

# A Love Song to our Mongrel Selves

## Cosmopolitan Habitus and the Ordinariness of Difference

Chapter 8 in Mica Nava (2007) *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference* Oxford: Berg

*Bibliography not included here. Detailed references can be found in the book itself.*

*The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformations that come of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelisation and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Melange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*, and I have tried to embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change by fusion, change by conjoining. It is a love-song to our mongrel selves. (Rushdie 1991: 394).

This book ends with an autobiographical chapter, a historical narrative spanning a hundred years of my cosmopolitan rootless family as it has moved around the world, translated cultures, blurred boundaries, engaged with difference and has now settled, at least in part and for the time being, in modern ‘actually existing’ cosmopolitan London.<sup>1</sup> This periodisation while partially fortuitous, in that it starts with the birth of my mother in 1907, also shadows the episodes and structures of feeling that have been singled out and explored in the body of the book. The intention here is to offer a case study of a cosmopolitan family across generations, focusing therefore on the domestic and emotional -- on *habitus* -- as well as the global political. So the version of the past recounted here is shaped by the contours of this book, by the context of its writing in the present -- as indeed are all histories. Yet this lens of the present has itself been reciprocally honed in complex ways by the personal narratives and socio political climates of the past. The telling of the story thus has various purposes.

One of these is to provide some insight into the provenance of academic research. Biographical details tend to be considered relevant only in the case of writers of fiction or drama. But the intellectual formation and

personal history of academic authors are also worth knowing insofar as they cast light on the labyrinthine processes at work in the selection of research topics and the adoption of critical standpoints in debates. Recognising this, a few academic researchers do now expose some brief details about their origins in the prefaces to their books. Most, however, consider these biographical factors unimportant or too revealing; or they might want to avoid the dangers of reductive thinking and to sustain for themselves and readers the illusion that evidence and reason are the principle factors underlying the uptake of political and theoretical positions and the construction of historical narratives. But, as is well known post postmodernism, the possibility of objectivity and 'truth' in such situations has long been abandoned. Discretion moreover can lead to obfuscation, though to make this point is not a defence of confessional culture. It is nevertheless part of an argument which insists that the details of our personal lives, our sense of national and familial belonging, our 'race', class and gender, our social and political positioning, do all affect our intellectual production -- how we investigate and make sense of the world -- though certainly not, it must be stressed, in any unmediated or straightforward way.<sup>2</sup>

This is not the main purpose, however, of making this final chapter a theoretically-inflected autobiographical account. My project here is to complement, indeed to expand the research and illustrate the main argument of the book by offering up an account -- albeit partial and incomplete -- of the making of a not untypical modern cosmopolitan London family in an increasingly interconnected world. A number of authors have used this method: they have drawn on their own experience to make theoretical arguments and historical narratives more vivid, among them Fernando Henriques writing about miscegenation (1974), Richard Sennett writing about respect (2004) and Kwame Anthony Appiah writing about cosmopolitan values (2006). This attempt falls broadly into the same camp. but has also been influenced by the more psychoanalytically-oriented poststructuralist approaches developed, among others, by Carolyn Steedman (see also Hirsch 1997; Kuhn 2000; Radstone 2000 and 2005) which interweave memory and events in order to make more complex arguments about subjectivity and the constructed nature of all history, all memory, all autobiography. Steedman thus writes 'about interpretations, about the places where we rework what has already happened to give current events meaning... about the stories we make for ourselves, and the social specificity of our understanding of those stories' (1986:5). The narrative presented here similarly tries to integrate memories, the reworking of events, historical context and argument. This is the 'story' I have discovered about myself and set down at this stage in my life. But given that the purpose of this chapter is mainly to trace visceral cosmopolitanism through its various

twentieth century modulations, from its moment as a modernist counterculture to its current status as an ordinary everyday aspect of metropolitan UK culture, it will on the whole eschew reflexivity that strays beyond the boundaries of the cosmopolitan project.

