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The Unconscious and Others: Rescue, Inclusivity and the Eroticisation of Difference in 1930s Vienna¹

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I

Stanley Cohen's impressive book *States of Denial* includes one small but significant section on altruism in which his concern is to explain why some people *did* help Jews escape from Nazis in occupied Europe during World War Two, despite the extraordinary risk to themselves. The reason for such heroic acts, Cohen suggests, is that they possessed something he calls 'instinctive extensivity', which is in effect a disposition towards inclusivity, a spontaneous 'sense of self as part of a common humanity... rather than tied to specific interests of family, community or country'. But interestingly in his view 'nothing explains its biographical origins' (2001:265). It either exists or it doesn't. According to Cohen, some people feel compelled to include and defend those from beyond their immediate social group and others do not, but we don't know why. The logic of Cohen's argument is that altruism and instinctive extensivity constitute an arbitrarily-bestowed natural inheritance. Could this be the case? Or should we probe a little deeper into their psychosocial and geopolitical determinants?

Making sense of the dynamic underlying some people's positive and inclusive perceptions of others and 'elsewhere' -- sometimes in the face of widespread xenophobia -- is a central concern of this chapter as well as of my research of the last few years. My focus has been on the cosmopolitan imagination and its gendered and vernacular expressions in British cultural and emotional life; the object has been to trace the uneven shift in this cosmopolitan formation from a counterculture of modernity in the first decades of the twentieth century to the cultural mainstream at the end of that century, by framing particular episodes and moments, thus combining an analysis of the broad sociocultural contextual factors with specific case studies and personal narratives (Nava 1998; Nava 1999a; Nava 2002). The emphasis overall therefore, in contrast to other analyses of cosmopolitanism (see for instance Featherstone *et al* 2002; Vertovec and Cohen 2002) is on the historical gendered everyday, on the imagination and emotions. Like Cohen (2001) one aspect of the project is the attempt to unravel the psychic and affectual elements -- the partly unconscious dialogic reactive figurations that I call 'visceral cosmopolitanism' -- which are in play in feelings of desire, sympathy and hospitality towards cultural and racial others and the foreign.

It is important to note that these feelings of benevolence and interest have often coexisted with, and operated against the grain of, dominant political and representational regimes of exclusion and racism, of 'white paranoia'.² They have constituted a repudiation of the prevailing mood. In part such attitudes are informed

by more-or-less rational analysis, by reflexive political and cultural critique, by a desire to broaden horizons and experience the new, by an 'aesthetic and intellectual stance of openness' towards others and elsewhere.³ But committed opposition to racism and a deeply felt sense of connectivity to others is also often rooted in non-rational unconscious factors as well. Paradoxically however, psychoanalysis, despite its preoccupation with the unconscious, has had little to say about the attraction of cultural and racial difference or the complex processes of identification with otherness and the socially ostracised. Historically, it has been more concerned with the unconscious factors that fuel antagonism, with the irrational 'passion' of racist violence to others.⁴

Freud addresses the question of such antagonism in his *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). Written before the holocaust yet in a climate of growing menace, his object is to make sense of the persistence of aggression, and more specifically the often bitter hostility between ethnic and racial neighbours, predominantly men, which he argues was rooted in the son's rivalry with the father. He calls this type of fundamental hatred, which serves to reinforce the internal relations of the group or nation, the 'narcissism of minor differences'. More recent explanations tend to see racism as pathology rather than part of the natural inherited order of things, as Freud implied. Although rooted in diverse approaches, the post-Freudian accounts are broadly united by the idea that the pariah race(s), selected according to historical and geopolitical fortuity, are constructed unconsciously as despised objects on whom whites or indigenous groups project disavowed negative shameful or libidinous feelings about themselves. Hence the vigour of popular racism is fuelled by repression.

The psychoanalytical literature on this theme is substantial and constitutes part of a wider attempt to make sense of the historical devastation wrought by racism and its hyper-charged nature (see for example Fanon 1952; Rustin 1991; Lane 1998; Žižek 1998; Stavrakakis 1999; Frosh 2002). Yet, although the unconscious forces at work in racial persecution have more obvious political consequences, it is nevertheless important to explore the complex non-rational dynamic involved in the parallel and contradictory history of *antiracism*: of inclusivity and eroticised identification with difference. This also has significant theoretical implications.

