Peter Burke

Exiles and Expatriates in the History of Knowledge

What does it mean to be an exile? Nowadays, the term "exile" connotes a problematic feeling of loss and suffering. In this article, however, Professor Peter Burke wants to focus on the more positive aspects of the term. By examining the impact of exile on the creation of knowledge, Burke argues that exiles and expatriates have contributed to the process of "deprovincialization", making people more aware of alternatives to the way in which they think and act.[1]

Introduction

At a time when this observation was not yet commonplace, the great historian of the frontier, Frederick Jackson Turner, remarked that "Each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time".[2] As we move into the future, we see the past from new angles. Today, it is obvious enough that the rise of environmental history responds to current debates about the future of the planet, global history to discussions of globalization, the history of knowledge to debates about our "knowledge economy" or "information society", while the history of diasporas responds to concern about migration.

Historiography

The history of exiles and expatriates obviously forms part of the larger history of migration, of diasporas. Some scholars took up these topics in earlier generations. E. H. Carr's *Romantic Exiles*, a study of Alexander Herzen and his circle, goes back to 1933. Oscar Handlin's *Boston's Immigrants* goes back to 1941 and his more general study *The Uprooted* to 1951. All the same, studies in the history of exile long remained relatively few and

far between. The situation began to change at the end of the 1970s. The Society for Exile Studies was established in the USA in 1978, followed by journals such as *Exilforschung* (1983), the *Journal of Refugee Studies* (1988) or *Diaspora* (1991). The volume of publications on the history of exile has rapidly increased since then.

Looking at the authors of these studies, it is easy to notice, indeed difficult not to notice, how many historians of exile have been exiles themselves or their children. One might begin the story with Jacques Basnage, a Huguenot who went into exile in the Dutch Republic in 1685 and wrote a famous book on the history of the Jews, concentrating on the "dispersion" of these "refugees", as he called them. One might call Basnage's interest in the Jews a "displacement", in the Freudian sense, of the concern with his own people on the part of a displaced scholar.[3]

For displacement in the opposite direction, take the late Myriam Yardeni, who was born in Romania but left for Israel after the Communists took over, and spent much of her scholarly life in the study of the Huguenot exiles of 1685. In similar fashion, Norbert Elias devoted a short article to the Huguenot diaspora soon after he escaped from Germany. Irene Scouloudi, the long-serving secretary of the Huguenot Society of London, was the daughter of a Greek immigrant.

Again, the sociologist Nina Rubinstein, the daughter of Russian refugees from the Bolshevik Revolution, chose as the subject for her doctoral dissertation in Frankfurt, with Karl Mannheim, on the French *émigrés* after 1789. Rubinstein's career was interrupted when she went into exile herself in 1933. The story has a happy ending, though a rather belated one. Her doctorate was finally awarded in 1989, fifty-six years after the dissertation was completed, and it was published in Graz in the year 2000, about seventy years after she began her research.[4]

Vocabulary

At this point I should like to pause to consider the vocabulary of exile. To describe forced migration, "exiles" is an old term in many European languages: exile, *exil*, *Exulanten*, etc. In Italian, *esìlio* is a term used by Dante to describe the state of exile, which he knew all too well, while *èsule*, referring to an individual exile, is used by the sixteenth-century historian Francesco Guicciardini. Ariosto refers to a *prófugo* in the sense of someone who has

fled, while Machiavelli uses the more neutral term *fuoruscito*, someone who has gone away. The Dutch speak of *ballingschap*. The traditional Spanish term, *destierro*, is vividly concrete in its reference to the loss of one's native land.

"Refugees" is a noun first recorded in both French and English, appropriately enough, in 1685, the year of the expulsion of Protestants from France. Examples of the new word include the *Histoire de l'établissement des François réfugies dans … Brandebourg*, published in Berlin by Charles Ancillon, himself one of them, in 1690, and the anonymous *Avis important aux réfugiés sur leur prochain retour en France*, published in the Netherlands in the same year. *Flüchtling* is another seventeenth-century term.

As for "expatriates", in the sense of voluntary migrants, the term appears in English in the early nineteenth century. "Displaced persons" is a term first recorded towards the end of the Second World War, although a *List of Displaced German Scholars* was published in London in 1936.

