

## Exiles and Plurality of Cultures in Edward Said's Perspective

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### Abstract

*The world witnessed many waves of immigration during the twentieth century either immigration or exile was by force or choice. Exiled who arrived in these countries descended from different cultures, identities, ethnicities, religions, and social classes, thus these factors reflected on their new location in the host country. Therefore, this paper discusses the theme of 'exile' based on Edward Said's perspective, as he mentions in the Reflections on Exile "anyone prevented from returning home is an exile" (Said 2000, 181), through exploration and investigation of postcolonial theory. It also discusses the concept of 'exile' and the effect of colonization on the exiled writers. Then, this paper explores kinds of exile and the extent of its influence on the exiled writers in the home of exile. As the colonialism affects their persistence in contemporary culture, politics, and philosophy. Thus, exile represents a starting point for writers to explore interdisciplinary fields which extend in diverse directions such as gender, race, ethnicity, and class as the place of exile represents the space of hybridity for exiled writers to integration. This new mixture of communities in the global reality is reflected in the revival of travel-writing and life-writing. This mobility is one of essential means for writers to compare cultures, nations, genders, and ethnicities, it thus helps exiled writers to integrate into the new communities.*

**Keywords:** Edward Said, Exile, Hybridity, Intellectual Exile, Insider and Outsider Exile.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The postcolonial theory refers to the period when colonies got their freedom from colonization as a theory discusses the effect of colonialism on cultures and communities that are originally historians used it after WWII referring to the post-independence period. Bill Ashcroft mentions that

the term 'post-colonial' is resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates, and [ ...] it addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact. Post-colonial critics and theorists should consider the full implications of restricting the meaning of the term to 'after-colonialism' or after-Independence. (Ashcroft 1995, 2)

Through the period of colonization and after, several changes happened in the global which forced writers to emigrate or exiled. But the appearance of many cultural dilemmas and crises which face immigrants/exiled writers generate confusion in their cultural identity. National and ethnic identity dilemmas produce a gap as a result of the weakness of the relationship between margin and centre where the centre represents the original home and margin represents the new home of exiled. Because colonialism is not only a power control but also is a cultural control by the colonizer which is still tied to colonized people.

The struggle of the colonized subjects of the cultural identity and the social formation is an aspect of cultural transformation that leads to conflict with the culture of colonizer. As the feature of the postcolonial period is the resistance to colonialism which seeks an identity to confirm their independence. Moreover, movements of migration from colonies to the colonizer's countries create new mixed and hybrid societies that conflict with each other. Ashcroft clarifies that "all post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem" (Ashcroft, 2). The ethnic fighting happens in order to get independence or recognition equal to each other. But colonial powers depend on creating societies which are heterogeneous through dividing them ethnically in order to create a clash between the majority and minority, thus they force the minority to migrate or exiled out of their homeland. Moreover, the impact of colonization continues even after decolonization as this image is clear in different societies which

they have different ethnicities. For instance, Asian or Arabian countries that have different cultures lead to refuse this kind of hybridity when they feel that they lose the sense of being natives. Generally, the situation in the period of postcolonial is overwhelmed with the tensions of struggling of newly independent states to achieve their cultural and political identification in order to show their privacy and create their self-determination.

The effect of colonialism on victim shows through the influence of colonial power itself and the reaction of reflective in the face of these powers. This problem clearly appears in the texts of postcolonial thinkers, but it is most discussed in works of the two prominent thinkers who consider the base of postcolonial theory: Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. These two thinkers work on the postcolonial theory through analyzing and studying the effects of colonial during the period of the colonization and after. Their project depends on studying ideologies of colonial and imperials to show their past effect and present the possible upcoming effects on the colonized societies and also on individuals themselves. Each of these thinkers makes important contributions to the theory of the postcolonial; therefore, I am going to discuss Said's perspective of the theme of 'exile' to examine how Said defines the concept of 'exile' and then I am going to discuss the origin of the notion of 'exile' in history. Afterwards, I am going to investigate the notion of "Intellectual exile", kinds of exile and the epistemological influences of it in the twentieth century based on Edward Said's theoretical works. Edward Said who is the most prominent Arab-American scholar in the twentieth century who was born in Jerusalem, Palestine, to parents from a different background who displaced with his family to Egypt, then to Lebanon, after that he settled with his family in the United States in 1973. In fact, I chose Edward Said because the theme of exile is central in his critical and scholarly works as he obviously engaged in three essays which relate to the theme of exile as *Reflections on Exile*, *Intellectual Exile* and *Criticism and Exile*. Edward Said clarifies that "most people are principally aware of one culture, one home, or one setting, exiles are aware of at least two, giving them a plurality of vision give rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions" (Said 2000, 186). Therefore, this plurality generates an absence of uniform cultural identity because most of the exiled writers associate their previous culture, experience, and language with their new experience, culture, and language after displacement that Homi

Bhabha calls it the 'hybridity'. Thus, I will investigate the concept of 'hybridity' using Homi Bhabha's statements in order to study the cultural differences and their relation to exile.

