

**Conflicting Exile Issues in Contemporary England in Rose
Tremain's The Road Home**

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Abstract

Since the formation of the EU many citizens of the former Eastern Europe have been seeking a better life in England. Rose Tremain's *The Road Home* is a novel that represents the case of Lev, one of these emigrants. This paper draws on Edward Said's concept of the exile intellectual to examine, first, whether the protagonist can be categorized as an exile intellectual, second, to what extent does he succeed in playing such a part. The paper also draws on Suzanne Nalbantian's *Memory in Literature* to examine the part played by memory in Lev's life during his one-year-stay in England. The paper focuses on Lev's engagement in certain issues such as out-casting foreigners, defected custody laws, negligence of the old, and the freedom of artists to express their "cutting edge" ideas. These are investigated as prominent aspects of life in contemporary England.

Keywords Exile intellectual. Memories. Out-casting foreigners. Custody. Elderly people. Cutting-edge

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تناقضات الحياة المعاصرة في انجلترا كما تصورها رواية الطريق للوطن لروز
تريمين

حنان بركات

ملخص

يتعرض البحث الدور الذي يقوم به المثقف في المنفي في رواية الطريق للوطن للكاتبة الإنجليزية روز تريمين. في المقدمة يستعرض البحث مفهوم مثقف المنفي مركزا علي تناول ادوار سعيد لهذا الموضوع . البحث يعرض بعد ذلك دراسة مستفيضة للمتغيرات التي طرأت علي المجتمع في انجلترا و كذلك بعض المشكلات و التي يكشفها بطل الرواية المهاجر من إحدى دول أوروبا الشرقية الي انجلترا بحثا عن فرص حياة أفضل هناك . هذه المتغيرات تمس نمط الحياة و بعض العادات المعهودة هناك . أما المشكلات فهي تتنوع بين نذب المهاجرين و حضانة الاطفال و إهمال الأبناء لأبائهم المسنين بالاضافة الي بعض الأعمال الفنية التي تصطمم بالقيم الأسرية . البطل يقوم بدور إيجابي هنا حيث يحاول إصلاح بعض هذه المشكلات و مواجهة المتغيرات السلبية. تخلص الدراسة إلي أن سمات المثقف في المنفي تتفق و الدور الذي يقوم به البطل بالرغم من كونه رجلا بسيطا لا ينتمي للمجتمع الانجليزي.

Rose Tremain (1943--) is one of the contemporary prominent English writers. Her novel *The Road Home* (2007) is a popular winner of the Orange broadband prize. The novel is concerned with the issue of the immigration of European Union citizens. The aim of this paper is to investigate whether the protagonist of Tremain qualifies as an exile intellectual, as conceived by Edward Said in *Representations of the Intellectual*. If so, to what extent does he fulfil the assigned mission of that intellectual. The paper attempts to answer to the question of how far can the protagonist tackle psychological, racial, social, and moral dilemmas, often faced by exiles. Hence, the present social and artistic reality of England is also engaged in this study as the protagonist undergoes a number of experiences in diverse circumstances. As memories play an important part in the novel, they will be investigated in the light of Suzanne Nalbantian's *Memory in Literature*. Thus, *The Road Home* will be analyzed to show the way in which memory reconstructs conflicting exile's issues in contemporary England.

From the 1990s on, and with the emergence of the European Union, a number of citizens of former Communist Europe have moved to Capitalist Europe seeking better life opportunities. Unlike children of former European colonies who moved from one continent to another, these European emigrants only moved from one European country to a neighbouring one. Their belonging to the same Caucasian race, as well as sharing some common cultural traits with the hosting country, narrowed the gap between them and local citizens. However, the experience of being far away from home creates a sense of alienation shared by all types of emigrants. As Johannes F. Eveliein aptly states,

[t]he existential state of alienation, of being dispersed from one's home and land is sedimented in our collective myths and historical accounts, epitomizing the phenomenon of expulsion as an integral aspect of the human condition.(15)

Man's attachment to his homeland, where he was born and grew up, and where his family-- nuclear and extended-- lives, is strong enough to haunt him wherever he goes and to inspire him to write about. Homer's *Odyssey*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, E.M.

Forster's *A Passage to India* and Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*, to name but few, are fictional works that represent the experience of exile.

