problems presented in literature. Gustave Flaubert's Emma Bovary, the heroine of the novel of the same title, in the 1840s already feels alienated by her mediocre bourgeois surroundings and constantly and obsessively dreams of a romantic and exciting world. In addition to the presentation of an alienated and internally displaced heroine from the provinces who dreams of the exciting life of the big city, Flaubert also introduces the industrialization of the world. Emma Bovary sublimates her romantic dreams and desires in the acquisition of material objects, a sublimation that ultimately results in an enormous debt and her eventual suicide.

While Flaubert traces the path followed by the modern world with his unhappy heroine, the most accurate analysis of the roots of present society belongs to Charles Baudelaire, who, according to Walter Benjamin in his exposition on the poet entitled The Writer of Modern Life, bestows upon Flaubert's contemporary, Baudelaire, the title of the first modern poet. Benjamin's acute vision accurately defines Baudelaire who, already in the nineteenth century, diagnoses most of the diseases that will plague modern man from the poet's age to the twenty-first century. In Baudelaire's time, specifically the middle of the nineteenth century, the Western world had not reached the full industrialization and materialism of present society, but the poet, according to Benjamin, through his abilities, succeeds in sensing "the true essence of things as they really are" (The Writer of Modern Life 27). Baudelaire accurately senses in the initial traces and shadowy roots of the industrialized modern world a "presentiment of its real picture" (27). For Benjamin, Baudelaire serves as the perfect representative of the nineteenth

century, a period of transition from the previous, settled world to the materialistic and alienating modern world, because, while Baudelaire partakes of Paris' noise and anonymous crowds, the poet also rebels against the deteriorating tone and quality of modern life. But in order to explore Baudelaire's evocation of modernity, one must look at Benjamin's own description of Paris, one of the most important capitals of the world and one among the centers of the nineteenth century's industrial boom. One of the fundamental reasons for Benjamin's designation of Baudelaire as the first fully modern poet stems from Baudelaire's preferred subject, the city. While Romantic poets chose natural landscapes for their depictions of the beautiful and sublime, the source of Baudelaire's inspiration becomes the bustling and changing city of Paris. Benjamin writes that, with Baudelaire, "for the first time, Paris becomes the subject of lyric poetry" (40). This specific choice of subject establishes the city as the favorite modern dwelling. In addition, in the modern literature of the following centuries, the city simultaneously represents the place of the individual's most profound metaphysical alienation as well as the exiled writer's beloved home¹.

In Baudelaire's poetry, the city of Paris occupies the central position, but, Benjamin warns, "this poetry is no hymn to the homeland; rather, the gaze of the allegorist, as it falls on the city, is the gaze of the alienated man. It is the gaze of the *flâneur*, whose way of life still conceals behind a mitigating nimbus the coming desolation of the big-city dweller" (40). Baudelaire's best expresses his alienation in "Le Cygne," a poem in Les Fleurs du Mal, the poet's most important collection of poetry.

¹ "Modernism," writes Malcolm Bradbury, is a "particularly urban art," because the artist "has been caught up in the spirit of the modern city" (Modernism 97).

The poem opens with an invocation to Andromache, the Trojan heroine of The Iliad, who, after Troy's fall and her husband Hector's death, becomes the wife and slave of Pyrrhus, a Greek warrior. The powerful first line, "Andromaque, je pense à vous!" forcefully pulls the Trojan exile from the depths of antiquity so that the poet can illustrate his empathy and identification with the tragic character (Les Fleurs du Mal 72). As opposed to Andromache, however, external forces have not violently torn Baudelaire from his home. He thinks of Andromache while in Paris, the city of his birth and eventual death. The alienation that links the poet to the ancient figure stems from the poet's inability to recognize the familiar in the new, changing city. His home, "le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville / change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel)" (74). Thus, through his grief for the changing city, Baudelaire expresses the loss of his home and the lack of correspondence between his own memories and his actual surroundings. The alienation from his familiar environment places the author in a dreamy state, in which he envisions a swan in the middle of the city with its beak "près d'un ruisseau sans eau," and "le coeur plein de son beau lac natal" (74). In this miserable condition, the poet continues, the swan seems pathetic and convulsed, looking at the sky "comme s'il adressait des reproches à Dieu" (74). The figure of the suffering swan, removed, like Andromache, from her native and natural element indicates the increasing chasm between the poet and the city. In addition, Baudelaire implicitly creates a parallel between the swan's painfully unnatural environment and modern man's progressively artificial dwelling. This implicit comparison becomes clearer when Baudelaire, in front of the Louvre, directly links the figure of the swan with all "les exilés, / ridicule et sublime" (75). Much like Andromache, the swan, and the poet, the museum which

contains art's great masterpieces, seems displaced in the middle of the transformed industrial city, concerned more with economical progress than art. In addition to the presentation of the changed world and the expression of modern man's alienation, Baudelaire, by equating his position with that of the swan, Andromache and "quiconque a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve / jamais," forms a broader definition of the term exile (77). In Baudelaire's terms, exile undoubtedly denotes the process of separation from one's roots, the natural and familiar environment. This uprooting, however, does not have to be external, either physically or geographically; rather, the displacement can be wholly internal. Indeed, contemporary writers have extended the definition of exile; in the essay, "Exsul," Christina Brooke-Rose writes that "it is also possible to feel an exile in one's own country" (Exile and Creativity 20). While actual removal from one's environment includes specific properties which are absent in Baudelaire's work, this poem and Baudelaire's work, in general, broadens the definition of exile, a broadening which greatly influences the twentieth century's exploration of the topic. Indeed, Katarzyna Jerzak states that Baudelaire not only broadens but "redefine[s] the inherited notion of exile. At the core of this redefinition there is a sense of disinheritance that makes any simple correspondence between the old and new exile impossible" ("Modern Exile and Perspective in Baudelaire's 'Le Cygne' and in *pittura metafisica*" 26).

Baudelaire's discomfort with his surroundings, his own exilic condition, "merges with a desire to be elsewhere" (39). Indeed, the poet's dissatisfaction and detachment from his environment result in ennui, a state of boredom and inescapable apathy. In the introductory poem, "To the Reader," Baudelaire singles out this profound boredom as the defining and most dangerous monster of modern life (Les Fleurs du Mal 20). As usual,

Baudelaire is correct in his emphasis on this modern monster. After all, the monotony and tedium of life destroyed most of the major literary heroines of the nineteenth century: Emma Bovary, Anna Karenina, Hedda Gabler. These characters, however, lacked Baudelaire's foresight; they could only escape their boredom through adventures that ultimately led to their death. While in "Anywhere out of the World," one of his Twenty Prose Poems, Baudelaire admits that "cette vie est un hôpital où chaque malade est possédé du désir de changer de lit. Celui-ci voudrait souffrir en face du poêle, et celui-là croit qu'il guérirait à côté de la fenêtre," he realizes that a simple changing of beds, positions, cities, nations, or continents, will fail to satisfy the overwhelming desire to be elsewhere (Twenty Prose Poems 72). In his expressed desire to go "anywhere out of the world" rather than a specific place within it, Baudelaire shows his acute foresight and knowledge of the eternal laws of the world. The condition of ennui, a state that the nineteenth century acknowledged rather than invented, has always existed and will continue to plague men forever. The focus on this dull monotony emerges especially in authors who, differently from the twentieth century's overwhelming trend of massive migration, decided to remain in the city of their birth. Two of the authors in this particular study, the Portuguese Fernando Pessoa in the early 1920s and the contemporary Turkish Orhan Pamuk, despite their curiosity and transitory unhappiness in their respective cities, Lisbon and Istanbul, are physically and creatively linked to their native homes. These two exceptions in the uprooting and destructive twentieth century will serve as an answer to the question presented by Edward Said in his essay "Reflections on Exile": "What is it like to be born in a place, to stay and live there, to know that you are of it, more or less forever?" (Reflections on Exile and Other Essays

181). A premature stab at an answer would certainly point to Baudelaire's desire to be elsewhere as one of the problems with staying in the place of one's birth and childhood.

Baudelaire's comparison of modern life to a hospital does not presume that the massive migrations of the twentieth century stem only from the chase for a better future, the search for a dream. Certainly, in the century of suffering, war, fascism, Nazism, communism and heartless capitalism, exile still continued to serve its cruel role as punishment. Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Brodsky and André Aciman, the main exiled authors in this study, left their homes for primarily political reasons. In addition, in the new global society, the desire to escape poverty, misery and other perceived flaws of one's bed or country plays an important role in the continuation of mass migration. Baudelaire, however, sees the limitations of the fulfillment of this desire. In the poem "Le Voyage," he explicitly identifies with the travelers whose experience of the temporary pleasures of the new and exotic drives them to an eternal and inexhaustible chase after new *frissons* (Les Fleurs du Mal 94). His prematurely thorough diagnosis of the modern world earns Baudelaire the title of the first modern poet; his foresights, because of their accuracy, serve as a prism for the analysis of modernity as such.

In order to explain the source of the first modern poet's condition of alienation and displacement, Benjamin offers a useful exposition of the modern world in its embryonic stage. The city's alienating properties stem from its transformation into an enormous industrial center. This change in the city surfaces in the fundamental transformation of its skeleton, its architecture. Instead of the natural materials previously used in the city's buildings, Benjamin states that, "for the first time in the history of architecture, an artificial building material appears: iron" (The Writer of Modern Life

31). In a sense, the artificial and highly “functional nature of iron” serves as a metaphor for the character of modern life, which is driven by functionality and plagued by artificiality (31). The emphasis on function betrays the materialistic nature of the modern world as well as its emphasis on production and material wealth. The focus on economic progress undoubtedly affects the individual, who represents one of the fundamental tools of acquiring such material wealth. This rising love of competitive economic development emerges in the century’s world exhibitions, which “glorify the exchange value of the commodity,” thus clearly announcing the purely materialistic nature of the new world (36). Benjamin suggests that Baudelaire quickly perceived this transformation of society and, as a result, for the poet “prostitution is the yeast that causes the great urban masses to rise in his imagination” (147). Baudelaire’s frequent usage of the figure of the prostitute in poems such as “Le Crépuscule du Matin,” “Les Plaintes d’un Icare,” and “La Solitude” shows that, in his view, the love of progress had transformed the individual into material for exchange. For Baudelaire, prostitution epitomized the nature of the new world, in which people became “affolés qui cherchent le Bonheur dans le mouvement et dans une prostitution que je pourrais appeler *fraternitaire*, si je voulais parler la belle langue de mon siècle” (Twenty Prose Poems 40). In the brief but exact diagnosis of the changed society expressed in “La Solitude,” Baudelaire indicates that the new life requires, in addition to the selling of the individual, the delusion that self-estrangement will benefit the individual and the world at large. Modern self-estrangement is best represented by an image, specifically Édouard Manet’s painting *Le Bar aux Folies-Bergère*². This painting seems influenced by Baudelaire’s evocation of

² My discussion of this painting is informed by T.J. Clark’s work, The Painting of Modern Life.

modern life, a probable influence supported by Manet's admiration for his contemporary. In this particular canvas, the barmaid, perhaps a prostitute, is presented from two different views; while in her reflection she is engaged in a conversation with a customer, in reality, her face looks toward the viewer with an expression of apathy and boredom. The barmaid, like any individual in the modern world, becomes split into two personas: one that sells the product, with this product usually being the self, and one that attempts to remain private and detached from the transaction. The nature of the transaction, however, damages the individual, who, when not involved in the sale, becomes plagued by apathy and boredom, Baudelaire's *ennui*.

As an artist, Baudelaire draws inspiration from the masses of the big city by partaking in modern life, while also standing outside the crowd in order to observe it. The massive crowds of people arrive in the big cities attracted by work and the hope of an improvement of their lives. The city, as a result, becomes a great container for the "amorphous crowd of passers-by, the people in the street" (The Writer of Modern Life 180). The anonymity and uniformity of the crowd puzzled a number of the century's intellectuals. In The Writer of Modern Life, Benjamin presents Friedrich Engels' response when confronted with London's crowds as one of dismay and horror: "these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature in order to bring to pass all the marvels of civilization which crowd their city...The very turmoil of the street has something repulsive about it, something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of people of all classes and ranks crowding past one another—are they not all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy?...And still they crowd by one another as though they had

nothing in common” (182). While Engels expresses his discomfort with the visible alienation of people in the crowd, he stands outside them. Baudelaire, however, laments the changes of life and the city, but partakes in the commercialization of life and finds a perverse pleasure in mingling with the crowds. Benjamin writes that, for Baudelaire, “the masses were anything but external; indeed, it is easy to trace in his works his defensive reaction to their attraction and allure” (183). But, continues Benjamin, his fascination with crowds “did not blind him to the horrible social reality” (89). As an artist, in order to preserve his power of observation which presented the birth of a new world, Baudelaire realized that only a part of him must interact with the crowd while the other part must stand outside and unobtrusively observe the transformation of the city.

This split in Baudelaire demonstrates the sensitive individual’s attempt to preserve a minimal amount of an internal life. Unquestionably, the changing society required an active mass in order to satisfy its dreams of wealth and progress, specifically an industrious mass of Dostoevsky’s abhorred men of action. The masses’ dedication to this monumental work required a suppression of any internal life separated from the job at hand. For any person inclined to an internal life, the only possible solution is a half-hearted involvement in a social environment accompanied by a simultaneous existence in a dream world. In writers such as Pessoa, the split between an active person and a passive participant forms the source for the creation of his work. His internal life, the source and bulk of his work, acts as a refuge from the external world. In an attempt to keep at least a remnant of a private identity intact, in The Book of Disquietude, Pessoa displays this personal rift by writing in the guise of a different person, Bernardo Soares. As with many aspects of modernity and its consequences on the individual, Baudelaire is

one of the first artists to illustrate this simultaneously external and internal, hence privileged, position. In the short prose poem entitled “Les Foules,” Baudelaire claims that “il n’est pas donné à chacun de prendre un bain de multitude: jouir de la foule est un art” (Twenty Prose Poems 26). Baudelaire’s claim that only privileged men can play in the multitude of the crowd results from his observation that modern man, when part of the masses, loses his identity. The poet possesses the ability to retain his identity in his interaction with the crowd because “il jouit de cet incomparable privilège, qu’il peut à sa guise être lui-même et autrui” (26). The desire to join and intermingle with the crowds arises precisely from the element that causes alienation between its members: anonymity. Without knowledge of the crowd’s members, the sensitive poet imagines, at liberty, the professions and lives of his anonymous companions. The potential for imagination attracts the poet to the crowd, which awakens such intense excitement in Baudelaire that he claims: “Ce que les hommes nomment amour est bien petit, bien restreint et bien faible, comparé à cette ineffable orgie, à cette sainte prostitution de l’âme qui se donne tout entière, poésie et charité, à l’imprévu qui se montre, à l’inconnu qui passe” (26). Drawn by the anonymity and unpredictability of the crowd, the poet becomes a component of the crowd. However, unlike the others in the crowd, Baudelaire can exchange identities at will, without losing sight of his own.