II

One way of advancing a psychoanalytic understanding of these issues is to deploy the device of the contextualised case study. This is because, as Žižek points out (1998), neither a sociocultural nor a psychoanalytic approach on its own can do the job. So, to explore how notions of alterity and enactments of inclusivity are structured both by historical contingency and the unconscious, by a 'confluence' between psychic and socio-political fields, as Laclau (1990) and Stavrakakis (1999) have put it, the focus in this next section will be on a particular complex of inevitably-partial but nevertheless illuminating narratives and imaginaries associated with Jews and a group of antifascist foreigners in interwar Vienna.

During the early 1930s, Vienna -- 'red Vienna' -- was both symptomatic and emblematic of the political changes occurring in Europe as well as in the

consciousness of the English left. The Austro-Fascist overthrow in February 1934 of the democratically-elected socialist municipality of Vienna, celebrated for its social housing, schools, medical care and swimming pools, was a political forerunner, albeit less iconic and less studied, of the overthrow of the elected Republican government by Franco and the ensuing civil war in Spain. The Austrian crisis, in which several thousand socialists and workers were killed in street battles and many thousands imprisoned, and which saw the bombardment of the new social housing projects, among them the celebrated *Karl Marx Hof*, similarly drew to it a contingent of foreign political sympathisers and militants who helped distribute clandestine arms, money, pamphlets and food to the outlawed besieged socialists and their families and organised the escape of hundreds from the country.⁵ In some cases they participated in the military resistance of the *Schutzbund* (the social democratic defence league) whose members, after the 1934 putsch, were forced to go into hiding, in some instances in the city's sewers (made famous in the iconic postwar film *The Third Man*,⁶).

Among those from England who got involved in these activities were Hugh Gaitskell, later leader of the Labour Party (Brivati 1996); Naomi Mitchison, celebrated left-wing author and activist (Mitchison 1934;1979); Stephen Spender, partly-Jewish poet, 'a modern-day Shelley' according to Virginia Woolf (Leeming 1999:84; Spender 1934; 1951); and G.E.R. Gedye, the respected central European correspondent for the *Times* (Gedye 1939).⁷ My mother, Ankie van der Voort, was there from Holland to study the city's innovative social housing programme.⁸ Muriel Gardiner, medical student and trainee psychoanalyst, was there from Chicago (Gardiner 1983). All of these young foreigners were part of the same extended social network and were active to a greater or lesser extent in the political underground. All had been radicalised, or further radicalised, by the rise of Hitler and fascism and the 1934 events. It was in reference to these years and this mood that Dick Crossman, the Labour MP and a school friend of Gaitskell's, described himself and his non-Jewish political comrades as 'pro-Jew emotionally...as part of "anti-Fascism"... instinctively standing up for the Jews whenever there was a chance to do so' (Crossman 1946:27).⁹ And indeed in the context of virulent and mounting anti-Semitism, not only in Germany and Austria (Arendt 1959; Bronner 2003) but also (a good deal more often than usually acknowledged) in Britain (Kushner 1989) many of these figures married or had emotional and sexual relationships with Jews, in part as an act of visceral political revolt against the antisemitism and conservatism of the parental culture.

Virginia Woolf, who married Leonard in 1911, was an earlier example of this kind of defiance. According to her biographer, she married Leonard partly *because* of his 'problematic Jewishness' and the fact that this was the 'opposite of the sort of ...marriage which either of her parents could have countenanced' (Lee 1996:308). Two decades later, Hugh Gaitskell married Dora Frost, who was Russian Jewish, again -- according to his biographer -- partly because she 'personified the rejection of his family and the constraints of his upbringing... It is difficult to imagine anyone further removed from Gaitskell's family and background than Dora' (Brivati 1996:33). Jan Struther, author of *Mrs Miniver*, a widely-read chronicle of everyday upper-middle-class plucky 1930s Englishness, who was singled out by cultural historian Alison Light as one of the exemplars of interwar 'conservative modernity' (Light 1991) was in fact a much more contradictory and unstable figure than her writing implied. She too flouted the conventions of her upper-class background by leaving her

