

## DISPLACED PERSONS

**T**O BE DISPLACED from one's country of origin and upbringing—the experience of over 175 million people in the world, on a conservative estimate—is a wrench perhaps comparable in impact to that of war, long-term hunger or imprisonment.<sup>1</sup> It has similar roots to these in the *odium theologicum* of modern power-holders, although displacement is of course a relatively milder variant. In this sense, too, it is quite unmetaphorical. Instead of a person creatively carrying over (*meta pherein*) meanings, across accepted borders of sense, a person is here bodily pushed over borders by forces beyond his or her control. But all our lives are shot through with ways of apprehending ourselves and others (what is a border? and a person?), so that right at the outset a secondary, metaphoric usage of displacement needs to be brought into play: the sense of feeling alien and out of place, a widespread unease sometimes deepening into despair, that seems so intrinsic to the experience of modernity. Marx, of course, found the root of alienation in the labour process. The acute critic of the first modern mass democracy, Thoreau, postulated that most people live lives of quiet desperation, but the sentiment is most often articulated by and about intellectuals, from Nietzsche to Sartre to Said.

But this depends on how we define intellectuals. Sociologically, they have been characterized as those middle-class people, largely university graduates, who 'produce, distribute and preserve distinct forms of consciousness'—images, stories, concepts.<sup>2</sup> In another sense, however, anybody is a potential intellectual insofar as she or he attempts to articulate meanings and make sense of the forces shaping our lives, as Brecht and Gramsci put it, combining a lived concern for knowledge and for freedom. For the present purpose I would differentiate between two poles, one of *critical* intellectuals and the other what Debray has called *reproductive* or *distributive* intellectuals: the engineers of material and human resources;

admen and design professionals; the new bishops and cardinals of the media clerisy; most lawyers—in other words, the ‘organic’ mercenaries, for whom postmodern cynicism dispenses with the need for alibis. Most distributive intellectuals work to reproduce, at one level or another, the means of psychophysical repression. The critical intellectuals, those who produce new forms of consciousness and subconsciousness, are most likely to be alienated from today’s regimes, to feel themselves what used to be called ‘inner émigrés’ or undeclared exiles.

Yet this is too ambiguous a category to be used at the outset of an investigation into ‘actually existing’ displacement. The metaphor, ‘all modern thinkers are exiles’, might tend rather to conceal the brute fact of bodies not only psychically but physically in exile, and the new ways of feeling, thinking, and living that this brings; to elide the experience of working and downtrodden people. The metaphor is of Christian origin, evoking the expulsion from Eden; and the quasi-Christian insistence on the alienation of the post-lapsarian soul seems to obscure ‘what is truly horrendous: that exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical; that it is produced by human beings for other human beings’.<sup>3</sup> I want therefore to hold the metaphor in abeyance; yet also to keep it in mind for later use, because it wonderfully illuminates, first, some central facets of the phenomenology or inner sense of exile, of the existential alienation or opposition most displaced persons feel toward where they were displaced from and displaced to; and second, some of the cognitive and creative uses to which displacement can be put.

Accordingly, this essay will first attempt to establish a typology and a brief phenomenology of displacement, and then consider some of its applications for intellectuals. It pretends to no more than a first orientation in this field, leaving out such key historical factors as the world market, demographic trends, war. It addresses itself only to the modalities and consequences of people getting, more or less reluctantly, from an

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Carlo Pagetti, Chang Hueikeng, Carla Dente, Laura Matteoli, Patrick Parrinder and Marc Angenot for their help with materials and critical comments. Needless to say, the opinions and any errors are my own. Figures for those ‘foreign-born’ in 2002 from ‘Factfile: Global Migration’, <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.

<sup>2</sup> C. Wright Mills, *White Collar*, New York 1953, p. 142; but cf. David Noble, *America by Design*, New York 1977, and Barbara and John Ehrenreich, ‘The Professional-Managerial Class,’ in Pat Walker, ed., *Between Labor and Capital*, Boston 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Said, ‘Reflections on Exile’, *Granta* 13, 1984, p. 160; reprinted in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Cambridge, MA 2000.

original society to a new and at least initially strange one. Therefore, it will speak little about how the 'target' society deals with such people (asylum etc.), and not at all about the modalities and consequences of their return to the 'source' society, if that happens; nor about the important economic and political fallout of the communications between such a diaspora and its source.