My intention has been to develop a domestic genealogy of cosmopolitanism linked to the different chapters in the book and I hope to have achieved that. But in the writing something else has emerged as well. I already expected London to figure as a key territory in this account; I have written about the specificity of London and what I have called domestic cosmopolitanism elsewhere (Nava 2006). My argument in relation to London, as I point out in chapter 1, is that there have been specific factors to do with postwar urban reconstruction and the distribution of social housing, postcolonial migration and settlement, and the political mobilisation of 'black' identity which together have fed into a more cosmopolitan environment than in most other cities in the world. In relation to the domestic, my argument is that most theorists of the cosmopolitan have focused on travel and abroad whereas a good deal of inclusive thinking and feeling, of 'conviviality' (as Gilroy terms it, 2004) takes place in the micro territories of the local: at school, in the gym and the café, *at home*. I have also throughout this book stressed the importance and general theoretical marginalisation of the affective elements in cosmopolitanism: of emotions and imaginaries, of empathy and desire, of the visceral. Finally a key element of my argument has been to explore the specificity of gender, in socio-historical as well as psychodynamic terms, for an understanding of the way modern cosmopolitanism has developed in the UK. All these figure centrally in the book and are brought to the fore in this autobiographical narrative.

What I think I have neglected over the years of working on this subject, and has now surfaced in the telling of my story, is the importance of family, of the ways families provide a site -- a 'habitus' -- for the fusion of differences, for 'embodied history, internalised as second nature' (Bourdieu 1990: 56) and the transmission of inclusive dispositions across generations. This insight about the family expands the concept of domestic cosmopolitanism and adds another dimension, one which takes on board time and transmission: so, in addition to singling out the specificity of domestic, gendered and affective cosmopolitanism we must add transgenerational cosmopolitanism. It is ironic but perhaps not surprising that I overlooked the role of the family. My first published article, as I describe later in this chapter, was a feminist critique of the nuclear family and for many years I chose to live in what we called collective households. There were good pragmatic reasons for doing this because they were an effective way of enabling me to combine work with children as well as being

great sources of mutuality for all. But the power of the libertarian critique (see the articles in Segal 1983, to which I also contributed) obscured for me the positive elements of families and, significantly, of my own family of origin (though I was always clear about the passion for my children). In relation to the transgenerational, well that should not have surprised me either; but it did. Having been deeply immersed in psychoanalytic thinking for many years I anticipated that childhood would have an important effect on adult behaviour, so from my earliest work on the subject of cosmopolitanism I have assumed that the allure of difference might be part of a revolt *against* the parental culture. What has surprised me in the telling of my own story, and disturbed me as well, has been how *alike* are the versions I offer here of my mother and myself, of my parents' extended family and my own, of my parents' and their friends' political preoccupations and my own. No doubt my brothers would have come up with different accounts -- family histories necessarily contain multiple viewpoints -- but they would have to agree with some of the main 'facts' presented here. So, here, in this case, the autobiographical form has exposed an unexpected linearity and continuity across generations of certain kinds of political consciousness and unconsciousness.

Finally, there is the question of writing style, of cultural practice. How, technically, should an autobiographical chapter in the context of an academic book be written? How to integrate historiography and memory (Radstone 2005)? What kind of narrative structure and style should be attempted? Should the material be thematically or chronologically organised? How do autobiographers establish the boundaries of what may be said about friends and family? These are troubling questions but, as is probably the case in most autobiographical writing, the story, although occasionally pummelled and polished to fit my brief, more or less wrote itself, albeit sometimes quite hesitantly and painfully. In fact, the problems of compression and the undercurrent of emotion seems to have led in places to unusually truncated prose and in revising the chapter I found myself eliding sentences and drawing out statements that were probably doing the job of chain mail: armouring and concealing from the reader -- and probably myself -- private and vulnerable places.

This chapter then also raises questions about the relationship between theory and practice, about the range of possible ways and forms in which ideas, knowledge and affect can be presented. Whether it provides answers the reader will decide.

