

# The Poetics of Exile: Traveling to the Land of Intellectual Adventures

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**Abstract**— One of the most influential approaches in the modern literature is contemplating on the issue of exile. Exile can be regarded as a force to leave a country or as a voluntary action to live in another one. The minds of the writers who are exposed to exile are filled with imaginations that involve the sense of loneliness and nostalgia for their homeland. This study is an attempt to contribute to the study of the literature of exile by pointing to the specific body of works and movements in which the positive attitude to expatriation becomes the foundation for a complex world-view. Concentrating on the issue of exile this article evaluates the different aspects of exile as positive and negative aspects and focuses on the place of the author in the twentieth century.

**Keywords**—Exile, Modern Literature, Expatriation, Homeland.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE twentieth century can be regarded as a highway in which various approaches, attitudes and points of views not only in science but in different approaches in humanities as arts and literature commuting and overtaking each other. Every moment, the scholars and libertarians of an era give birth to their new ideas that sometimes these ideas paves the way for a great change in the world. Sometimes these scholars add something to the old prevalent ideas and schools and fortify them and sometimes their genius mind creates something which no one has thought about it before.

One of the prominent issues in the twentieth literature that can be regarded individually as a literary movement or school is the concept or theme of exile in literature. The mind and imagination of many of the writers has been engaged by the concept of exile because most of them have experienced it by leaving their own country by force because of inadaptability with political issues of the time or by leaving intentionally and consciously because of dissatisfaction from their own homeland.

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The experience of exile and living in another's land has produced many literary writings by those who have experiencing it. Many of the twentieth century writers such as Oscar Wilde, Henry James, James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Samuel Beckett, Hemingway, have generated literary works in which there are traces of the theme of exile. Some others have mentioned the general characteristics of exile in their works. Among the writers who have experienced and written about exile one can refer to Joseph Conrad who was a Polish citizen living in England and writing in English; one of his great works in this issue is *Lord Jim* (1900); F. Scott Fitzgerald is another writer who experienced a temporary self-exile in France and this issue is presented as a theme in his work *Tender Is the Night* (1934). Among the second group who can be regarded as exile theoreticians Edward W. Said (1935-2003) has considered implications of exile and has emphasized the personal and literary repercussions of exile.

In this way, exile as a major historical phenomenon of the twentieth century has been studied by many great philosophers and scholars and it has still its own unsaid words. This study by focusing on the definition and varieties of exile during the history of the literature in western world tries to evaluate its entity in modern literature and find a relation between exile and literary creativity. Another issue in the literature of exile is the idealization of the home by the writer of exile.

## II. DEFINITION AND THE HISTORY OF EXILE

Different people have different understanding about exile, it can be defined as being forbidden to set foot on a country's soil or it may be considered as nostalgia for land. As far as it concerned, exile primarily means banishment, in this way, it just seeks repentance. Oxford Dictionary defines exile as an "enforced removal from one's native land," it can also mean "expatriation" or prolonged absence from one's native land, endured by compulsion of circumstances or voluntarily undergone for any purpose.

From these definitions different attitudes of exile can be perceived that generally are classified as positive and negative attitudes. Concentrating on the issue of exile, many scholars believe that exile must be taken in to account on the basis of two forms: exile which is based on force, usually regards as political exile and exile which is based on voluntary

separation in which one can be dissatisfied with life in his homeland.

Exile is not something new to deal with. There have been traces of it in ancient Greece, in Christianity or in the banishment of dissidents from the Soviet Union and various forms of literature.

In Christianity, voluntary exile is seen as an escape from sin and the temptations of everyday life. "Christianity believes that exile is a way to salvation," [4] which makes a distance between people and God and eventually from entering the kingdom of heaven [5], in this way, many wanderers forced themselves in voluntary exile and put themselves isolated from the people he has to live with. Monks and hermits who voluntarily withdraw from other people to be closer to God, found that living far from the everyday bustle and temptations of the world can make them serve God better and their choice is sanctioned by God's blessing. [4]

In literatures focusing on folk tradition, most of the plots and themes refer to the figure of a wise man who lives in speculation in order to contemplate, learn from nature and be closer to god. In picaresque tradition, of course not a picaresque tradition in which a hero tries to dupe society to obtain wealth and advantageous position, but noble spirits who preserve their isolation unrestricted by political or social boundaries.