### *Choosing and leaving*

'Anyone prevented from returning home is an exile,' wrote Edward Said—as a Christian-born Palestinian Arab and critical intellectual, an *addetto ai lavori* if ever there was—in his 1984 essay, 'Reflections on Exile'. Said goes on to speak about refugees and émigrés, and I shall use insights by him and others to construct a typology as a guide to the labyrinth of what I shall provisionally call *forced displacement*. Here, however, the term 'exiles', which can loosely encompass also refugees and émigrés, will be taken in the stricter sense of people forced out from their original society for political reasons (though elsewhere it may become necessary to use it for the whole category of 'forcibly displaced people').

To be prevented from returning home, one must first have left under pressure and in circumstances which make a return impossible, although the particular individual may not have been fully aware that this would be the case. A cognate but experientially and existentially quite different category is *expatriates*, such as my fellow-members of the Cambridge Club of Toscana and Umbria, who have moved from England to Italy's even greener and more pleasant land to work and mostly marry. According to Said, 'expatriates voluntarily live in an alien country', the best-known group in cultural history being perhaps the Americans in Paris after the First World War: Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Stein, Miller; and the somewhat more complex cases of their black compatriots, such as Baldwin and Wright, or of Irishmen like Joyce and Beckett. Pure expatriates are those who can and usually do return, whose physical and metaphoric alienation from their mother-country is therefore not so thoroughgoing as to be permanent. 'Expatriates may share in the solitude and estrangement of exile, but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions': they retain their original nation-state rights and are spared the sense of indefinitely durable, very possibly final sundering or expulsion from the society of their youthful acculturation.<sup>4</sup> In a looser

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<sup>4</sup> Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 166.

sense, temporary power-holders and missionaries in the colonies, as well as scholars investigating other societies, are also expatriates.<sup>5</sup> The latest avatar of the colonial administrator is the swelling class of elite technicians of capitalist globalization—the international bankers, planners, policy makers, accountants and NGO employees flitting between the cities of five continents. Yet almost all expect to return to enhanced status at home, and fall totally outside this discussion. Finally, expatriates remind us that the possibility of moving to a new location may be quite positive, and that this could also be the case for a number of displaced persons from less fortunate categories. It is, alas, the bleaker aspect of displacement that must first of all be faced.

### *A typology of departure*

The precondition for talking about this category, then, is the existence of people who grow up and are acculturated in one national society, with its *mores*, language, sights, sounds and all other treasures of youthful experience, and who move to live in another country without certitude of return. Not rarely such people, especially intellectuals, move to several other places—Joyce to Paris, Italy and Switzerland; Nabokov to Germany and the USA. Here a first distinction needs to be made, between what I shall call single exiles—though as with the Joyces, this is often a nuclear family—and multiple or mass exoduses, by those whom I shall call refugees. If we term the original society O, and the new, strange one S, we come to this initial overview:

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TABLE I

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EXILES	O → S	Single departure, political reasons
REFUGEES	O → S	Mass departure, political reasons
EXPATRIATES	O ↔ S	Single departure, ideological and/ or economic reasons
EMIGRES	O → S	Mass departure, economic reasons (only sometimes O ↔ S)

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<sup>5</sup> See A. R. JanMohamed, 'Worldliness-without-World, Homelessness-as-Home,' in Michael Sprinker, ed., *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, Oxford 1992, pp. 96–120.

The typology can also be represented as a Levi-Straussian quadrangle of 2 x 2 parameters, figuring RETURN: *Possible* or *Impossible* and DEPARTURE: *Single* or *Mass*, as in Table 2:

TABLE 2

		RETURN	
		<i>Possible</i>	<i>Impossible</i>
DEPARTURE	<i>Single</i>	Expatriates	Exiles
	<i>Mass</i>	Émigrés	Refugees

Some qualifications. First, since these terms are inevitably treated by incompatible discourses (for example, those of police bureaucracy and social philosophy), and are in any case historical variables, it is doubtful that a fully viable typology can be established. Nonetheless it seems impossible to proceed without an initial overview; if and when new general insights can be arrived at, the raft may be spurned.