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My mother, Anna (Ankie) Van der Voort, later Weisselberg, was born in Amsterdam in 1907 and died nearly a century later in London in 2001, not long after 9/11. Her life spanned the period of this book and intersected with many of its concerns. As will emerge, the maverick conditions of her childhood made it unsurprising that she and her younger sister Miekie would feel like outsiders, would in turn feel empathy for other outsiders and would grow to possess what Stanley Cohen has identified as 'instinctive extensivity', that is to say a disposition towards inclusivity and a spontaneous sense of self as part of a common humanity (Cohen 2001:265; chapter 4) -- even if somewhat inconsistently at times.

My maternal grandfather at the beginning of the twentieth century led a bohemian life, but in his forties he married, had two children and felt obliged to settle down so took a job, with comfortable tied accommodation, as a financial administrator of a large mental hospital in a provincial Dutch town. However his paid occupation had less influence on how my mother and her sister were to grow up than did his eccentric views. My grandfather had rebelled against his family of Protestant colonial administrators and ruptured all contact with them to become a follower and teacher of Theosophy, a cultish movement associated with socialism and the appropriation of eastern spiritualism whose admirable, modernist, humanist and much-reiterated first basic principle, first inscribed in 1896, was 'the formation of a universal human brotherhood without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour' (Washington 1996:69).<sup>3</sup> Despite the use of the generic 'brotherhood', this was a movement that promulgated revolutionary ideas about sexual, racial and religious equality and unity that in some ways remain modern a century later. In line with the general philosophy of the movement my grandfather (whom I never knew) was also therefore in his time an advocate of women's rights and dress reform, a critic of Dutch colonialism in the East Indies, a vegetarian and a socialist. 'What did it mean that your father was a socialist?' I once asked my mother when she was already quite old and I had started to be interested. 'He used to raise his hat to the maid' she replied, which although an absurdly trivial gesture in today's terms was of some significance at the time. Whether he did more than this she didn't really know, so it is not clear how active a socialist he was. But Theosophy was the major commitment in his life and he conducted regular seminars and meetings in the family home attended by people from Amsterdam and beyond. Moreover, his knowledge of the cultures of the east was extensive and he had a good collection of Indonesian art objects and crafts, which at the time, although not appreciated by conventional collectors, were signs both of aesthetic modernity and his anti-colonialism.<sup>4</sup>

My mother's mother was a less flamboyant figure. Although modern in some respects, in that she rejected corsets and was an active supporter of

votes for women, she appeared, to the disappointment of my mother, to be content to be in the kitchen making the vegetarian food that Theosophy required and generally servicing the lives of her husband and daughters. 'I swore early on, as a reaction, that I would never learn to cook,' my mother often told us, which was indeed how it turned out to be. Her mother did not approve. Despite this oedipal defiance, it was probably the broad impact of Theosophy which more than anything propelled my mother out of the family and out of Holland into the wider world. For a start the adherence to their unorthodox set of beliefs and practices put the family beyond the pale with the local priest and school teacher. According to Ankie and Miekie they were repeatedly threatened in the classroom with hell fire and damnation because they hadn't been baptised and didn't go to church. Village children threw stones at them. So they were withdrawn from school and educated for some years at home according to the modern pedagogic practices advocated by Theosophy. These incidents set my mother firmly against Catholicism as well as provincial Holland, though, or perhaps therefore, not entirely against spirituality, and she became in her old age a student of world religions.<sup>5</sup>