While the short prose poem “Les Foules” expresses the poet’s inclusion in and attraction to modern life with its anonymity, estrangement, and ceaseless activity, “L’Albatros” and “Les Plaintes d’un Icare,” two poems from Les Fleurs du Mal, express Baudelaire’s complete alienation from his surroundings. In “Les Plaintes d’un Icare” he describes the people around him as “les amants des prostituées,” who are “heureux,

dispos et repus,” while the poet’s “bras sont rompus / pour avoir étreint des nuées” (Les Fleurs du Mal 114). His view of his contemporaries characterizes them as simpletons, satisfied by the fulfillment of basic needs. Unlike them, Baudelaire suffers because he searches for something that perhaps does not exist. The estrangement of the poet from his surroundings becomes explicit in “L’Albatros,” in which Baudelaire likens the poet to the “prince de nuées / qui hante la tempête et se rit de l’archer,” but who, when “exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées, / ses ailes de géant l’empêchent de marcher” (24). Here, the poet’s internal exile results from the incongruity between his inherent nature and the requirements of the external environment. Baudelaire’s characterization of the poet’s role, in addition to its representation of the excessively grounded modern life, shows art’s awkward role in this new environment. In a time and place where people focus their efforts on material betterment, the poet, against reason and common sense, starts “his doomed flight toward the ideal, which ultimately—with the despairing cry of Icarus—comes crashing down into an ocean of its own melancholy” (The Writer of Modern Life 29). The poet’s acknowledgement that, in his days, art seems to occupy a futile role in an overly active world, represents the fundamental reason for the chasm that exists between Baudelaire and his contemporaries.

The estrangement between the artist and his contemporaries will continue to be an important issue. While not explicitly an exilic condition, this estrangement contains elements that resemble facets of exile, internal and physical. Baudelaire’s privileged dual position as a member and a critical observer of the masses represents the defining position of later artists extending to the present time. Most importantly, this simultaneously internal/external vision characterizes the perspective of exiled authors

whose works constitute, to a great extent, the most important literature of the twentieth century. By definition, the author in exile possesses the one advantage of participating in a new, strange world, while, at the same time, through estrangement, maintaining a degree of objectivity and clarity of vision. This gained objectivity comes at the price of a state beautifully rendered by Baudelaire in “Le Cygne”: the ability to coexist, though not completely, in both the past and the unsatisfying present. The analysis of a number of important authors of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, like Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Brodsky and André Aciman, will show the continuation of ideas first brought forth by Baudelaire. While Baudelaire wrote during a transitional period, a stage of transformation from a settled world to an industrial society, the more recent authors lived or live in the completion of the dreamed progress of the nineteenth century. The alienation and displacement first rendered by Baudelaire assume massive proportions in the twentieth century, the century of wars, destructive political systems and exile.

The alienation of the twentieth century spares no one; now, the masses of people alongside the artist become estranged from life, from God, and from themselves. The poet, who previously felt estranged from the masses, now represents the emotional state of the majority. In the essay entitled “The Mind of Modernism,” James McFarlane states that in the twentieth century, “the wanderer, the loner, the exile, the restless and rootless and homeless individual were no longer the rejects of a self-confident society but rather those who, because they stood outside, were uniquely placed in an age when subjectivity was truth to speak with vision and authority” (Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930 82). The industrial boom that begins in the nineteenth century reveals its ugly aspect. Progress, dominating and unstoppable, leads to the

destruction of the world and people who created it. In the period that preceded the First World War, the world already experienced important redefinitions and reshaping, one of which was the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, an event relevant to this study as it helps create Orhan Pamuk's modern Istanbul. As a result of this collapse, Istanbul becomes characterized by its ruins and melancholy, aspects of the city that both alienate and comfort the author. During and after the technologically advanced First World War, every aspect of the world and society lost its meaning. T.S Eliot, in The Waste Land (1922), one of the defining works of modernism, evokes the emergent West as a land of ghosts. In the first canto, "The Burial of the Dead," Eliot describes London as an "unreal city, / under the brown fog of a winter dawn, / a crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many" (The Waste Land 25). At this moment, alienation and displacement have reached everyone; to the poet, people appear as ghosts in an unreal world. Metaphysical exile claims everyone because progress and alternately destruction have erased anything concrete that could act as a potential anchor. Baudelaire broadens and redefines the term but the twentieth century spares no one from such an affliction.

The ideas first presented by Benjamin are concluded in the author's contemporary and friend, Theodor Adorno, in Minima Moralia, an analysis of life in the West, specifically America, in the twentieth century. Because Adorno wrote this work during the Second World War while in exile in the United States, his view of the last century seems bleak and hopeless. While in the nineteenth century, according to Benjamin, the system of exchange started to overpower other aspects of life, Adorno writes that in the twentieth century, "life does not live" (Minima Moralia 19). Just as

Eliot evokes the modern populace as an enormous mass of ghosts, so Adorno expresses the idea that life, in the destructive and false twentieth century, becomes a poor imitation of what it once was. The external signs of life indicate disease rather than health. The system of exchange dominates the public sphere as well as private life, the portion of existence that should belong to the individual. In the new world, Adorno writes, "the entire private domain is being engulfed by a mysterious activity that bears all the features of commercial life without there being any business to transact" (23). The commercialization of society, a process that really starts in the nineteenth century, poisons every aspect of life, any relationship between people, because "we have become all too practical" (44). Adorno does not attempt to offer any solutions in the struggle with the complete "withering of experience," unless people can think outside of societal confines (40). For Adorno, modern life is a "wrong life [that] cannot be lived rightly" (39). The only protection from the intrusion of this world is "for the intellectual, inviolable isolation" (26). The isolation that Adorno advises as the only escape from infection represents one of the few advantages of exile, a condition which Adorno knew intimately.

Adorno, as a consummate representative of the twentieth century, writes about both the alienation of society and literal exile. While modern alienation applies to all men, in the case of physical exile it is doubly felt. According to Adorno, a temporary exile in the United States, "every intellectual in emigration is, without exception, mutilated," because "he lives in an environment that must remain incomprehensible to him" (33). While exile mutilates everyone, Adorno, as an intellectual, speaks strictly from his own perspective. In addition, although mass migrations certainly characterize the twentieth century, an

exiled person, writes Mary McCarthy in her essay “A Guide to Exiles, Expatriates, and Internal Émigrés,” is “a singular, whereas refugees tend to be thought of in the mass” (Altogether Elsewhere 50). Because one cannot in good conscience write with complete authority about masses, exilic literature focuses on the solitary individual, the seemingly “more noble and dignified” sense of the term *exile* (50).

Edward Said's initial discussion of exile in his “Reflections on Exile” presents a succinct and clear definition of physical exile. Exile, Said writes, is “strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted” (Reflections on Exile 173). But the definition of modern exile also includes the absence of such a rift; in the introduction to the collection entitled Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances, Susan Rubin Suleiman defines exile, “in its narrow sense,” as a “political banishment,” while “exile in its broad sense designates every kind of estrangement or displacement, from the physical and geographical to the spiritual” (Exile and Creativity 2). The broadening of the definition of exile, however, seems to require some delineation between the two states: estrangement, or spiritual exile, and physical or geographical exile. In the case of Nabokov, Brodsky and Aciman, the sadness that results from their respective separations from St. Petersburg and Alexandria permeates all their works. But because of modern exile’s inextricable link to metaphysical exile, the understanding of the rift between a person and the native place necessitates a comparison with authors like Pessoa and Pamuk, whose works and lives are highly affected by their permanent residence in their native cities, Lisbon and Istanbul. Like all modern writers, these two

authors feel somewhat detached from an active, external life and are sporadically overcome by the urge to be elsewhere. In order to separate this desire, an inheritance of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from the state of physical exile, it seems useful to compare authors who stay in the same place, with authors who leave their native places. In either case, Baudelaire's prescient but accurate analysis of the modern world will prove useful. While the two sets of authors are defined by the presence or absence of their native cities, the stationary authors are, at times, overcome by the desire to be somewhere else, whereas migratory authors are unsettled by the lack of correspondence between memory and surroundings.

Chapter 2: Exile at Home

The ones who stay: Baudelaire, Pessoa, Pamuk

Like Charles Baudelaire, who lived most of his life and died in Paris, Fernando Pessoa, with the exception of a five-year stay in South Africa during his adolescence, spent his entire life and died in Lisbon, Portugal. Although separated by the distance of several generations, Pessoa, in his life as in his writings, follows in the footsteps of the great French poet. His most important work, The Book of Disquietude, published under the pseudonym of Bernardo Soares, expresses a condition of malaise similar to Baudelaire's ennui. Written during the late 1920s and the early 30s, Pessoa's journal explores the writer's alienation from his surroundings, an alienation that results in his attachment to an intellectual world partially separated from reality. Pessoa's constant use of heteronyms complicates discussions of the Portuguese author, but Richard Zenith, the diary's translator and editor, quotes Pessoa as stating that Soares is "a semiheteronym because his personality, although not my own, doesn't differ from my own but is a mere mutilation of it" (The Book of Disquietude ix). The most important connection between the author and his assumed persona, Zenith adds, lies in Soares and Pessoa's "shunning [of] the outer world, which [they] find sordid and petty beside [their] dreams" (ix). The inclination to evade the external world emerges in Orhan Pamuk as well. Like Baudelaire and Pessoa, Pamuk, the Turkish author of Istanbul, still lives in his native city. His memoir traces the process of becoming a writer and the role that his native city plays in this decision. While Pamuk, seventy years after Pessoa, expresses a similar need to

temporarily withdraw from the world, his work focuses on the representation of Istanbul as recreated from private and collective memory. Pessoa's diary expresses a singular perspective, but while the Portuguese author expresses his attachment to the city, Lisbon fails to occupy the central position that Istanbul has in Pamuk's work.

The similarities between the two authors lie in their expressions of the writer's uncertain role in the modern world and in their decision to stay in the places that destiny assigned them. The common factor of geographic stability is no small matter in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Constant mobility, writes Eva Hoffman in "The New Nomads," "has become the norm rather than the exception" (Letters of Transit 42). Indeed, in the first chapter of Istanbul, Pamuk writes that "in an age defined by mass migration and creative immigrants," he feels "sometimes hard-pressed to explain why [he] has stayed, not only in the same place but in the same building" (Istanbul 6). Pamuk's statement clearly expresses the modern world's penchant for mobility. From Baudelaire's time, in which the city attracted country dwellers with its promises of wealth and economic well-being, to the present time in which the West attracts the East with the same promises, staying in one's native city represents the exception to the rule. The temptation of a different life that seems better from afar and the easy accessibility to other countries hinders the decision to stay. Despite the two authors' decision to permanently live in their birth cities, like their predecessor Baudelaire, Pessoa and Pamuk express the intellectual's alienation in the modern world. Much like the works of exiled writers, both of the authors' books express feelings of nostalgia and displacement. Pamuk and Pessoa, while stable in terms of location, share similar internal conditions and ideas with exiled authors, thus adhering to the concept of the modern creative artist,

who, according to Shoshana Dietz' discussion in her essay "The Bitter Air of Exile," "never truly belongs to or fits into any society; by definition, the artist is, and must be, always in a kind of self-imposed exile—an outsider, distant and alienated from mainstream society" (The Literature of Emigration and Exile 46).

In their respective works, both Pessoa and Pamuk, like Baudelaire, claim to experience a definite, if transitory, alienation from their surroundings. For the two authors, the various definitions of alienation depend on the different stages of life. Pamuk, the memoirist, while remembering the early years of his childhood, cites the initial temporary separations from home as the original and defining sense of displacement. In distinction from the later, tortured stages of his life, Pamuk's nostalgic memories of childhood convey a sense of complete comfort and happiness. The large family meals that irritate the older Orhan define happiness for the author as a child. Though in succeeding periods of his life the author is often beset by uncertainty and melancholy, the young Orhan concludes that people "were put on earth to take pleasure in it," as a result of "the security of belonging to a large and happy family" (Istanbul 14). Any separation from this comforting place and "all would slide about in a confusion that made [him] long all the more to be at home again, surrounded by [his] family" (4). For the young Pamuk, the first separations from his family approximate an exilic condition; any physical distance from home disrupts the order of comfort and security. Similarly, this sense of happiness and comfort is closely tied to childhood because home, then, embodies the center of existence. When the young Pamuk begins school, he discovers that he "counted for nothing in the outside world," a realization that "made it only harder to part each day from my mother and the comforts of home" (31). The beginning of

school, which creates the first clear separation from home and the first contact with people different from one's family, gives young Pamuk his first acute sensation of displacement. The nostalgia that pervades the author's descriptions of his family is closely tied to this initial displacement. With the beginning of an adult life, the security and happiness once felt can never be recaptured.

Pessoa speaks in similarly nostalgic terms about his childhood. Like Pamuk, he associates childhood with the sensation of happiness. In an episode that recalls Proust, Pessoa, through the flavor of a piece of chocolate, remembers, or rather, tastes "the happiness of old, of [his] long lost childhood" (The Book of Disquietude 261). In addition to the loss of his childhood, the author here mourns the irretrievable loss of the sort of happiness that is only connected with childhood. Like Pamuk, Pessoa nostalgically remembers a state of security and happiness that, once lost, cannot be recaptured. Yet, Pessoa adds, he "doesn't mourn the loss of his childhood," but the fact that "everything, including [his] childhood is lost" (158). The author suffers the realization that time passes and everything is fleeting, a realization that becomes clear only with a person's first loss, that of childhood. Both authors' nostalgia for their lost childhood entails a common, but nevertheless painful, temporal displacement. Indeed, the loss of childhood brought forth by the inevitable foray into the world outside one's family constitutes an exilic condition. "Is there anyone who does not—in some way, on some level—feel that they are in exile?" asks Eva Hoffman in "The New Nomads" (Letters of Transit 39). Adulthood, the natural ejection "from our first homes and landscapes, from childhood, from our first family romance," represents the first permanent state of

displacement (39). For the two authors, this specific discomfort is primarily alleviated by excursions in an imaginary world.

