Introduction

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Exile[1] may be involuntary, when one is banished or expelled from one's native land by authoritative decree; or voluntary, when one escapes persecution, evades punishment or stressful circumstances, or carves out a new existence for oneself.

Exoteric exile, permanent physical departure from the land and banishment to areas outside of the boundaries of the country, was the penalty meted out in ancient Greece to murderers; ostracism, temporary banishment lasting up to ten years, was imposed on perpetrators of political crimes. A citizen of ancient Rome who had received the death penalty had the choice of execution or exile. During the Roman Empire, criminals were frequently deported to distant islands. The ancient Hebrews allowed those who committed homicide to take refuge in specific cities of sanctuary. Prior to the American Revolution, certain English criminals were sent to the colonies in the New World as punishment; after 1853 they were removed to penal areas in Australia. In Nazi Germany, those who were not considered sufficiently Aryan were imprisoned and/or killed in concentration camps and crematoriums. In imperial and Communist Russia, enemies of the state were banished to Siberia. Prior to, during, and after the Cultural Revolution in Communist China, the reeducational process required that individuals and groups be forcibly exiled from their native cities to the country to work the land.

Exoteric exile, whether voluntary or involuntary, may be identified, though not always necessarily so, with extraverted behavioral patterns. Esoteric or private exile suggests a withdrawal on the part of individuals from the empirical realm and a desire or need to live predominantly in their inner world. Such a course is frequently that of the writer. To live inwardly, for whatever reason, is to exile oneself from outside forces, events, or relationships, which one might find repugnant (as in the case of Socrates), or difficult (as was the case for Novalis); or one might choose introversion in oder to enrich one's understanding of the world and deepen one's spiritual development, as Marsilio Ficino did.

The concept of exile, be it exoteric or esoteric, extraverted or introverted, and its fulfillment in transcendence, may be explored with regard to human development only after nomadism gave way to

a sedentary mode of life. Thirty-five thousand years ago, prior to the birth of the city, state, or nation, when Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons roamed about vast expanses of land hunting for food, seasonal encampments depended upon climate and the bounties of nature. The sedentary life-style of the Sumerians, peoples in southern Mesopotamia who may have come from Iran or India around three thousand years before the common era, led to the forming of the first city-states and future empires. Ourouk is mentioned in connection with Gilgamesh, one of a dynasty of "heroized" kings and the protagonist of the Babylonian epic named after him. Menes (3400 B.C.E.), the first Egyptian pharaoh, took up residence in what was to be known as Memphis. As nations grew, conquests and invasions multiplied, and new kingdoms came into being while others vanished into oblivion: the Hittites in Anatolia, the Assyrians in the north of Mesopotamia, and the Medes in Persia. The word *exile* now took on meaning.

In biblical literature, Cain is given credit for the forming of the first city-state: "And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch" (Gen. 4:17). Was the Hebrews' newly acquired sedentary way an ironic premonition of the continuous exiles this group was to experience throughout the centuries? Abraham, at the age of seventy-five, was instructed by God to leave his native Ur of Chaldees and proceed to an unknown destination, later called Canaan. Moses led his people out of bondage from Egypt into exile in the wilderness which lasted forty years. Torture and deportation by the Assyrian ruler and conqueror Sargon II (722 B.C.E.) was also the lot of the ancient Hebrews. In 587, the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was followed by the forcible exile of the Hebrews to Babylonia, their displacement ending officially in 539, when the Persian monarch Cyrus the Great conquered Babylonia and opened wide for them the gates of freedom. The Psalms of King David convey the feelings of grief and sadness experienced during the Hebrews' captivity (Psalm 138:1-5):

> By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
> We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
> For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
> How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

If I forget thee, o Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

Emigrations and exiles were frequent with the advent of Cretan, Hellenic, and Phoenician civilizations. Homer tells us that Odysseus spent ten years fighting the Trojans and another ten wandering about the seas, undergoing many trials in his attempt to return to his wife and son in his homeland, Ithaca: "So surely is there nought sweeter than a man's own country and his parents, even though he dwell far off in a rich home, in a strange land, away from them that begat him" (Butcher and Lang 109). And in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*: "Ah, well I know how exiles feed on hopes of their return" (Moorshead I:224). Euripides' Medea, an alien in her land, also speaks out her torment when Jason condemns her to exile: "Insult me. You have a refuge, but I am helpless, faced with exile" (Hadas and McLean 45).