husband and children for a 'penniless Jewish refugee', a poet, from Vienna who was twelve years her junior and whom she met while doing refugee work in London in the late 1930s.¹⁰ As a member of the editorial board of the *Times*, her ideas about Vienna and the plight of Jews as both tragic and heroic were presumably derived in part from Gedye's radical anti-appeasement reports about developments in central Europe.¹¹ Vienna and Jewishness were symbolically important for my mother as well. From a social democrat Dutch Theosophist family, and therefore often marginalised in the conservative Christian community of her childhood, as were of course the Jews, she left Holland and travelled abroad as often as she could. In 1933, shortly after she arrived in Vienna, she met my Jewish father and lived there with him until they left for England in 1937.¹²

During the interwar years, Jews and their symbolically resonant and problematic love affairs with non-Jews were also represented in English literary fiction. Elizabeth Bowen's *House in Paris* (1936), Virginia Woolf's favourite Bowen novel, is an example of this. Written after Hitler's rise to power, but about a non-specific historical moment, it vividly conveys the contradictory feelings among interwar liberal upper-middle-class families about love affairs between their daughters and 'continental' Jews. The heroine, Karen, falls passionately in love with Max, the enigmatic, slightly feminine, dark-eyed, half French half English-Jewish anti-hero, but is made aware that socially, as a husband, 'he would not do'.¹³ In the context of the 1930s political climate and pervasive antisemitism, the relationship between non-Jews and Jews was as complexly charged with desire, transgression, ambivalence and repudiation as relationships between Afro-Caribbeans and whites were to become in the postcolonial climate of the 1950s and 60s.

Among the non-Jewish foreign activists in Vienna who risked their lives doing clandestine work for persecuted socialists and Jews between 1934-8, and who formed sexual relations with Jews or other 'others', was the American heiress and psychoanalyst Muriel Gardiner, later Buttinger. Gardiner, who had lived in Vienna on and off from the late 1920s, was doing her training analysis with Ruth Mack Brunswick, completing her medical studies and was simultaneously active in the political underground. Almost fifty years later she wrote an autobiographical account of her experiences during this period entitled *Code Name "Mary"* for which Anna Freud wrote the forward (Gardiner 1983; Freud 1983).¹⁴ Gardiner's vivid reconstruction of the social environment she lived in recounts her personal relationships as well as her political activism. In addition to her many Austrian friends, she refers to Gaitskell with whom she walked and talked in the Vienna Woods; to Gedye, the 'sympathetic' journalist who connected her to the underground; and to Stephen Spender, eight years her junior, with whom she had a love affair. Gardiner was the first woman Spender was attracted to (Gardiner 1983:54; Spender 1934 and 1951) and his long poem *Vienna*, written in 1934, in which he laments the defeat of socialism in the city and observes his own sexual-emotional confusion, was dedicated to her.

Gardiner's book, written so much later, is more dispassionate than Spender's poem (as befits an elderly psychoanalyst) yet is nevertheless an absorbing account of both her life and the epochal period 1934-38. The illegal and highly dangerous antifascist underground work in which she was involved, and in which she operated 'in the face of all reason' as Anna Freud put it (1983:xi) included obtaining forged

passports, hiding socialist militants and Jews in her Vienna flat and country cottage, supporting fugitives financially and smuggling them out of the country, while all the time sustaining the appearance of a rich American student of psychoanalysis and medicine, concerned with her studies and young daughter. After the *Anschluss* in March 1938, when Hitler annexed Austria, the situation became even more desperate. In his book, Gedye quotes a *Times* article, probably written by himself, which chillingly depicts the moment.