The succeeding condition of alienation stems from both authors' incongruity with their surroundings. For Pessoa, as Soares, this incongruity results in a sensation of detachment from his environment, which, in turn, emerges in his disdain for the people that surround him. Although Svetlana Boym in her essay, "Estrangement as a Lifestyle," dismisses the "somewhat facile argument that every intellectual is already a 'spiritual exile,'" the category of the spiritually exiled intellectual certainly applies to Pessoa and Pamuk (Exile and Creativity 242). In her essay "Life in Translation: Exile in the Autobiographical Works of Kazimierz Brandys and Andrzej Bobkowski," Katarzyna Jerzak supports the idea that "the job of a writer often isolates him or her even in the homeland" ("Life in Translation" 4). In a display of his usual mood and perspective, Pessoa writes: "I'm physically nauseated by commonplace humanity, which is the only kind there is" (The Book of Disquietude 39). Pessoa's revulsion stems from his nervous sensibility as well as his negative opinion of modern life with its identical "succession of the same phrases" (39). As a writer, endowed with the ability to see beneath the façade of modern life, Pessoa, like Baudelaire before him, stands outside the crowds and observes the "intrigue, gossip, the loud boasting over what one didn't have the guts to do, the contentment of each miserable creature dressed with the unconscious consciousness of his own soul, sexuality without washing, the jokes like those of a ticklish monkey, their appalling ignorance of their utter unimportance" (40). Here, Pessoa views modern life as composed of a procession of unsuccessful attempts to hide and suppress life's inherent rottenness. In this particular statement, Pessoa approximates Adorno's later

view of modern life as an off-putting healthy façade that hides the deepest of diseases (Minima Moralia 59). For Pessoa, modern life requires the choice of either acting superficially as a man of action, or constantly escaping into a dream world. In a slightly exaggerated tone he writes that he “[has] to choose what [he] detests –either dreaming, which [his] intelligence hates, or action, which [his] sensibility loathes” (The Book of Disquietude 8). As an intellectual and a writer, Pessoa cannot fully engage with a world that requires constant action. The split of life into two worlds, the external world and the dream world, the latter of which, despite his protests Pessoa clearly prefers, results from this inability to completely function in the real world. Like Baudelaire’s Icarus chasing clouds, Pessoa, because of his artistic temperament, fully understands his displacement in the modern world. This world, writes Pessoa, “belongs to those who don’t feel ... Two things can hinder action—sensibility and analytic thought, this latter being no more than thought with sensibility” (186). In a sense, Pessoa’s alienation stems from the requirements of the modern world and the unfitness of someone with a sensitive temperament for the demands of life. Like Baudelaire and Dostoevsky before him, Pessoa expresses a general dissatisfaction with the condition of modern life, a life which excludes the search after non-practical pursuits.

In his memoir, Istanbul, Pamuk traces his childhood, adolescence, and youth in order to present his development into a writer. Unlike Pessoa, the fifty-year-old novelist retroactively presents his opinions and perceptions as a young child and adult in addition to his present views on life in his native city. From this retrospective view Pamuk claims that, even as a child, he experienced a condition similar to Pessoa’s displacement. Early in the memoir, Pamuk expresses his inclination for a “strange pastime commonly known

as daydreaming” (Istanbul 22). In addition to a common love of escaping to a dream world, Pamuk, like Pessoa before him, feels a vague disdain for the adult world that surrounds him. Apart from special people like his parents, Pamuk writes, “I cannot say I was very fond of adults in Istanbul, finding them in the main ugly, hairy, and coarse” (24). This early revulsion at the people that surround him, Pamuk implies, results from the overwhelming reality of their physical appearance and temperament. These adults, remembers Pamuk, seemed as though they had “lost their capacity for amazement and forgotten how to dream” (24). Like Pessoa, Pamuk observes that the people around him seem so immersed in reality and its demands that they become completely detached from an internal life. Indeed, Colin Thubron claims that, for Pamuk, “the quest for some childlike purity” represents the primary “condition of his art” (“Locked in the Writer’s Room” 3). Again, implied in Pamuk and overtly stated in Pessoa, life requires an active temperament and gradually erases the propensity for dreaming. Later in his life, specifically during the momentous and terrifying first year of school, Pamuk observes that “the first thing I learned at school was that some people are idiots; the second thing I learned was that some are even worse” (Istanbul 121). With this dismal realization, Pamuk distances himself from the majority of his peers. Fairly early, Pamuk realizes that school does not aim at providing clarity about life’s “most profound questions; rather its main function was to prepare us for ‘real life’ in all its political brutality” (126). Thus, in young Pamuk’s opinion, school, instead of attempting to provide answers for life’s fundamental questions and uncertainties, aims at preparing the student for the realities of a brutal world. Pamuk’s emphasis on the phrase *real world* suggests that the first step toward this indoctrination involves a gradual depletion of a dream world. And yet, the

boredom of the classroom aids young Pamuk in accessing his fantasy world instead of inhibiting it. In the midst of his observation of other classmates, Pamuk writes, “my eyes would float to the window, to the upper branches of the chestnut tree...the little cloud floating behind it; as the cloud moved it kept changing shape,” until the close watch of the cloud takes him home, his desired destination (122).

In the case of both Pessoa and Pamuk, the desire to escape to another world arises from a sense of boredom. The boredom that afflicts the two authors is not identical, however; Pessoa’s tedium resembles Baudelaire’s ennui, whereas Pamuk’s boredom stems from the child’s dreamy nature. In a number of aspects, Pessoa is the rightful heir of Baudelaire’s modern world. For Pessoa, every facet of the world, “all things, unto their roots of mystery, have the color of my boredom” (The Book of Disquietude 108). This overwhelming sense of fatigue and weariness belongs to the observer rather than the observed. Pessoa’s boredom is a permanent, rather than transitory, condition, and it does not spring from a lack of activity, but is “the greater disease of the feeling that there’s nothing worth doing” (287). This metaphysical fatigue mirrors Baudelaire’s view of life, one filled with illusions that are necessary in veiling the truth—that things are “semper eadem,” always the same (Les Fleurs du Mal 52). Indeed, Pessoa writes that monotony is the essence of life with its “dull sameness of equal days, with no difference between yesterday and today” (The Book of Disquietude 104). This persistent internal weariness results in a marked fragmentation of the author’s personality, a split which clearly illustrates Pessoa’s detachment from the real world. Because this ambivalence about life belongs to the author and thus cannot be shaken, Pessoa claims that he “observes [himself]. [He] is his own spectator. [His] sensations pass, like outer things, before [he]

doesn't know what gaze of [his]" (108). The author then becomes split into an observer and an actor. This duality, a phenomenon that Pessoa mentions several times, is a byproduct of modern life, the defining trait of modern man, but also a quality that usually belongs to the nervous, self-conscious and sensitive modern writer.

Pamuk displays a similar awareness of a personality split as he grows older. In his case, the split undoubtedly stems from an analytical mind which constantly observes the actions of others. Pamuk's personality split into an actor and observer resembles that of Pessoa but Pamuk does not display the same rejection of an active life. Rather, the observer inhibits the performer from fully engaging with life. In a sense, while the motivations possess a slight difference, the result remains the same: like a milder case of the Underground Man before them, both Pessoa and Pamuk become hindered by their overly-developed inner lives. As he grows into an adolescent boy, Pamuk remembers that anytime he manipulated someone or told a lie, "a great eye would swing out of nowhere to hang in the air before me—like some sort of security camera—and subject whatever I was doing to merciless scrutiny" (*Istanbul* 309). Pamuk continues to explicitly define the personality's split as a simultaneous presence of two existences. He becomes, he says "at once my film's director and its star, in the thick of things but also watching from a mocking distance" (309). "Such passages" in Pamuk's work, writes Thubron, "verge on the melting identities of Fernando Pessoa and his The Book of Disquiet" ("Locked in the Writer's Room" 5). Certainly, the constant presence of an observer, perhaps the harshest observer, the self, inhibits the young Orhan from being a performer. Resulting emotions of shame and embarrassment cause the author to feel

more comfortable in his role as observer, perhaps a required preference for a successful modern author.

In both cases, the analytical gaze creates sensations of displacement and an acute estrangement from the outside environment. Pamuk clearly demonstrates his discomfort with external life when he writes that during the times that he “was the performer and not the spectator, [he] could not feel at home” (*Istanbul* 322). The “mocking gaze inward” causes an estrangement not only from the external world but also from his family (321). For Pamuk, the gulf created between him and his family, and then his city, becomes the appropriate definition of misery, a state which Matei Calinescu refers to as “internal exile,” a condition that is a “private and largely imaginary state” (“Readings of Saint-John Perse’s ‘Exil’” 66). In the past, writes the author, “misery meant feeling out of place, in one’s home, one’s family and one’s city” (*Istanbul* 321). Thus, for Pamuk the dualism that arises from boredom and an analytical mind causes alienation and misery. The distance created between Pamuk and his family causes sensations of distress because to be alienated from one’s closest family, people who shape a person’s identity from an early age, translates into an estrangement from a part of the self. While Pamuk’s estrangement is partly transitory and linked with the difficult age of adolescence, Pessoa’s alienation lies deep within him. He writes that he feels completely alone in the world because “to analyze is to be foreign” (*The Book of Disquietude* 52). Pessoa mostly exists in his thoughts when to act means to live and, thus, estranges himself not only from his surroundings but himself as well. In addition to experiencing a detachment from the world and his life, Pessoa feels exiled from his thoughts. In a sense, he almost does not exist; in a moment of contemplation, he realizes that even at the center of his thoughts, he

is “an abruptly solitary man who finds himself exiled where he’d always considered himself a citizen” (25). Therefore, while Pamuk’s inward gaze creates estrangement from the self, as well as a temporary distance from his family, his alienation seems surmountable, temporary, whereas Pessoa’s estrangement appears to be insurmountable; alienation from his own thoughts transforms the author into a barely existent entity.

Pessoa’s vague and amorphous identity results from his obstinate attachment to another world, the world of thoughts and dreams. For both authors, the realm of dreams and imagination acquires a greater weight and importance than the real world. The second world momentarily represents a place of exile fulfilled, of internal “exile as escape from the brutally confining reality” (“Readings of Saint-John Perse’s ‘Exil’” 65). For Pessoa, this imaginary world possesses not only more importance but a greater degree of concreteness than the real world. During his days, Pessoa writes, “I’ve never done anything but dream. This and this alone has been the meaning of my life. My only real concern has been my inner life” (58). In this statement, Pessoa claims his place as a member of the modernists; as J.P. Stern has said of Thomas Mann, “consciousness, in this situation, is presented as the enemy of life, as a spirituality which exacts an understanding over and above the needs of practical life,” the same could be said of Pessoa’s perspective on the world and his strict emphasis on the analysis of an internal life (Modernism 425). This dream life is best accessed through literature and, in turn, can result in literature. The best point of entry into this world, Pessoa writes, “the best way to start dreaming is through books” (The Book of Disquietude 256). Thus, novels act as an entry point into the other world. But, the role of books, novels in particular, does not necessarily stop at the beginning of the dream. If one possesses the talent and inclination

to write, the last stage of dreaming “is to construct one’s own novels” (257). For Pessoa, reading, dreaming and creating are inextricably tied to one another. The Book of Disquietude, a strict exploration of the author’s inner life, represents the concrete instance of that belief. The importance that Pessoa places on dreams is fully justified by the presence of this work. His dreams result in something concrete and lasting such as art, while his daily existence consists of an empty and monotonous office job. While “to act is to live,” and simple life means little to Pessoa, “to be expressed is to endure” (19). Expression for him assumes greater importance than living, primarily because he views his life as severely limited. Because Pessoa stays in the same place and in the same job for most of his life, writing and dreaming offer a way out of this monotonous existence. At the room in which he writes, Pessoa continues, “I’m less of a petty, anonymous employee. I write words as if they were the soul’s salvation” (10). In this way, the creation of art offers an alternate existence and an expansion of reality’s possibilities. Only through the process of writing can the author experience “the nocturnal glory of being great without being anything” (10). Thus, art, initially inspired by dreams, acts as another existence when real life is limited and unsatisfying.

In a similar way, Pamuk cites literature as a necessary means of accessing his imaginary world, and in turn connects his dream life with the creation of art. In fact, Pamuk takes a step further and compares literature to medicine that keeps him sane. In order to feel happiness, Pamuk writes, “I must have my daily dose of literature” (Other Colors 3). This daily dose of literature affords two primary benefits for the author: the happiness that results from entrance “into that world” (4), the world of a novel, and the isolation that the very nature of the reading process provides, “a room where [he] can be

alone with [his] thoughts” (5). While literature becomes a way of entering into this happy, other world, the process of writing represents a means of shaping the author’s fantasies. Indeed, Pamuk states, prose writers “choose [their] subjects, and shape [their] novels, to suit [their] daily daydream requirements” (6). Like Pessoa, for Pamuk the world of dreams serves as the main engine for the writing process. In Istanbul, “the more authentic second life,” the imaginary life is “none other than the book in your hand” (Istanbul 8). Pamuk’s need to inhabit and then create a second life results from his decision to stay in one place. From the early stages of his childhood, he suspects the existence of “another Orhan so much like me that he could pass for my twin, even my double” (3). The sensation of this other, discomforting existence comes from the author’s suspicion that “there was more to my world than I could see,” that life contained more than one person’s perspective in one city (3). Pamuk explicitly links the sensation of another life, his double, living somewhere beyond him to the simple fact that he has “never left Istanbul, never left the houses, streets and neighborhoods of [his] childhood” (5). The fulfillment of the second life, the book, owes its existence to the unexplored life, the life of the other Orhan. Thus, in the case of both Pamuk and Pessoa, writing serves as a vehicle for the fulfillment of unexplored possibilities.

Pamuk attributes the awareness of another life, the elsewhere existence of his double, to the stability of his life. If one stays in the place of one’s birth and childhood, the author seems to say, surely there must be another version of him that leads a different, perhaps a more adventurous, life. While Pamuk’s double exists simultaneously with the author, but in another place, Pessoa’s expresses the longing to live anywhere but where he is. In the expression of this desire, Pessoa reflects the condition and words of his

predecessor, Baudelaire. The sensation of being imprisoned in one specific place causes the author to exclaim that he “want[s] to depart—not for the impossible Indies or for the great islands south of everything, but for any place at all—village or wilderness—that isn’t this place” (The Book of Disquietude 100). This desire to exist anywhere but the place assigned by life is a topic frequently discussed by Baudelaire. In “Anywhere out of the World,” the French poet states: “il me semble que je serais toujours bien là où je ne suis pas, et cette question de déménagement en est une que je discute sans cesse avec mon âme” (Twenty Prose Poems 70). In the same way, both authors struggle with the persistent thought that somewhere else, perhaps just beyond them, life can offer something different, if not better. This particular struggle has little to do with the specific place in which each author feels imprisoned; instead, the very state of remaining in one place causes this oscillatory condition. At the core, this persistent desire for something else results from both authors’ inability to achieve any semblance of happiness or satisfaction. In a statement identical to Baudelaire’s, Pessoa writes that he has “always belonged to what isn’t where I am and to what I could never be. Whatever isn’t mine, no matter how base, has always had poetry for me” (The Book of Disquietude 58). In Pessoa’s case, the failure to be satisfied with present life in its location stems from the same source as Pamuk’s suspicion of another, double existence; namely the awareness that life, the world, must have more to offer than a limited existence in one specific spot. The unseen and unlived world tempts both authors with its promises of a different existence.

And yet, neither author abandons the city of his birth and adulthood. At the beginning of his adolescence, Pessoa briefly moves to South Africa with his family, but

later returns to Lisbon. Similarly, Pamuk for a short period of time, lives in the States, but he too returns to Istanbul. The reasons that influence their decisions to stay in their respective cities are of a slightly different nature; whereas Pamuk feels inextricably tied to his city, Pessoa thinks that any place is as good as another. With his characteristic weariness, Pessoa thinks that he'll "never leave Douradores Street," the street of his monotonous existence (23). Several obstacles prevent Pessoa from changing location, primarily the belief that one's perspective and character remain the same even when the scenery changes. Oppressed by the routine of his life, Pessoa admits that "the monotony of everything is merely the monotony of myself" (100). In any place, because of his character, Pessoa would conclude that nothing is worth doing. The thought of travel fails to inspire or impress him because he has "already seen what I have never seen. I have already seen what I have yet to see" (73). The change of place cannot force the writer outside of himself. In this sense, Pessoa, without traveling, echoes the words of Baudelaire's travelers in "Le Voyage": "Amer savoir, celui qu'on tire du voyage! / le monde, monotone et petit, aujourd'hui, / hier, demain, toujours, nous fait voir notre image: / une oasis d'horreur dans un désert d'ennui!" (Les Fleurs du Mal 100). Like these travelers, Pessoa reaches the conclusion that the world he has not seen is as boring as his limited place in it because he believes that everything is always the same. Both in Pessoa and Baudelaire, boredom and dissatisfaction characterize man's existence, regardless of location.