Intent upon creating a climate of moral austerity, the Roman emperor Augustus reacted negatively to *The Art of Love* by the Latin poet Ovid (43 B.C.E.-18 C.E.), a "scandalously" erotic work which praised adultery. Its author, therefore, was expelled to Tomis, a Black Sea outpost, until his death. Ovid's poems of exile, *Sorrows*, and his *Letters from the Black Sea* convey his despair and his supplication for mercy.

The notion of esoteric exile is implicit in many faiths. According to the Vedic Aryans, the creation of the universe, human procreation, and the birth of the arts all resulted from a primeval sacrifice: the self-immolation, or exile from the world, of the cosmic being Purusha: "With the sacrifice the gods sacrificed to the sacrifice. These were the first ritual laws. These very powers reached the dome of the sky where dwell the Sadhyas, the ancient gods" (O'Flaherty 31-32).

In the Hindu *Chandogya Upanishad*, many sages contend that salvation may be obtained through mental and physical disciplines, frequently culminating in extreme asceticism requiring physical and spiritual exile from the material world. Indeed, in the well-known parable concerning the nature of the real Self, that Self is identified with neither body nor mind nor a complete negation of consciousness: it is conscious of nothing but itself.

After the Buddha had successfully divested himself of most of his earthly desires and needs as well as his individuality, he reached the state of Nirvana, thus exiling himself so completely from the world of contingencies that he no longer existed as a human being:

> The Lord has passed completely away in Nirvana, so that
> nothing is left which could lead to the formation of another
> being. And so he cannot be pointed out as being here or
> there....
> He can only be pointed out in the body of his doctrine, for
> it was he who taught it. (de Bary I:iii).

In Valmiki's epic, The Ramayana (4th century B.C.E.), the
protagonist, Rama (accompanied by his wife and his brother) is
banished to the forests for fourteen years. Thrust upon his own
devices, however, Rama was strengthened physically as well as
spitirually by his years of trial and anguish and thus did he transcend
the pettiness of humankind and made worthy of kingship.

Many Christian mystics practiced esoteric exile—introversion,
martyrdom, self-abasement—in an attempt to reject the ephemeral
joys of the here-and-now, thus making them worthy of eternal
beatitude in the world to come. St. Paul, in an *imitatio Christi*,
withdrew into the solitude of the wilderness:

> In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of
> robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the
> heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in
> perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren... (2 Cor.
> 11:26-27)
> Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in
> necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for
> when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:10)

St. Paul's words had an enormous influence on the early church
fathers. They encouraged St. Anthony, among many others, to
withdraw into the desert. Significant as well was the role they
played in the development of the concepts of monasticism,
hermitism, ascetism, self-flagellation, and suffering. The continuous
deprecation of earthly life enhanced the notion of salvation in
celestial spheres. St. Augustine's *Confessions* are a case in point,
revealing his need for exile and renunciation of the finitesphere in an
attempt to *know* God. In the centuries following Augustine, the
spirit of withdrawal from the material world increased in power, as
exemplified by Dionysius the Areopagite, Meister Eckhart, St.
Hildegarde, St. Benedict, Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Mechthild of
Magdeburg, St. Gertrude the Great, St. Ignatius Loyola, and others.

Unlike many Christian mystics, who lived their exiles
esoterically, or inwardly, most of the Crusaders experienced their
exiles exoterically, or extravertedly. They left behind native lands

after Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade (1095), ostensibly to "liberate" the Holy Land from the Turkish "infidels." Such a lofty aim disintegrated in time into a political and economic power struggle. The unabashed killings and pillagings of the "holy" Crusaders reached untold proportions during the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Serving the material and political greed of Venice and the pope, the Crusaders' obsessive need for lucre and conquest drove them on to sack Constantinople, burning this extraordinary city, killing and raping many of its citizens, and taking back with them nine hundred years of accumulated treasure.