It was not only her rebellion against the constraints of provincial culture but also the allure of abroad and the desire to meet people from elsewhere that prompted her departure from Holland, and this too was in part influenced by Theosophy, which in the first part of the century was a buoyant international movement. Although certain factions were dominated by spiritualism, its main political goal about the formation of a universal brotherhood invoked much the same rhetoric about the equality of races and universal liberal idealism as the well-attended Universal Races Congress, organised by Jewish sociologist Gustave Spiller, held in London in July 1911, and predictably 'sneered at' by GK Chesterton (chapters 2 and 3). 'The main ethos of the Congress was one of liberal internationalism ... a concern to transcend national divisions [and] the promotion of a world order that could ensure the perpetuation of peace' (Rich 1994:68). In fact 1911 was a significant year in this story for a number of reasons. Only a few weeks before the congress, Krishnamurti, one of Theosophy's principle gurus, had been brought to England from India as a sixteen year-old boy by Annie Besant and Emily Lutyens. It was also during this summer that the Ballets Russes made its first dramatic visit to London and Gordon Selfridge, the department store founder, announced that he was so pleased London was losing her insularity and becoming more cosmopolitan (chapter 2).<sup>6</sup> 1911 was as well the peak of pre-war militant feminism, to which Theosophists in England -- as in the Netherlands -- had many connections.<sup>7</sup> Finally, it was during these years that a number of progressive educational philosophies which promoted self expression and freedom were beginning to make their mark (Washington 1993). Figures connected to the Theosophical society, such as Rudolf Steiner and later Maria Montessori, were linked to a broader

group of liberal educators who influenced the climate in which my mother and her sister grew up and on whom they in turn drew in the education of their own children.

As a teenager, my mother met Krishnamurti (or saw him at least) at the enormous international summer camps organised by the Theosophists at their headquarters at Eerde Castle in Ommen in Holland from 1920 onwards. These exciting events, at which young people from around the world slept in tents in the grounds while their parents were allocated accommodation inside the castle, were my mother's first encounters with the English language and people from abroad. Krishnamurti would deliver campfire talks (in English) under the stars in a gentle hesitant meditative style wholly unlike the declamatory rhetoric of his contemporary, Hitler. According to Washington 'his most constant injunction to others [was] to empty themselves of all prejudices and illusions' (1996: 215). He and the camps were profoundly influential:

For a brief, glorious decade from 1919 to 1928 [the Theosophical Society] flourished among the world's youth as a sort of junior League of Nations. For what appealed to young people was not Theosophy's ceremonial and psychic mumbo jumbo but its humanitarian, pacifist and internationalist ideals, embodied in the summer camps and in the fetching person of Krishnamurti himself. (Washington 1996:270).

Throughout 1920s and beyond Krishnamurti was a kind of star not unlike Valentino and Nijinsky (chapter 2) in that, with his exotic and somewhat feminised clothing, he represented both heterodox masculinity and intriguing and subversive otherness. So Theosophy was exciting and, as my mother would later acknowledge, had a lasting effect on her. Yet contradictorily, for her it was also associated with her small town life and a climate of provincial prejudice. Thus at seventeen while both her parents were ill and unable to prevent her leaving, she escaped from Holland to England where she was an au pair in a Jewish family interested in progressive education, and later went to Florence, then a distinctly exotic city for a Dutch girl, where she took the boy Pucci (subsequently to become the famous designer) to and from school. It was at this time that travelling first became her means of escape from insupportable events at home. 'Holland was just not big enough for me' she said. In the late 1920s she travelled with her lover, André, a Jewish lawyer and Theosophy student of her father's, to Paris, where they lived together on the Left Bank for several months while he completed his studies. This was an unusually rebellious act for a middleclass young woman at the time and despite Theosophy's defence of 'free-thinking', her mother was distraught. A few years later, after André's

sad premature death of peritonitis, my mother went to Vienna to study the innovative socialist housing projects as part of her social work degree.