Second: in the right-hand column, RETURN IMPOSSIBLE, both exiles and refugees were driven out by the political powers of their original countries, and they are differentiated here simply as more-or-less prominent individual *exiles* (such as the Hellenic ostracized and other banished victims of authority), as opposed to *refugees*, 'suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance'.<sup>6</sup> But in fact the conditions of forced displacement differ sharply between exiles—usually able to choose at least the day of departure and afford a ticket on a cross-border train, ship or plane—and refugees, often tens of thousands or indeed millions of people, uprooted by immediate fear of death and fleeing by whatever improvised means are available. True, once the refugees arrive in S, they may either be put into resettlement camps, which threaten to become durable pseudo-homes (as in the case of Palestinian or Serbian Krajina and Kosovar refugees), or they may disperse and become statistically indistinguishable from

<sup>6</sup> Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 166.

the prominent exiled. But in either case, the refugees are likely to be overwhelmingly from the working classes (usually peasants and artisans) and small traders. The exiles, however, were in Classical times members or immediate satellites of the upper classes (the politician Alcibiades, the poet Ovid) and in modern times are either politicians or intellectuals (the two fuse in Marx, Lenin and Trotsky), so that committed poets like Brecht, Neruda, Hikmet or many of the Spaniards after 1939 are not rare. Exiles and some refugees cannot return—unless they renege—until the political horizon in O changes significantly (for refugees), as in the case of the us Vietnam War refuseniks in Canada and Europe, or (for exiles) changes radically, as in the cases of Khomeini and Solzhenitsyn.

Third: the RETURN POSSIBLE column is more than a little dubious. Since expatriates, as a rule, can return to O whenever they wish, they perhaps belong to an epicycle of this typology; they are retained here not simply because they are of interest to students of literature, arts and sciences, but because the comparison to the forcibly displaced might prove of some use. The term *émigré*—evoking the 19th-century Irish, Italian, Jewish and subsequently Latin American and other emigrations to the USA—is not used in the technical or bureaucratic sense of anyone who emigrates to a new country, but is restricted to mass displacements for mainly economic reasons. Such *émigrés*, who follow the maxim *ubi bene ibi patria*, do not quite fit the division between RETURN POSSIBLE or IMPOSSIBLE: since they left to escape poverty (usually coupled with second-rate political status, but not the same as direct political expulsion), those that attain some economic comfort can return, often in old age, and possibly to remaining relatives. Nonetheless, this does not hold for the mass of *émigrés*; and the fact that possibility or impossibility of return remains so important existentially, and therefore also psychologically, may for present purposes justify retaining this column.

Fourth: the above discussion leads to the conclusion that ‘single’ displacements (expatriates and exiles) belong mainly to the upper or upper-middle classes, displaced by the rise of new power-groups, while the ‘mass’ displacements (*émigrés* and refugees) belong mainly to the lower or lower-middle classes, displaced by a desire for economic betterment or through fear of group reprisals. The forcibly expelled, exiles and refugees, go wherever they might find safety; the economically pushed *émigrés* move, as a rule, from the global periphery to the metropolis, and

the pulled expatriates to wherever the working conditions are better. Yet finally, politics is inseparable from economics. If the border-crossings by exiles and refugees may roughly be labelled political displacements, while those of expatriates and émigrés are primarily economic, we should not forget that, in the first case, political expulsion is almost always speeded by expectation of economic advantage to those who remain (as in anti-Semitism); while in the second case, the economic stimulus for leaving may be strongly intertwined with lack of power and ideological alienation.

When one factor, political or economic, is not immediately apparent, it usually lurks in the background. Both are accompanied by ideological stances, quite consciously articulated in the case of intellectuals. Henry James, T. S. Eliot and Joseph Conrad settled in England, 'in flight', as Eagleton ironically suggests, 'from a lack of established order and civilized manners elsewhere'; Pound's flight from disorder took him to fascist allegiance. Paris, meanwhile, seems to have attracted mainly rebels and dissidents.<sup>7</sup> Between these poles there fall the very many writers and artists who settled in France, Britain and then the us, before and after the Second World War: from Wittgenstein and the New York painters to Rushdie, Ishiguro and Mo.