The exoteric exile—flight, or *Hegira*—of Muhammad (570-632), the last of the Prophets, from Mecca to Yathrib (later named Medina) led to the founding of his model theocratic state. Islam dates its birth from the time of his exile, 622 years after the birth of Jesus Christ, whom the Muslims look upon as a previous "Prophet."

Many Islamic mystics preached an esoteric "secret doctrine" which demanded spiritual and emotional exile from the empirical world. Nizami (d. 1209), the Persian Sufi, wrote: "Under the poet's tongue lies the key of the treasury." Ibn El-Arabi (1165-1240), a Spanish Arab from Murcia, considered by the Sufis as their Master Poet, experienced the revelation of God out of pure being, in a condition of absolute inwardness. In "The Song of the Reed," Rumi (d. 1273), the *Mevelana*, or Master, and founder of the Whirling Dervishes, revealed the soul's longing for transcendence during its earthly trajectory, for deliverance from the world where it is a stranger in exile.

Examples of exoteric as opposed to esoteric exile are plentiful throughout history. Religious persecutions were frequent throughout the ages. Many exiles, be they Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or belonging to any other faith, left their native lands to escape death or mutilation, or to write and/or preach new and "heretical" doctrines.

Poets of exile were plentiful. The French Renaissance gave us Joachim du Bellay, who knew great sorrow during his four-year stay in Italy when he accompanied his Cardinal uncle to the Holy See. He continuously suffered from homesickness and loneliness, and his series of poems, *Regrets* (1553), convey his profound nostalgia for his beautiful Anjou. They also express his outrage and disgust at the intrigue, materialism, and dissolute carryings-on within the papal court.

Montaigne (1533-1592) chose another form of exile. At the age of thirty-seven, unwilling to participate in the religious and civil

wars rampant in his land, he decided to withdraw into his castle, eschewing active political and social life. Within its walls, which housed his extraordinary library, he spent his time in "worthwhile" pursuits: study, reflection, and the composition of his *Essais*. Montaigne's willed introversion strengthened his character and enriched his mind, leading him to achieve the independence of thought and spirit for which he longed. Using the analogy of a store to point up the psychological necessity of the formation of a personality, he speaks of it as having two parts: a front room, where the wares are displayed and outsiders congregate, and a back room, which is private and to which only the owner has access (Frame 177):

> We must reserve a back shop all our own, entirely free, in which to establish our real liberty and our principal retreat and solitude. Here our ordinary conversation must be between us and ourselves, and so private that no outside association or communication can find a place; here we must talk and laugh as if without wife, without children, without possessions, without retinue and servants, so that when the time comes to lose them, it will be nothing new to us to do without them. We have a soul that can be turned upon itself; it can keep itslef company; it has the means to attack and the means to defend, the means to receive and the means to give; let us not fear that in this solitude we shall stagnate in tedious idleness.

Montaigne articulated his voluntary exile clearly and explicitly, as he did his notion of transcendence.

A different kind of esoteric exile appeared implicitly in much of the poetry of the Romantics. Because the Romantics saw God as inhabiting inaccessible climes, his isolation from them accentuated the impact of their already well developed feelings of exile. A sense of solitude and abandonment pervades the writings of such poets as Lamartine, Vigny, Wordsworth, Hölderlin, and Nerval. Daily existence was so painful for the early Romantic German poet Novalis that in *Hymns to the Night* he viewed his descent or exile into death as a liberation—a transcendence—from the suffering he knew in the circumscribed land of the living.

For many Romantics, their sojourn on earth meant foregoing any and all temptation, basking in suffering, as a kind of *imitatio Christi*. Feelings of dissatisfaction and of alienation, however, had a catalytic effect on the creative life of such writers as Keats, Coleridge, and Byron. Exile for Shelley became a positive experience. It afforded him great contentment by divesting him of

the excessive constraints plaguing him in England. In "Julian and Maddalo" he writes: "Paradise of exiles, Italy!"

