



Modernity As Exile: The Stranger in John Berger's Writing

Nikos Papastergiadis

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Concerning itself with the radical instability of contemporary experience, this book traces this theme by focusing on the representation of exile in John Berger's writing. Exile is taken to signify not just the consequence of political banishment but also to refer to the dislocations of peoples by economic pressures and the redefinition of values and norms through cultural transformation. The author argues that exile is not just the consequence of modernity, but also a metaphor for the processes within modernity. Exile will also be used as a component in the methodology for a critical representation of modernity. The stranger is the person who has entered "our" space but without an a priori claim for staying. He is always located within society and people must ask what are the available categories for defining these levels of interaction. The etymology of words or the existence of synonyms at times reflects the scope for differentiating and understanding the perplex patterns of social interaction. John Berger's diverse writings - which range from art criticism to literature, from sociology to philosophy - offer a unique opportunity to not only reflect on the utility of each genre, but also to engage with the specificity of particular forms of exile. This book does not offer a history of modernity by establishing a causal relationship between his texts and the shifting trajectory of this epoch. Rather it is an exploration which utilizes literary, sociological and psychoanalytic concepts to reveal the multiple connections and fascinations that are brought to bear on the theme of exile and how the trope of exile can summon up a further exploration of the potentialities of his writing.

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