Fifth: exiles and refugees, who see no possibility of returning, have had the decision to depart forced upon them: their input was, in the case of exiles, at best *en amont*, in the much prior decision to take up certain political positions; in the case of refugees, the input was usually nil: they were simply born as Serbs, Hindus or Palestinians, and forced out by the political powers striving for a monolithic nation in newly independent Croatia, Pakistan or Israel. However, from a different angle, departure for exiles and expatriates, as indicated in Table 1, is existentially a singular decision (though clearly influenced by other people's); but for refugees and émigrés, it is a decision taken either serially or *en masse*. The singular decider becomes, in turn, part of an *a posteriori* collectivity once in S, where both exiles and expatriates constitute (different) sub-groups held together by language, politics and destiny; and sometimes by profession, as in the case of physicists in the Manhattan Project or European exiles in Hollywood at the time of Hitler (the latter, mainly

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<sup>7</sup> See Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Emigrés*, London and New York 1970, p. 15; and Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, Cambridge, MA 2005; see also p. 89 in this issue.

German-speaking, community felt quite estranged from Anglophone expatriates like Huxley and Isherwood).

Of course there are many grey zones and cross-hatchings. Status may shift with the vicissitudes of time: Picasso began as an enthusiastic expatriate to the bright lights of Paris, but after Franco he turned exile. Shelley, Byron and their circle, including Mary Shelley and Claire Clairmont, were (much like Wilde after his trial) halfway between exiles and expatriates; the males probably nearer to exile, whence Shelley's exclamation 'Thou paradise of exiles, Italy!'<sup>8</sup>. Again, many refugees become such when fearing they would be exiled or imprisoned if they did not leave: the vanquished rank-and-file in civil wars, for instance.

Such grey zones or shifting roles occur in many individual cases. To mention one I know best, my own: as a child, I was a refugee in liberated Italy from the German and Italian Fascist occupation of Yugoslavia. As a student, I was a short-term expatriate in England, France and the USA. Then, as an adult, I was half-expatriate and half-émigré, as a university teacher in North America; until after seven years I realized I was simply an émigré. Finally, after the collapse of the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, when the resulting Croatian mini-state refused citizenship to my Bosnian-born wife, baptized in the Orthodox religion, and after my retirement to Italy, I am today an expatriate from Canada, which had accorded me its citizenship. What this all might mean should become clearer as we get on to the phenomenological psychology of displacement.

### *Nations and borders*

Finally, but quite fundamentally, the proposed typology is historically dependent upon the rise of nation-states: both as O, the determining locus of youthful acculturation; and as S, the determining instance of full, partial or non-acceptance for the displaced. It is sometimes forgotten that Anderson's justly celebrated definition of nation, as 'an imagined political community', adds that the nation is a 'limited and sovereign' community. Sovereignty marks well the nation's absolutist claims, no

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<sup>8</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Julian and Maddalo* 1: 57; cited in Christine Brooke-Rose, 'Exsul', in Susan Rubin Suleiman, ed., *Exile and Creativity*, Durham, NC and London 1998, p. 9. How times have changed since 1818, with the exacerbation and miniaturization of nationalisms between Bonaparte and Bossi!

smaller than theocracies make upon their adherents; while the limits of the 'impermeable' and 'closed surface' of the modern nation are far stricter than in pre-national states.<sup>9</sup> Surely there were proportionately as many exiles before that: almost all the great Chinese poets managed to offend the imperial Court as badly as Ovid, and political strife produced exiles from popes like Gregory VII to lesser fry like Dante. But expatriates are already predicated upon a notion of *patria* largely absent from the more encompassing political formations—unified in part by an official written language, not based on ethnicity—of late Antiquity, and especially of the Middle Ages. Theocritus might seek patronage from a Sicilian as well as an Alexandrian despot; clerics, mercenary captains, philosophers and musicians moved with ease across medieval Christendom and Islam. (At the same time, serfs could not move from the soil at all, while masses of slaves from wars and raids were transported hundreds or thousands of miles.)