Rose Tremain has never been an exile herself but she shares what Evelien calls:

[an] extended metaphorical understanding [that] applies to all modernist writers who seem to thrive on nonbelonging....who gain perspective from distance....in order to convey the separateness, the fragmentation that has become part of the human condition. (19)

As a citizen of cosmopolitan London, Tremain has had the opportunity to encounter various nationalities and to observe these emigrants and the different attitudes of the English people towards them. Tremain's "extended metaphorical understanding " is explained.....:

I feel very strongly that it's hard for people to respond in an empathetic way when we think about a group of people in a collective way...fiction can do something very important here, which is that if you are able to tell the story of one person then suddenly it's not a faceless group which you can go away and forget...I get letters now from people saying they look at the builders next door in a different way. (Aitkenhead 25)

Tremain seeks achieving a universal human egalitarianism. She uses her art to transmit to the readers her sympathy with these suffering emigrants. The letters she receives from her readers indicate a change of attitude toward emigrants as representatives of "separateness" and "fragmentation" of the human condition.

The protagonist in *The Road Home* is a case in study, as he represents an individual in this "group of people," to which Tremain refers. Lev is a citizen of a former communist European country, who leaves to England, seeking to improve his financial position there. The novel represents the hardships encountered by such an emigrant, as well as exposes the social reality of contemporary London life. Lev is a possible example of an exile.

A precise definition of "exile" is thus needed here. The *O E D* defines "exile" as: "a prolonged residence in a foreign country, either voluntary or imposed by circumstances." It is further defined as "a

person obliged by law or compelled by circumstances to live abroad. Also, a person who does this from choice." Literary writers interested in exile often give it a sweeping definition. For example, Jean Sgard sees that it is an experience of "displacement" (qtd in Dahab xi), and Elizabeth Dahab elaborates on him as "the person who undergoes this experience and is displaced is called an *exile*" (xi).

A more detailed analysis of the exile and intellectual is done by Edward Said. In defining exile, Said refers back to the "age-old practice of banishment...[as] the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life" (*Reflections on Exile* 181). "Refuges" suggest "herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance"; thus Said asserts the global and political dimensions of this category. Expatriates, "voluntarily live in an alien country, usually for personal or social reasons" (181). Here, expatriates enjoy a better status as they are given the choice of a hosting country. "Emigre" is defined as "anyone who emigrates to a new country." Choice, here, is also "a possibility" (181). This particular category is given a more general definition than the previous ones. This term is liable to be applied to any form of leaving one's homeland.

Metaphorical "exile" is yet another category. There are individuals who can also be 'exiles' even though they are lifelong members of their society. These are individuals endowed with intellectual gifts that make them "at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power, and honours are concerned" (*Representation of the Intellectuals* 52-3). Here, Said deals with the "metaphorical" condition of the exile intellectual as well as the "actual" one. Exile intellectuals, in this "metaphysical" sense, are never satisfied with the status quo; they are disturbers, "restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others" (53). Here, the mission of intellectuals is to be eye openers to negative aspects of society. Said puts no limits to the areas where intellectuals relieve their positive energy; these areas could be political, philosophic, intellectual...etc. Such is the "public role" given to exile intellectual by Edward Said.

Naming the category to which the protagonist of *The Road Home* belongs is necessary here. Lev, the protagonist, "voluntarily"

leaves his former communist country; he chooses to live abroad for a certain period of time. Therefore, the category that fits him is the expatriate. But this is only a physical exile and Said's concern is also in the metaphorical one. So, Lev needs other attributes of intellectuals to fit him into Said's metaphorical exiles.

"Imagination" is what distinguishes Lev from others. In the opening of the novel, Lev remembers his being referred to as "possess[ing] a vibrant imagination. At the Baryn sawmill—where he used to work in his homeland-- he'd been known, derogatorily, as a dreamer" (Tremain 6). This figural narrative is dominated by two different voices with two conflicting attitudes: the authorial and the collective voice of the people of Baryn Sawmill. The authorial voice informs the reader of his being a highly imaginative man; the modifier "vibrant" signifies an authorial support and celebration of this talent. The logical reason for such support is that, as a creative writer, Rose Tremain is also endowed with rich imagination. However, in the second sentence, where the collective point of view of Baryn Sawmill dominates, the adverb "derogatorily" does not denote the same approving authorial attitude, rather it is a downgrading one. Their attitude creates a sense of Lev's being different for possessing a rich imagination, which makes of him a non-conformist.

Non-conformity is a key aspect of Said's intellectual. He gives political dimension to the reductive categories and obstacles that encounter such an intellectual. Said assigns the intellectual "the task of break[ing] down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought" (*Representations of the Intellectual*, xi). Said himself was almost denounced by Western media, simply for being a Palestinian. As for Lev, being in his homeland and being endowed with vibrant imagination, leave him no space for political dimension. Yet, this very talent -- being endowed with vibrant imagination -- breaks away from stereotypical mentality and aligns him with Said's exile intellectuals.

