

НЕСКОЛЬКО ПОЛЕМИЧЕСКИХ ЗАМЕТОК О ТЕОРИИ ЭМИГРАЦИИ¹

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Аннотация: В предлагаемом тексте дается критическое изложение двух версий теории эмиграции и изгнанничества, первая версия и сама теория создана Эдвардом Саидом, вторая версия переработана в контексте русской эмиграции Любовью Бугаевой. Выявляются отдельные несвязности этой теории, в частности, чрезмерная модернизация и психологизация опыта изгнания и миграций в ущерб системному рассмотрению его политических, культурных, социальных условий.

Ключевые слова: теория эмиграции, теория межкультурной динамики, теория номадизма, депортации, миграции, экспатриант, изгнанник, беженец, отщепенец, Эдвард Саид.

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Research Article



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THE THEORY OF EMIGRATION: SOME POLEMICAL REMARKS

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Abstract: The paper proposes a critical account of two versions of the theory of emigration and exile, such as created by Edward Said and then reworked in the Russian context by Liubov' Bugaeva. It reveals certain inconsistencies in this theory, in particular, an excessive modernization and psychologization of the experience of exile and migration, to the detriment of a systematic consideration of their political, cultural and social conditions.

Keywords: theory of emigration, theory of intercultural dynamics, theory of nomadism, mass deportations, migrations, expatriate, exile, refugee, heterodoxy, Edward Said.

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A brief article gives little opportunity to grasp all that has been written about emigration in its various forms and, even less so, to draw of the problematics a coherent outline. Therefore, the variety of the matter will be reduced to a minimum. The proposed polemical notes take into consideration three main points. The first is the writings of Edward Said, the celebrated author of a book on Western Orientalism, the founder

of the “postcolonial” school in the humanities, and an authority on emigration [4; 5; 3]. The second point of reference is the theoretical part of the article written by Liubov’ Bugaeva and included in an important collection of works on Russian emigration [1]. Bugaeva often refers to Edward Said and their positions are interrelated. Finally, a third point of reference: in order to clarify some of the claims made by Said and Bugaeva, the author of this paper uses his own emigration experience as well as what he knows about that of his father’s, Mikhail Heller.

Let us begin with what Said calls “metaphysical exile”, and Bugaeva describes as the “metaphorical” meaning of the word “emigration”. Trotsky once called more accurately and simply such a position “internal emigration”, and this purely political term from the time of the revolution seems to return in the contemporary writings to denote withdrawal into oneself from the pressures of the surrounding reality.

Said speaks of the marginalized, the outcast, the rejected in their own homeland; at the same time he considers a similar alienation from the rules of the dominant culture, the ability to think outside of authority and of ready-made ways and prescriptions, to be perhaps the main feature of the creative intelligentsia.

Starting from a polemic against those who, without noticing the suffering of the exile, emphasize their function as a creative ferment, in the course of his reflection Said comes to a similar view, charging the exile with a moral and cultural prestige, precisely because of their renewing, anti-conformist, “deconstructivist” potential. Such a perspective virtually obliterates the difference between “internal emigration”, the ideal state of the intellectual, and “coming out into a foreign land” (*vyход na čužbinu*, as Vladimir Dahl’s dictionary calls emigration).

It is surprising that Said’s commentators, and perhaps even himself, link this praise of “metaphysical exile” to postmodernism: it is, after all, a sign of modern culture as such, already the Romantics eagerly adopted the posture of the outcast. In Russia, the cult of the outcast or the renegade becomes particularly important in the middle of the nineteenth century and feeds revolutionary moods: we need only to recall the once widely read book *Renegades* [*Otščepency*] (1866), whose authors Nikolai Sokolov and Varfolomei Zaitsev proclaimed Proudhon, Fourier and future revolutionaries as new heroes of mankind; or recall Bakunin, who relied on social outcasts to fuel the revolution. It is not by chance that Victor Hugo’s most popular novel, first published in Russia as the *Unlucky* [*Nesčastnye*] in 1862, the same year as its French edition, later was called the *Outcasts* [*Otveržennye*], which is more distant in meaning from the French title (*Les Misérables*), but much more radical in the social sense.

The example shows that the Russian intellectuals of the eighteenth-sixties were thinking primarily in terms of collective categories, whereas Said and Bugaeva describe alienation, exile, from the perspective of individual situations.

In his well-known article “Thoughts on Exile”, Said contrasts the old as time itself practice of banishment from homeland with the refugee movement, a product of the twentieth century:

The word “refugee” has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance, whereas “exile” carries with it, I think, touch of solitude and spirituality [3].²

It is quite clear what Said speaks about; however, it is surprising that a historian and philosopher does not connect this phenomenon to a past more distant than the twentieth century, that he does not want to see multitudes which in different times scattered over the face of earth in search of a refuge, to start with the Jews, subjects to regular expulsions or collective migrations. Migratory movements shook particularly the second half of the nineteenth century; the main route led from Europe to the US, but it was not the only one. At the very moment when the great famine exodus from Ireland began (1848–1849), the “gold rush” started to draw to California the Chinese. And the US were not the only pole of attraction at the time. The Chinese fled internal feuds for work in Manchuria, Indonesia and the Philippines; Hindus settled in the Malayan jungle; millions of Italians escaped poverty in South America; those of Russian Jews who did not go to America founded colonies in Palestine. Before the turn of the century, a “theory of emigration” based on comparative statistical data had emerged among sociologists, geographers and economists [7]. Naturally, it was primarily concerned with changes in the labor market and industry caused by the inflow of workers. The economic effect of emigration was for a long time considered to be the main one, although its political causes and consequences were not ignored.