Modern experience brought a new vocabulary. While tribal congeries have always shifted in great migrations across steppes and seas, mass refugees from O to S seem to begin with the rise of the bourgeoisie, nation-state and attendant religious wars: the 17th-century expulsion of Huguenots from France and emigration of Puritans from England; followed by mass émigrés, as the first full hemispheric market came into being around the Atlantic; and culminating in huge population shifts across almost all borders in the 20th century, from 1918 up to our present war-torn days. Nationalist narratives cultivate a monolithic little splinter-truth of their own which has far less tolerance for others than, say, the Ottoman empire, where the majority of grand viziers were islamized non-Ottomans.

After 1918, the constitution of Central and Eastern European states with large 'national minorities', often from neighbouring countries, was accompanied by huge migrations of refugees, incommensurate with earlier single exiles; the experience was repeated on a far greater scale in Africa and Asia after 1945. The alternatives meted out to the refugees, argued Hannah Arendt, were either repatriation, which in most cases was impracticable; 'naturalization', a revealing bureaucratism implying that the official seal of citizenship, bestowed by S on people coming from O,

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<sup>9</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London 1991, p. 6; see also George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses*, New York 1977. On the nation-state's 'closed surface', see Carl Schmitt, *Das Nomos der Erde*, Köln 1950, p. 99.

cancelled the aliens' 'unnaturalness'; or, most often, neglect—leaving the refugees in a limbo of semi-illegality, where often 'the only practical substitute for a non-existent homeland was an internment camp'.<sup>10</sup> Under conditions of capitalist globalization, meanwhile, poorer economic émigrés have found that 'free' circulation applies on a descending scale to finance, commodities, information and (least of all) to people. On conservative estimates, at least 3,500 immigrants died trying to penetrate Fortress Europe between 1993 and 2002, and the situation is similar along the 1,500 miles separating the US from Latin America.

### *A phenomenology of immigration*

'The subjectivity or interiority of the immigrant or exile is formed and informed by the totality of her or his "home" culture. When individuals go to a new society, they experience a major gap between the alien culture and the self (in)formed elsewhere: collective and individual subjects no longer coincide': this precise collocation by JanMohamed may introduce a focus on the lived negotiation between O and S, which makes immigrants what they are.<sup>11</sup> Arendt particularizes this from the experience of Hitlerian exile:

We lost our homes, which means the familiarity of daily life. We lost our occupation, which means the confidence that we are of some use in the world. We lost our language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings.<sup>12</sup>

It is usually an 'essential sadness [that] can never be surmounted'; immigrants 'feel their difference (even as they frequently exploit it) as a kind of orphanhood'—though it may be palliated in cases of more fortunate insertion into S.<sup>13</sup> Essentially, an immigrant has two choices: either Said's 'solitude experienced outside the group', or cocooning inside a small

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<sup>10</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Imperialism*, Part II of *The Human Condition*, New York and London 1973 (written 1945–49), p. 284. People 'forced out of all political communities . . . have lost all those parts of the world and all those aspects of human existence which are the result of our common labour', Arendt concludes.

<sup>11</sup> JanMohamed, 'Worldliness-without-World', p. 107. I shall speak here only about involuntarily displaced people in S; their return to O, if and when it happens, needs separate consideration.

<sup>12</sup> Hannah Arendt, 'We Refugees', originally published in *Menorah Journal* no. 1, 1943, cited in Sharon Ouditt, ed., *Displaced Persons: Conditions of Exile in European Culture*, Aldershot 1992, p. 116.

<sup>13</sup> Said, 'Reflections on Exile', pp. 159, 167.

collectivity of landmen, speakers of the pre-displacement language. The latter is less common with exiles (who are often both more arrogant and better able to fend for themselves), except in cases of politicians plotting their return within a small group. But both choices have a huge psychic cost, evident in solitude but just as high—if different—in an enforced clinging to patriarchal pieties from O. Immigrants are constantly threatened with the fate Aristotle allotted to those not belonging to the *polis*: to mimic either gods or beasts.