Lev's imagination helps in easing psychological stress in exile. On his way to London he experiences confusion over his decision to leave home. Worries about his mother and daughter drive to retrieval of home memories. In her book, *Memory in Literature*, Suzanne Nalbantian refers the process of memory retrieval by fictional

characters to these reasons "to nourish their spiritual lives...as a constant support system for the human identity" (42) and "control[ing] the workings of their minds in a variety of ways that create a continuous interchange with the past" (7-8). Such an interchange is not linear, as the working of human mind does not proceed chronologically. The turbulent working of Lev's mind provides the reader with a fair picture of his childhood, adolescence and marriage.

People who show up in Lev's memories are mostly his family and his friend Rudy. One of the earliest retrieved memories is triggered by Lev's inability to sleep upright on a bus.

Lev's father, Stefan, sometimes used to sleep upright...on a hard wooden chair...Often, Lev had slept on a rag rug beside his daughter's bed, when she was ill or afraid. And when his wife, Marina, was dying, he'd lain for five nights on an area of linoleum flooring on wider than his outstretched arm. (Tremain 2)

These memories revolve around Lev's stretching his body, not on beds but on floors, in different places and occasions. Here, the ailments of his daughter and wife are dominant here. However, Lev is overwhelmed with a sense of loneliness, fear of the unknown near future and both financial and language worries. These led to his retrieval of family memories. But they are mere flashes of memories; they are fragmented: neither detailed nor focused. Yet, what matters here are not the details as much as the imaginary companionship of as many members of his family as possible. The figure of the father supports Lev, as a son, with a feeling of being protected, as for the figures of the wife and daughter, they make him feel protective. Therefore, these memories support Lev with a sense of being sheltered in this new foreign environment.

Lev's memory of his mother plays its part as an additional psychological support. It is noticed that the figure of the mother does not show up in the former fragmented memories. However, a few hours later, after occupying himself with some trivial activities to consume time, Lev resorts to retrieving a detailed memory of his mother. It is a memory of her love of a Poinsettia plant and how he had once planned and worked hard to get her one as a birthday

present. He wanted to please his mother, and wanted her to sit in the evenings to "do her knitting and admire them, and neighbours would arrive and congratulate her – on the flowers and on the care her son had taken" (7). The vivid details of the memory suggest that Lev is seeking emotional support of his mother, as well as a need to prove to himself his being a loving and caring son. Having stimulated that sense, he finally manages to fall asleep.

Alienating foreigners is yet another dilemma that faces exiles in England. On his early arrival to London, Lev is faced with a gross social reality. As a new arrival, with little money, he is unable to find a place to shelter him. He resorts to spending the night on the street but he is detained by the police, as "sleeping in the streets" is considered by law an "anti-social behaviour" (24). The law which considers Lev's act a "crime" casts its shadow on the social attitudes of its subjects: the Londoners. These Londoners play their own part in complicating the situation for Lev. After his release, Lev tries to take some rest in a private garden where some kids are playing, monitored by their young mothers. His presence causes these mothers to call their children "from the swings and had their arms round them" (41). Here, a part from being protective, the act of surrounding the kids with arms is significant. It denotes Lev as an "outcast against an urban community of shared values" (Pike 14). But Lev is not a complete foreigner to the country; he shares its people their Caucasian race as well as some common European values.

Inherent racial attitudes toward foreigners motivate this alienating response. Not being an Englishman categorises Lev, by these English women, as an outcast. Their action suggests a belief that he shares with them neither their Englishness nor their maternal values. Lev tries to tell these young mothers that he, too, is a father of a little girl; as to send the message that he shares paternal values but his English fails him. Consequently, the mothers, in order to send him away, threaten to call the police. Indeed, this attitude can be considered as "inherently...spacial" (Pile 5). These women see themselves as belonging to the place. They also refuse to accept Lev because he is a foreigner; therefore he is alienated. For them, Lev does not only threaten their space-- the garden-- but also might "contaminate" them and their kids with values that are foreign to them.

Thus, "the narrative produce[s]...racist signifiers" (Pike 5). Had Lev been a black African or coloured Asian, these racist tones would have been stronger.

Out-casting foreigners is characteristic of urban communities. The conduct of both police and young mothers signifies discriminatory attitude as well as an "isolation or exclusion of the individual from community and...express fragmentation of the very concept of community" (Pike xii). Lev's subjection to this experience exposes the social fragmentation that motivates city people, represented by the young mothers, to be inhospitable, even though they realize that Lev is a harmless foreigner. Here, Lev is used by Tremain to show an inhospitable disposition of the English people.