In Vienna and Austria no vestige of decency or humanity has checked the will to destroy and there has been an unbroken orgy of Jew-baiting such as Europe has not known since the darkest days of the Middle Ages...[Jews] are rapidly being forced out of every economic activity, and what was once a community outstanding in intellect and culture, is being turned into a community of beggars...There can be no Jewish family in the country which has not one or more of its members under arrest...Not a day passes without its toll of arrests and suicides...Thousands stand outside the Consulates, waiting through the night so that they may register their names (Gedye 1939:356).

Most waited in vain. Some escaped with forged documents acquired by Gardiner and others who put their own lives in continuous jeopardy. Gardiner emerges in this context -- albeit from her own account -- as a person who seemed to possess 'instinctive extensivity' to an extraordinary degree; moreover she was politically astute, tirelessly active, meticulously organised, and astonishingly committed, generous and brave. It is therefore all the more extraordinary that she should make a strikingly naïve and ill-considered 'mistake'.

The nature of this mistake is evidence of the broader syndrome of inclusivity and identification with difference which is here under investigation. The story is as follows: in the summer of 1938 Gardiner passed her final medical examinations. She had been unwilling to leave the country without graduating because a medical degree was required in order to practice as a psychoanalyst in the US. By this time the *Anschluss* had already taken place but as a US citizen Gardiner considered her clandestine activism still relatively low risk, and during those final critical months before the outbreak of war, was involved in more dangerous rescue work than ever before. In order finally to graduate, she was required by the university and new Nazi laws to complete lengthy forms about religious ancestry, baptism and marriage. This was partly to ensure the separate graduation of American Jews (Austrian Jews had already been excluded from the university). Although Gardiner's paternal grandfather had been a Jew (but non-practicing) the rest of the family on both sides came from established English Protestant stock: she had been brought up as a Protestant, had married a Protestant (though was now divorced), and had identified herself as such on all official forms since birth. The form filling was the site of her error. Her description of the event is as follows:

The easiest thing, and the only sensible thing, would have been simply to write that my parents and grandparents were all Protestants. Certainly I had no scruples about lying to the Nazis and in this case there was not the slightest danger that a lie would be detected. But I felt a sudden unexpected sense of solidarity with my American colleagues, all of whom were Jewish. I don't know why I felt this. I barely knew them, had no personal ties with any of them and did not consider myself a Jew. But I wrote 'Jewish' as my father's religion. I think now that this was a senseless thing to do; it could only hurt me

and make me less useful to my friends. It did no one any good. I ask myself now what impelled me to do this irrational, injudicious act. I cannot believe it was a sudden upsurge of Jewish identity, which I had never felt before and have never felt since. Was it a passionate need to identify with the oppressed? I have no answer (Gardiner 1983: 129).

Nor, interestingly, especially for a trained psychoanalyst, does she try very hard to find an answer, either to this specific problem (which the authorities fortunately chose to overlook) or to the broader intractable question of how she came to possess such a visceral commitment to 'others' which encompassed not only her politics but also her love affairs. As with Woolf and Struther, she selected as her lover (after Spender) someone profoundly different -- in her case a leader of the outlawed Social Democrats, Joe Buttinger, who came from a working-class peasant background and who as a child had suffered years of deprivation. The family had had insufficient food and clothing, inadequate housing and minimal education: 'none of the children had ever received a present... and the family did not own a single book' (Gardiner 1983: 68). It was through his political involvement with the socialist movement in the work place that Buttinger had started to read widely and in the process had become well educated. Buttinger and Gardiner were not only lovers and comrades; they concurred on most things and were later to marry. Their initial meeting took place in 1934 in the context of her providing him with a safe refuge. He remained in hiding in her Vienna flat and country cottage for nearly four years until their flight from Austria. Although her lover, he was during the early years of their relationship also in effect her prisoner.