*To belong*: what to, how, at what price? This is the central problem for the immigrant. Many intellectuals in exile, and some younger refugees or émigrés, may have the good fortune to find a place in a profession or trade—and indeed, insertion into the work process at a reasonable level of economic and existential dignity is probably the key to psychophysical survival. A few exiles may trade in their political expertise by going over to the enemy, as Themistocles to Artaxerxes, or the КГБ transfuges to the CIA; a number of émigrés may be experts welcome to the host country, as Hitler's rocket scientists working for the Red Army or Pentagon. But apart from such gilded displacements, most immigrants, and especially refugees with no certainty that the society or labour market want them, confront the basic problem of economic survival. Illegal activities—prostitution, drug-pushing, petty crime—may be the most accessible form of work, especially if the S government pushes them into the position of second-rate inhabitants, denied insertion, training, work permits, etc. In that case, immigrants are forced to fulfill the prophecies of chauvinists from S who see them as threats. As Freud's pun has it, those who are without a *Heim* are *unheimlich*: for the comfortably settled burgher, there is something 'uncanny' about the homeless and transient.

The horns of an immigrant's dilemma, goring most severely exiles and intellectual émigrés, are either assimilation or an intransigent, sometimes curmudgeonly, espousal of marginality. Assimilation opens prospects of success in S, which often means becoming more Catholic than the Pope—the path chosen by T. S. Eliot, who reinvented himself as a conservative Anglo-Catholic; by Kurt Weill, who metamorphosed into a Broadway composer; or by Edward Teller, who recreated himself as a Cold War hawk; not to mention Brzezinski, Kissinger and Albright. Most immigrants surely prefer this option, especially émigrés, who have no strong reasons, political or artistic, to return to O; less so perhaps the refugees, who may try several host countries. But it may also be, as

Dubravka Ugresić notes, tragi-comic: the exile who refused to bow to the intrigues of Athens must now adapt to the court of Artaxerxes.<sup>14</sup> The espousal of marginality, a refusal to conform to the dominant modes of thought and behaviour in S, is more often characteristic of expatriate or exiled writers, who do not want to lose the language in which they write, or the beliefs for which they were forced to leave: Joyce, Brecht or Evgenii Zamyatin, equally disliked by the Soviet authorities who let him go and the White Russian colony in Paris where he arrived. Word artists in exile must pin their hopes for a revindication of their life-work on a return to O, by way of either political reversal or posterity,<sup>15</sup> and are inevitably stubborn and often unpleasant—like Dante, using eternity as a place for settling old scores.

### *Displacement as privilege?*

Is there another path, somewhere between assimilation and marginality, one which would permit the intellectual to function either in both O and S, or as a mediator or universalizer, somersaulting between the bull's horns like the Minoan *taurokatháfa* dancers? There are historical examples of such a stance, among them Byron's intervention (not only by writing) between England and Greece; or those two-way streets between imperial metropolis and colonial periphery, forged in our own time by Said, from the us, or Stuart Hall in Britain (who, as a black Jamaican, did not have language problems but had to cope with xenophobia in its racist forms).

Said developed not only a practice, but also an approximation to a theory of border intellectuals, as mediators between the two worlds of O and S. His discussion of displacement connects directly to Georg Lukács's famous hypothesis in *The Theory of the Novel*, written under the shock of the outbreak of the Great War, that the novel is the literary form of the soul's *transzendente Obdachlosigkeit*, its 'transcendental homelessness'. This was, as Lukács judged it in a shrewd self-critique of 1963, the amalgam of a 'leftwing' ethics with a 'rightwing' epistemology and, indeed, ontology.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to the epic poem, which was correlative

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<sup>14</sup> Dubravka Ugresić, 'The Writer in Exile', in her *Thank You for Not Reading*, Normal, 11 2003, p. 136.

<sup>15</sup> See Brecht's poem, 'Concerning the Label Emigrant', in Brecht, *Poems Part Two*, London 1976.

<sup>16</sup> Georg Lukács, retrospective introduction in *Die Theorie des Romans*, Neuwied 1965, p. 16.

to a (grossly idealized) order of stable social totalities, with clearly prescribed values and a virtually unchanging mode of life, the novel after Cervantes arises from, and lays bare, the experience of a society in which incessant change has become the norm. The disinherited protagonist seeks to build a new 'home' for himself within it, incorporating some of the safeties of the lost one. The theological vocabulary reveals this as a laicized Judeo-Christian version of the Fall, which makes the inhabitants of the Terrestrial City permanent exiles from the City of God, for which they yearn. As Donne phrased it in 'The Progress of the Soul':

For though through many straits, and lands I roam,  
I launch at paradise, and I sail towards home.

