**Edward Said - Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals**

Exile is one of the saddest fates. In premodern times, banishment was a particularly dreadful punishment since it meant not only years of aimless wandering away from family and familiar places but also being a permanent outcast, someone who never felt at home and was always at odds with the environment, inconsolable about the past, bitter about the present and future. There has always been an association between the idea of exile and the terrors of being a leper, a social and moral untouchable. During the twentieth century, exile has been transformed from the exquisite, and sometimes exclusive, punishment of special individuals-such as Ovid, who was banished from Rome to a remote town on the Black Sea-into a cruel punishment of whole communities and peoples, often as the inadvertent result of impersonal forces such as war, famine, and disease. In this category are the Armenians, who lived in large numbers throughout the Eastern Mediterranean (Anatolia especially), but who, after genocidal attacks by the Turks, flooded nearby Beirut, Aleppo, Jerusalem, and Cairo, only to be dislocated again during the revolutionary upheavals after World War Two. I have long been deeply drawn to those large expatriate or exile communities who peopled the landscape of my youth in Palestine and Egypt. There were many Armenians, of course, but also Jews, Italians, and Greeks who, once settled in the Levant, had grown productive roots there-these communities after all produced prominent writers like Edmond Jabes, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Constantine Cavafy -that were to be brutally torn up after the establishment of Israel in 1948 and after the Suez war of 1956. Foreigners who symbolized the new aggressivity of European post war imperialism to new nationalist governments (in Egypt and Iraq and elsewhere in the Arab world) were forced to leave, which, in the case of many old communities, was a particularly nasty fate. Some of these people were acclimatized to new places of residence, but many were, in a manner of speaking, reexiled. There is a popular but wholly mistaken assumption that to be exiled is to be totally cut off, isolated, hopelessly separated from your place of origin. If only that surgically clean separation were possible, because then at least you could have the consolation of knowing that what you have left behind is, in a sense, unthink able and completely irrecoverable. The fact is that for most exiles the difficulty consists not simply in being forced to live away from home, but rather, given today's world, in living with the many reminders that you are in exile, that your home is not in fact so far away, and that the normal traffic of everyday contemporary life keeps you in constant but tantalizing and unfulfilled touch with the old place. The exile therefore exists in the median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half involvements and half detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another. Being skilled at survival becomes the main imperative, with the danger of becoming too comfortable and secure constituting a threat that is constantly to be guarded against. […]

The widespread territorial rearrangements of the post-World War Two period produced huge demographic movements-for example, the Indian Muslims who moved to Pakistan after the 1947 partition or the Palestinians who were largely dispersed during Israel's establishment to accommodate incoming European and Asian Jews-and these transformations in turn gave rise to hybrid political forms. In Israel's political life there has been not only a politics of the Jewish diaspora but also an intertwining and competing politics of the Palestinian people in exile. In the newly founded countries of Pakistan and Israel the recent immigrants were seen as part of an exchange of populations, but politically they were also regarded as formerly oppressed minorities enabled to live in their new states as members of the majority. Yet far from settling sectarian issues, partition and the separatist ideology of new statehood have rekindled and often inflamed them. My concern here is more with the largely unaccommodated exiles, like Palestinians or the new Muslim immigrants in continental Europe, whose presence complicates the presumed homogeneity of the new societies in which they live. The intellectual who considers him- or herself to be a part of a more general condition affecting the displaced national community is therefore likely to be a source not of acculturation and adjustment but rather of volatility and instability. This is by no means to say that exile doesn't also produce marvels of adjustment. […]

But what I want to focus on here is the opposite: the intellectual who because of exile cannot or, more to the point, will not make the adjustment, preferring instead to remain outside the mainstream, unaccommodated, unco-opted, resistant. There are some preliminary points that need to be made. One is that while it is an actual condition, exile is also for my purposes a metaphorical one. By that I mean that my diagnosis of the intellectual in exile derives from the social and political history of dislocation and migration I discussed earlier, but is not limited to it. Even intellectuals who are lifelong members of a society can, in a manner of speaking, be divided into insiders and outsiders: those on the one hand who belong fully to the society as it is, who flourish in it without an overwhelming sense of dissonance or dissent, those who can be called yea-sayers: and, on the other hand, the nay-sayers, the individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power, and honors are concerned. The pattern that sets the course for the intellectual as outsider, which I believe is the right role for today's intellectual, is best exemplified by the condition of exile, the state of never being fully adjusted, always feeling outside the chatty, familiar world inhabited by natives (so to speak), tending to avoid and even dislike the trappings of accommodation and national well-being. Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You can't go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation. Second-and I find myself somewhat surprised by this observation even as I make it-the intellectual as exile tends to be happy with the idea of unhappiness, so that dissatisfaction bordering on dyspepsia, a kind of curmudgeonly disagreeableness, can be come not only a style of thought, but also a new, if temporary, habitation. The intellectual as ranting Thersites perhaps. A great historical prototype for what I have in mind is a powerful eighteenth-century figure, Jonathan Swift, who never got over his fall from influence and prestige in England after the Tories left office in 1714, and spent the rest of his life as an exile in Ireland. Swift was an almost legendary figure of bitterness and anger saeve indignatio, he said of himself in his own epitaph-furious at Ireland, yet defending it against British tyranny, a man whose tow ering Irish works Gulliver's Travels and The Drapier's Letters show a mind flourishing, not to say benefiting, from such productive anguish.