Another reason Pessoa and Pamuk remain faithful to the same place emerges in their need for stability. For the two authors, while the imaginary realm represents one creative outlet, their actual surroundings occupy an equally important role. Both

negatively, as a point of departure and contrast and positively as a stabilizing center, the two authors need their routine surroundings in order to create. In addition to the daily dose of literature, Pamuk adds that in order to “write well I must first be bored to distraction; to be bored to distraction, I must enter into life. It is when I am bombarded with noise, sitting in an office full of ringing phones, surrounded by friends and loved ones,” that the writer suddenly becomes overwhelmed by the urge to write (Other Colors 5). Therefore, life and his surroundings present as necessary a component of the creative process as isolation from reality. The boredom caused by routine accompanied by the comfort of being surrounded by friends allows the writer to detach from his surroundings and imagine something else. Pessoa writes of a similar condition when he states that his life, though undesirable to a degree, creates the perfect conditions for his pastime, dreaming. If life were perfect, asks Pessoa “what would I have left to dream?” (The Book of Disquietude 104). Instead of having a better life, Pessoa states, it seems “better to have Vasques my boss than the kings of dreamed worlds; better, after all the office on Douradores street than the grand promenades of impossible parks. Having Vasques, I can enjoy dreaming of kings” (104). But even though the authors establish reality as a desirable element in the process of writing, in these two statements life possesses a negative meaning as something to be escaped, evaded. Life remains a point of departure for the other world and serves merely as a contrast for the other, better world.

In a positive sense, both authors need their familiar surroundings in order to create. Pessoa believes that when one possesses an active imagination, an actual change is unnecessary. In addition, because he mostly lives in his vague and unstable world of the mind, the author needs his familiar environment and routine in order to function.

Pessoa states that “like every individual of great mental mobility, I have an organic and fatal love of settledness. I abhor new ways of life and unfamiliar places” (73). Because of the dream world’s uncertainty, Pessoa needs his street and office in order to create. In a rare moment of near happiness, Pessoa writes that, for once, he “walked down the street peacefully, full of certainty, because the office I work at and the people who work with me are, after all certainties” (41). The stable, if at times undesirable, environment serves as an anchor in the author’s dreamy and vague existence. The author goes one step further and expresses a somewhat uncertain affection for the elements that make up his external life. While describing his office and Douradores Street, he states that he “feels love for this, perhaps because I have nothing else to love” (12). Although a slightly sad declaration of affection, Pessoa remains tied to the place selected and assigned to him.

Similarly, Pamuk explains that his decision to remain, not only in the same city, but also the same house in which he was born, stems from a combination of a certain laziness and love of routine. Not only does Pamuk stay in Istanbul but he states that “never once did I entertain the idea of leaving the city. This wasn’t owing to any great love of the place where I lived, but rather a deep-seated reluctance to abandon habits and houses that had made me the sort who was just too lazy to try out something new” (Istanbul 313). In a vein similar to Pessoa’s, Pamuk, at this point presenting the perspective of the younger Orhan, suggests that the familiarity with his surroundings, which have shaped him as an individual, rather than a strong affection, prevents him from leaving the city assigned to him. He not only needs his surroundings to feel safe and create, but he also cites routine as the only source of any sort of happiness. As he speaks of his family, a closer and more effective anchor than Pessoa’s office colleagues, Pamuk

exclaims that routine is “the source of all happiness, its guarantee, and its death” (81). Routine, specifically familial life in his native city, provides the only happiness because it offers security from the outside world. In the sheltered environment that protects the young future writer from an alien world, safety equals happiness. The statement is telling in another way, however; routine becomes the death of happiness as well because it creates boredom, and boredom, in turn, leads to the desire for another more exciting existence. In this phrase, Pamuk captures the simultaneous state of happiness and unhappiness created by the safety of remaining in one’s original environment. In addition to the connection between familiar surroundings and a state of happiness, Pamuk admits that, with time, he has accepted his native city as the only destiny handed to him. In the first chapter of his memoir, the chapter in which the older and wiser author details the scope and purpose of his work, Pamuk explains that despite the fact that the persistent question of “why were we born in this particular corner of the world, on this particular date?” might remain partly mysterious, for him, the answer is fate (6). He writes that, in time, he has “accepted the city into which I was born in the same way that I’ve accepted my body...this is my fate, and there’s no sense arguing with it” (7). While the place and life apportioned him might possess flaws, Pamuk accepts his city as his destiny. Like Pessoa, Pamuk at first refuses to leave the city because of comfort and later realizes that, for partly unknown reasons, his fate is inextricably tied to that of Istanbul.

Indeed, Pamuk’s decision to become a writer stems from his eventual acceptance and understanding of his city. While home “served as a center for the world in my mind—as an escape, in both the negative and positive sense of the word,” the understanding of his city leads Pamuk to understand himself and make the decision to

become a writer (89). Unlike Pessoa, for Pamuk, the surrounding environment does not act solely as an anchor; while the author claims that the book in the reader's hands is a fulfillment of his second life, the reader must not forget that this same book describes the past and present incarnations of Istanbul. Towards the end of the work, Pamuk recounts his numerous walks around the city, walks taken as a student in an outward rejection of school. During this specific time, Pamuk, who had previously discarded a career as a painter, studied architecture. Realizing that architecture fails to ignite his imagination, the author-to-be walks around the city, in search of "the 'truer' life I thought I should be living" (343). During his excursions in the city, the young Orhan finds objects, such as "a few old books, a calling card, an old postcard," a process which Pamuk equates to "the Coleridge hero who wakes to find himself holding the rose of his dreams" (354). In this particular equation, the real world and the second, imaginary realm collide. In the next sentence, Pamuk writes that "these objects were not of the second world, which had brought me so much contentment as a child, but of a real world that matched my memories" (354). The roads and objects that point Pamuk to his future and correct fate, to his role as an author, belong to the city and not the second world. While the second world remains a necessary realm for the processes of imagining and creating, the city remains Pamuk's primary source of inspiration. Indeed, in an interesting comparison to exiled authors, Pamuk states that while the imaginations of these authors "were fed by exile, a nourishment drawn not through roots but through rootlessness," his imagination "requires that [he] stay in the same city, on the same street, in the same house, gazing at the same view" (6). Here, Pamuk clearly identifies the city as his fundamental and most important inspiration.

The fact that Pamuk's realization of his fate as a writer stems from his acceptance and understanding of his city, reveals that the city and Pamuk are reflections of each other; the city reflects the author and the author, in turn, reflects the city. While Pamuk's acceptance of the city as his fate mirrors the acceptance of his own nature, for Pessoa Lisbon serves as a mirror in which the author fails to see himself as before. Initially, even for Pamuk, the city provides the writer with a sense of displacement and alienation. Indeed, writes Pamuk, "Istanbul is a place where, for the past 150 years, no one has been able to feel completely at home" (115). The city's general air of displacement possesses two sources: the West, an external force, which provides the primary definition of the city, and the remnants of the Ottoman Empire that imbue Istanbul with an air of melancholy. The fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the subsequent effort to westernize Istanbul, change the nature of the city. The inability to return to a glorious past creates the desire in the city's inhabitants not only to "westernize and modernize," but also to "be rid of all the bitter memories of the fallen empire" (29). The goal of westernization requires that the inhabitants of Istanbul always judge their city from two simultaneous perspectives: those of an insider and outsider. Indeed, Pamuk writes that because "for centuries the only literature our city inspired was penned by Westerners"(240) he, as someone fed on western literature and admiring of Western writers, admits that "there is something foreign in my way of looking at the city" (241). Thubron states that Pamuk's foreignness arises from his position as "a Turkish author," who remains suspended "geographically and culturally between the two specious concepts East and West" ("Locked in the Writer's Room" 5). Pamuk's perspective echoes Malcolm Bradbury's view of mainstream modernist art, which he claims, "gained its perspective out of a

certain kind of distance, an exilic posture” (Modernism 100). In Pamuk, this distance is created by the influence of the West, which in shaping and defining the city creates in its inhabitants a sense of alienation accompanied by an enhanced, dual gaze that sharpens his understanding of the city. In addition to a sense of displacement, this aim to modernize emerges in the destruction of the buildings of the past. The traces of the past, however, refuse to disappear; instead, these remnants continue to exist and impart a sense of melancholy to Istanbul. Pamuk names the specific type of melancholy unique to Istanbul *hüzün*, a collective sadness that "the entire city feels together and affirms as one" (Istanbul105). The collective nature of *hüzün* separates it from conditions like tedium and ennui that belong to the solitary individual. *Hüzün*, Istanbul's permanent state of melancholy, arises from the presence of the past's ruins, a presence that signifies that for the city and its people "the starting point is that the beauties of the past are lost forever" (114). The constant state of Istanbul and İstanbul, repeats Pamuk, is a state of resignation and loss.

The nostalgic nature of Pamuk's memoir emerges from the shadowy presence of this glorious past. In the article "Thanks for the Memory," Amos Elon categorizes Pamuk's memoir as a "spectral portrait of his city" ("Thanks for the Memory" 2). In a sense, the author grieves for a past that he did not experience. In both Pamuk and Pessoa, nostalgia for the nonexistent, or the no longer existent, pervades their works. As usual, Pessoa's nostalgia is shapeless and lacks a definite source. Pessoa claims to feel pain over imaginary absences and "people and things that were nothing to me" (The Book of Disquietude 303). The author's nostalgia for apparently unimportant events and people betrays his true fear, "an anxiety over time's fleeing, a sickness of life's mystery" (303).

The pain of losing things, even when of little importance, signifies a fear of both the passing of time and the inevitable changes such passing brings. Only the passage of time causes change, Pessoa writes, and just "to live" is already enough "to be other" (61). According to Pessoa, life's inherent nature presumes change and loss. What the author mourns is not only the passing of time accompanied by its inevitable losses, but the gradual loss of his previous selves. The author claims that what he loves most are "my sensations—states of conscious seeing, impressions of an alert hearing, and aromas through which the humility of the outside world speaks to me of things from the past (easily remembered by their smells)" (125). He feels nostalgia over his previous states of being and not for the events that inspired such states. In the poem "Lisbon, Revisited (1926)," Pessoa explicitly mourns the inevitable changes that create an unbridgeable rift between him and his native city. The constant mirror of his life, Lisbon, "city of [his] sorrow and joy," fails to offer the reflection that the author demands (Poems of Fernando Pessoa 96). In a reverse situation to that of Baudelaire in "The Swan," Pessoa mourns not the change of the city, but his own transformation. He directly addresses his words to the city: "Once again I see you, / but myself, alas, I fail to see! / Shattered, the magical mirror where I saw myself identical" (97). Here, the displacement of the poet stems from the incongruity between the city's reflection and his memories, an incongruity that, differently from that of Baudelaire, results from the change in the poet and not the city. In any case, in Pessoa, as in Baudelaire and Pamuk, the native city serves as a mirror in which each author measures the passage of time and contemplates his own reflection.

The sense of nostalgia that pervades Pamuk's memoir emerges from a past that the author never directly experienced, the glorious past of the Ottoman Empire. In his

attempt to present Istanbul from multiple perspectives, Pamuk cites Melling, a European painter, as a favorite influence in the definition of the author's native city. Melling, who "saw the city like an İstanbullu but painted it like a clear-eyed Westerner," depicted scenes of the city in the 18th century (Istanbul 75). Because the depictions emerge from the still affluent period of the Ottoman Empire, Melling's scenes cause sadness in Pamuk, who realizes that "part of what makes Melling's paintings so beautiful is the sad knowledge that what they depict no longer exists" (63). The sadness of Pamuk's work results from this nostalgic look at the lost past of the city, a past whose present ruins are "reminders that the present city is so poor and confused that it can never again dream of rising to its former heights of wealth, power, and culture" (101). And yet, Pamuk's reconciliation with the inevitable presence of these ruins becomes the factor that decides the author's future as a writer. After the loss of his first love, Pamuk finally understands the nature of Istanbul and realizes that the city reflects its inhabitants just as they shape the city. "When the loss was still new," writes Pamuk on the subject of his first love, he sees "my mood reflected everywhere" (346). For the first time, the city that reflects the author's emotional state provides "this sense of belonging, this sense of sitting in the heart of the city" (346). Through his experience of a first real loss, the author understands not only that, above all, he "loved Istanbul for its ruins, for its *hüzün*, for the glories once possessed and later lost," but also that this love for the city emerges from the realization that his appreciation of Istanbul is inextricably tied to an understanding of his own nature (354). Both the city and its inhabitants, in this case Pamuk, absorb each other's nature and "anything we say about the city's essence says more about our own lives and our own

states of mind" (349). In this way, the city becomes a part of the author just as he is a part of the city; both exchange and determine the nature of the other.

In addition to tying the author to the city, *hüzün*, as a collective state of melancholy, establishes a common bond between the members of the community. Belonging to a once great city that at present feels, in some ways, lesser than the West, defines the notion of *hüzün*, in which the community members "see [themselves] reflected [and] absorb with pride and share as a community" (94). The fall from affluence causes both shame and pride—shame in being poorer than the West, and pride in being singular, different from other places and communities. *Hüzün*, the feeling that connects Pamuk to his co-citizens, represents the engine of this specific work. In a sense, Pamuk's work, which at times seems characterized by a solitary melancholy, possesses a collective nature. In describing all the facets that separate Istanbul from other large European cities, the facets that define *hüzün* like old cars, the abandoned boxes left in a street market, the unemployed drinking coffee, Pamuk claims that he "speaks of them all" (99). Here, the author implies that he aims to describe all these aspects, but also speaks for them, becomes their mouthpiece. In addition to the inclusion of chapters that discuss Istanbul from the viewpoint of other authors, painters, and journalists, Pamuk recounts that, as a response to his writing on Istanbul, acquaintances would request that he include "their favorites" (214). Despite his occasional displacement and alienation, Pamuk, through this work, not only immortalizes his native city in the present condition, but, as a member of the city and the community, creates a multi-perspectival portrait of Istanbul.

While Pamuk feels himself a member of a community and writes the work with this collective voice in mind, Pessoa's work is more solitary in nature. And yet, even

Pessoa shares a connection with others; his connection, however, is generational rather than location specific. While Pessoa claims that "this book is a single state of soul, analyzed from all sides, investigated in all directions," the ubiquitous usage of the pronoun *we* implies that the focus of Pessoa's work is not strictly solitary (The Book of Disquietude 200). Pessoa's *we* represents the men of his generation, men like him "with no illusions, [who] lived by dreaming, which is the illusion of those who can't have illusions. Living out of ourselves, we became smaller, for the complete man is the one who doesn't know himself" (184). Pessoa's voice belongs to the time that gave birth to it, the time in which war erased any concrete faith in man. A child of his time and a representative of modernism, Pessoa speaks for the men of his generation. His work possesses a collective voice in a generational sense, but he also writes "for those few like me who live without knowing how to have a life" (7). This introductory statement gathers the dreamers, like Pessoa, who cannot fully engage with active life. While in Pamuk's case, the city establishes the community, Pessoa speaks for a greater group, his generation, and a selective, limited one made of dreamers and writers like him.