In Lukács this is filtered through his teacher Weber's theories of modern disenchantment, in fact the death of God. The epic of Antiquity knew only one sublunary world, whereas the novel as epic of bourgeois adventurers, speculators and exiles, comments Said, 'exists because other worlds can exist'—horizontal connections replacing, as it were, the vertical link between gods and men.<sup>17</sup> The novel indicates for Lukács and Said both the distress of *Geworfenheit*, the world's dereliction, and the hero's struggle to achieve a serene *Geborgenheit*, a shelteredness. In that optic, the wanderings of the exceptional exile, the new Odysseus, amount to an enlightening and redemptive motif: though he cannot go back to Ithaca, his tragical displacement may serve to reveal the cruelty of the world, in which he will perish; or he may find some new form of home, however makeshift, that offers relief to the *unheimlich* alienation of the soul (as Lukács, four years later, after the horrifying carnage of the Great War, would find in the Bolshevik Party).

This has some similarities to the conservative theme of the 'uprooted cosmopolitanism' of modern intellectuals, who have no native soil to root in but sprout as flowers of asphalt, or of evil; nationalist filiation is ultimately bound to the coincidence of *Blut und Boden*, even if such bloody soil is usually hidden by Herder's cultural form of nature, language. But a diagnosis following and adapting the Lukács–Said tradition to our purposes would run quite differently: the roots are no longer to be found—in fact, *cannot* be found—in horticultural metaphor; they are to be sought in time. Raymond Williams's magisterial *The Country and*

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<sup>17</sup> Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 167. In this sense, Science Fiction is the materialization of the hidden presuppositions—the other worlds—of the modern novel, what the Russian Formalists call 'the baring (or exposure) of the device'.

*the City* traced self-contained ‘knowable communities’ in England up to the end of the 19th century: none now remain. Displacement from no-longer-operative local and national communities does not necessarily entail cutting off one’s roots, therefore; indeed, it might actually help in finding new ones.

There seem to be two main orientations, not mutually exclusive, towards achieving the ‘reassurance, fitness, belonging, association and community’ that Said calls affiliation.<sup>18</sup> Either an intellectual’s exemplary roots can be found in another tradition (linguistic, formal, professional, etc.): this is the route chosen by the many first and second-generation émigrés seeking refuge in engineering and science professions, though it is a feature in the humanities too. Or, paradoxically, roots can be sought in a projected better world, one to be worked towards by applying the tools of the intellectual’s profession (though not only these); a future, only for the sake of which one can, as Fichte said, tolerate the present. For Said, this is the intellectual as ‘secular critical consciousness’, for whom exile is emblematic of ‘an *alternative* to the mass institutions that dominate modern life’:

The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience.<sup>19</sup>

From which it follows that, in studying literature,

the inevitable trajectory of critical consciousness is to arrive at some acute sense of what political, social and human values are entailed in the reading, production and transmission of every text . . . [and this also involves a relationship to] a concrete reality, about which political, moral and social judgements have to be made.<sup>20</sup>

If texts are a form of human activity, they need to be correlated with (though not reduced to) other such forms, perhaps even repressive and displacing ones. But though a stance of Swiftian oppositional criticism to concrete social situations may serve to reconnect the texts and the world, Said nevertheless concludes—following the example of yet

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<sup>18</sup> Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Cambridge, MA 1991 [1983], p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Said, ‘Reflections on Exile’, p. 170.

<sup>20</sup> Said, *The World*, p. 26.

another Mitteleuropean Jewish exile, Adorno—that the new home is to be found ‘only . . . in writing’.<sup>21</sup>

This may be psychologically correct; but it is scarcely a realistic political alternative. Said’s own Palestinian cause is a good example of how little the powerful institutions of state and media are affected by mere words. And he has himself noted the extent to which ‘culture, cultural formations, and intellectuals exist by virtue of a very interesting network of relationships with the state’s almost absolute power’.<sup>22</sup> For Said, the exile’s intellectual mission can, insofar as he remains a lone artisan, function only in two ways: either quite locally, within her immediate profession, or for wider purposes exemplarily. In the latter case, we are back to the metaphor of exile that we left in abeyance at the beginning: the displaced person, represented by the exemplary oppositional intellectual, returns to take upon himself the woes of the world and work out a path of exodus for future generations.