Spotting London's social and demographic changes is yet another mission assigned to Lev. In his homeland, Lev had always had the impression that English people " would look something like Alec Guinness in *Bridge on the River Kwai*, thin and quizzical...or like Margaret Thatcher, hurrying along with purpose, like an indigo bird" (Tremain 35). English cinema and media created this myth of English people being smart and active. Further, the prominent images of the actor and prime minister signify the superiority of England, a leading Western country, in these two areas of art and politics. As a citizen of a former communist country, with mainly a poor population, Lev arrives in London with "the myth of the city as perfection" (Pike 8). However, in encountering the London people, Lev is faced with a different reality. English people seem to be "a gathering of nations...of every colour...too well fed...and ugly" (Tremain 54-5). This gathering of many races is one of the consequences of the past glory of the British Empire. Some natives of former colonies, already British subjects, have decided to adopt England as their homeland. In consequence, English people are no longer all Caucasian, or with the smartness and seriousness of Guinness and Thatcher, as the spirit of grace and purpose declines in their image. The myth of pure English breed, or all white English people is almost overshadowed with diverse mixed races creating in Lev feelings of amazement.

Change of English food habits is another social and cultural aspect scrutinised by Lev. A different image of London is further

revealed as he sees people eat on the London tube.

Two huge white men...consuming hamburgers and onions out of cardboard boxes...Lev put his hand over his face. When the men got off the train, they left the half-empty cartons, stinking up the carriage, on a narrow shelf behind the seats. Lev felt sick. Everybody knew that America was a fat country, but somehow news of England's decline into obesity hadn't travelled as far as Auror. (Tremain 55)

In this excerpt, the shift from external perspective to internal is clear, indicating Lev's senses of sight and smell at work. The sight of men eating and the smell of onions create in him a feeling of disgust. Reference to onions "stinking up the carriage" indicates a collective point of view of both Lev and the other passengers as well. The behaviour of these passengers undermines the traditional graceful image of English people and creates in Lev a "complex of contradictory forces" (Pile 8). Furthermore, engaging America in this image reminds the reader of its imported fast food habits; outdoor meals of hamburger and onions served in cardboard boxes and eaten on public transport.

Such cultural change is a consequence of global economy. Fast food, produced by international enterprises, has had its impact on food habits of peoples. Thus, in England, outdoor-meals no longer mean either being at restaurants or taking part in picnic. At restaurants, diners cosily sit at tables, observing etiquette: table-linen and table-ware. At picnics, they sit on chequered cloth with picnic hamper full of food and some utensils. These are some of the images that are usually seen in books of English life style. As a result of the change of English food habits, the remark that "America is a fat country" suggests that England, too, is declining into the same fate. Yet, there are instances when Lev, as an intellectual exile, intentionally scrutinises some changes that have been lately occurring in England. Indeed, what 'sickens' Lev more is a general ignorance, especially in Auror, of such a change.

Lev's role, as an exile, that exposes the negative face of England, yet extends to uncover the impact of divorce laws on families. Two cases of divorce are portrayed in *The Road Home*: Christy Slane's,

Lev's Irish landlord, and Medge's, the farmer for whom Lev works for a few weeks. Slane's case is the one approached in this study since Tremain gives it a detailed portrayal. Before meeting the man, both reader and Lev are first introduced to the place where he lives:

Number 12 was on the shaded side and a high private hedge, overgrown to wide proportions, made the entrance dark. Behind the hedge stood overflowing garbage bins and a bicycle chained to the window bars. (Tremain 67)

Imagery is manipulated here to foreshadow Chris's ruined life. Both location of the house and hedges deprive him of a fair share of sun and light. The untrimmed plants and the overflowing bins, symbolize his tragic story as well as his seclusion and suffering as a result of his deprivation of his daughter. The chained bicycle symbolizes his failing attempts to reach for his daughter and attain her love. His suffering is further emphasized by the imagery of the window bars which symbolize the same custody and divorce laws that obstruct his paternity.

Further, the messy entrance of Chris's house is yet another indication of his misery.

In the dark hallway, several pairs of trainers lay in a sprawling heap, under a line of hooks, where anoraks, scarves, back-packs, fleeces and leather jackets hung.

'None of this junk is mine.' Said Christy Slane. (Tremain 67-8)

The messy entrance symbolises Christy's troubled marriage. It is noticed that he instantly denies any responsibility for such a mess. This attitude foreshadows his constant self-defence against his wife's accusation of being responsible for the ruin of their marriage. The story of Christy's turbulent relation with both his wife and daughter is given in fragments. The times he and Lev spend together are mostly spent in complains of his estranged wife. For example, the man complains to Lev of obstacles put against communicating with his daughter.