Regardless of their difficulties with reality and the world, both writers only find the short moments of happiness that their natures allow them in their respective cities and communities. For Pessoa, there are no beauties in the world, "no flowers like the variegated coloring of Lisbon on a sunny day" (32). The few happy moments for Pessoa result from his musings and contact with the city. Although nearly never content, the author claims that "it really takes very little to satisfy me; the rain having stopped, there being a bright sun in this happy South...this entire familiar corner of the universe" (41). While the same corner creates indefinable desires and disdain for his surroundings, it also

provides the only moments of happiness in his work. Like Pessoa, Pamuk cites the Bosphorus, the strait that divides the Asian and European side of Istanbul, as his and other İstanbullular's source of happiness and renewal. The strait, writes Pamuk, is perceived by the city's inhabitants as a "cure of their ills, the infinite source of goodness and goodwill" (Istanbul 61). Despite life's disappointments and sadness, "whatever happens," Pamuk writes "I can always take a walk along the Bosphorus" (61). In the case of both authors, the city plays the dual role of a simultaneously afflicting and healing entity. Like Pamuk's definition of routine, the close and physical tie to the city both causes and damages the authors' happiness.

Chapter 3: Physical Exile

The ones who leave: Nabokov, Brodsky, Aciman

In the essay “The Condition We Call Exile,” Joseph Brodsky states that “displacement and misplacement are this century’s commonplace” (On Grief and Reason 23). Indeed, the phenomenon of exile defines the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and as a result, much of these centuries’ literature explores this specific topic. In the twentieth century, the various transformations and political systems, especially the rise and fall of communism, enabled a previously unseen mass migration and the forceful expulsion of a great number of people. Political and religious issues constitute the primary reasons for the expulsion and consequent exile of Vladimir Nabokov, Joseph Brodsky and André Aciman. The lives of Nabokov and Brodsky were profoundly affected by communism. The rise of communism in Russia caused the escape of Nabokov’s White Russian family from St. Petersburg. Nabokov initially lived in Berlin and Paris, and in the late 1930s moved to the United States. Although he spent several decades in America, Nabokov died in his native European continent, in Switzerland³. Constant migration and movement characterized the author’s life and, as a result of communism’s strictness and rejection of individual freedom, he was unable ever to revisit his native place and the city of his privileged childhood, St. Petersburg. In the novel *The*

³ In *Imagining Nabokov: Russia between Art and Politics*, Nina L. Krushcheva discusses the author’s life in Switzerland and the journey through Europe and America that led him there.

Gift, Nabokov, through his protagonist, Fyodor Godunov-Cherdyntsev, presents the young author's exile and displacement in Berlin. In his characteristic contrarian nature, Nabokov insists that although he "had been living in Berlin since 1922, thus synchronously with the young man of the book," the reader should not be misguided by this fact, "nor my sharing some of his interests, such as literature and lepidoptera, should make one say 'aha' and identify the designer with the design" (The Gift, *Foreword*). Despite this statement and common episodes in The Gift and Nabokov's memoir Speak, Memory, Nabokov insists that Fyodor and the author are not interchangeable beings. But The Gift undoubtedly presents the author's situation and emotions while in exile. As Brodsky confidently states, "what goes into writing a book—be it a novel, a philosophical treatise, a collection of poems, a biography, or a thriller—is, ultimately, a man's only life" (On Grief and Reason 97). An author writes about his own life and experiences, even when he explores these experiences through a mediator, a novel's protagonist.

Like Nabokov, but without his privileged and wealthy childhood, Brodsky left St. Petersburg when threatened and arrested by the communist party. He escaped from St. Petersburg and the Baltic, for which one "had indeed to be an eel to escape my part of it" (Watermark 6). Brodsky, like Nabokov, never returned to St. Petersburg and spent most of his life in America, teaching and writing. Yet, despite the conscious decision to live in the United States, the author took yearly trips to Venice, "Petersburg's extension into a better history, not to mention latitude" (38). Because he does not possess the professed nonchalance of Nabokov, Brodsky, embittered by his country's politics, resists the open display of nostalgia for his native city; and yet, such nostalgia becomes apparent in his

depictions of Venice, the replacement of his native city. Perhaps as a result of this substitution and resistance, the author's condition of exile emerges as an especially painful state.

Aciman, the youngest and most recent author of this thesis, also left Alexandria, his native city, for political reasons. When the author was a teenager, the Egyptian government, inflamed by an attack from France, Britain, and Israel, expelled these countries' citizens, including "many Jews: everyone had assets, businesses and properties seized by the state" (False Papers 6)⁴. As the author and his family were wealthy Jewish Alexandrians, the government expelled them from the country and seized their properties. Aciman first moved to Italy, a period that also includes numerous trips to France, and later relocated to the United States, specifically New York, which became Aciman's permanent residence. Unlike Nabokov and Brodsky, Aciman returned to his native city of Alexandria, as he discussed in his collection of essays entitled False Papers. Because of this ability to return, Aciman can examine exile and its consequences from multiple angles; in his collection, Aciman discusses the unsatisfactory return to his native city, his anticipated nostalgia, and many other results of exile. While his essays lack the gravity and pain of Brodsky and Nabokov, perhaps as a result of his ability to return and see his native city, they represent useful and insightful tools in the analysis of exile and memory.

Despite their slightly different stories and literary products, a common thread links the experience of all three exiled authors, namely the constant interference of the past in their present lives and surroundings. As mentioned, Edward Said, another important author and critic whose life and work were also heavily influenced by his

⁴ Aciman recounts the expulsion of his family from Alexandria in his memoir, Out of Egypt.

exiled condition, defines exile as “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home,” a rift whose “essential sadness can never be surmounted” (Reflections on Exile 173). He continues by describing exile as “a discontinuous state of being,” because “exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past” (177). According to this definition, the condition of exile denotes a forceful detachment from the native place and an aggressive interruption in the normal flow of life. Expatriation uproots the individual from an original place and removes him to new soil that requires changes in his already formed constitution and character. This “unhealable rift” causes the division of life into multiple, seemingly unconnected parts, a division which, in turn, creates a fragmentary existence that includes the simultaneous influences of both the old and adopted homes, yet belongs suspended between the two. The original place loses its status as a home at the moment of exile, a term which according to Brodsky “covers, at best, the very moment of departure, of expulsion” (On Grief and Reason 31). Yet, while the exile’s native place can never fully represent home again, this place, most commonly a city, affects and influences the perception and appreciation, or lack thereof, of every succeeding “home” and experience. The head of the writer in exile, notes Brodsky in “The Condition We Call Exile,” remains “like the false prophets of Dante’s *Inferno*, forever turned backward” (27). The explanation for this fixed backward glance lies in the fundamental role that the original home, specifically one’s native city and the environment of the formative years, occupies in the development of the individual, his tastes and modes of perception. This double life, writes Katarzyna Jerzak, constitutes exile’s “distinct chronotope. This chronotope is characterized by a doubled perception of reality: the exile functions in a new world, but

his inner compass is invariably pointed back home” (“Life in Translation” 1). Memory, therefore, assumes the dominant function in the life of an exiled author. While the sense of home remains permanently out of the exiled author’s reach, memory, in its involuntary form, repeatedly yet momentarily transports the exile home; through voluntary memory, specifically the methodical revisiting and retrieval of the past, the author attempts to retain the self intact. In their works, Nabokov, Brodsky, and Aciman emphasize their attachment to their respective native cities and analyze the inevitable damage that the separation from the place of origin inflicts on the self and life.

According to all three authors’ experience, once separated from the native city, the sense of home becomes irretrievably lost. The original home ceases to represent the definitive and uncontested home as a result of separation and the new experiences in the adopted permanent location. Aciman, writing after a return journey to Alexandria, a return during which he “had hoped finally to let go of this city,” simply states that Alexandria, though always present in his thoughts, “is no longer home for me” (False Papers 21). Here, the author notes that the city, in a physical sense, has lost its privileged position as home for the author. Thus, the experiences in other places, the author’s physical distance from his native city and his permanent location in New York, have robbed Alexandria of its role as home. For Brodsky, the inability to return to St. Petersburg enforces the irreversible loss of his original native city. St. Petersburg can never again represent the author’s home because the separation from the city remains absolute and permanent. Nabokov was unable to return to communist Russia. Although he admits that “anything on any continent resembling the St. Petersburg countryside and my heart melts,” Nabokov claims that while he experiences the occasional temptation to

“see again my former surroundings,” this wish can only be fulfilled by “revisiting them with a false passport, under an assumed name” (Speak, Memory 250). But, the author adds wistfully, although “it could be done,” he does “not think I shall ever do it” (250). The author rejects the possibility of the wish’s fulfillment because he knows that the lengthy physical and temporal absence from his home has deprived St. Petersburg of its role as home. A return would be futile, concludes Nabokov, because he has “been dreaming of it too idly and too long” (250). Time and distance create the unfixable rift between the author and his native city. While the city remains a constant presence in each author’s mind, and as Aciman writes, “the longing would start again soon enough,” the original city cannot revert to being home for the three authors (False Papers 21).

The separation from the native city results not only in that place’s failure to reclaim the title of being the definitive home, but also in the inability to find a new home in new surroundings; indeed, the exile can never find a new home, once he loses his original one. In a sense, the permanent loss of the sense of home and belonging represents the most important consequence of exile. In the essay “Shadow Cities,” Aciman defines an exile as “not just someone who has lost his home,” but as “someone who can’t find another, who can’t think of another” (39). In some cases, Aciman adds, implying that he counts himself a member of this group, the replacement of the original home remains unthinkable because “some no longer even know what home means” (39). The finality of the loss of this important definition echoes Baudelaire’s insightful diagnosis of exiles as beings that have “perdu ce qui ne se retrouve / jamais, jamais!” (Les Fleurs du Mal 76). The author’s emphasis on the word *never* in the conclusion of “The Swan” betrays the permanent inability to belong anywhere, not just the loss of a

particular city or country. For various reasons, the exile, once separated from his original environment, can never fully rebuild a new home. In all these three authors, two reasons emerge as the fundamental obstacles to adapting to a new place: the authors' own forced refusal and rejection of the new place as home, and the unbidden and uncontrollable interference of the past.

For all the authors, the adopted place refuses to transform itself into a new home. In Brodsky and Aciman's case, America becomes the permanent abode, but because of the constant presence of the past, as well as their own resistance, it fails to acquire the name and characteristics of home. Nabokov, through Fyodor, expresses his dislike of and detachment from Berlin, a temporary residence. In "Shadow Cities," Aciman writes that one of his favorite places in New York, Straus Park affords the author a sensation of belonging because "depending on where I sat, or on which corner I moved within the park, I could be in any of four or five countries and never for a second be in the one I couldn't avoid hearing, seeing and smelling" (False Papers 43). For Aciman, New York represents a point of departure for his constant imaginings of other places. This city, he adds, "is my home precisely because it is a place from which I can begin to be elsewhere—an analogue city, a surrogate city, a shadow city" (46). New York, therefore, assumes the shaky role of home precisely because it offers no false delusions of constituting a real home. Instead, the amalgamation of different cultures and architectural styles activates Aciman's imaginary transportation to other, more beloved places. The shadow presence of these other cities affords the author the temporary illusion of being home; New York acts as a tunnel that transports the author to his preferred places.

Similarly, Brodsky's life in America contains all the necessary components for success, such as an illustrious career as professor and writer and the admiration of his contemporaries. Perhaps because of this successful professional life, Brodsky experiences difficulties at times in addressing the hardships of the exiled writer. Speaking at a conference about exile, the author explains that "in this attractive and well-lit room," the thought of all the refugees "who, quite naturally didn't make it to this room" (On Grief and Reason 22), creates problems, makes "it very difficult to talk with a straight face about the plight of the writer in exile" (23). Brodsky's resistance in addressing his own difficulties as a writer arises as a result of his successful and well-settled life in the United States. And yet, in Watermark, his literary hymn to St. Petersburg via Venice, Brodsky implies that America for him is a transitory rather than permanent home. While the author refers to Venice as his "version of Paradise," America remains for him "a kind of Purgatorio" (Watermark 19). The status of America as purgatory places the author's three tentative homes in perspective: St. Petersburg, because of its history and adopted identity as Leningrad, represents the hell from which one "had indeed to be an eel to escape" (6); Venice assumes the role of Paradise, because of its likeness to St. Petersburg, with "a better history" (38); and America occupies the in-between place of a waiting room. America, as purgatory, a place that is not as negative as hell but worse than paradise, assumes a transitory nature; in fact, America functions as a bridge between the place that must be escaped and the desired destination. The author's designation of his seemingly permanent home as purgatory betrays his detachment from it.

Like Brodsky and Aciman, Nabokov's protagonist fails to feel at home in Berlin, his newly permanent residence. Walking in the streets of Berlin, Fyodor resents their forced familiarity. These streets, Fyodor thinks, "that had already long since insinuated themselves into his acquaintance," are not satisfied with this detached familiarity but, "as if that were not enough, they expected affection" (The Gift 53). Here, Fyodor expresses disdain for the city which uselessly requires an affection that the young author feels unable to give. The young man cannot respond to the city's streets precisely because Berlin fails to move him as a home; for Fyodor, the city remains foreign. The permanent foreignness of the city emerges in two contrasting poems that the aspiring young poet writes about, St. Petersburg and Berlin. The poem on St. Petersburg is not discussed at length; the author merely suggests that its content is positive judging from the response of Fyodor's mother, who "liked so much" the poems "on Russia" (93). The poem on Berlin, however, expresses Fyodor's lack of affection and growing detachment from the city. While the poem on Russia starts with the line "the yellow birches in the blue sky..." (93), the poem on Berlin, presented immediately after the Russian poem, claims that "things here are in a sorry state; / even the moon is much too rough / though it is rumored to come straight / from Hamburg where they make the stuff" (94). The first line expresses Fyodor's open dislike of the city, with the following line suggesting that even natural elements, like the moon, feel unfamiliar in the alien city. While the poem on Russia conveys a sensation of happiness and peace, the poem on Berlin suggests a feeling of detached despair. Fyodor's extreme detachment from his new surroundings becomes palpable when he visits an old apartment in Berlin that he, his mother and sister previously occupied. Nabokov writes that in a half-hearted attempt at nostalgia, "Fyodor

and his mother went to have a look at the apartment house where the three of them had lived for two years,” but, despite the lengthy period spent in this tentative home, “there was nothing their hearts could recognize” (90). The environment remains foreign because it carries less weight than the exile’s previous reality; the lack of imprint on Fyodor’s memory is caused by what Katarzyna Jerzak names the “disturbing unreality of the exile’s surroundings” (“Life in Translation” 8). The place remained so alien and foreign that, despite surrounding the family for years, it failed to leave any traces in their memory. The previous owners recognize no aspects of themselves in this specific place; the people and the environment exchange nothing with each other, and the place remains a neutral living space and cannot be transformed into a home.