As a historian of early modern Europe who began to study the nineteenth and twentieth centuries relatively recently, I have been faced with the question of differences between the two periods in exile history. What the German historian Heinz Schilling calls "confessional migration" was the dominant form of exile in early modern times. As a recent book by the Dutch-Canadian scholar Nicholas Terpstra has recently pointed out, "the religious refugee became a mass phenomenon" at the Reformation, perhaps for the first time in history.[5] This phenomenon had, of course, important consequences for early modern Dutch history, with Catholics from the Northern Netherlands moving south, Protestants from the South moving North or to England or Germany, and foreign Protestants, especially the French, moving to Amsterdam, Rotterdam and elsewhere.

The late modern period, by contrast, has been dominated by political exiles from 1789 onwards and by ethnic refugees from the 1880s. Where Terpstra emphasized the desire for religious purity as – quite literally – a driving force for the expulsion of heretics in the early modern period, its place was taken in late modern times by secularized forms of purification, both political purges or ethnic cleansing, legitimated by politics or science rather than theology.

Approaches to Exile History

There are of course many questions to ask about exiles, many approaches to their history. One important approach focuses on the personal problems of the exiles; the trauma of displacement and of a broken career, a loss of identity along with insecurity, unemployment, poverty, loneliness, and the struggle with a foreign language. Beyond individual human interest stories, this approach to exile history includes a concern with modes and degrees of assimilation to the host culture on the part of exiles, or indeed the opposite response, the refusal to assimilate, tracked through marriage (endogamy vs. exogamy) and the use of language (of homeland or "hostland").

At worst, exiles suffer from a sense of 'placelessness'. Individuals who decide to leave their homeland often find themselves at a crossroads, needing to decide in what direction to travel. Some of them have to make such a decision again and again, like the wanderers Giordano Bruno and Jan Komenský in the early modern world, or in the twentieth century the economist Albert Hirschman, who used to refer to his fourth or fifth exile (born in Germany, he fled to France, moved to England, fought in Spain, moved to Italy, returned to France and finally left for the USA). No wonder then that Stefan Zweig, another wanderer, described himself as "homeless in all countries", while Edward Said viewed himself as "out of place" everywhere.[6]

Exile and Knowledge

My own current research, on the other hand, focuses on more positive aspects of exile, the silver lining of the dark cloud. It is situated at another kind of crossroads, the meeting-point between the history of exiles and expatriates and the history of knowledge. The principal question that I am trying to answer in the book that I am writing at the moment is whether exiles and expatriates have made a distinctive contribution to knowledge, and if so, what forms that distinctive contribution has taken.

This comparative study, which takes cases ranging from 1453 to 1933 or beyond in Europe and the Americas (North and South), focuses on the intellectual consequences of exile and expatriation on three groups. In the first place, on the exiles themselves, for whom it is a kind of education – a tough education, one has to admit. Exiles gain new insights, a kind of reward for the struggle to survive in an alien culture. Expatriates also learn from

their experiences abroad, but the pressures to learn are not so strong in their case, since they have an exit strategy. They have, in a manner of speaking, a return ticket in their pocket, together with the expectation of returning home at some point.

In the second place, the book is concerned with the effect of exiles and expatriates on the host countries or "hostlands": education once again, often in the literal sense, since exiled French Protestants became professors in the Dutch Republic, while many Jewish academics who fled in the 1930s taught in the USA, Britain and elsewhere.

In the third place, the consequences of exile for the homelands, for example the loss of knowhow or skills to France following the expulsion of the Huguenots, or the provincialization of German and Austrian science that followed the exodus of Jewish academics in 1933 and 1938.

So what is distinctive about the contribution of the exiles to knowledge? In a word, they contribute to the process of deprovincialization, making people more aware of alternatives to the way in which they think and act. The exiles deprovincialize themselves by moving between cultures. Paul Tillich once remarked that it was only in the USA that he "became aware" of his "formerly unconscious provincialism".[7] Exiles and expatriates also deprovincialize their hosts by confronting them with points of view that are unfamiliar to them.

I should like to emphasize three recurrent elements in this process, which can be summed up briefly, at the price of simplification, in three keywords: mediation, distanciation and hybridization. Let me try to unpack these concepts.

Mediation

Writing about what he called the '"function" of refugees, Karl Mannheim emphasized their opportunities for mediation between the culture of their homeland and that of the country to which they had fled.[8] Mediation includes dissemination, and for this reason a number of printers and publishers will make their appearance in this study.