The court had granted him 'chaperoned visits' to his daughter...
'Trouble is: the chaperone is Angela,' said Christy. 'I think that's unfair. I can't see Frankie without seeing the woman who took her

away from me. D'you think that's right?'

'No,' said Lev. Maybe I can be "chaperone"?'

'Well, I wish. But they said it has to be the mother or some female social worker. And Angela never wants to go out anywhere. I said I wanted to take Frankie to the zoo, but there was a drop of drizzle in the air so Angela says, "No, we'll get soaked going round the zoo." Then I suggested a film.' Christy pronounced it *fillem*. 'But she says, "No chance. I'm not going up the West End, it's too hideous." So all we do is, we sit there and do bits of colouring or Lego. And I try to talk to Frankie about school or about her friends. She answers me, yes-no, yes-no, but she won't look at me...And the light in that place is so glaring...'

When Lev asked about the owner of the loft, Angela's lover whose name was Tony Myerson-Hill, Christy said: 'The less I hear about him, the happier I am. His furniture's ugly...And everything has to be in its right place or he has an epileptic fit. How can he put up with a five-year-old, I've no idea. And the shower's weird...with no door on it. No privacy at all. What kind of interior design is that?...'(110-11)

Direct speech presentation is the mode employed in confiding marriage troubles to Lev. Employing such mode of transmission signifies the importance of the issue, both psychologically and legally. Further, though Chris is an Irish, neither dialect --except for the word *fillem* -- nor idiolect are used to report his speech verbatim. Dialect is "the language of the ordinary, informal, spontaneous and affectionate heart" (Fishman 341), and it is a highly "regional marker". Dialect is more liable to be used here, as Chris is a plumber and presumably of poor education. According to Elizabeth Grace Winkles "[t]he more different a person sounds, the more features of her or his variety differ from yours" (12). Depriving Chris of a stereotype manner of speech eliminates lingual difference between him and the reader. Thus, the author suppresses a sign of difference between him and the reader, and an empathy, even identification with Chris is more liable; consequently, the universality of his divorce case is emphasised.

Speech act is also carefully employed by Tremain. Reporting Chris's and the wife's indirect speech presentation is significant as the mode indicates the importance of this issue, both socially and legally.

Chris's complaint highlights the suffering of a parent from obstructing communication with his child. The replies of the wife show her stubbornness, and expose one way of manipulating custody laws. The outcome of such messy family relationship is shown later in an episode, to which Tremain devotes a whole detailed chapter.

The episode portrays Chris's persistence at making his little daughter talk. It also shows her complete failure at a game of "I Spy," which tests word-spelling skill. Further, the episode shows another absurdity of the custody laws which allow children to live with strangers, the spouse's partner, while putting restrictions on them living with the estranged biological parent. Chris complains to Lev of the indecency of the interior decoration of his wife's partner's flat, where his little daughter now lives with them. The interior walls of the flat are transparent and the toilet has no door. Such design indicates carelessness of the mother's partner, here, privileged with joint physical care. It also suggests subjecting the girl to both emotional and psychological troubles, which further exposes her mother's negligence.

Lev's part in this dialogue is brief, for he hardly makes a few suggestions. His first one of performing the part of chaperon triggers off Chris's complaint of his wife's stubbornness. His inquiry about her lover exposes another aspect of custody laws which allow the parent's lover joint physical care, while putting obstacles against seeing the child by the estranged biological parent. Lev's part accords with the part assigned to intellectuals by Said of exposing social reality; here, it is the absurdity and injustice of divorce laws.

Another social reality, which Tremain allows Lev, the exile intellectual, to expose is the condition of elderly people in England. Statistics show that "one in ten baby boomers has not seen their aging parents for more than a year"(Ross, "Elderly left isolated as children fail to call home"). The baby boomers often get the burden off their shoulders by sending their parents to elderly care homes. Some of these places neither meet their assigned tasks, nor provide them with the expected haven. There are a number of problems regarding care service, such as "staff not answering buzzers, or not coming quickly enough to take people to toilet particularly at night. Others related to the standard of food" ("Care homes for older people in the UK: a

market study," 121). This negligence of elderly people has become a crucial social issue in England.

Lev, accompanied by his girlfriend Sophie, pays a visit to a care home for elderly people, Ferndale, a name which suggests the feeling of its residents. The place evokes memories in Lev.

Inside, the smell reminded Lev of the hospital where Marina had lain for so long: urine and disinfectant mingled, stale coffee, the faint suggestion of some recent unidentifiable burning..