Fyodor’s poem on Berlin betrays another element, especially present in Nabokov and Brodsky, which becomes an obstacle for the establishment of a home in the West. The last lines of the poem, in which Fyodor suggests that in Germany the moon is manufactured in a factory, rather than natural, convey the author’s view that the West possesses an artificial nature. While Aciman feels somewhat adjusted to the West, perhaps because of his family’s European origins and continued ties to Europe, Nabokov and Brodsky suggest that the West seems more desirable from a distance. Fyodor, in a moment of intense hatred for Berlin, articulates the source of this intense dislike of the city and its inhabitants: their unnatural “love of fences, rows, mediocrity; for the cult of the office; for the fact that if you listen to [their] inner voice (or to any conversation on the street) you will inevitably hear figures, money...for the visibility of cleanliness—the gleam of saucepan bottoms in the kitchen and the barbaric filth of the bathrooms” (The Gift 81). The common thread that links all of the different accusations is Fyodor’s utter

disdain for superficiality. The West, here represented by Berlin, emphasizes materialism over internal life and surfaces rather than content; because of this emphasis, a writer's inherent nature seems to prevent a natural adaptation to the West. And yet, the route from the East, here mainly Eastern Europe, to the West represents the dominant path for the massive migration of the twentieth century. In "The Condition We Call Exile," Brodsky notes that the West, as a professed democracy, remains the only logical destination for authors who had to evade the communism of Eastern Europe: "from a tyranny one can be exiled only to democracy" (On Grief and Reason 24). Perhaps because of its assumed role as the ideal model for other places, the West can only be disappointing. Brodsky states that during communism, as a response to their hostile and inhibiting environment, Russians "with our instinct for individualism fostered at every instance by our collectivist society, with our hatred toward any form of affiliation, be that with a party, a block association, or, at that time, a family, were more American than Americans themselves" (14). While America, an "industrially advanced society with the latest word on individual liberty on its lips" (24), theoretically embodies all the advantages and principles of freedom, Brodsky insists that Russians like him "were the real Westerners, perhaps the only ones" (14). He calls his circle of friends the real Westerners because, living in an oppressive environment, they really clung to and believed in the ideals of the West. But the imaginary West as "imagination counterbalances and at times outweighs reality," acquires a more powerful reality than the real West, which promises more on the surface than it is able to deliver (13). Perhaps this incongruity between promise and delivery offers a disappointment that makes it impossible for the authors to feel completely at home and satisfied by the West.

A more powerful reason for the authors' inability to feel at home in their new locations stems from their conscious and willful resistance to their new surroundings. In "Reflections on Exile," Said somewhat negatively claims that "the exile jealously insists on his or her right to refuse to belong" (Reflections on Exile 182). For exiles, the new place can never represent a complete home because they carry their old cities and countries within them. In addition to this constant presence of the old home, exiles consciously return their thoughts to their original home. In "Shadow Cities," Aciman claims that New York acquires importance once it enables the author to become transported to other cities. These other cities, such as Rome, Paris, or London, ultimately represent Alexandria, the author's native city. "Straus Park, this crossroad of the world, this capital of memory, this place where the four fountains of the world and the four quarters within me meet one another is not Paris, is not Rome, could not be London or Amsterdam, Frankfurt or New York. It is, of course, Alexandria" (False Papers 49). In coming to Straus Park, therefore, the author actively tries to recapture his past. The park is comforting, not because it exists in New York, but because it enables the author to think about the past. Aciman comes to the park to do "what all exiles do on impulse, which is to look for their homeland abroad, to bridge the things here to things there, to rewrite the present so as not to write off the past" (38). Here, the author indicates that he willfully damages the present in order to keep the past intact. This persistent clinging to the past and the conscious retrieval from memory of the original home prevent New York from becoming an actual home for the writer. The price of forcefully preserving the past emerges as the inability of the adopted place to become a home.

Like Aciman, Brodsky consciously bestows upon America the name of purgatory, an impermanent and semi-settled home. Willfully and fully aware of the consequences of his actions, he divides his life into two completely separate parts: the seemingly permanent existence in America and his yearly sojourns to Venice. In his frequent visits to Venice, the author claims that he “never could convincingly claim, even to myself, that I had acquired any local traits” (Watermark 122). Indeed, Brodsky’s alienation in Venice most clearly emerges in his fantasies of becoming a regular and familiar figure for the locals. He dreams of “wasting his afternoons in the empty office of some local solicitor or pharmacist, eyeing his secretary as she brought in coffee from a bar nearby, chatting idly about the prices of motorboats..., exchanging malicious remarks about the new German battalions or the ubiquitous Japanese peeping through their cameras” (63). His imagined conversations, which include critiques of the various tourists’ vices, betray his inability to feel completely at home in Venice, as well as his desire to attain a certain amount of stability in this city. The inability to create a home in Venice as well as the outward rejection of America as a home stems from the author’s forceful division of life in two disparate parts. While he refers to Venice as the dream part of his life, to which he “kept returning myself, rather than the other way around,” (121), he never “stayed here long enough” (64) either to abandon his dreams of belonging or to attempt to actually settle there. His persistent attachment and subsequent visits to Venice result in the erosion “of what constituted my reality,” his life in America, and yet, the author does not mind this inevitable erosion (121). Indeed, he notes that “reality suffered more” than the dream, with the obvious consequence being the inability of America to become a stable home (122). While the author damages his reality willfully, he simultaneously prevents

the dream, Venice, from acquiring real features. To start a new life, the author adds, “one ought to be able to wrap up the first one,” an action that the author is unwilling to take (64). Instead, he hovers between two lives, a “transient in either realm,” unable to found a settled existence in either world (122). The author voluntarily limits his reality by knowing that his attachment to Venice ruins his chances of establishing a settled life in America.

While Brodsky’s resistance to his adopted home of America seems to have little to do with a persistent clinging to the past, his yearly visits to Venice betray his nostalgia for his native city, St. Petersburg. Like Aciman, though less directly, Brodsky rejects America’s tentative role as home because he regularly and faithfully returns to St. Petersburg’s double, Venice. Indeed, Watermark contains the superimposition of St. Petersburg, the author’s home for thirty years, on Venice, his chosen place of yearly pilgrimage. Unable to return to his city of birth, Brodsky chooses Venice as his place of repose and writing. His superimposition of St. Petersburg on Venice, something without which Watermark would be a pretty work about a nice city, instead of the sad, nostalgic thoughts of a sick writer, becomes clear in the parallel and overlapping descriptions of Venice in this work and of St. Petersburg in the essay entitled “A Guide to a Renamed City.” Although he mostly avoids the explicit connection between the two cities, Brodsky’s preference for visiting Venice in winter, “at the wrong time of the year,” when the water surrounding the city seems alternately “blue [and] at times, gray or brown,” betrays his pursuit of St. Petersburg (Watermark 21). Both cities are characterized by the dominant and overwhelming presence of water, which reflects everything. In Venice, water forces the inhabitants and tourists to devote time and effort to their appearance

because of the “natural surplus of mirrors here, the main one being the very water” (26). In Brodsky’s description of St. Petersburg, the “ubiquitous presence of water” reflects “every second by thousands of square feet of running silver amalgam, as if the city were constantly filmed by its river” (Less than One 77). In addition to the identical description of water as mirror and artist, another common element that establishes the interchangeable identity of the two cities is their similar winter light. A defining trait of St. Petersburg, writes Brodsky, is the unchangeable “northern light, pale and diffused, one in which both memory and eye operate with unusual sharpness” (89). The Venetian version of this same pale light represents, for the author, one of the most beautiful effects of winter in Venice. On several occasions, he praises “the winter light in this city,” which possesses the “extraordinary property of enhancing your eye’s power of resolution to the point of microscopic precision” (Watermark 78). The descriptions denote the role of Venice as a reflection of St. Petersburg. Only on a few select occasions does Brodsky explicitly link Venice to his native city. The first time Brodsky sees Venice in a few melancholy pictures that suggested “what I wanted them to suggest: winter, the true time of the year” (On Grief and Reason 15). The winter represents the true time of the year because truth and reality are closely connected to the author’s youth in the wintry Baltic. His connection to his native city elucidates Brodsky’s favored time for his yearly visits to Venice. Indeed, the pictures of Venice, because of “the texture and melancholy [they] conveyed,” a state “so familiar to me in my own hometown, [which] made these pictures more comprehensible, more real” (15). The interchangeability of the two cities suggests that the author, in willfully eroding his life in America, clings to his past, St. Petersburg, rather than the promise of Venice, the dream.

Through Fyodor, Nabokov shows that the impossibility of the transformation of a place into a new home greatly depends on the expatriate's perspective. During one of Fyodor's trips in a tramcar, a man bumps into him accidentally. Believing the passenger to be German, the occurrence of "this trivial thing turned his irritation into a kind of pure fury, so that, staring fixedly at the sitter, reading his features, he instantly concentrated on him all his sinful hatred (for this poor, pitiful, expiring nation) and knew precisely why he hated him: for that low forehead, for those pale eyes; for *Vollmilch* and *Extrastark*" (The Gift 81). The rage, intensely and undeservedly directed at the other passenger, illustrates Fyodor's overall unhappiness and irritation with his life in Berlin. As a result of living in a place which he resents, every one of his gestures and interactions with the locals is colored by this rage and unhappiness. While Fyodor continues to enumerate the German nation's shortcomings and ridiculous features, the man who incited such hatred begins to read a Russian newspaper. Suddenly, Fyodor relaxes and thinks: "That's wonderful...How clever, how gracefully sly and how essentially good life is!" (82). The discovery that the man is Russian, rather than German, completely transforms Fyodor's mood and perspective on life. The man who until that point represented an enemy, the source of Fyodor's rage, looks different when his nationality is revealed. In the man's face, in which Fyodor despised every stereotypical German trait, now Fyodor discovers "such a compatriotic softness" (82). The newspaper reader does nothing right or wrong in this episode; his nature and character are purely determined by Fyodor's perspective. When Fyodor believes the man to be German, he focuses all of his intense unhappiness in Berlin on the innocent bystander, but when he discovers that the man is Russian, life suddenly becomes more satisfying and hopeful. Thus, Fyodor's discomfort in his new

life in Berlin greatly derives from his attachment to his home, an attachment that skews his perspective. In fact, Fyodor later realizes that the reason for Berlin's failure to become a home primarily stems from Fyodor's own lack of love for the city. When he leaves another apartment, in which he spends a considerable amount of time, Fyodor claims to feel only a certain "subtle sorrow of parting with an unloved abode" (144). The place means little to him, not because of its inherent beauty or ugliness, but because he refused to bring the apartment "to life with [my] breath" (144). He does not hold any affection for the apartment, indeed he "hardly noticed" it (144). This place, therefore, not only means little to Fyodor in the present, but already constitutes a "dead inventory," which "will not be resurrected later in one's memory" (144). Fyodor's refusal to bestow any affection on his new surroundings eliminates any chance of Berlin becoming a home. His perspective colors Russia, specifically St. Petersburg, with positive traits, while Berlin remains nearly wholly negative. Thus, this perspective prevents Fyodor's acclimatization to his new life and city.

A fundamental reason for the authors', and their characters', persistent attachment to the past, is their attempt to keep their identity intact. As one's identity and past are inextricably connected, the authors, in trying to preserve the past, attempt to save parts of themselves. In "Estrangement as a Lifestyle," Svetlana Boym states that an émigré protects "a portable home away from home" because it "preserves an imprint of his or her cultural motherland" (Exile and Creativity 244). The protection of memory, therefore, is directly linked to the preservation of a collective and personal identity. Fyodor, while thinking of his father, an enigmatic figure and the most important person for the young author, feels sad as a result of memory's limitations. He resolves that he will preserve his

lepidopterist father's "captures, his observations, the sound of his voice in scientific words" (The Gift 112). And yet, despite Fyodor's forceful preservation of these memories, the protagonist sadly thinks that "that is still so little" (112). Fyodor's sadness arises from his knowledge that memory is fickle and that one inevitably loses loved people and places with the loss of memories. In trying to retain memories of his father, Fyodor strives to hold on to memories of the past, memories of his previous self.

Like Fyodor in his despair at the fickleness of memory, Brodsky and Aciman realize that the person in exile must expend considerable effort to maintain strong ties to the past, which the demands of the present new life gradually erase. Inevitably, an exile's distinct individuality remains profoundly connected to the past, the betrayal and forgetting of which leads to a loss of self. In the essay, or tale as Aciman categorizes it, "Pensione Eolo," the author receives news of a job offer in Italy, news which represents the fulfillment of his wish for an eventual return to Europe. This exciting prospect, however, fails to provide the author with the happiness he expected, and, instead of rejoicing, he becomes increasingly concerned with the departure from New York and the gradual disintegration of his relationship with the city. This unexpected disappointment reminds Aciman of his transition from Europe to America. Frightened by the loss of the connection with Europe, once he arrived in America, Aciman continued to buy "French and Italian magazines so as not to let go of Europe, knowing all along, however, that I'd unavoidably lose touch and that despite my promises of holding on to the old, the new invariably had ways of demoting old things" (False Papers 135). Thus, Aciman's primary purpose becomes the recovery of the slippery past, the very process of remembering. The author places less importance on the recall of specific events than on

“the beauty of remembering, realizing that just because we look back doesn’t mean we love the things we look back on” (44). The process of looking back is an attempt to keep the self intact, rather than the desire to return to the previous life. Although this process of recovery may fail to yield the desired result, the attempt to recall the past and rebuild the self suffices. Even though “you may never find yourself,” Aciman notes, “you remember looking for yourself,” a process that “can be reassuring, comforting” (44). For Aciman, the restoration of the self effectively occurs in Straus Park, the place that bridges the author’s old world to his new life. The function of this place, the facilitation of the work of memory, elucidates the park’s attraction for the author. This place seems to be created precisely for “retrospection, for finding oneself, for finding the center of things” (41). The process of voluntary memory, the author’s dedication to remembering, is his conscious attempt to preserve his past and, in turn, the self intact.

Brodsky expresses a similar concern about the inability of the human mind to retain the past. Through the acts of remembering and writing, the author aims at a concretization of past events. In the essay “Less than One,” the author recalls his childhood because he has “never done so before, because I want some of those things to stay—at least on paper” (Less than One 7). The author’s effort to reproduce the past on paper proves difficult, mainly because of the gradual erasure of the past from inconsistent human memory. Even when the writer possesses the necessary dedication for the representation of the past, the “effort to reproduce the tail in all its spiral splendor is still doomed, for evolution wasn’t for nothing. The perspective of years straightens things to the point of complete obliteration” (30). Like Fyodor and Aciman, Brodsky remains convinced that fickle human memory lacks the ability to preserve the past in its entirety.