Let’s return to Said’s reflections.

He states that refugees and exiles are forced to leave their home and their country, while expatriates³ move voluntarily: “Hemingway and Fitzgerald

² Several of the works we use in our article were only available to us on the Internet; in such cases, we indicate only their references in our summaries and citations, without giving page numbers.

³ The forms “expatriate” (from English) and “expatriant” (from French) coexist in Russian, the French-British acronym “expat” also occurs: see [2].

were not forced to live in France”. The status of the émigré, on the other hand, is ambiguous. “In formal terms, an émigré is anyone who moves permanently to another country; this definition certainly implies a relative freedom of choice” [3]. In spite of differences, however, Edward Said seems to equate all the above categories (“exile is still an exile”) and returns to the exaltation of exiles: they “break boundaries, their thoughts and feelings are pushed beyond traditional boundaries” [3]. If exile is not the privilege of the chosen, it is still an alternative to “that traditional mass consciousness which largely determines the life of modern society” [3]. Once again, the individual exile, the intellectual exile, is at the center of the philosopher’s attention.

As a result, he misses a lot of things, apart from what has already been noted. The leader of postcolonialism in science, he should have been aware of the fact that expatriates are for the most part — consciously or not — agents of the colonialist paradigm; but there is no mention of this in his emigration theory. His classification does not seem to leave space to integrate forced mass displacements like the sub-convoy epic of the Native Americans, the Stalinist deportation of the “kulaks as a class” in the 1930s and then of entire nations during the war, or the displacement of city dwellers by the Khmer Rouge. Episodes such as the multi-million Muslim exodus from India to Pakistan are mentioned but, as far as I understand, are not analysed and it is not clear how to include them in the classification. The definition of “refugees” as Said uses it fits well with the wave of recent, sometimes illegal migration to Europe, but the reasons for the latter are complex and varied, and in their turn require analysis.

Liubov’ Bugaeva, in an obvious dialogue with Said, proposes a different approach; she includes in the notion of emigration exile and a change of place (which she quite problematically terms “spatial dislocation”):

Four main forms of alienation — detachment from home — can be distinguished, that are present in contemporary studies of emigration in different variations and combinations. These four forms of alienation are represented by the following figures: 1. Emigrant. 2. Expatriate. 3. Nomad. 4. Tourist [1].

According to Bugaeva, all four are figures of “alienation from the dominant influence of the same social and cultural paradigm” [1]; all of them have narratological links to the travel motif.

The emigrant who is forced to move abroad (Said’s exiles and refugees are apparently included in this category, regardless of the differences between them) and the expatriate who is leaving home voluntarily are opposed to the nomad and the tourist. The

former “embodies endless displacement, permanent dislocation and homelessness <...> he is incapable of having a home and does not aspire to it.” He is displaced “into the position of a marginal being” [1]. The tourist, on the other hand, as the researcher writes, referring to English-language works, is “usually” an unconstrained, educated white American: they travel “in a constant search for new meaning, in search of the most authentic” [1].

The construction is unbalanced. It is unlikely that the journey plays the same role or, from a textual point of view, has the same narratological function for the emigrant and for the tourist. The figure of the nomad, a concept taken from Deleuze and Guattari, seems artificial in this context, its concrete incarnations are difficult to find. The example Bugaeva gives — a couple of performance artists Marina Abramović and Ulay, who travelled around the world in a truck for five years — is quite doubtful: even though she calls herself a “nomadic ex-Yugoslavian” [15], Abramović often returns in her statements to her Serbian roots, to traumatic memories of her parents, and she has a permanent home in Amsterdam. In other words, such as it is described, the phenomenon compares poorly with the other categories Bugaeva talks about. Even if other artists can be found to embody it — the inexhaustible traveler Blaise Cendrars comes to mind — it seems apparent that such a figure, characterized above all by its inner instability, more dependent on the subject’s personal psychology than on external circumstances, belongs to a different typological level than emigrants and expatriates, if we stay within the limits of Bugaeva’s classification.

The mythical Wandering Jew has a very different scale: he still symbolizes nomadism, curse-driven “homelessness”, in literature; but he is not included, as far as I understand, within the field of the discussed theories.

It should be noted that Russian culture contains brilliant examples of “collective nomadism”, where “endless displacement” does not necessarily mean separation from one’s real or symbolic roots. Such are the “Runners” (beguny, an Old Believers’ faction), to whom one can apply the remarkable thought of one of the Andrei Platonov’s heroes: “in the essence of things <...he> assumed to be lying space, that is, the distance, the sea, the journey, walking with a grey-haired and wise wanderer” [14, p. 229]. Such is the eternal rover Velimir Khlebnikov. In his “suggestions” from the future he dreamed of making his experience universal:

Frame houses were build so that the inhabitants themselves would fill in the empty spaces with movable glass huts that could be moved from one

building to another. <...> the right to be the owner of such a place in any city was established by law <...> [10, p. 279–280].