## **2. WHAT IS AN EXILE?**

The original meaning of exile is banishment, it refers to a person who has displaced from origin home and does not allow him/her returning home, as Said points out in his article *Reflections on Exile* that "anyone prevented from returning home is an exile" (Said 2000, 231), even if this exile is voluntary or involuntary, by choice or by force. The best example Edward Said who spent four decades in the United States with a successful career at Columbia University, but he continued with his sense that was not being at home to see himself a temporary resident. Nevertheless, Said engaged his experiences in the United States with the experience in his homeland to present us the concept of exile and how exiles suffer.

As I mentioned in the definition of exile that it can be either voluntary or involuntary. So involuntary exile refers to someone who departs origin home when he/she feels a dangerous situation, thus in this case that the "leaving is only just better than staying" (Berg 1996, 4) because circumstances beyond control make a return impossible as Edward Said mentioned that exiled who is "prevented from returning home" (Said 2000, 233). While the voluntary exile refers to a person who departs his origin home willingly. In this kind of exile, the returning to the origin home is possible whenever the person wishes that. The critic Mary McCarthy defines this kind of exile in her article *A Guide to Exiles, Expatriates, and Internal Emigrés* that a person whose "main aim is never to go back to his native land [...] to stay away as long as possible" (Mary McCarthy 1972, 3). The best – known example in history the Americans lived in Paris after the First World War or the Irishmen who left Ireland voluntary like James Joyce. Said mentioned in his article *Reflections on exile* that "Joyce chose to be in exile" (Said 2000, 235).

However, the theme of exile was not a product of the twentieth century, and it was not 'invented' by postcolonial writers: on the contrary, it has a very long history. One of the hypotheses links the appearance of the theme of exile with the story of Adam and Eve when

they were displaced from the Garden of Eden as it is mentioned in the *Hebrew Bible*, Genesis chapter:

The Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen 3:23–24)

As well, the story of Jewish exile to Babylon which represents a form of divine punishment for past sin

Now these are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city. These came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel. (Ezra 2:1-2)

### **3. INTELLECTUAL EXILE IN SAID'S PERSPECTIVE:**

Said at the beginning of his article describes the concept of exile as the “saddest fate” (Said 1996, 47), thus Said illustrates the concept of exile in two different periods premodern and modernism. In premodern, Said means by exile that someone who never feels at home and had a bitter sense from the past and unknown the fate in the present time and in the future. In the 20th century, the concept of exile transforms from exclusive punishment into the punishment of the whole society and people due to a result of wars, famines, diseases, and so on.

Based on Said's perspective that exile never means to be totally cut off and isolated from the place of origin because the exiled people have roots in their original homeland, identity, own language, traditional culture, and religion, thus there are several factors that link them with their homeland, but at the same time, they remind them that they are in exile, not being in a real home. Therefore, the exiled writers should not completely focus on new setting or fully on the old, but they have to be in “a median state” (Said 1996, 47) when producing their works that engage with their experiences in their homeland and their new residence after displacement, thus their works become hybridity. Furthermore, Said uses the term of exile to refer into two purposes, actual and metaphoric condition. The actual condition refers to an individual or a group of people who live in unfair and being in a terrible position either they live in origin homeland (internal exile) as

Said mentioned in his article that “even the natives have become exiles in their own country” (Said 1996, 49) such as Palestinian’s condition, or people who live in a new home after exiled (external exile) for different reasons (racism, minority, famine or religion) such as Irish Catholics who forced to leave Ireland to North of America and Great Britain because of the famine. Said’s purpose of using the metaphor condition in order to describe the role of the ‘modern intellectual.’ He tends to use Gramsci’s meaning to define the concept of the ‘intellectual’ which it means that anyone who works in any field connected with the production or with distribution of knowledge and performs a particular set of functions in the society such as broadcasters, academic professionals, computer analysts, lawyers, government advisers, and authors.