In her book Gardiner makes no direct attempt to interrogate the conscious and unconscious motives that might have operated in the genesis of this love affair and choice of love object, or in her political identifications and 'passionate need to identify with the oppressed', as she herself puts it. Nonetheless she does offer an autobiographical sketch of her childhood which sets out in relatively lay terms some of the details that might be relevant to the origins of her psychic formation. A central determinant was, in her view, the cold rather fearful relationship she had with her wealthy, often absent, parents and her close emotional and social relationship with her Irish nurse Mollie, 'the person I loved most... I felt very sad that I could not love my mother as I loved Mollie' (Gardiner 1983:9). The family residence on Chicago's South Side took up half a large city block, and her luxurious lifestyle was a stark contrast to the servants' stories about the living conditions of the poor and, of particular importance for Gardiner, their abject experience as steerage passengers on their voyage to America. It was through her emotional proximity to the servants that she became increasingly sensitive to the injuries of social inequality and developed a political consciousness and a determination to change the world. At age ten she organised a suffragette march with friends and during her adolescence in World War One she declared herself a pacifist. While at university she rejected the social mores constraining her personal and sexual life and became increasingly active as a socialist.

Inevitably this is a very truncated account. What is valuable about it however is that it introduces a new element into the argument about instinctive, emotional cosmopolitanism. Until recently I considered that women's particular receptivity to psycho-sexual (not just sexual) relationships with people from elsewhere was determined in part by their own sense of exclusion *as women* and that this was a

factor which impelled their identification with and empathy for other 'others'. Additionally I considered that the apparent predominance of upper-middle class and aristocratic women who flouted class and racial boundaries in their selection of lovers during the 1930s was a result of the limited availability of biographical sources about more ordinary women, and was not in itself a feature of class background.¹⁵ But Gardiner's story suggests that romantic libidinal relationships with people from other classes and cultures -- with difference -- might also be an outcome of certain specific child-rearing principles and practices of the upper and upper-middle classes which were particularly dominant during the Edwardian period (Gathorne-Hardy 1972). The intensity of the early emotional contact between children of this background and their working-class nurses, combined with the routine absence of parents, could well have led to deeply felt empathy for the socially ostracised. In Gardiner's case it seems to have led to fantasies, and indeed practices, of rescue; to wanting to save and protect; to an eroticised inclusivity; and in relation to her lover and virtual prisoner, also to a contradictory exercise of power.

The emotional centrality of the nurse and the ensuing conflict of loyalties and unlikely object choices also emerged as significant factors for some of the others whose stories have figured in this chapter. Hugh Gaitskell, who was deeply politicised by his Vienna experience (although already a socialist before he went) also had a privileged childhood in class terms, yet was also deprived of an emotional relationship with his parents: he was left for several years with a Burmese nurse while the parents travelled overseas for the colonial service. Brivati describes Gaitskell's 'beloved ayah, Mary' as one of the few stable emotional elements of his childhood and crucial to who he was to become. A photograph in which, as a blonde two-year old, he grips the cloth of his young dark-skinned nurse's sari and moulds his body to hers, conveys the mutual intensity of this kind of relationship (Brivati 1996: plate 3).

Jan Struther, also referred to earlier and another child of the upper classes who later led a rebellious life, had a similarly passionate relationship with her nurse. As was common at the time, the nurse was dismissed with traumatic effect when Jan, as youngest charge, reached seven and was ready for more formal education:

A world without Lala was as monstrously inconceivable as a world without my parents... I used to read books, sometimes, about children whose mothers and fathers died... But no one ever bothered to write a book about a child whose nannie died or went away for no apparent reason, which was why I was so completely defenceless when it eventually happened to me (Struther quoted in Maxton Graham 2001:9).¹⁶

After that, she said, she was 'infected' by mistrust. Like Gardiner, Struther identified her relationship with her nurse as formative in the development of her adult sense of justice; in her autobiography she describes a particularly determining moment when she felt her beloved Lala was humiliated by her mother:

When I think of Lala, one small incident always comes back to me... My mother and various guests were having tea ... and Lala was making scones for the whole party ... standing by the fire ... ladling the batter on to ... the iron griddle... [she] made a second batch, and then a third... My mother had poured out the tea [and served the family and guests] ... After a while Lala turned her red hot face from the fire and said to my mother, 'Could I please have a cup, Madam?'...

I was swept by a wave of shame, embarrassment and vicarious remorse. It was the first time that I ever had the feeling that I afterwards learned to call a sense of pathos: and it was the first time I was ever consciously aware that the social system was more than a little cock-eyed. This is an opinion I have never had any temptation to revise (Struther quoted in Maxton Graham 2001: 27-8).