Attempts at dissemination face obvious linguistic obstacles. All the same, the native language of exiles is sometimes an asset as well as a liability in their new home. It is a form of intellectual capital, allowing them to make a living by giving language lessons or by producing grammars and dictionaries. Some of the Greek refugees from the Ottoman conquest of Byzantium gave lessons in ancient Greek, while a number of the French Protestants in exile

in Amsterdam, London and Berlin made their living as language teachers.

Their displacement has turned many exiles into translators, appropriately enough, perhaps, since they themselves had been "translated" in the archaic sense of that English verb, in other words transferred from one place to another. Books by major figures of the Renaissance such as Machiavelli, Guicciardini and Tasso were translated into Latin (and so made available to a pan-European public) by Italian Protestant refugees in Switzerland and elsewhere.

In the USA in the 1930s, refugees introduced German theory. Kurt Wolff translated Simmel and Mannheim, Hans Gerth translated Max Weber, and Werner Stark introduced the writings of Max Scheler, while Walter Kaufmann both translated and commented on many works by Nietzsche. In similar fashion, among the Spanish Republican exiles who arrived in Mexico after 1939, Eugenio Ímaz devoted much of his time to translating the complete works of Wilhelm Dilthey, José Medina Echevarría translated Max Weber, and José Gaos translated books by Eduard Husserl, Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers. These translations, published in Mexico, circulated throughout the Spanish-speaking world – with the exception of Franco's Spain.

Mediation between languages easily extends to mediation between cultures. Greek scholars in Renaissance Italy introduced some of their hosts to the world of ancient Greece. Huguenot refugees spread the knowledge of French culture. Russian exiles in Britain and the United States, among them Isaiah Berlin, George Florovsky and George Vernadsky, spread the knowledge of Russian culture. German Jewish scholars who came to the United States and Britain from the 1930s onwards taught German history and published books about it.

Some exiles become specialists in the culture of their new home. The Huguenot Paul de Rapin-Thoyras became famous for his history of England, written in French and read in many parts of Europe. Other Huguenot refugees spread the knowledge of English and German culture in France and elsewhere by translating texts and publishing articles in journals. Eduard Bernstein, a German socialist exile who lived in London between 1888 and 1901, carried out research on seventeenth-century English radical thinkers, and was the first to draw attention to the writings of one of them, Gerard Winstanley. Israel Gollancz, a second-generation refugee from Eastern Europe, became a professor of English at King's College London in 1903 and a noted Shakespeare scholar.

Distanciation

Distance had positive as well as negative effects on refugee scholars, allowing the big picture to become more visible at the same time as it made more specialized research difficult, as in the cases of Erich Auerbach in Istanbul and Américo Castro in Princeton.

In a famous passage of his masterpiece, *Mimesis* (1947), Auerbach warned his readers that the book had been written in Istanbul "where the libraries are not well equipped for European studies". All the same, he admitted that "it is quite possible that the book owes its existence to just this lack of a rich and specialized library. If it had been possible for me to acquaint myself with all the work that has been done on so many subjects, I might never have reached the point of writing".[9] In similar fashion, the Spanish scholar Américo Castro, a refugee from the Spanish Civil War, concentrated on medieval philology when he lived in Spain, but in exile, especially in the United States from 1936 onwards, he produced his most important study, a reinterpretation of Spanish history as the fruit of a prolonged encounter between three cultures, Christian, Jewish and Muslim, a study published in 1948 under the title *España en su historia*.

Another form of distanciation is detachment. Remarkable examples of this quality include the Calvinist pastor Pierre Bayle, a refugee in Rotterdam, and in the twentieth century the sociologist Norbert Elias and the historian Eric Hobsbawm. Bayle loved to undermine received ideas and to contrast two points of view without taking sides. When the witnesses contradict one another, he argued, it is necessary to suspend judgment. Bayle was at his liveliest when discussing the prejudices of earlier writers. "History is dished up very much like meat …," he wrote in a famous passage from the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, "Each nation and religion takes the same raw facts and dresses them in a sauce of its own taste, and each reader finds them true or false according to whether they agree or disagree with his prejudices".[10]

Elias not only practiced detachment, he also wrote about it. A striking feature of his essay on "involvement and detachment" is that rather than pointing out the comparative advantages and disadvantages of both approaches, Elias reserved his praise for detachment, suggesting that it is necessary for survival. The example offered is a fictional one, from a story by Edgar Allen Poe about a man who escapes drowning by keeping a cool head, but Elias was surely thinking about his own experiences in 1933.[11]

Like Américo Castro and Fernand Braudel, Eric Hobsbawm saw the big picture with more clarity than most of his professional colleagues, as his trilogy on the Ages of Revolution, Capital and Empire vividly illustrates. He also offers a striking example of detachment. In so saying, I do not mean to suggest that Hobsbawm was incapable of commitment. Quite the opposite: his loyalty to the Left began at an early age and was maintained till the end of his life. All the same, this loyalty coexisted with a remarkable capacity for detaching himself from his objects of study and even from his surroundings.