It was in Vienna, in 1933 that she met my Jewish father Marcel Weisselberg. He had lived in the city for most of his life but like many Viennese Jews, was born (in 1904) in the eastern provinces of the declining Hapsburg Empire, in his case in Berlad, Bukovina, where his family were assimilated German-speaking timber merchants with business connections over a wide geographical region. This was no protection however and in 1907 the family fled from antisemitic attacks to Czernovitz, the capital of the region and a flourishing 'cosmopolitan' city with avenues, cafes, an opera house and a university (Lichtblau and John 1996; Hirsch and Spitzer 2003). From there they were forced to flee again, in 1914, ahead of the invading Russian army, to Vienna where they settled for rather longer and the children were educated. As the oldest son, my father was expected to go into the business after completing the *gymnasium*, which he did; though, like many sons of Jewish merchants he would have preferred university and the more intellectual route taken by his older sister Erna, and younger brother, Konrad, both of whom not only went to university but were also, by the early 1930s, members of the Austrian Communist Party. Demetz, in his introduction to some of Walter Benjamin's essays (Demetz 1986) describes this intergenerational struggle between bourgeois Jewish families with commercial interests and their more intellectual and politically-minded sons (he doesn't refer to daughters) as typical of the moment, and cites Freud, Husserl and Benjamin as examples.<sup>8</sup> Although my father belonged to a younger generation than these figures, he experienced some of the same contradictions and in his case was radicalised during the interwar by the expansion of socialism and communism across the continent, by Viennese municipal socialism at home, by the increasing virulence of Austro and German fascism, and no doubt, by his early childhood experiences of flight and displacement. In this sense he belonged to a fairly typical group of Viennese 'non-Jewish Jews' who were not religious or Zionist but all the same conscious always of their political Jewish heritage (Deutscher 1968; Fleck 2002). Yet, despite the secular and left-wing life style, he seems to have been among the first in his extended family and social network to go out with and then marry a non-Jew.<sup>9</sup> This was later to be forbidden across occupied Europe (in Germany in 1935 after the Nuremberg laws; in Vienna in 1938 after the Anschluss; in Holland in 1941 after the occupation). But these barriers seemed unimportant for my mother. She already identified with difference and in a climate of growing antisemitism her connection to my father was a combination of political defiance, identification and of course desire.<sup>10</sup> In the early days of their relationship my parents spoke English to each other; later German; then, on their migration to UK, a mixture of both. Dutch was the language my mother spoke with her sister



and in postwar England with our Dutch au pairs. French was used by our parents when they wanted us not to understand. But that is jumping ahead.

In Vienna their circle of friends, who tended to gather at the Café Schottentor, included a number of people whose histories are threaded through this book. Among them was Marie (Mitzi) Jahoda, the sociologist, who, I discovered while writing this, was a friend and comrade of Joe Buttinger's, the Austrian socialist who later married the American psychoanalyst Muriel Gardiner about whom I write in chapter 4.11 Jahoda's work on race and racism, produced after she left Austria in the late 1930s, is referred to in chapter 6. It was through her that my mother met Gertrude Wagner (Gerti) who became her closest friend and remained so for sixty years. Gerti was a colleague of Jahoda's; she had worked for her on the innovative *Marienthal* project in 1930 (Jahoda et al. 2002; Fleck 2002) and was also an old friend of my father's from their socialist youth movement days. It was in turn through Gerti that my mother met my father. He owned a car, a rare possession in those days, and drove my mother and others in the group to a *Heuringer* in the country where the new wines were tasted. Everyone drank a little too much. This was the story they told about how they met and became lovers. Another in the circle of friends was Hugh Gaitskell (see chapter 4), later leader of the British Labour Party, who the following year was a witness at my parents' marriage. It was in Gaitskell's company that my mother watched the shelling of the block of workers' flats, the *Karl Marx Hof*, by the Austro-fascists during their attack on the democratically elected socialist municipality in the spring of 1934. As foreign nationals they felt relatively safe on the streets of Vienna under siege, unlike their Austrian socialist friends. Later my mother helped in the clandestine distribution of money and false documents sent by Quakers and the British Labour movement to underground members of the outlawed Social Democrats and their families hidden around the country, as did Muriel Gardiner (chapter 4). Among the other foreigners doing this work, and also organised by Hugh Gaitskell, was Naomi Mitchison, the novelist and activist, who wrote about the experience and mentions my mother in her *Vienna Diary* (1934). She describes how they were sent to Graz, one of the main centres of resistance. Later 'A.W [Ankie Weisselberg] came to dinner with ... me... I liked her; she was handsome and capable and full of fun and intelligence. If only one had the time to make friends with all the people one would really like to know!' (Mitchison 1934: 257). My mother didn't feel particularly capable however: 'I think I was just pregnant at the time but didn't know that I was. I kept falling asleep in meetings. I don't think I knew how dangerous it was to do what I was doing. I was very naïve'. But my mother often told me how this period in Vienna was probably the happiest of her life and that in this left-wing predominantly Jewish social circle she felt for the first time that she had friends and belonged.