There are many such examples, although there were, of course, also numerous children for whom intense relationships with nurses did not lead to a heightened consciousness of the injustices of class or to a greater sense of inclusivity. Nonetheless Gardiner and Struther's analyses are particularly valuable as reflexive narratives constructed by themselves in an attempt to understand and explain the unpredictable nature of their adult political and sexual lives. Their accounts not only provide insights into the choice of love object, they also feed into the psychoanalytic literature to which I shall now turn in order to make more sense of the attributes constitutive of the mood described here -- that is to say instinctive extensivity, visceral cosmopolitanism, the eroticisation of otherness -- and their empirical proximity to femininity.

III

There are a number of broad yet interrelated questions associated with this structure of feeling which psychoanalysis should be able to illuminate. First of all, what unconscious mechanisms are involved in the emotional and libidinal attraction of difference? Secondly, how might these be connected to a commitment to inclusivity and a relative disregard for the borders associated with family, 'race' and nation? Thirdly, if, as the evidence suggests, this visceral cosmopolitanism has been driven predominantly by women (particularly during the twentieth century in the UK) how can gender differences in responsiveness to 'others' in terms of sympathy and desire be explained? What can psychoanalysis add to geopolitical and cultural-historical formulations?

The following speculations are tentative and embryonic. The approach has been to cull, on intuitive as well as rational grounds, an eclectic selection of promising insights from a fairly broad range of psychoanalytical literature. This reveals that explanations for the allure of difference, where they occur, are rarely gendered and that, unsurprisingly, interpretations are diverse. Most clinical accounts don't explore the large questions that impact on the social and political -- they tend to focus on the micro-dynamics of the consulting room and private life. Yet here too are variations. Thus in clinical terms, a libidinal engagement with difference, with people who are unlike the parents, can be variously interpreted as a strategy of avoidance or a sign of psychic health: for some clinicians such sexual and emotional preferences, particularly where repeated, are a sign of unresolved conflict arising from the repression and displacement of childhood incestuous desire for the parent (though this presupposes that the key figures in the emotional and psychic world of the child are the parents, which the biographies of Gardiner and Struther remind us is not always so) whereas for others, a fascination with difference and the new and a willingness to take risks are perceived as part of maturation and individuation and a way of transcending what Adam Phillips has called 'the dull security of sameness' which 'unconsciously kills desire' (Phillips 200:340).

Julia Kristeva, who also focuses -- albeit elliptically and from a more theoretical stance -- on early childhood identifications and attachments, in her case to address the socio-historical questions of nationalism, seems to concur with Phillips about the significance of the dull security of sameness. In her reading of nationalism, the 'nation' is imaginatively rendered as a transitional object, as something to hang on to in the precarious process of separation from the mother(land). Attachment to the safety of the local, the known, is interpreted as a narcissistic impediment to mature transition. For Kristeva, the cosmopolitan imaginary of the late twentieth century and 'living with foreigners' can lead to the recognition that we are *all* strangers, that the 'other' is within ourselves. In a heterogeneous 'paradoxical community' only strangeness is universal (Kristeva 1993; Davey 1990). She also suggests (though without explanation) that women may be, by inclination, more 'world oriented' than men.

Kaja Silverman, in another densely expounded argument, combines Lacan with the philosopher Max Scheler in an attempt to distinguish between different forms of identification and different modes of relating. Following Scheler, she proposes two styles of identification: the idiopathic and heteropathic (Silverman 1996:23). Different responses to the mirror phase -- different ways of integrating images and identity -- result in different styles of relationships with love objects. The heteropath acknowledges the separateness of the other: this style of identification does not presuppose an imaginary unity yet is capable of sympathising with the other. In contrast an idiopath tends towards a cannibalistic consumption of the love object: there is no separation or acknowledgement of difference, there is no imaginary alignment with others. Although not tied to racial difference or to gender, this theory may be helpful in understanding the relationships with 'other' love objects and the psychic mechanisms involved in an inclusivity which nevertheless recognises and accepts difference.