This detachment is clear enough in Hobsbawm's historical studies, most obviously in *Nations and Nationalism*, which begins by imagining the Olympian view of "an intergalactic historian" and argues for the need of viewing the subject with "a cold and demystifying eye". One is left with the impression that this cosmopolitan scholar found nationalism a rather odd phenomenon.[12]

When exiles choose to study the culture of their hostland, their distance from the conventional wisdom, which was not drilled into them at school, allows them to adopt a fresh approach. Take the case of Lewis Namier, who came from a Jewish family in Russian Poland and was originally known as Ludwik Bernsztajn Niemirowski. Namier came to England in 1907, studied at Balliol College Oxford and became a British subject – changing his name – just before the outbreak of the First World War. Namier came to identify with England, at least in some respects, and his work on Parliament expressed this identification, but it might also be said of him that his detachment from English culture and especially from English myths about themselves, allowed him to take a fresh look at English history, and especially to demystify the eighteenth-century party system.

Some exiles develop what one of them, the historian Fritz Stern, calls "bifocal" vision. Stern, a child when he left Germany for the USA, once confessed that "I tend to see things German with American eyes, and things American also with German eyes".[13]

Hybridization

The famous sociologist of the city, Chicago in particular, Robert Park, noted that one result of immigration was the appearance of "a new type of personality that he called the 'cultural hybrid', living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples".[14] Fritz Stern is a

good example of the type. However, the process of hybridization, in the history of knowledge as in other forms of cultural history, is best seen as a collective enterprise involving individuals and groups on both sides of a cultural encounter.

Expatriates too contribute to the hybridization of knowledge, whether they teach in or learn from their new environment, or indeed do both. For example, a recent essay on knowledge and colonialism discussed the encounter between British medics and indigenous healers in India and Africa, in which each group learned from the other, under the vivid title of "pidgin-knowledge".[15] Something similar may be said about the many German scholars (together with a few Dutch), who were invited to Russia in the eighteenth century as part of the westernization campaign by the tsars from Peter the Great onwards. One of the most famous of these expatriates was the historian August Schlözer. Schlözer spent only six years in Russia before returning to Göttingen, where he remained for more than forty years, but his career might be summed up by saying that he brought Göttingen (in the sense of a centre of new historical methods) to Russia, and then brought Russia to Göttingen, where he taught Russian and East European history and adopted an ethnographic approach that emerged from the collective enterprise of studying the variety of cultures in the Russian Empire.[16]

However, one of the most striking cases of the hybridization of knowledge occurred in Britain and the USA from the 1930s onwards: the encounter, or better, perhaps, the collision between German theory and Anglo-American empiricism. Take the case of the sociologist of knowledge Karl Mannheim, who was dismissed from his chair at the University of Frankfurt in 1933 because he was Jewish and was offered a lectureship at the London School of Economics. The historian G. M. Young described one of Mannheim's projects as "too grandiose" and contrasted his German style with English "academic realism". For his part, Mannheim complained about the problem of explaining the sociology of knowledge to the British and described American sociology as "characterized by its peculiar delight in a form of empiricism which I would be inclined to call an isolating empiricism, a mass of secondary details unrelated to the whole".[17]

It was in American sociology that the opposition between German theory and local empiricism in what Edward Shils called "the country of legendary theorylessness" was most obvious if not most important.[18] The clash between two modes of thought was perhaps most dramatic when the Institut für Sozialforschung relocated from Frankfurt to New

York. Contrasting American and German approaches to the subject, the Scottish sociologist Robert McIver, one of the Institute's hosts at Columbia University, noted perceptively that even when they used the same term, the two groups sometimes misunderstood each other. "Method means an entirely different thing to American and to German investigators. To the American, method means primarily research technique … to the German, method is a principle … In a word, the American is eager for new facts and new verifications, whereas the German seeks new formulations and new thought-constructions."[19]

All the same, in the later twentieth century, some degree of hybridization becomes visible. Anglophone sociologists, for instance, became more concerned with theory, while some of their German colleagues became more empirical. A few German scholars returned from exile after the Second World War and introduced American approaches to sociology, politics, literature and other disciplines in German universities.