Flying humanity does not limit its property rights to a particular place. <...> the area of a single-use landholding cannot be less than the entire surface of the globe <...> [11, p. 159–160].

Such a project, as utopian today as it was in Khlebnikov's time, represents nomadism far less abstract than that of Bugaeva's typology: it is based on the anarcho-cosmopolitan conviction that a free man has the right to live wherever he wants, the right to treat his national-cultural "roots" as he wishes. As such, Khlebnikov's "flying nomad" can indeed be included in the list of the aforementioned "figures of displacement". To do so, however, one needs to reformulate the entire classification, starting with the principle of alienation: after all, the "flying nomad" is by definition not alienated from anything.

The figure of the tourist is also unsatisfactorily described. It is ridiculous and naive to think, in these days when the world is flooded with tens of millions of Asian visitors, that the average tourist retains the features of the white American, that the tourist — and especially the "white American" — is in search of authenticity and authentic meaning, and that at some point he is alienated from his native culture, from the "dominant paradigm". It hardly needs proving that the average real tourist is, as a rule, entirely at the mercy of the latter.

In relation to tourism, the notion of "exoticism" has been omitted as well as the first theorist of exoticism and tourism, Victor Segalen [6]. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, he predicted that global tourism is going to bring inevitable death to all exoticism and genuine otherness. Segalen distinguishes *the folklorist* and the traveller-*"exote"* from the *tourist* (italics mine — L.H.). The latter consumes the otherness like a product. Whereas the folklorist seeks to study, to explain the otherness, and the *exote* collects *diversity* (*diversité*), treats it with care, recognizes its subject uniqueness and avoids reducing it to readability and universal accessibility. In a sense, it is this last figure, the wanderer open to the world, the *exote* described by Segalen, who is better suited to the role of nomad than the Deleuzean version of the absorber of smooth spaces.

However, psychologism colours the Bugaeva's vision of nomadism for a reason: Said also emphasises psychology. All forms of exile in his work, all Bugaeva's figures of alienation lead to purely psychological consequences. Said argues that the exile develops a narcissistic

masochism that prevents them from fitting into their new environment. Bugaeva speaks of the melancholy that results from the loss of a beloved object, the homeland. In doing so, Said stresses “the particular tragedy of homelessness in a world that has grown heartless unwillingly” [3]. And it is precisely this tragedy, and the suffering associated with it, the “drying sadness of separation”, the “slow death” [3], the horror of which the scholar seems to be insisting in various places on the basis of his own experience, — it is precisely this suffering that develops in the exile the consciousness that constitutes an alternative to the mass mentality. Out of the worst evil is born the supreme good, the powerful force that drives all humanity, all world culture; only this force brings hope in our “time of alienation and spiritual orphanhood, the age of separation and anxiety” [3]. This concept, which translates proletarian “missionism” into a real mysticism of exile, while affirming the necessity of roots and home, comes rather unexpectedly in the context of a postmodern apology of relativism, nomadism and marginality.

Does this concept function? Said says: “The exile’s life is broken up into unconnected periods: for he is cut off from his roots, his country, his past” [3]. But here is what Vladimir Nabokov writes in *Bend Sinister* (1947) putting his own thoughts, it seems to me, into his character’s words:

He saw the possibility of escaping from Padukgrad into a foreign country as a kind of return into his own past because his own country had been a free country in the past. Granted that space and time were one, escape and return became interchangeable [16, p. 150].

Nabokov allows to see a gaping hole in Said’s theory of emigration: in it much is said about the pressure, sometimes political, which forces one to emigrate, about the horror of losing one’s roots, but little is said about the desire for freedom and the joy of gaining it, which can compensate for much suffering.

One might ask one more question: what if the man who leaves his homeland does not love it? What if Vladimir Pecherin, who wrote “in a fit of <...> Byronism <...> these mad lines”, is not alone in his feelings?

How sweet it is to hate the fatherland
And greedily wait for its destruction!
And in the destruction of the fatherland to see
The world’s day of rebirth! (1825) [13].

These “mad lines” were often mentioned by Mikhail Heller [8] for whom Pecherin’s contradictory position was not at all exceptional [9].

Our question, of course, seems provocative if one stays under the influence of the “dominant paradigm”. After all, Alexander Solzhenitsyn is still not forgiven for the way he showed in his *Gulag Archipelago* the *vlasovtsy* (soldiers of Vlassov army who fought on the German side during the Second World War), for if he did not justify them, he expressed his doubts about the absolute value of “love of the fatherland”, a fatherland that doesn’t love its citizens [10].

But if we do raise such question and share Solzhenitsyn’s doubt, if we do take into account Nabokov’s observation about freedom and the past, then the concepts of emigration and exile discussed above need a thorough reconsideration.

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