...From some of the rooms came the sounds of small? afflictions...a voice crying...softly into the telephone...(138-9)

In the above passage, senses of smell and hearing are used to indicate both physical and psychological suffering of elderly people. Complaints of not being looked after properly and of being neglected by the staff are implied in the urine smell. Lev's internalization of the smell and the resultant memory of his wife's death imply a similar fate for its elderly residents. But the difference between Lev's wife and the residents is that the former was suffering leukaemia, whereas the latter, in addition to old age, suffer negligence of the staff in charge. Sense of hearing is manipulated to express a further psychological suffering. The voice crying into a telephone suggests a profound feeling of loneliness, weakness and a desire to connect with Ferndale's outer world.

The story of Ruby Constad is a case in point. The encounter between her and Sophie reveals this social issue:

He [Lev] heard the two women laughing...The sound filled the room. He smiled at the childish joy he heard in it...

'Now,' she said. 'This is for you. For being such a dear darling to a fat old woman. For brightening all our Sundays.'

Lev saw that Ruby's eyes were suddenly brimming with tears.

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...He saw a cheque drop out of a Christmas card and Sophie bend to pick it up.

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Ruby laid a kiss on Sophie's scarlet hair. She said to Lev: 'Sophie is the dearest girl.'

'I agree,' said Lev.

'She's much nicer than my daughter. Alexandra never sings to me. Never helps me with the crossword. Never makes me laugh.'

Ruby invited them to sit down in her cluttered room. She installed herself on the commode chair. Lev perched on a low stool. 'That's a Kashmiri stool,' said Ruby. 'I brought it back with me from India. Most of the silver is Indian, too.'

'Yes?'

'I expect Sophie told you I spent my youth in India – before Independence, when we had the Viceroy and everything. I was in a welcome pageant for the Viceroy at my school. We made a tableau. We made the word WELCOME in girls across the stage. I was one half of the O. I've never forgotten being half of an O...'(Tremain 140-1)

The above encounter between Ruby and Sophie is transmitted through Lev as the dominant method of narrative is limited omniscience. Authorial narrator withdraws to the background allowing the reader to listen and see, through Lev's ears and eyes, the compliments and complains of the old woman, Ruby, to the young one, Sophie. The two women are not biologically related, yet Ruby gives her young friend a check as the latter treats her with filial feeling. The laughter of Ruby is pure as Lev senses "childish joy" in it despite her old age. Like Christy's, Ruby's talk is reported verbatim. Direct speech mode is employed to report a straight forward comparison between Sophie's care for Ruby and the daughter's negligence of her mother. The repetition of the adverb "never" emphasises the estrangement of Alex from her mother. Giving Sophie a check indicates the old woman's desperate need to prolong this sort of care, even if provided by a stranger, and even if she has to pay for it. Lev neither associates Ruby's talk or action with any of his homeland memories, nor does he reflect on what's happening. Hence, his act of transmission is not blemished and is more objective, and the reader is allowed to have an independent view of Ruby's case.

On the other hand, Ruby's memory of India and the furniture

play a significant part in her lonely life. The part she played in the welcome part, being "one half of the O," is trivial, yet repeating telling the memory a number of times signifies its importance for her. Furthermore, having items of Indian furniture in her room indicates that she cherishes the place, India, where the memorable event took place. It also indicates that the old woman is exiled both geographically and psychologically. Geographical exile is defined by Pike as "a loss of an original place in which one naturally belongs. The displacement of exile banishes this belonging to the memory, and creates the idea of dissociation from the new home" (76). In Ruby's case, England is her homeland, yet the memory of India, where she only spent a few years, is strongly cherished by her. The Indian memory is associated with team work, collective and cooperative spirit of Ruby and the other girls. Such a spirit gave her life, then, a sense of purpose as well as provided her with a sense of human bond; both are missing in her life now.

One day, he found two middle-aged people sitting silently beside her. 'These are my children,' said Ruby quietly. 'This is Noel and this is Alexandra.'

They didn't move from their chairs or hold out their hands, only nodded at him. It was hot in the room but he noticed that the son, Noel, was still wearing his lightweight overcoat. The daughter, Alexandra, had a grey waterfall of hair...The flesh of her legs was pale and dry.

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.....

'Ma can't eat proper food any more, can you, Ma?' said Noel.

'No,' said Ruby. 'I can't. But I know the meals here have become wonderful since Lev took over. Tell about the menus, Lev. It will amuse my guests.'