Looking back on his career, Erwin Panofsky called it a "blessing" that he had been able to "come into contact – and occasionally into conflict – with an Anglo-Saxon positivism which is, in principle, distrustful of abstract speculation".[20] I could make a similar remark myself, the other way round, about the way in which contact with exiles such as the art historian Hans Hess, the literary historian Eduard Goldstuecker and the sociologist Zevedei Barbu (all three active at the University of Sussex in the 1960s), encouraged my interest in theory.

Receptivity

Just as individual emigrants or whole diasporic communities have been more or less open to the cultures of their hostlands, so these hostlands have been more or less receptive to foreigners, or to different kinds of foreigners. To take examples from the 1930s, adaptation to the new culture was easier for Spaniards in Mexico, for instance, who spoke more or less the same language as their hosts, than it was for Germans in Britain. Thanks to its tradition of hosting exiles, Britain was relatively open to foreigners in the 1930s, while the USA was still more open. At the micro-level of academic departments, expanding universities, from Istanbul to Mexico City, accepted foreign scholars more easily than universities which lacked the funds for more appointments.

The testimony of two exiled scholars of the 1930s is worth noting at this point. Erwin Panofsky wrote about what he called the "providential synchronism" between the need to escape from Germany on the part of Jewish art historians and the rise of the discipline of art history in the USA. Again, the social psychologist Marie Jahoda noted what she called the "intricate interplay" between what the immigrants bring and "what they find in the new host culture".[21] The story of exiles and expatriates in the history of knowledge, as in other histories, cannot be separated from the story of their hosts.

Notes

1. This article summarizes the conclusions of a book that Professor Burke is writing, the amplification of the Menahem Stern Lectures, delivered in Jerusalem in March 2015. The book should be published by the University Press of New England in 2016.
2. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of History," in *The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner*, ed. Fulmer Mood (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1938), 47-8.
3. Jacques Basnage, *L'Histoire et la Religion des Juifs* (5 vols., Rotterdam, 1706-7).
4. Nina Rubinstein, *Die französische Emigration nach 1789: ein Beitrag zur Soziologie der politischen Emigration* (Graz, 2000).
5. Heinz Schilling, "Innovation through Migration: the settlements of Calvinistic Netherlanders in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Central and Western Europe," *Histoire sociale-Social History* 16 (1983), 7-34, at 32; Nicholas Terpstra, *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 4.
6. Edward W. Said, *Out of Place: a memoir* (London: Granta, 2000).
7. Paul Tillich, "The Conquest of Theological Provincialism," in *The Cultural Migration: the European Scholar in America*, ed. Franz Neumann (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), 138.
8. Karl Mannheim, "The Function of the Refugee," *New English Weekly* (19 April 1945).
9. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: the representation of reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 557.
10. Elisabeth Labrousse, *Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 12, 22, 51.
11. Norbert Elias, "Problems of Involvement and Detachment," *British Journal of Sociology* 7 (1956): 226-252.
12. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1990), 1, 130, 168.
13. Fritz Stern, *Five Germanies I have known* (Wassenaar: NIAS, 1998), 14.

14. Robert E. Park, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man," *American Journal of Sociology* 33 (1928): 881-893.
15. Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Pidgin-Knowledge: Wissen und Kolonialismus* (Zurich and Berlin: Diaphanes, 2013).
16. Han F. Vermeulen, "Von der Empirie zur Theorie: Deutschsprachige Ethnographie und Ethnologie, 1740-1881," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 134 (2009): 253-66.
17. G.M. Young quoted in Colin Loader, *The Intellectual Development of Karl Mannheim* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 127; Karl Mannheim, *Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1953), 225.
18. Edward Shils, "The Calling of Sociology," in *Theories of Society*, ed. Talcott Parson et al. (New York: Free Press, 1961), 1407.
19. Robert McIver quoted in John Higham and Paul Conkin (eds.) *New Directions in American Intellectual History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 8.
20. Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 329.
21. Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 332; Marie Jahoda, "The Migration of Psychoanalysis," in *The Intellectual Migration. Europe and America, 1900-1960*, ed. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 421 and 445.