By glimpsing the ineffable and infinite realm through the creative process, Symbolists such as Baudelaire gained glimmerings of transcendence, suffering less poignantly from feelings of exile and alienation in the everyday world. Through the realm of *correspondences*, that is, affinities experienced between the macrocosm and the microcosm, Baudelaire could *know* reality, if only ephemerally; he could enjoy a reconciliation between worlds in opposition, a dichotomy which tore at him so powerfully. Balzac, Nerval, Dickinson, Melville, Sand, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Flaubert, and the Brontë sisters, to mention but a few, experienced such co-relationships and were thus enabled to know some semblance of transcendence by linking mortal to cosmic spheres.

Political dissidents such as Voltaire, Heine, Madame de Staël, and Hugo exiled themselves from their native land. Madame de Staël fled during the French Revolution, during the Reign of Terror, and was later expelled from France under Napoleon. Her unfinished work, *Ten Years of Exile*, depicts her peregrinations and the thoughts and feelings involved during her period of turmoil: "So I spent my life studying the map of Europe in order to escape. For active and sensitive temperaments, exile is sometimes a more cruel torment than death." During Hugo's eighteen-year exile (1851-1870) on the islands of Jersey and Guernsey, he wrote some of his greatest poems (*Chastisements*, *Contemplations*, *Legend of the Century*), their apocalyptic images remaining indelibly engraved in the minds and psyches of his readers.

For certain writers, such as Poust, who considered true life—the only one worthy of being lived—to exist only in the creative process, esoteric exile became a way of life. The creative act culminating in his monumental *Remembrance of Things Past*, required him to abstract or exile himself from the everyday world in order to find transcendence, while, paradoxically, remaining in his own home and surrounded by familiar objects and people.

James Joyce chose exile from the intellectually and emotionally stifling conditions of his native Ireland. Only by leaving his country could he grow and survive as a writer. Although he exiled himself from it physically, its presence, paradoxically, was deeply embedded in his soul and psyche, forming the stuff out of which he molded his *Dubliners*, *The Portrait of an Artist*, *Ulysses*, and other works.

Displacement from their native lands was a *sine qua non* for Henry James, Edith Wharton, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Henry

Miller, Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, E. E. Cummings, F. Scott Fitzgerald, W. H. Auden, Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood—and the list continues. Willa Cather speaks of exile in *Shadows on the Rock*: "Only solitary men know the full joys of friendship. Others have their family; but to a solitary and an exile his friends are everything."

Exoteric and esoteric exiles from Germany prior to and during World War II included such names as Vicky Baum, Lion Feuchtwanger, Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Nelly Sachs, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Toller, Stefan Zweig, Franz Werfel, and many Nazi concentration camp victims such as Primo Levi. Mention must also be made of the massive exodus of writers from Franco's Spain, during and after the civil war: Rafael Alberti, Jorge Guillén, Vicente Aleixandre, Fernando Arrabal. Russian dissident writers during and following the Stalinist era were plentiful: Anna Akhmatova, Boris Pasternak, Andre Sinyavski, Ossip Mandelstam, Joseph Brodsky, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Nina Berberova, and others.

Latin American novelists are, understandably (since many consider their ancestors as émigrés from Spain), inextricably associated with the notion of displacement; from Mexico: Carlos Fuentes; from Chile: Joé Donoso; from Argentina: Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar, Mario Goloboff, and Mario Satz; from Guatemala: Miguel Asturias; from Colombia: Marquez; from Paraguay: Augusto Roa Bastos; from Peru: Mario Vargas Llosa; from Cuba: Cabrera Infante, Reinaldo Arenas, Severo Sarduy, Heberto Padilla, José Lezama Lima, Edmondo Desnoes, and others.

The list of exiles—exoteric and/or esoteric, voluntary or involuntary—is virtually infinite.

The essays appearing in this special issue are devoted to the theme of "Exile and Transcendence" in works published after 1945, although references to past writings are plentiful.