Thus, Said classifies the condition of intellectuals who are members of society that they live either ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders.’ Insiders refers individuals who belong to the society as it is, they have never been in any kind of disagreement or opposition, thus they can be known or say always “yea-sayers” (Said 1996, 52). While outsiders represent individuals, who feel strangers in their own society, thus they can be known or say always “nay-sayers” (Ibid.). The best pattern that sets the way of the intellectual as an outsider because it represents the condition of exile as they have always a sense that they are strangers in their own home.

Said goes on to interpret how exile can productively contributing to the construction of the intellectual’s thinking. As an example, he refers to Theodor Adorno and Erich Auerbach who fled the Nazis and did vital work that reflected their experience of disruption. Said holds that exile can foster a scrupulous subjectivity, independence of mind, critical perspective, and originality of vision. Thus, exile contributes to be in a contact with more than one culture which gives the individual an awareness of coincident dimensions of reality. Because exile life is a dynamic life which is decentered as people live on the margin of the established order and thus the individual must create his/her own structures of meaning. If the intellectuals force to live in exile, they are always going to be marginal and that they cannot follow a prescribed path. Nevertheless, if they can experience that fate not as a deprivation but as a sort of freedom, as a process of discovery and as the particular goal, they set themselves dictates, thus it is a unique pleasure. Theodor Adorno who was the dominating intellectual

conscience of the middle twentieth century, whose entire career skirted as he fought the dangers of fascism and communism. His background partially Jewish, he left his native Germany in the mid-1930s shortly after the Nazi capture of power. Although Adorno returned to Frankfurt in 1949, his years in America stamped him with the marks of exile forever. So his works later reflected his experience in America to produce a great masterpiece, the *Minima Moralia*, which published in 1953 and subtitled *Reflections from Damaged Life*.

#### **4. THE ORIGINAL HOMELAND IN THE IMAGINATION OF EXILES:**

The roots of the nation started with the story of the tower of Babel which interpreted as a mythical description of the origin of nations. According to that story, at the early stage in human history, the world was populated by one people who spoke one language wherever human beings challenged the limits of their ability and joined together to build a tower reaching up to heaven. By that time, God scattered human beings across the face of the earth, and they divided into nations as the story is mentioned in the *Hebrew Bible* (Gen 11):

Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be withheld from them, which they schemed to do. Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. (Gen 11: 6-7)

According to this myth, the birth of nations considers as the beginning of multiplicity and diversity. Therefore, experiences of nations are particular and universal at the same time. The universal national narrative enfolds itself in many forms so that there is more than one exile, one divine restoration, or one moment of liberation for all humankind. Liberation and self-determination are universal experiences, but each nation faces them its own particular way, thus this is the essence of the reiterative view of nationalism.

The social scientists and historians make a significant contribution to the sociology and history of nationalism by exploring the interrelations between patterns of development of different national movements. For instance, Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* defines 'nation' as "it is an imagined political community

and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” (Anderson 1983, 6). Anderson uses the term of ‘imagined’ clarifying that members of the smallest nations never know all of their fellow members or meet them or even hear of them but there is an image of their community which lives in the imagination of each one of them. Anderson distinguishes his definition from Ernest Gellner’s view that Nationalism “invents nations where they do not exist” (Gellner 1964, 169). Anderson claimed that Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false tricks that he equates invention with fabrication and falsity rather than with imaging and creation, thus implying that there are true communities that can be advantageously compared to nations.

Anderson’s definition is important because it emphasizes the central role which is played by the image of nation in creating a national reality, but this definition raises theoretical difficulties that undermine its usefulness. Anderson argues that nation is an imagined community because it is impossible for all its members to always engage in face - to - face contact with all fellow members. Thus, members can only perceive the nation as a whole by referring to the image of it that they have formed in their own minds. However, this use of the term seems uninformative because all human associations could be considered imagined communities. For instance, any member at the university never needs the opportunity to engage in face - to - face relationships with other members of the university as they carry an image of all members in their mind. But the question presents here, would this criterion be sufficient to turn the university into an imagined community?