The inevitable passage of years displaces the old and replaces it with new events and memories. Despite this displacement, the author relentlessly attempts to recapture the past and recreate it on paper because the self retains innumerable links to the former life that determined its formation and character. Even in Venice, St. Petersburg's double, the author looks for traces of his past in the reflection of water, an element that reflects and retains each aspect of the city and its inhabitants. In the wintry, gray waters of Venice, which recall the reflective river Neva in St. Petersburg, Brodsky looks for images of his previous self. "The reason I am engaged in straining [the water]," writes the author in Watermark, "is that it contains reflections, among them my own" (Watermark 21). The attachment and disturbance of the past reflects the various authors' efforts to take hold of and retain aspects of their old life and previous identities; if they fail to try, places and people escape them, thus robbing the exiles of parts of themselves.

Apart from the conscious chase after the past, the authors' detachment from their new surroundings results from the unbidden interference of their previous surroundings, an interference that is activated by the uncontrollable mechanism of involuntary memory. Because a person's senses are conditioned by the native, original environment, one fails to feel at home in a new and alien environment, even physically. During the first day in his new lodgings, Fyodor contemptuously resents his presence in such an environment, the "degrading boredom, the recurrent refusal to accept the vile yoke of recurrent new quarters, the impossibility of living face-to-face with totally strange objects, the inevitable insomnia on that daybed!" (The Gift 7). Indeed, the physical body revolts against a new environment because one's organism, and, as a consequence, one's tastes and habits, have already been determined by the formative environment. Fyodor hears

everything with a “Russian ear,” in which his landlady’s German name, Klara Stoboy sounds “with a sentimental firmness as ‘Klara is with thee (*s toboy*)’” (7). Indeed, Fyodor’s attachment to St. Petersburg, particularly his childhood, stems from the fact that the places and views to which he was first exposed shape the way he sees everything afterward. The body acts as a reservoir, a kind of repository, of views, perceptions and memories. Even if he returns to St. Petersburg, Fyodor knows that he will be unable to re-discover his childhood, which “made the whole business of exile worth cultivating” (25). Childhood acquires the greatest importance, because the sights and smells experienced in his childhood will afford Fyodor upon his possible return “something infinitely and unwaveringly faithful to me, if only because my eyes are, in the long run, made of the same stuff as the grayness, the clarity, the dampness of those sites” (25). Here, the environment and the individual become one; they absorb one other. Katarzyna Jerzak credits Henri Bergson with the idea that “we perceive reality through what we have seen, what we have experienced before” (“Life in Translation” 11). Because Fyodor’s eyes are shaped by the specific sights of St. Petersburg, they cannot help but reject new and alien sights. In fact, exile is a physically uncomfortable condition. The sights and smells of a new environment jar the senses which have been formed in a completely different one. The senses can eventually adjust to a new environment, but never completely.

Aciman bypasses an explicit discussion of the role of the formative environment on a person’s senses. Yet the effects of growing up in Alexandria, a port city, dictate the author’s constant and permanent attraction to the beach and to water in general. On his way to France, the author and his family observe and admire an obstructed view of the

Adriatic Sea. “For an Alexandrian,” writes Aciman, “used to having the beach within sight all day long,” looking at the sea “was like meeting a close sibling two years after a quarrel: an odd mix of strained familiarity, sudden intimacy” (False Papers 24). The author’s close connection to the sea undoubtedly stems from his childhood. Thus, the environment of his childhood affects his inclination and desire to constantly be close to water. Indeed, the author’s admiration of the sea is not purely aesthetic. The beauty of this specific sea, as opposed to Rome’s “exalted swimming pool,” reminds the author of an affection and quality that exist within him: “beach as a way of life, beach at the hand’s reach, beach in the blood. Just as in Alexandria” (24). The external surroundings pervade the physical body and the constitution of the author, and, as such, he searches for conditions that imitate his formative environment because this environment exists within him.

In Watermark, Brodsky writes of a similar condition, in which he recognizes himself in the external elements. As he arrives in Venice, the author smells “freezing seaweed,” which awakens in him a “feeling of utter happiness” (Watermark 5). Among various reasons, the primary explanation offered by the author for this sudden happiness is the process “of spotting the elements of your composition being free” (7). At this particular moment of happiness, the smell simultaneously exists outside and inside the author’s body. Referring to all the human senses, Brodsky writes that the eye “identifies itself not with the body it belongs to but with the object of its attention” (110). Therefore, external views are the dominant force that affect the eye and shape one’s constitution. Because the environment so powerfully influences the individual, one cannot immediately and definitively separate oneself from an important place. Departure

from the city, continues Brodsky, “is not the body leaving the city but the city abandoning the pupil” (110). The city absorbed by the eye and body, however, does not disappear; instead, affecting views and vistas are “banished to the crevices and crevasses of the brain” (110). Here, Brodsky explains the mechanics of the previous incident, during which the author recognized himself in the external elements. The author is able to recognize the self because the body absorbs and retains sights and smells from the outside, thus becoming part of the environment and taking aspects of this environment with him, wherever he goes. In fact, Brodsky offers a similar explanation in order to clarify his attachment to Venice. The reflective water of Venice “equals time and provides beauty with its double” (134). Because we are “part water, we serve beauty in the same fashion” (134). Like the water, people reflect the outside environment and retain specific parts of it, especially the elements of the formative environment, which shape one’s tastes and perceptions.

The triggering of these simultaneously external and internal elements awakens memory—Proust’s involuntary memory—and the past, unbidden this time, aggressively affects the present. Brodsky writes that one explanation for the exile’s permanent position of looking backwards lies in the internal existence of a “retrospective machinery [that] is constantly in motion in an exiled writer, nearly always unbeknownst to him” (On Grief and Reason 29). The machine, of course, is memory, which at times operates without the permission of the exile. In these moments, the exiled author is not engaged in an active pursuit of the past; the past, rather, without his knowledge, suddenly appears and overtakes him. The smell of freezing seaweed causes a sensation of happiness in Brodsky precisely because this specific smell is connected to his childhood and youth in

St. Petersburg. Always resistant to obvious connections, Brodsky denies that the “attraction to that smell should have been attributed to a childhood spent by the Baltic” (Watermark 6). This denial seems a little forced, however, because in “A Guide to a Renamed City,” the author emphasizes the very same smell in his description of St. Petersburg. In St. Petersburg, writes Brodsky, “the seaweed-smelling head wind from the sea has cured here many hearts oversaturated with lies, despair, and powerlessness” (Less than One 89). The curative effect of the seaweed-smelling wind in St. Petersburg explains, then, the author’s happiness in Venice because the recognition of his native city’s dominant element brings the author pleasure. In fact, Brodsky becomes so utterly engrossed in images that the Venetian seaweed inspires, that he prefers to remain in his fantasy rather than confirm his present location, Venice. As he ponders the lines of a poem, which he translated while in Russia, the author loses track of his location and, though he could turn around and see “the *stazione* in all its rectangular splendor of neon and urbanity, the block letters saying VENEZIA,” he refuses to accept his physical surroundings (Watermark 8). The familiarity of the smell of seaweed, determined by its connection with St. Petersburg, Brodsky’s formative city, unconsciously and suddenly creates the presence of the previous home, which the exiled individual cannot evade.

In The Gift, Fyodor directly addresses in his poems the existence of such moments in which the past attacks the present. In a poem composed in an instant of pure inspiration, the young author expresses his gratitude towards his homeland “for [her] remotest / most cruel mist,” which both possesses and ignores him (The Gift 56). He describes the present interactions with people in Berlin as “talks between somnambules,” during which Fyodor is constantly attacked by memories of the past, without knowing if

“it’s my demency that rambles / or [her] own melody that grows” (56). This poem perfectly captures the unbidden and overwhelming invasion of memories and their damaging consequence on the character’s present life. In exile, the past, writes Katarzyna Jerzak, “overtakes the present, swallows it up, spills over” (The Writer Uprooted 77). The intermingling of these two realities, continues Jerzak, causes the exile to “live in two places at once: in one as a body, in the other as phantom” (77). Because of the past’s constant reappearance, Fyodor can only exist as a ghost in his real life in Berlin. In her discussion of Victor Shklovsky and Brodsky, Svetlana Boym writes that, for Shklovsky, who like Fyodor resided in Berlin, the city is like a “realm of shadows,” while “real life is elsewhere” (Exile and Creativity 248). Indeed, the constant presence of his homeland while he lives in Berlin causes Fyodor to liken these moments to attacks “of a fatal illness,” which occur “at any hour, in any place” (The Gift 80). These sudden moments of removal from Fyodor’s actual life occur mostly during his walks through the streets of Berlin. In one such moment as Fyodor leaves the street and walks “across an unpaved section,” memories from his family’s summer house transport him to that particular place (63). Indeed, he clearheadedly realizes that “it was in his feet that he had the feeling of Russia, that he could touch and recognize all of her with his soles, as a blind man feels with his palms” (63). Through his sensory awareness of Russia, Fyodor escapes the streets of Berlin and re-enters the world of his childhood, walking “toward the still invisible house,” complete with the presence of his father and mother (79). In Fyodor’s case, the attacks of involuntary memory, and his transportation to another land, acquire a pathological nature; Fyodor is unable to live in Berlin because his senses frequently transport him to the other world, the world of his childhood.

Aciman experiences similar episodes, in which the environment activates the senses, thus triggering the author's transportation to a place in the past. Aciman openly analyzes his past, unafraid of the twists and turns of memory, perhaps because he can freely revisit his original home. In a very Proustian passage, the uncomfortable sensation of a pair of wool trousers activates the hidden retrospective machine. During a walk through New York, the discomfort created by the combination of wool and heat reminds Aciman of his father's trousers, later altered for the young author so that he could wear them in the family's first adoptive home, Rome. This discomfort stimulates Aciman's memory and he feels a "flush of almost sexual pleasure" (False Papers 156). The pleasure, the author explains, stems from the memory of his days in Rome, when the heat that emanated from the wool would propel him to search for a fountain "where I could entertain the illusion that I was one step closer to the beach in Egypt and—if the illusion lasted—to our summer house, to my friends and relatives, and to an entire world that I longed to recover: the city I had known as a child, the smells, the heat, the cast of light" (156). Thus, the sensation of wool in New York transports the author to the fountains of Rome, which in turn lead him to the smells and sights of his childhood, the ultimate source of such a pleasure. The sudden sensation of pleasure closes the gap between the distant years of his childhood and the present, and the past materializes once more. Memory possesses a fickle nature, but the senses, activated by familiar external influences, transport the author to the past.

The authors' voluntary and involuntary imaginary returns to their cities of origin illustrate their affection for these specific places. Indeed, their connection to their native cities is an emotional one; the authors can only apply the term love when they write of

their native cities rather than their adopted ones. During his actual return to Alexandria, Aciman realizes that he attempts to reconnect with the city and the places of his past life in a detached, perfunctory manner. As he walks determinedly but hurriedly to the places that hold particular importance for him, Aciman concludes that “everything about me is trying to discourage contact with a city that is, after all, the only one I think I love” (10). The love that connects the author to Alexandria becomes a diluted form of the same emotion in Aciman’s relationship with his adopted city of New York. In “Shadow Cities,” Aciman praises Straus Park for its ability to conjure images of the author’s favorite cities that ultimately recall different facets of Alexandria. The author’s introduction to this particular park, with its strange ability to recall distant places by erasing the features of the city which physically surrounds the author, indicates the time “when I started to love, if ‘love’ is the word for it, New York” (43). Aciman’s detachment from his adopted city renders him unable to claim any genuine emotion for New York. Alexandria has already claimed the position of the first beloved home which leads the author to regard New York solely as a substitute for the real city, the city of his childhood.

In a similar way, Brodsky, while bestowing upon America the title of reality, refrains from expressing any affection for his new country. Although his relationship with St. Petersburg is troubled, Brodsky’s strong emotional connection to his former city becomes apparent in the city’s description in the essay “Less than One,” as well as in his insistence on revisiting Venice yearly for seventeen years. Although Brodsky feels somewhat alienated in Venice and refers to his limited life in the city as the dream part of his split life, Venice, more so than America, approximates the notion of home mainly

because of the author's adoration for the city. Although he characterizes his existence in the city as ghostly, Brodsky notes that "a case could be made for fidelity when one returns to the place of one's love, year after year, in the wrong season with no guarantee of being loved back" (Watermark 123). Here, the author suggests that his affection and his faithfulness to Venice possess the ability to transform Venice into an approximate home. However, Brodsky's arrival in Venice during the wrong season, winter, betrays the author's search for the real home, St. Petersburg. In "Less than One," he explicitly expresses his love for the city and bemoans St. Petersburg's change into Leningrad under the communist regime. In the conclusion of the essay, which is presented as a fairy tale in order to create the necessary distance between the author and the city, Brodsky writes: "And there was the city. The most beautiful city on the face of the earth. With an immense gray river that hung over its distant bottom like the immense gray sky over that river" (Less than One 32). Although forever separated from his native city and disappointed with its subjection to a cruel regime, the author deems St. Petersburg, as itself and in the guise of its reflection, Venice, as the most beautiful place in the world. St. Petersburg claims such a privileged position because, for the author, the city represents the first, therefore defining, source of the author's notion of beauty.

Fyodor, who resents his new home, Berlin, more than Aciman and Brodsky do theirs, can only express affection for Russia. Towards the end of the novel, Nabokov's partial double, Fyodor, provides a brief definition of himself. His internal self, notes the character, the "personal I," is the one that loves "words, colors, mental fireworks, Russia, chocolate and Zina" (The Gift 334). Casually placed between a trivial love for chocolate and his actual lover, Zina, Fyodor's love for Russia is presented as one of the

fundamental shaping forces of the character. Yet Fyodor, although a clear reflection of Nabokov's own life and personality, remains nonetheless a literary creation. In other works, especially Speak, Memory, Nabokov describes St. Petersburg as a lost Paradise, so powerful in its beauty and the evocation of a "sense of security, of well-being, of summer warmth," that its "robust reality makes a ghost of the present" (Speak, Memory 77). Despite the treatment of his family by the Russian Bolsheviks, Nabokov refrains from expressing his disappointment or disillusion with his city and country. While completely ignoring the people who hurt him, the author openly expresses his affection for Russia, its literature and language. In an interview included in the collection Strong Opinions, Nabokov clearly cites love as the primary factor in the preservation of specific memories. He claims that "it is all a matter of love. The more you love a memory, the stronger and stranger it is. I think it's natural that I have a more passionate affection for my old memories, the memories of my childhood, than I have for later ones, so that Cambridge in England or Cambridge in New England is less vivid in my mind than some kind of nook in the park on our country estate in Russia" (Strong Opinions 12). The love for a place and time, suggests the author, ensures the recurrence and return of the past. In the case of exiled authors, while some periodically feel affection towards specific aspects of adopted places, love is only possible in relation to their native cities. This love preserves the authors by securing the status of their memories while simultaneously destroying their present existence.