In "Zénon ou la recherche d'une transcendance," **Micheline Tison-Braun** explores Marguerite Yourcenar's *L'oeuvre au noir*, an alchemical novel which takes us into that fascinating, but also terrifying esoteric world of seventeenth-century Flanders. The protagonist, Zénon, lusting after knowledge, has chosen exile as his life's course. Opting for adventure, his wanderings take him from Spain to Sweden, to Turkey, sapping up all kinds of knowledge on the way: "sciences," as they were called at the time, ranging from alchemy, astrology, and occult hermeticism of the Alexandrine and Pythagorean schools. How Zénon fared and how—and if—he found transcendence, is explored for the reader in depth.

When Samuel Beckett moved into a nursing home in Paris after a serious fall in his apartment early in 1989, he took into exile only several books: one being a copy of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Not only had this volume brought Beckett "to scholarly prominence" during his Trinity College days (1926), writes **Sighle Kennedy** in "Beckett's 'Schoolboy Copy' of Dante: A Handbook for Liberty," but his profound understanding of this work earned him the admiration of James Joyce. It also inspired Beckett's first publication, "Dante... Bruno. Vico... Joyce," and was critical, as Kennedy points out, in the creation and struggle of his *alter ego*, Belacqua. How Dante's views of liberty manifested themselves in Beckett's writings, as well as in the ethicality of his acts—in exile and in trancendence—enriches our understanding of two literary greats.

In "Alain Bosquet, voyage au bout de l'exil," **Tatiana Greene** discloses the peregrinations and ordeals, both exoteric and esoteric, of this Russian-born poet, novelist, editor, and literary critic who made his home in a variety of lands: Belgium, Ireland, England, the United States, Germany, and France. For Bosquet, the *word*, as used in such works as his *Monsieur Vaudeville* or *L'image impardonnable*, *is*, in itself, exile and transcendence: the *word is* that very substance out of which he structures his world of enchantment or horror, serenity or provocation.

Eugène Kouchkine's "Nabokov ou le don de la trancendance" focuses on this exiled Russian author's novel, *Le don*, written in Russian, published in France in 1937, and in Russia only in 1990. In his preface to the American edition of *Le don* (1963), Vladimir Nabokov wrote prophetically: "Il est fascinant d'imaginer le régime sous lequel on peut lire *Le don* en Russie." For Kouchkine, a professor of French and Russian literature at the University of Leningrad, "*Le don* m'apparaît comme un bilan littéraire de Nabokov de son exil en Europe dans les années 1920-30, mais aussi comme un témoignage, voire même une 'vengeance' de toute une génération d'exilés russes qui rentrent aujourd'hui, hélas, à titre posthume, dans leur pays natal." Nabokov transcended his historical and metaphysical exile in *Le don*: he performed this miracle each time he pierced through the hard *corps* of reality and penetrated into the *ideal* sphere of poetic creation.

Professor **Alba Amoia**'s "Albert Camus's 'Exile' and 'The Kingdom'" treats the theme of moral and/or geographical loneliness and alienation in her exploration of the six short stories included in *Exile and the Kingdom*. In this, Camus's mature work, Amoia suggests that he seems to have discarded the bleak pessimism of the

war and postwar periods, paving the way for "the possibility of transcending the crippling limitations of everyday life." For Camus, exile was a necessary step in the acquisition of a higher understanding of the life/death experience. It pointed the way, writes Amoia, "to reintegration into this 'Kingdom of man'."

Edouard Morot-Sir's "La double transcendance du féminin et du masculin dans 'La femme adultère' d'Albert Camus" probes the ambiguities—stemming from Descartes to Pascal—implicit in the very notion of transcendence: "le sujet de conscience s'éprouve transcendant par rapport à l'objet qu'il perçoit et en même temps il en reconnaît la transcendance inverse...." Is the notion of rebellion implicit in Camus's narrative rebellious? Is passion alone the motivating factor? Is antinomy the answer? Or is it *oneness*?