Jean Walton, also concerned with psychoanalytic accounts of identification, is among the few theorists who addresses the question of racial difference and desire from a specifically gendered of view. As part of a critical evaluation of classic psychoanalytic texts, she offers an innovative re-reading of the famous Joan Riviere essay on womanliness as masquerade (written in 1929), in which Riviere's intellectual female patient recounts childhood fantasies and a dream about a Negro man. Using a broadly Lacanian approach, Walton provides an insight into this neglected racial sub-theme in Riviere's essay which can be easily transferred to the Jew in the context of 1930s Europe. She suggests that:

By shifting the emphasis from penis to phallus, we may be able to see how Riviere has possibly misread her patient's imagined attacker as a father figure; it may be more pertinent to see him as occupying a position similar to that of the woman, insofar as he, too, might have reason to engage in masquerade to ward off retaliation by those who fear he has usurped their position of privilege...[His] relation to the phallus, as signifier of white male privilege in a racialised patriarchal society, is as tenuous as her own (Walton 1997: 228-9).

Thus what Walton does is to offer a psychoanalytical reading rooted in a specific cultural history which enables us to distinguish the relationships of white (or racially-privileged) women to racial others, from those of racially-privileged men. White women in this reading, particularly those who aspire to transgress the boundaries

imposed by the conventions of cultural femininity, *identify* and empathise with racially-ostracised men, because, like themselves, they are contingently denied power. In the process, as we have seen in the stories of Struther, Woolf and in Bowen's *House in Paris*, racially other men -- in this case Jews -- are feminised.¹⁷

The theories drawn on so far have broadly been preoccupied with the early roots of identification and desire, with object relations and the symbolic meaning of the phallus to the child. However there may be another significant way of understanding the unconscious and specifically gendered forces in play in the formation of instinctive inclusivity. The sensate pre-verbal relationship of the child to the mother is one important influence on adult identity and empathetic thinking, but the female child's own potential as a mother -- the imagined, intuitive and emotional effects of having a womb (merged perhaps with memory of being *in* the womb) -- also makes a contribution. Bracha Ettinger has called this imaginary the matrixial (2004). Her obscure yet nevertheless very promising thesis, which draws on elements of Lacan as well as object relations, has recently been interpreted for us, though hardly simplified, by Griselda Pollock (2004).¹⁸ The central claim of relevance to the discussion in this chapter is that the matrixial offers an additional and prior signifier to the phallic/castration paradigm. Rooted in the affective intrauterine connection between the mother and the child, women's subjectivity -- femininity -- is more likely to be about conjoining than difference, about 'jointness-in-separateness', 'severality' and 'encounter'. According to Ettinger, the matrixial has more permeable borderspaces and thresholds and a less differentiated relation to others and foreignness.¹⁹ Roy Boyne, in his introduction to her work, summarises her thesis and its implications thus:

In general terms, the deep and abiding consequences of an opening out of matrixial thinking, of placing gestation and birthing in the foundations of social and self-understanding, is the very possibility of valuing the other more highly than the self: a vista toward the horizon of the indispensability... of the other (2004:3).

So this is another theory which adds to the architecture of the psyche and gives us a sense of why some people, women more often than men, are sympathetic to outsiders and inclined to instinctive extensivity. Despite its different style and theoretical provenance, Ettinger's thesis confirms Freud's original point about men's greater predisposition towards conflict with ethnic and racial others. Together the eclectic combination of insights outlined here (and produced mainly by women theorists it must be pointed out) evoke Virginia Woolf's celebrated quote about women's ambivalent relation to patriotism: 'As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world' (1938: 234). What I hope to have sketched out here is a different country, a neglected landscape, in which inclusivity, desire for difference, a disposition to interdependence and political altruism transcend the limitations of cultural and geopolitical borders; a place in which Virginia Woolf might have felt a little more at home. Cosmopolitan cultural imaginaries exist, even if precariously, contingently, and in tension with much darker forces; historically they have fuelled innumerable small heroic acts.