To some degree the early V. S. Naipaul - the essayist and travel writer, living off and on in England, yet always on the move, re visiting his Caribbean and Indian roots, sifting through the debris of colonialism and postcolonialism, remorselessly judging the illusions and cruelties of independent states and the new true believers-was a figure of modern intellectual exile. Even more rigorously, more determinedly the exile than Naipaul, and for me the dominating intellectual conscience of the middle twentieth century is Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, a forbidding but endlessly fascinating man whose entire career skirted and fought the dangers of fascism, communism, and Western mass consumerism. Unlike Naipaul, who has wandered in and out of former homes in the Third World, Adorno was completely European, a man made up entirely of the highest of high cultures, including astonishing professional competence in philosophy, mu sic (he was a student and admirer of Berg and Sch6nberg), sociology, literature, history, and cultural analysis. Of partially Jewish background, he left his native Germany in the mid-1930s, shortly after the Nazi seizure of power: he went first to read philosophy at Oxford, which is where he wrote an extremely difficult book on Husserl. Finding himself surrounded by ordinary-language and positivist philosophers, Adorno, with his Spenglerian gloom and metaphysical dialectics in the best Hegelian manner, seems to have been miserable there. He returned to Germany for a while but, as a member of the University of Frankfurt Institute of Social Re search, reluctantly decamped for the safety of the United States, where he lived for a time first in New York and then, after 1941, in Southern California. Although Adorno returned to Frankfurt in 1949 to take up his old professorship there, his years in America had stamped him with the marks of exile forever. He detested jazz and everything about popular culture; he had no affection at all for the land scape; he seems to have remained studiously mandarin in his ways, and therefore, because he was brought up in a Marxist-Hegelian philosophical tradition, everything about the worldwide influence of American films, industry, habits of daily life, fact-based learn ing, and pragmatism raised his hackles. Naturally Adorno was very predisposed to being a metaphysical exile before he came to the United States: he was already extremely critical of what passed for bourgeois taste in Europe, and his standards of what, for instance, music ought to be were set by the extraordinarily difficult works of Schonberg, works that Adorno averred were honorably destined to remain unheard and impossible to listen to. Paradoxical, ironic, mercilessly critical: Adorno was the quintessential intellectual, hating all systems, whether on our side or theirs, equally. For him life was at its most false in the aggregate-the whole is always the untrue, he once said-and this, he continued, placed an even greater premium on subjectivity, on the individual's consciousness, on what could not be regimented in the totally administered society.

But it was his American exile that produced Adorno's great masterpiece, the Minima Moralia, a set of 153 fragments published in 1953 and subtitled "Reflections from Damaged Life." [...]The core of Adorno's representation of the intellectual as a permanent exile, dodging both the old and the new with equal dexterity, is a writing style that is mannered and worked over in the extreme. It is fragmentary,jerky, discontinuous; there is no plot or predetermined order to follow. It represents the intellectual's consciousness as unable to be at rest anywhere, constantly on guard against the blandishments of success, which, for the perversely inclined Adorno, means trying not to be understood easily and im mediately. Nor is it possible to retreat into complete privacy since, as Adorno says much later in his career, the hope of the intellectual is not that he will have an effect on the world but that some day, somewhere, someone will read what he wrote exactly as he wrote it. One fragment, number 18 in Minima Moralia, captures the significance of exile quite perfectly. "Dwelling, in the proper sense," says Adorno, "is now impossible. The traditional residences we have grown up in have grown intolerable: each trait of comfort in them is paid for with a betrayal of knowledge, each vestige of shelter with the musty pact of family interests." So much for the prewar life of people who grew up before Nazism. Socialism and American consumerism are no better: "people live if not in slums, in bungalows that by tomorrow may be leaf-huts, trailers, cars, camps, or the open air." Thus, Adorno states, "the house is past [i.e. over].... The best mode of conduct, in face of all this, still seems an uncommitted, suspended one. .... It is part of morality not to be at home in one's home."