Another instance when the exiled wants to talk about the members of his/her family, he/she knows all of them but at the time of speaking, they are not physically present. Thus, the individual depends on the imagined image in his/her mind at this moment of speaking; therefore, based on Anderson’s view, the family is no less an imagined community than the nation that the individual belongs to. If the condition of a community to be considered imagined is that the only way to perceive it as a whole to refer to its image, thus all social groups, even the smallest, are imagined community, in this sense, the term imagined community is informative. Anderson may accept this objection even if all communities are imagined, they can still be distinguished by “the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson

1983, 6). However, he does not provide evidence of the existence of such different styles and nor does he explain what they may consist of. In another way, we can interpret Anderson's concept of an 'imagined' as referring to the attributes that play a major role in the construction of the community's image in which the differences among communities would then lie in the distinguishing features ascribed to them. For instance, the image of a university embraces attributes such as classrooms, libraries, and the features which concern with academic studies while the image of a family includes attributes such as love and ties of blood and marriage. In constructing the image of a nation, we can refer to another set of attributes which includes culture, language, history, and national consciousness.

Postcolonial theorists use Anderson's concept of 'imagined' as a metaphor to describe the movement of migration and also an exile. For instance, in one of his essays, Salman Rushdie proposes that just as the word metaphor connotes the "migration of ideas into images" (Rushdie 1991, 278), migrants are also "metaphorical beings" (Ibid.) as they exit one culture and nation to enter another. Rushdie's view is based on the linguistic and social dislocation as well the disorder of the home place that results from migration enable migrants to realize that the "reality is an artefact" (Rushdie 1991, 280) as the migrant resists all "absolute forms of knowledge" (Ibid). This view maintains that a migrant who exposes to different cultures is only certain of the relativity of things.

As Homi Bhabha mentions that

the history of the modern Western nation from the perspective of the nation's margin and the migrants' exile. The emergence of the later phase of the modern nation, from the mid-nineteenth century, is also one of the most sustained periods of mass migration within the West, and colonial expansion in the East. The nation fills the void left in the uprooting of communities and kin and turns that loss into the language of metaphor. Metaphor, as the etymology of the word suggests, transfers the meaning of home and belonging, across the 'middle passage', or the central European steppes, across those distances, and cultural differences, that span the imagined community of the nation-people. (Bhabha 2004, 200).

Bhabha refers to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, which suggests that nations are imagined collectively by a people who believe or imagine that they share a set of commonalities. Bhabha believes that those who do not belong to this 'collective' and those who live on the margins of nations as migrants or exiles have the power to rewrite or

re-imagine the nation. He argues that the migrant possesses the power to offer imaginations different from that of the nation. In the case of migrant communities, they live metaphorically as imagined communities, thus these communities live in a 'doubleness' of representation which moves between the traditional culture and a new culture. Bhabha claims that

such cultural movements disperse the homogeneous, visual time of the horizontal society. The secular language of interpretation needs to go beyond the horizontal critical gaze if we are to give 'the nonsequential energy of lived historical memory and subjectivity' its appropriate narrative authority. We need another time of writing that will be able to inscribe the ambivalent and chiasmatic intersections of time and place that constitute the problematic 'modern' experience of the Western nation. In that sense, both Rushdie and Bhabha introduce migration as a site of empowerment where the experience of pain or loss is diminished and where the privilege of unique insight is highlight. (Bhabha 2004, 202)

## **5. HYBRIDITY IN BHABHA'S PERSPECTIVE:**

The theory of postcolonial combines the theory of poststructuralism and the new field which is called Cultural Studies which is formed with Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. Bhabha points out the term 'innovative' which moves away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as a primary concept which crosses beyond boundaries. According to Bhabha, the 'beyond' is neither a new horizon nor a leaving behind of the past. He thought that the beginnings and the endings are the supporting myths of the middle years, but in the moment of transit, we find ourselves where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. Martin Heidegger in his article *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* explains "a boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing" (Heidegger 1971, 152-3). It is the point which considers the starting transition from past to present in order to prove our existence. Bhabha clarifies that our existence today is marked by a sense of survival and living on the borderlines of the 'present'. In the development of the overlap and displacement of areas of difference, Bhabha presents two questions: How are subjects formed 'in-between' the parts of difference (race/class/gender, etc.)? The other question, how do strategies of representation or empowerment come to articulate in

the competing claims of communities? Though it shares histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities are not always collaborative and dialogical. Bhabha clarifies that the force of these questions is stood by the 'language' of recent social crises sparked off by histories of cultural difference.