Notes

- ¹ In memory of Ankie van der Voort Weisselberg and Miekie van der Voort Keus. The chapter appears in a slightly revised form in Nava (2007).
- ² In this article Sharma and Sharma point out that cosmopolitanism is not necessarily free from racist constructions of the other (2003).
- ³ This is the type of cosmopolitanism identified by Hannerz (1990) and also critiqued as predominantly male and Western.
- ⁴ 'Passion' is the term used by Sartre to describe anti-Semitism in his essay 'Anti-Semite and Jew' quoted in Rustin (1991:61).
- ⁵ My Viennese father's brother and sister were among those imprisoned and/or forced to flee.
- ⁶ Dir. Carol Reed 1949, based on a script by Graham Greene and starring Orson Welles and Joseph Cotton.
- ⁷ Kim Philby, subsequently one of Britain's most notorious communist spies was another (Cookridge 1968).
- ⁸ She was to watch the grim shelling of the Karl Marx Hof in the company of Gaitskell. Most Austrians dared not leave their houses. See also a reference to her work with Quaker groups in Mitchison (1934: 220-1).
- ⁹ However he went on to distance himself from the politics of the Jewish architects of the state of Israel in the postwar period.
- ¹⁰ Author's interview with Dolf Placzek, the poet and refugee who later became Struther's husband, New York, 4 and 5 September 1996. The expression 'penniless Jew' was also used by Virginia about Leonard Woolf, as Jan Struther was aware. See also Maxtone Graham (2001).
- ¹¹ Gedye's authoritative dispatches were published against the political grain of the *Times* which was generally pro-appeasement. Kim Philby, also from the upper-middle classes was another figure whose emotional involvement with 'otherness' coincided with his politicisation: he met his Austrian Communist Jewish wife in Vienna and through her first became involved in clandestine political work. Philby's biographer tells a story of how Gedye gave Philby six of his own suits to enable Schutzbund fighters hidden in the sewers to escape unnoticed (Cookridge 1968). The suit incident is recounted, though slightly differently, by Mitchison (1979). Philby also met Muriel Gardiner who didn't trust him (Gardiner 1983).
- ¹² At the end of her long life, when she entered a Jewish home for refugees from Hitler in London, my mother claimed that, although herself not Jewish, she had a moral entitlement to be there because she *felt* Jewish and because most of her boyfriends had been Jewish.
- ¹³ Gollancz, Bowen's publisher considered the book 'most *un-English*' (Glendenning 1977:97).
- ¹⁴ Anna Freud was an admirer of Gardiner's: in a letter to her she said that she 'was quite fascinated, even a bit envious' of the intensity of Gardiner's political activities in Vienna. 'I like my own life very much, but if ... I had to choose another one, I think it would have been

yours' (Gardiner 1983:179). Gardiner's story became the model for the story *Julia*, by Lilian Hellman (1974), later made into a film of the same name by Fred Zimmerman.

¹⁵ The list is far longer than presented here. It also includes, for instance, the heiress Nancy Cunard whose lover in the 1930s was African-American Henry Crowder, and Edwina Mountbatten, also immensely wealthy, part-Jewish, the wife of Lord Mountbatten, who is alleged to have had a brief affair with Paul Robeson before World War Two and had a long relationship with Jawaharlal Nehru after. For further discussion see Mica Nava (1999a and 1999b).

¹⁶ Jan Struther, unpublished autobiography quoted in Maxtone Graham (2001). As a child Joyce Anstruther (as she was then called) attended the same primary school as Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the future Queen. According to Placzek, Struther's second husband, she was in 'a constant act of rebellion' throughout her life.

¹⁷ The feminisation of the Jew in the interwar period has also been noted by Lassner (1998) and Loshitzky (2002).

¹⁸ For a more accessible and wide-ranging discussion of psychoanalysis, creativity and intuitive feminine thinking see Minsky (1988). See also Wyatt for a discussion of some of the psychoanalytic questions discussed in this chapter (2004).

¹⁹ It is worth noting that although the matrixial is associated with the feminine, its location in the imaginary means that men are not biologically excluded from it.

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