The metaphor of intellectual as exile remains highly ambiguous. On the one hand, the chosen identity of outsider suggests a welcome break with conformity: ‘to stand away from “home” in order to look at it with the exile’s detachment’ is a particular instance of what Brecht calls the ‘estrangement effect’, of seeing all as strange unless sanctioned by reasoned values. This involves seeing things not simply as they are, but ‘as they have come to be that way: contingent, not inevitable . . . the result of a series of historical choices made by human beings’. And indeed Said’s insistence that by a creative use of displaced personhood the intellectual can become a well-informed critic in the borderlands between the poorer and richer sections of the world, on ‘both sides of the imperial divide’, seems to me rather Brechtian and right. In that case, forced displacement becomes ‘a model for the intellectual who is tempted, and even beset and overwhelmed, by the rewards of accommodation, yea-saying, settling in’.<sup>23</sup> And further:

Exile, far from being the fate of nearly forgotten unfortunates . . . becomes something closer to a norm, an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new territories in defiance of the classical canonic enclosures, however much its loss and sadness should be acknowledged and registered.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Said, ‘Reflections on Exile’, p. 170.

<sup>22</sup> Said, *The World*, pp. 169, 176–7.

<sup>23</sup> Said, ‘Reflections on Exile’, p. 170; ‘Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals’, *Grand Street* 12.3, 1993, pp. 122–4; *Culture and Imperialism*, New York 1993, p. xxvii.

<sup>24</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 317.

Indeed, in *Culture and Imperialism* Said even claimed that it is possible 'to regard the intellectual as first distilling then articulating the predicaments that disfigure modernity—mass deportation, imprisonment, population transfer, collective dispossession, and forced immigrations'. And finally:

that liberation as an intellectual mission, born in the resistance and opposition to the confinements and ravages of imperialism, has now shifted from the settled, established, and domesticated dynamics of culture to its unhoused, decentered, and exilic energies, energies whose incarnation is today the migrant, and whose consciousness is that of the intellectual and the artist in exile, the political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages.<sup>25</sup>

It will be apparent that Said is here putting an enormous onus on this new privileged agent of liberation, replacing Lukács's privileged ideal proletariat, Virginia Woolf's privileged androgynous mind (in *A Room of One's Own*), and Liberation Theology's privileged option for the poor. Yet surely even a whole slew of migrant intellectuals would be inadequate to prevent the ravages so well denounced by Said—unless accompanied by a careful alliance with some mass movement, into which he himself practically entered but which he never theorized. Said knew this too but chose to keep it in the background: 'Exile, in the words of Wallace Stevens, is "a mind of Winter" in which the pathos of summer and autumn, as much as the potential of spring, are nearby but unobtainable'.<sup>26</sup> Or most clearly, as in his consideration of Swift: 'Intellectual writing protrudes into space and time, but its occasions are in the end controlled by real power'. What this leaves us with, beyond the no-doubt needed philology, is a combination of epistemological enquiry, investigating Said's 'intrinsic conditions on which knowledge is made possible', and political alliances outside criticism proper but made possible and fruitful by the oppositional stance. For such a venture not to adjoin to an understanding of ethno-cultural oppositions which is also, and quite centrally, one of class, seems self-defeating.<sup>27</sup>

Further: the christological echoes of the migrant and suffering intellectual as liberator gloss over Said's own insight, that exilic displacement

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<sup>25</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 332–3.

<sup>26</sup> Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 172.

<sup>27</sup> See Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, London 1992; and the approach of Wallerstein, in Part II of Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, London 1998.

is irremediably secular and historical, that it is wilfully produced by those in power to be borne by other groups or classes of wronged and (as Adorno put it) damaged humans. If we wish to use insights from theological language, then each moment and each person is in a direct relationship to divinity, and no future felicities can erase the Now and Here. Various smaller groups, above all the erotic couple, are therefore adopted as makeshift earthly paradises, where exiles might be, in Milton's words, 'Imparadised in one another's arms'. But on the whole, as classical tragedy rehearsed, the transgressor's moral triumph is at least counterbalanced by his or her suffering and defeat. For those of us who are no masochists, a Brechtian or Aristophanic critical comedy might be a better template—one with an open ending, an outcome that depends on us all.