Yet, despite all the suffering and the nostalgia, for all the authors, exile serves as a creative machine. The majority of their works is undoubtedly influenced by their exilic state and explores facets of exile. In fact, for exiled authors, once tasted in exile,

displacement becomes the only and, in some cases, the preferred mode of existence. As a modern prophet, Baudelaire already senses—without a firsthand experience of exile—the perverse satisfaction that one might derive from displacement. In the conclusion of “The Swan,” the poet characterizes exiles as beings who “tettent la douleur comme une bonne louve,” thus suggesting that exiles not only depend on pain but derive nourishment from it (Les Fleurs du Mal 76). Baudelaire seems to suggest that exiles need and perhaps enjoy their dissatisfaction and pain. After all, Brodsky, once displaced from Russia, deliberately furthers the damage by dividing his life between Italy and America, never settling in either place. Nabokov spent “20 years in America, and yet [he] never owned a home or had a really settled establishment there” (Strong Opinions 27). In Imagining Nabokov, Nina L. Khrushcheva claims that Nabokov’s penchant for living in hotels expresses a “bitter freedom, in which man, having lost paradise forever, is merely a guest on earth with no reason to accumulate heavy life baggage” (Imagining Nabokov 51). Once displaced, the authors, partly from their inability to feel at home anywhere else but in their native cities, continue to consciously and deliberately displace themselves. Aciman explains this chosen instability as the only possible home for the exile. The exiled individual can only find a home, “the spiritual home, the capital,” in the “traffic between places, and not the places themselves” (False Papers 139). The only home, therefore, becomes the very condition of displacement. Indeed, Edward Said concludes his memoir, Out of Place, by defining the exilic condition as “a form of freedom” (Out of Place 295). This sense of freedom emerges from the author’s recognition that because of “so many dissonances in [his] life,” he has renounced the search for a permanent home because he has “learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place” (295).

Aciman directly analyzes the exile's affinity for displacement and, to some extent, for dissatisfaction and unhappiness. In the essay "In Search of Blue," on a trip to the Italian coast, Aciman finally experiences complete and full satisfaction when he finds a perfect room with an extraordinary view of the sea. Instead of being satisfied, the author feels unsure and realizes that he "was so used to deferral and denial that when confronted with plentitude, I caught myself wishing it had never existed" (False Papers 27). The author is unequipped to deal with perfection; instead, he prefers a "more diluted, more fragmented, oblique, obstructed" kind of experience (27). The reason for preferring the incomplete experience derives from the author's ability to complete or analyze such an experience with his imagination, his thoughts. A complete experience, writes the author, leaves "nothing more to want. Nothing more to say" (27). As an author, Aciman suggests, complete experiences, while capable of providing a momentary sense of happiness, leave nothing to the imagination. Perhaps Aciman's dissatisfaction with a complete experience partly explains the other authors' willful displacement as well. Realizing that once separated from their country, they can never wholly belong anywhere, Nabokov and Brodsky forcefully damage their lives, perhaps in order to write. They fulfill the exiled Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz' dictum that "not only émigré art but all art remains in the most intimate contact with decay, it is born of decadence, it is a transmutation of illness into health" (Diary, Volume One 39). Exile, as an interruption of life, as an artificial splitting of lives into two disparate parts and, therefore, an illness, leaves much to be desired in terms of one's life. Needless to say, the exiled person, once separated from the native place, the first familiar and comfortable environment, can never again feel at home anywhere; instead, he will permanently feel

unsatisfied. This dissatisfaction created both by circumstance and willfully maintained by the exiled individual, represents the perfect condition for the “transmutation of illness into health.” Indeed, judging by the works of Nabokov, Brodsky, and Aciman, all concerned with and referencing exile in one way or another, one can say that the only compensation for the damaged life is literary output, its product.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

A brief contrast

In today's world, in which alienation and displacement affect everyone, albeit in different degrees, it is necessary to distinguish between physically displaced authors and those writers who spent their lives in their native cities. Beginning with Baudelaire, exile acquired an additional layer of meaning, which is the possibility of exile as a purely internal condition unrelated to an actual physical displacement. The contrast attempts to redefine the condition and the consequences of physical exile in the contemporary world. Certainly, Baudelaire was farsighted in expanding the notion of exile; as demonstrated by Pessoa and Pamuk, the authors who remained in their native cities, physical stability does not necessarily ensure happiness and a lack of estrangement.

Indeed, the two sets of authors, rooted and uprooted, share a number of similarities; as authors, Pamuk and Pessoa, like Nabokov, Brodsky and Aciman, temporarily reject the present, actual world in order to retreat to another realm, alternately named the second or other world. In the case of Pamuk and Pessoa, the second world, which is usually accessed through literature, represents an escape from reality, which, in turn, enables both authors to create. Both authors emphasize the necessity of this other world in order to create; thus, they willingly and happily enter the second world, their imaginary world. In the case of the exiled authors, the role of the second world is mainly claimed by the past. While the past certainly serves as a catalyst for writing, the exiled authors are not always able to control its interference. At times, the exiled authors, like Pamuk and Pessoa, choose to remember the past in order to preserve the self, but at other times, the past interferes and damages the present. The interference of the other world,

controlled by Pessoa and Pamuk, in the lives of the exiled authors becomes a pathological condition. While Pessoa and Pamuk consciously but temporarily delay actual life in order to write, the past, recalled and unbidden, provides the exiled authors with writing material but also irreparably damages their present life. This forceful intrusion of the other realm highlights the difference between Pamuk's "beloved second world" (Other Colors 9) and Fyodor's likening the past's interference to "attack(s) of a fatal illness" (The Gift 80). In the rooted authors, the second world, while displaying their partial alienation from the external environment, represents a necessary but transitory escape; in the case of the exiled authors, the past represents actuality and the present remains ghostly.

However, the attachment to the past and its consequent nostalgia are not present only in the works of the exiled authors; Pamuk, especially, although a permanent and faithful resident of his native city, devotes a great part of Istanbul to his expression of nostalgia for his individual and the city's collective past. Pamuk, like all the other authors, writes about his lost childhood, an irretrievable time of comfort and security. Indeed, childhood represents a common topic for both sets of authors, perhaps because the gradual loss of childhood represents the first and defining stage of alienation and estrangement. Whether exiled or not, the first separation from home and the subsequent loss of security and comfort represent the original condition of exile. In the essay "Border from Beyond," in which Adam Zachary Newton discusses and compares the memoirs of Aciman and Said, he criticizes both authors' "conflation of forced expatriation—one kind of estrangement—with the sense of rue with which one looks back on a lost childhood—another, and far more common, kind of alienation" (The

Elsewhere 233). As illustrated by Pessoa and Pamuk, Zachary Newton is correct in his assertion that nostalgia for one's lost childhood represents a common kind of alienation. Both authors, though surrounded by the same sights of their childhood, look back at their past with a sense of nostalgia like that of the exiled writers, precisely because the loss of childhood is a variation on exile. Pamuk claims that, as a child, once he had to separate from home and attend school, he sensed that he "counted for nothing in the outside world" (Istanbul 30). This feeling of estrangement, though powerful, is eventually allayed by the author's familiarity with the city and his identification as part of the community. In fact, whenever Pessoa and Pamuk experience moments of unhappiness and insecurity, they can turn to their external surroundings for comfort; Pessoa implies that, despite their defects, his coworkers and his own corner in Lisbon provide him with a sense of security (The Book of Disquietude 41). Similarly, Pamuk writes that, even when the world seems miserable, "whatever happens, I can always take a walk along the Bosphorus" (Istanbul 61). In addition, this environment, present for Pamuk and Pessoa, in both childhood and adulthood provides an anchor; for the exiled authors, writes Eva Hoffman in "The New Nomads," "the past is all of a sudden on one side of a divide, the present on the other" (Letters of Transit 46). The past, and childhood specifically, represents for exiles a previous and unfinished experience and, hence, their condition of exile and nostalgia are inextricably linked to childhood; the two cannot be separated.

Because the three exiled authors lack the comforting presence of their native environment, for them the feeling of home and security is inextricably linked to childhood. The formative environment, the environment of their childhood, definitively shapes the way these authors view the world and, as such, nostalgia for the past is

inextricably tied to their sense of estrangement in the condition of forced expatriation. In addition, the movement from the safe environment of home, which provides a child with an inflated sense of his own importance, to the realization of one's lack of importance in the external world, a state of insecurity expressed by Pamuk, reflects the condition of exile. In a sense, exile reenacts the state of a child being faced with an outside world in which his existence means little. Brodsky writes that if exile serves one particular purpose, "it is that it teaches one humility" (On Grief and Reason 25). He also adds that, especially in the case of an author, whose main tool is his language, the encounter with a new place "renders him socially insignificant" (25). The sense of being socially insignificant stems from the exile's lack of belonging in the new environment. Because the exiled individual cannot fully identify as a member of the new community, he feels socially insignificant. In "Shadow Cities," Aciman expresses incredulity at his unhappiness on seeing the transformation of Straus Park. Although a longtime resident of New York, the author asks: "And why should I, a foreigner, of all people, care? This wasn't even my city" (False Papers 38). In this statement, Aciman expresses his lack of belonging in the city and implies that his perspective as a foreigner possesses little importance. In this awareness of one's own insignificance, exile reenacts the condition of the individual's first introduction to a greater and more indifferent world than one's home. But because this humble state befalls the exiled authors as adults, the awareness of one's insignificance causes a greater amount of suffering. Unlike the case of Pessoa and Pamuk, the familiar environment and the sense of belonging to a community, which act as anchors, are absent in Nabokov, Brodsky and Aciman. The new environment jars the senses and the exiled author feels alienated from his old and present community. The

only community available to these authors becomes the group of exiles, specifically exiled authors.

The sensation of being divested of any social significance excludes the exile's belief in fate. In Istanbul, Pamuk claims that, despite the occasional temptation to know more of the world, he realizes that his destiny requires that he live and write in Istanbul. The knowledge of his destiny emerges from his satisfaction with life in his native city; after all, after discovering the true beauty of Istanbul and the reflection of his identity in the city, the young Pamuk decides to become an author. The awareness of fulfilling his destiny seems closely connected to his thorough knowledge and love of his city. The inherent nature of exile seems to annul the belief in destiny, generally. In the essay "Refugees," Charles Simic states that "immigration, exile, being uprooted and made a pariah may be the most effective way to impress on an individual the arbitrary nature of his or her own existence" (Letters of Transit 123). Because exile uproots the already formed individual and removes him to a strange and unfamiliar place, the natural flow of life is disrupted. Thus, disparate and seemingly disconnected lives and experiences constitute life in exile.

In False Papers, Aciman displays a perpetual concern with the notion of the un-lived, but possible life he could have led. Like Pamuk, who, because of his physical stability, senses the awareness of another Orhan, who leads another life, Aciman ponders the existence of his past double. While in Alexandria, Aciman considers the "person I might have been had I stayed there thirty years ago. I think of the strange life I'd have led, of the wife I would have, and of my other children" (False Papers 20). In short, the author imagines the continuation of an uninterrupted life, another self "who never left

Egypt or lost ground” (20). This awareness of another possible, at one time probable, life betrays the exile’s ambivalent, fragmentary existence in an adopted place. But, adds Aciman, this other self “still dreams of the abroad and of faraway America, the way” the author, over time, continues to long for a life in Alexandria “whenever I find I don’t fit anywhere else” (20). In this statement, the author identifies the condition that, at times, afflicts Pessoa and Pamuk, namely a rooted person’s desire to be elsewhere, to enter the exilic state, in which the expatriate constantly reverts to the thoughts of the better past when dissatisfied with the present. While the two conditions are similar in their imaginings of a better life, they seem hardly identical; Pessoa and Pamuk’s wish to escape is satisfied through literature and their excursions in the second, imaginary world. The two authors know, however, what Baudelaire already sensed in the nineteenth century, that the desire to be elsewhere remains unsatisfied by a change of location when the perspective remains the same. The exile’s constant look backward represents a fulfillment of the aforementioned wish to exist somewhere else and, differently from the possibility of an imaginary life, exhibits real and damaging consequences. In fact, one of the most damaging aspects of exile is the absence of fate, destiny. Through the voluntary or unwanted fulfillment of the wish to live elsewhere, the exiled individual permanently erases the possibility of ever feeling at home again. He simultaneously estranges himself from his previous home, and through the attachment to the past, ensures the impossibility of the adopted place’s transformation into anything meaningful. In addition, the self, the exile’s identity, suffers a sensation of leading a somewhat arbitrary existence, one that lacks concreteness and a sense of reality. While a complete return to the native city becomes impossible at the moment of rupture or separation, Brodsky explains that the

partly artificial existence in the adopted country “worries an exiled writer somewhat, not only because he regards existence back home as more genuine than his own” (On Grief and Reason 30). In a sense, the environment, which in Pessoa and Pamuk’s cases provided the only anchor of stability and source of happiness, becomes, in the life of an exile, a reminder of the arbitrariness of life.

Yet, Pessoa and Pamuk’s temporary desire to exist elsewhere and the exiled authors’ habit of constantly turning back express, as Aciman writes, a similar state of dissatisfaction with actual life. Baudelaire expresses this same idea with his famous analogy comparing life to a hospital, in which the patients dream that they will feel better anywhere else but where they are. But the constant desire to have more characterizes the human condition and does not cause irreparable damage. The fulfillment of this desire, however, a form of which is exile, comes at a great price; the individual is uprooted from his natural environment and must readjust the senses and perspective to fit the new environment, a process that is never completely successful. Also, while the geographically stable authors, despite similar emotions of alienation and estrangement, draw comfort from their community and environment, exile is strictly characterized by a sense of solitude. The most important aspects of exile are the permanent loss of a sense of home and the subsequent experience of an ambivalent existence. As Aciman writes, the only sensation of belonging stems from the actual “displacement” which becomes the only “tangible home” (False Papers 139). Not only Brodsky, who claims to be a “transient in either realm,” but every exiled individual embodies a transient being in both the past and the present, involved in a perpetual struggle between two or more places and lives, with neither one being satisfactory (Watermark 122) .

Despite the drawbacks of exile, Brodsky can write that, however damaging, exile, as a phenomenon with its own particular set of consequences must be analyzed and considered by the author in exile. “To ignore or to dodge” exile, states Brodsky, “is to cheat yourself out of the meaning of what has happened to you” (On Grief and Reason 25). And, indeed, exile serves as an inexhaustible, sometimes the sole and overwhelming source of inspiration for the three exiled authors. In fact, the primary concern for Aciman, the seemingly least impacted of the three authors, is “nostography, writing about return,” rather than the actual return (False Papers 7). One of the few benefits produced by exile is precisely this ability to inspire endless analyses; indeed, in the last and current centuries, works by exiled authors far outnumber memoirs and fictional works inspired by one’s permanent city, works like Pamuk’s Istanbul. Even Pamuk and Pessoa, however, must acquire the simultaneously internal and external perspective that specifically characterizes the privileged perspective of an exile; they must deliberately create distance between their familiar surroundings and their imagination. Adorno states that, although emigration “leaves no individual unmarked,” its one beneficial product is the ability to perform a “steadfast diagnosis of oneself and others, the attempt, through awareness, if not to escape doom, at least to rob it of its dreadful violence, that of blindness” (Minima Moralia 33). In his introduction to the Reflections on Exile and Other Essays, Edward Said states that he has “argued that exile can produce rancor and regret, as well as a sharpened vision. What has been left behind may either be mourned, or it can be used to provide a different set of lenses” (Reflections on Exile xxv). While the mourning and the new vision are connected rather than an either-or choice, exile automatically provides the individual with this privileged perspective, its most precious

gift; perhaps this double-edged view of places and people compensates for the permanent state of dissatisfaction created by the condition.

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