The communist regimes like Soviet regime condemn all refugees as traitors who want to serve capitalism for its material rewards and they employ all the means available to a totalitarian state to isolate them from their homeland.

Plutarch (46-120 AD), recalled some stoics arguments when he wrote about the advantages of expatriation in his essay "On Exile". He wrote, "every city at once becomes a native city to the man who has learned to make use of it and has roots which can live and thrive everywhere and take hold in any region." [2]

### III. THE CANON OF EXILE IN LITERATURE

When a reader is confronted with a text written by a writer in exile or an emigre writer, the impressions of nostalgic voices are prevailing in his work. Many writers who are separated from their homeland have produced literary works that are great in their real or imaginary values. All of them include such a nostalgia which is undisputed in many literary masterpieces. "These nostalgic voices of exile, however potent and inspiring are not the only expression of the phenomenon which, for centuries has been a part of significant human experiences." [4]

This question will be raised that whether exiled poets or writers can become successful in their new homeland or not, and if they can help their culture or not. Terry Eagleton (1943-) in *Exiles and Emigres, Studies in Modern Literature* (1970)

believes that the greatness of the twentieth century English novel was possible only because of exiles and emigres. They have managed to enrich conventional English culture with fresh themes and points of view; they were outside of a very rigid social stratification which acted as a straight jacket to many indigenous English writers. Eagleton stresses that the only great writer of the twentieth century, D.H. Laurence, was a working class, and thus as much outside stratified British society as his emigre follow writers: Conrad, James, Pound, Yeats and Joyce. Whether we agree with him or not that an émigré who is experiencing "particular tensions between the remembered and the real, the potential and the actual, integration and dispossession, exile and involvement"[1] has a better chance to become a writer.

So in many cases, literary responses to exile have been fruitful. Sometimes those who voluntarily part from their community are often looked upon in a negative way and generally are addressed as disloyal, but it is not always true because most of the time, they leave their countries due to the result of laziness and reluctance to work for their country or stupidity and illiteracy.

### IV. THEMATIZATION OF EXILE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY MOVEMENTS

Twentieth century is the century of birth in many attitudes, ideas and approaches in literature. The writers and critics who involve themselves in this track devote some parts of their career to the literature of exile. For example, twentieth century avant-gardes especially Dadaism stressed their detachment from national values and attached themselves to the international spirit. They believed that exile has positive influence on their life and their career.

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) believed that mankind would improve, if individuals put themselves in the position of an exile while approaching most passionate issues. This is true that exile is painful but it makes the writer to look at the worlds from a different angle and discover an important aspect of human condition. However this positive feeling always follows negative attribution to the feeling of the writer because harmful feelings of nostalgia make it possible for writers to examine their memories.

The positive and negative influences of the exile are inherent in the motifs and themes of a literary work on the basis of exile. Sometimes the poet or the writer is broken by exile and he is not able to generalize his experience because humanity needs happiness, harmony and security in life and he desires to find them in his homeland. In this way, homeland can become an object of idealization and the themes of lost home or lost inheritance are frequently used expression in words by exiled writers.

In the theater of Absurd, a lonely man in an absurd universe faces his destiny for example Samuel Becket (1906-1989) is a voluntary exile. In *Waiting for Godot* (1949) Vladimir and Estragon struggle for meaning in an absurd universe.

In Existentialism view, all humans are exile and alienated from the universe. We are imprisoned in our consciousness and no matter where we live. For this issue one can refer to the story of *Endgame* (1957) by Becket in which characters are living in a place like skull.

In Albert Camus (1913-1960), *Stranger* (1942), he believes in an indifferent universe from which he protects himself with his own indifference to the world and its traditional values. However, the protagonist in existential situation lies at the core of the human condition with its arbitrariness, alienation and loneliness." The writers of Existentialism recognized exile as a part of human destiny which could only be conquered by acceptance. [4]

#### V.CONCLUSION

It has been said a lot about exile and literature. This is true that in each century exile or migrations have been viewed differently but the twentieth century experienced exile on a scale which surpassed all previous migrations. Although literature of exile can be classified based on the incorporation of the theme of exile such as expulsion from one's native country, expatriation, and exile as a human experience, but, there are different views about its definition. Paul Tabori (1908-1972) believes that "exile is a form of punishment at all stages of human social development." [5] for some writers exile is an escape, a relief from the over powering influence of their native culture and in this way, exile enriches the writer on a personal scale by providing a different vantage point from which he could evaluate his experience.

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