In "Edmond Jabès: Exile and Presence," **Mary Ann Caws** fleshes out the polarities which are in fact *one*; the antitheses which become coordinates; the polarities which spell eternity in both the literary and mystical world of this universal poet. Because Jabès neither belongs to a specific space or place, nor is anchored to a time-frame, his world exists in "the desert of 'diseternity'...learning to 'diseternise' himself for ever." Solitude, disengagement, lostness in his exile, but also that enduring and eternal thirst for the presence of transcendence.

In "La revanche du malheur: Michel del Castillo," **Françoise Dorenlot** probes the manner in which autobiographical elements impact on a writer's desperate search for transcendence. "Tout avait commencé par un coup de canon. C'était la guerre en Espagne." Thus begins Michel del Castillo's novel, *Tanguy* (1957), which focuses on his exile from Spain during World War II, his internment in France, his deportation and detention in Germany, his repatriation in Spain, followed by another internment, his excoriating days in a variety of French schools, and his abandonment, finally, by both parents. Since childhood, his world was divided into two opposing forces: light/dark, solitude/communion. Forever an exile, the very notion of transcendence seemed like one of those fleeting and unattainable fantasies—possible only during "une lente dérive onirique entre veille et sommeil, dans la satisfaction béate des sens repus."

Nadine Dormoy's "J.-M. G. Le Clézio ou la transcendance de l'instant" explores that ever alluring and ever elusive world of symbol and imagination. As is typical of the fairy tale, when repeated acts take on ritualistic import, so in Le Clézio's writings, beginning with *Le procès-verbal*, where he poses the problematics involved in the hero's obsessional and obsessive quest into

forbidden territories. In *Le livre des fuites*, the protagonist appropriates space for himself: "Je fuis pour être en dehors de moi, pour être plus grand que moi." In *Le chercheur d'or*, the reader is exposed to a world of dreams, signs, codes, sacrality—in exile and transcendence.

Patrick Brady opts for the "chaos theory" in his approach to literary analysis. In "From Chaotic Order to Self-Exile in Lucette Desvignes's *Les noeuds d'argile*," a novel that won the Prix Roland Dorgelès in 1982, he explains the various stages of exile leading, hopefully, to some semblance of transcendence. The first step is explored vis-à-vis the notion of self-similarity, that is, exile from love; the second, in concealed order (and concealed disorder), as attested to in exile from religion and family; the third, non-linearity, that is, exile from life. But is transcendence feasible in self-exile?

In "Du Châble à Lhassa: l'exil poétique et spirituel de Maurice Chappaz," **David G. Bevan** explores this Swiss author's imaginary exile to Tibet and his mystical peregrinations in this land of magic and mystery which allowed him to gain transcendence not only in his writings, but in his spiritual being. As Chappaz wrote: "Notre vie est le pays où l'on n'arrive jamais."

Michael Bishop's "Feeling of World and Word: Exile and Transcendence in Contemporary French Poetry" begins with an analysis of the overall pertinence of the double discourse of, on the one hand, loss, doubt and separation, and, on the other hand, search, interrogation and intuition of possibility, to poets as distinct in mode and preoccupation as Du Bouchet, Chedid, Guillevic, Bancquart, Deguy, Teyssiéras. His essay then turns to detailed discussion of the recent work of Char, Dupin, Bonnefoy, Jaccottet and Frénaud, in order to demonstrate both the interlocking, unified nature of this seemingly riven and double discourse, and the degree to which it is emotionally variable and thus arguably philosophically unstable, or, once more, caught in the relativity of its component metaphors. Collections such as *Eloge d'une soupçonnée, Une apparence de soupirail, Ce qui fut sans lumière, Cahier de verdure* and *Nul ne s'égare* are given particular attention. Transcendence is always found to root itself in immanence, action, the energy of passage and persistence, rather than pure ideality, fantasmagoria or mere play, whereas exile is an emotional mode inciting to resistance, to the exercise of will, to a comprehension both of vulnerability and the latter's denial, à la Lautréamont.

Let us now listen to our writers...

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NOTE

1. The first section of this introduction is extracted from my forthcoming *Exile and the Writer* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

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