My guests. This was how she referred to her son and daughter. (326)

The atmosphere of this visit is different from that of the previous one. Sophie's pretty warm and noisy visit is replaced this time by a quiet and cold one. The company is silent for most of the time; Ruby's children even refuse to extend their hands to shake with Lev's. Also,

the son keeps wearing his overcoat, though it is hot in the room, which indicates his intention to make his visit short and leave soon. He talks very little, only to remind his mother of her inability to eat proper food; an implicit reference to her frail condition. On the other hand, the physical description of Alex, the daughter; the colour of her hair and her aging legs, indicates her growing old, which suggests an expectancy of her going through an experience similar to her mother's. Ruby's reference to her children as "my guests" expresses her bitterness and briefs their weak family-ties. Except for her use of the possessive pronoun "my," the mother's introducing them to Lev, who sees them as "silent middle aged people," is brief and devoid of maternal feeling. Further, the description of Ruby's children is both brief and objective. And despite her age and loneliness, her quiet voice denies any sense of excitement at seeing them or receiving their visit. In contrast with her recurrent and elaborate telling of the Indian welcome party memory, Ruby's brief introduction of her children shows that they are eclipsed by such dear past event which only lasted for few hours.

As mentioned above, Ruby geographically belongs to England, but psychologically she belongs to India. As for Lev, he belongs neither geographically nor psychologically to England. Yet, the two characters have the similarity of being marginalized: one as an elderly, the other as an exile. Thus, Lev, the exile intellectual "belongs on the same side with the weak and unrepresented" (Said 22). The two characters have different attitudes to their marginalization: one static, the other dynamic. The old woman, due to her age, is not capable of doing much to change her condition which makes her attitude a static one. Lev's is different, for he tries to improve his own life, and that of the marginalised and unrepresented.

A different spirit dominates the place now as Lev tries to help the marginalised. Lev uses his recently acquired cooking skills to prepare meals for the residents of Ferndale Heights. It is true that financial gain is considered by him, but revolutionizing the kitchen of the care home is also a priority. The first thing he does is purchasing "a set of chefs whites" (323). He admits to Chris that wearing these whites is old fashioned, yet he wants the residents to feel that they are "being

cared for" (323). So, being himself marginalized enables him to identify with and feel the needs of elderly people. Lev avoids the carelessness of the previous chefs who never gave them the luxury of choosing their meals from a menu. His attitude is reflected on their spirit as they have been always portrayed as nervous and quarrelsome. Now they are cheerful and joyful as Lev has introduced "choice" for the first time as meals are put on menu. Lev's new method succeeds in bringing "moments of light into their darkness" (325). Now, they are more peaceful and they spend longer time at the table during meal time.

Edward Said's intellectuals work in a more public environment than that of care homes. He assigns the intellectual tasks in a more complicated environment than that of the kitchen of care home. Said's prior target is a change of government policies that will eventually adjust the course of history. Elderly people are part of human history; protecting their human rights should be on government agenda. Thus Lev's performance aligns him with political figures such as Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, former US National Security Advisor, who are seen by Said as "to have contributed their talents...in eminence, material rewards...worldwide influence" (*Representations of the Intellectual* 51). In *The Road Home*, Lev is never a political official, yet his attitude is an eye-opener to governments to improve care and services for elderly people.

Lev's role of exposing social drawback extends to the contemporary situation of art in England. Tremain further uses him to pose the question of ethical values of a work of art in relation to moral codes. There is a playwright in the novel who strives hard to produce a play which he describes as "cutting edge." He believes that English theatre has explored all the rooms in the English house except for the bathroom. Though the action of the play never takes part there, yet, this is the room, as he tells Lev, which is left unexplored by the theatre. But the play, *Piccadilleos*, turns out to be about incest which raises the possibility that the playwright speaks figuratively to Lev about his play. Bathrooms are places connected with human waste and incest is yet one of the human moral crimes.

Rose Tremain devotes a chapter to a detailed description of the

play: the different rooms of the flat, its interior design, the customs and the dialogue. Miming incest is left to the closure of the play. Lev's response shows his devastation by the theme of the play, which causes him strong physical pain as well as a profound psychological disturbance. Following the play, Lev engages in a tense dialogue with a contemporary English artist Howie Preece.

'Hey,' said Preece. 'That's a bit out of order, isn't it? What's the matter with you?'

Lev was trembling. His arms felt like wires, sparking with electric current. He felt their lethal power. 'The matter is I'm mad,' he said. 'Crazy maybe. But I'm not sick, like this play. At home I have a daughter, Maya. I love this daughter—'

'Who cares?' said Preece. 'That's *so* not relevant. Who cares if you've got a daughter? This is *art*. This is cutting edge —'

'OK. Then I cut!' yelled Lev, passing a fingure across his throat. (210)

This dialogue shows different responses of two characters, Lev, representative of laymen and fathers, Preece, representative of a category of present day artists. Each response is dictated by their different personal circumstances.