The terms of cultural engagement are produced performatively as the representation of difference must not read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or culture which sets in the tradition. From the minority perspective, the social articulation of difference is a complex which negotiates that seeks to authorize 'cultural hybridity' which appears in moments of historical transformation. The right of signifying does not depend on the persistence of tradition which is resourced by the power of tradition to re-inscribe through the conditions of contrast that attend upon the lives of those who are in the minority. The recognition that tradition gives is a partial form of identification as the repeating of the past, it introduces others to the invention of tradition. This process estranges any immediate access to an original identity or a 'received' tradition. The borderline engagements of cultural difference may be consensual or conflictual that they may confuse definitions of tradition and modernity.

Through the theory of hybridity, Bhabha gives a priority to the construction of subjectivity in his argument of imperial ideology. He clarifies that hybridity gives to the postcolonial subject an ambivalent agency that takes its place in-between spaces of the colonial encounter. As Bhabha develops a theory of postcolonial which depends on Derrida's view of difference which he uses to expose the ambivalence of colonial power and to deconstruct it. *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse*, Bhabha clarifies that the ways which colonial authorities attempt to produce colonial subjects who become later their rules, for instance by using the education. Thus, the production is incomplete because the colonial authority never giving the powers and privileges to the colonized as Bhabha points out that

the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. And it is a double vision that is a result of what I've described as the partial representation/recognition of the colonial object [...] these are the appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, authorized versions of otherness. But they are also, as I have shown, the figures of a doubling, the part-objects of a metonymy of colonial desire which alienates the modality and normality of those dominant discourses in

which they emerge as 'inappropriate' colonial subjects. (Bhabha 2004, 126)

Therefore, the colonial mimic is a failure because it fails totally to integrate into the colonial culture due to the failure that foreshadows the very authority which it resembles. This is a result of what Bhabha's names a metonymy of presence in which the mimic attempts to appropriate the presence of colonial authority by imitating portions of colonial identity but not being allowed full access to it.

Bhabha argues that such tension within critical theory between institutional containment and revisionary force which can be understood in terms of ambivalence with reference to other cultures. He opposes cultural difference to cultural diversity in the politics of culture as the cultural difference is a process of the expression of culture as knowledgeable and authoritative-adequate for the construction of systems of cultural identification and statements of culture which producing fields of force. While cultural diversity implies culture as a relatively passive object of empirical knowledge, the recognition of cultural pre-givens, constants, and customs. So Bhabha mentioned that "the concept of cultural difference focuses on the ambivalence of cultural authority, 'the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation'" (Bhabha 2004, 51). It is the process which presents a split between the traditional culturalism demand for a stable and the necessary reversal of confidence in the articulation of new cultural demands. Bhabha illustrates that the cultural difference is the binary division of past and present, tradition, and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address. It is the problem of how something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the appearance of a pastness that is not necessarily a sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic. He clarifies that cultural difference "undermines our sense of the homogenizing effects of cultural symbols and icons, by questioning our sense of the authority of cultural synthesis in general". (Bhabha 2004, 52)

## **6. CONCLUSION (EXILE AND CULTURE DIFFERENCES):**

In recent years, the political changes which took place in the world, have brought up many problems, but the most important of these problems is the question of the different cultural affiliations and the extent of their association with identity in the case of exiles. This trend of diversity reveals an urgent need to re-assert the concept of citizenship because it is the main principle which preserves the unity of the country. Cultural diversity refers to multiple orientations of individuals within a society, but at the same time, they adopt this diversity within a unit that ultimately forms the cultural identity of the society. The most important characteristic of the identity of any society is its ability to formulate the diversity within the unit so that it becomes the centre of a combination of these differences. According to this perspective, all human cultures pursue to preserve their identity, which gives them a distinctive character from other cultures. Hence, the existence of this conflict between these cultures is inevitable because there are some world powers which trying to impose its cultural model on all cultures.

But the existence of the diversity in modern societies is characteristic by physical and virtual transformations, thus it increases when immigrants flow and communication technologies develop. This condition enables the interaction between cultures; therefore, this kind of mobilities is expressed by 'transcultural writers' such as Joseph Conrad and recent writers like Naim Kattan and V.S. Naipaul. Edward Said also mentions that "most people are aware of one culture, one home, or one setting" (Said 2000, 239) while "exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness" (Ibid.) and thus this doubleness leads to an absence of uniform cultural identity. Therefore, the need to re-examine one's identity becomes necessary as it is evident in works of transcultural writers that they seek to disrupt the cohesive sense of belonging to definite and homogenizing groups, thus the traditional narratives about the nation and belonging rooted in a specific community or location no longer work in the world.

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