Both figural and authorial narratives disappear in the quoted passage leaving the room to different sorts of physical symptoms of pain to express Lev's disgust and horror at the ideas of the play. Further, his short telegraphic sentences, though abruptly interrupted by Preece are enough to show his views, as a family man and a father, on the impact of such play on family relationship. Lev's reaction highlights the fact that the relation of art to ethics has been a recurrent and central concern in Western culture from Plato to the present, a concern manifested not just in the writings of philosophers and the literati, but in the attitudes and beliefs of politicians and lay people who may be largely ignorant of the intellectual debate. (Gaut 5). Indeed, Lev's reaction implies a criticism in which moral evaluation of the play is integrated. The play's moral controversy, its violation of moral codes, is the reason for its rejection by him. Preece's concern is with the aesthetic standards of the play; its success and appeal to him

are conditioned by its being a "cutting edge." Thus, for him, "whether a work is artistically valuable or not is to be kept conceptually distinct from...evaluat[ing] its moral character" (Kieran 131). Such an attitude treats the play independently from its moral dilemmas and separates between the two values of art: moral and aesthetic. Here, Preece is an artist, who adheres to the concept of "cutting edge," or innovative art, regardless of its relation to moral codes. And since this is the norm for him and his companions, who also admire the play and do not object to it, the controversial one in this particular situation is Lev. His reaction accords with that of Said's exile intellectual who is "neither...so uncontroversial and safe a figure...nor should the intellectual try to be...not only righteously unpleasant but also unheard...In any case, the intellectual is supposed to be heard from, and in practice ought to be stirring up debate and if possible controversy" (*Representations of the Intellectual* 69). Lev is so eager to have his voice heard to the extent that he threatens violence, which is not of his natural propensity.

On the other hand, the fact that Preece is unmarried and childless, explains his refusal to listen to Lev as he tries to explain his fatherhood. Preece is thus denied the ability to identify with Lev, or even to have an empathy with his shock. Further, denying the relevance by using the adverb "not" instead of "irrelevant" implies an ignorance of the rules of his own language. This drawback is an implicit criticism of cultural ignorance of some artists that often leads to producing artistic works with deteriorating impact on society.

Furthermore, Lev's disturbance, caused by the play, is shown differently here. Great emphasis is put on different sorts of physical pain caused by his shock. In previous occasions, when Lev is tormented by his separation from his family, retrieval of memories is sought as an emotional support. Here, Lev is failed by memories which could have provided him with a cure as they represent "a drug which could put one on a journey, away from the present scene" (Nalbantian 44). More than once, he tries to retrieve memories of his family but the act of retrieval either abruptly stops or fails him. Instead, Lev gets "only the feeling of not feeling" (Tremain 211) which drives him to the pub to get "vodichka." Such a response marks the beginning of end of resorting to memories as a cure. Lev, now, has

a dream to fulfil, which is opening a restaurant in his homeland. Making use of the experience he acquired in London and saving enough money, he returns to his country. As he succeeds in opening his new business, Lev thinks "Don't think about the past" (365). This marks a new phase in his life, free from fears that had once needed retrieval of memories as a cure.

This paper has attempted to prove whether Lev fulfils the tasks assigned to exile intellectuals by Edward Said. Lev is not a sophisticated man, not cultured enough, and not highly educated. But he is used by Rose Tremain to play the role of exile intellectual to expose negative aspects of contemporary England. Unlike Howie Preece, Lev is never an intellectual in an ivory tower. As a matter of fact, being a poor exile provides him with more opportunities to encounter defects of society than if he had been like Preece: a Briton, cultured and rich. Lev is used by Tremain to tackle very serious problems of England: custody laws, and marginalization of elderly people. Exposing the inhospitable, sometimes racial attitude of English people, is a mission which Lev has succeeded to fulfil. Lev also rings a bell to the English people to remind them of their graceful image as it is about to demolish. Also, he plays his own part in trying to alleviate the misery of elderly people as they are neglected by institutions. Lev's innovative ideas in elderly care home, breaks the stereotypical careless treatment of elderly just because they are no longer capable of playing an effective role in society. Further, Lev reminds the intelligentsia of the limits to the excess of free thinking. Since art is to be put on display, moral values are to be put into consideration, otherwise society, to which art is directed, will be ruined. According to Edward Said, intellectuals' interest in dilemmas is not to be "merely theoretical or academic but also involves direct participation" (*Representation of the Intellectual* 105). Thus, Lev is an exile intellectual whose mission is accomplished.

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