Meanwhile my uncle Konrad Weisselberg, my father's brother, had moved to Kharkov in USSR, married a Ukrainian woman (also not Jewish) and taken up Soviet citizenship. After completing his PhD at the University of Vienna he was apparently offered a job at Harvard but (to the disappointment of my grandfather) preferred to go to Kharkov's Physical Technical Institute, one of the best research institutes in the world, to which a number of Austrian and German scientists -- many of them communists and Jews -- had gone, hoping both to contribute to Soviet science and to escape the escalating menace of fascism. Central among them was Alex Weissberg, Konrad's close friend, who later wrote a much-cited and translated personal account and political analysis of Soviet mass interrogations in the late 1930s, *Conspiracy of Silence*, for which Arthur Koestler wrote the introduction (Weissberg 1952; Koestler 1952).<sup>12</sup> Both Alex Weissberg and my uncle were among those imprisoned, interrogated and tortured by the KGB in 1937. Both were accused of being Trotskyists and counterrevolutionary agents of the Gestapo. Alex survived three years of incarceration to write the book (and a further five in wartime Warsaw). My uncle Konrad was executed. He left behind his wife, Galia, who was designated 'a wife of an enemy of the people', so deprived of her home and job, and their year-old child, my first cousin, also Alex. Galia, unsurprisingly, suffered a nervous breakdown and so young Alex became a feral child in war-torn Kharkov, living in cellars and begging for food from both Soviet citizens and the German occupying forces. But he too survived. He was taken in by a neighbour, studied and did well. In 1959, after Stalin died, his father was posthumously rehabilitated. Contact with the family in the West was tentatively remade and thereafter sustained, albeit infrequently, given the dangers and impediments of the cold war.

Then, fifty years after Konrad's death, in Gorbachev's more liberal regime, my cousin Alex and his wife Nadia (whose Ukrainian surname, Kharlamov, he adopted to protect himself from Soviet antisemitism) met up with my brother Kiffer and his wife Alison in a Moscow hotel. With the aid of an interpreter they talked incessantly all day and most of the night.<sup>13</sup> After this initial encounter we all communicated regularly and in 1991 the Ukrainian family came to visit us in UK. They were here for the electrifying events which marked the collapse of the Soviet Union and witnessed the drama through the lens of the BBC refracted again through our minimal Russian and their limited English. Then in 1996, nearly sixty years after Konrad's death, the KGB opened their archives to the relatives of those executed in the great purge and Alex, by now a middle-aged man, found a meticulously logged transcript of the ten-month interrogation of his father.<sup>14</sup> This was finally what convinced him to make all efforts to 'return' to Western Europe. We did our best to help track down the critical evidence

of his father's Austrian citizenship, which was not easy given that all documents had been destroyed, but paradoxically the data in the KGB interrogation record itself provided most of the information required by the Austrian government. So, in the year 2000, Konrad's direct descendants -- Alex, his children and grandchildren -- finally gained Austrian citizenship<sup>15</sup> and moved, as EU citizens, with their spouses to the UK where they have experienced the tough uprooted lives of migrants but are now settled -- indeed thriving -- and are part of my complex international extended family. But more of that later.

Back in pre-war Vienna, the remaining family members had lost contact with Konrad. Erna was briefly imprisoned after the putsch in 1934. Although my father and grandfather were less radical than my aunt, and so perhaps less prescient about the impending political catastrophe, they nevertheless started in 1936, well before the Anschluss of 1938, to transfer the timber business out of Austria and moved in stages to Luxembourg *en route* for London. Erna and her children moved to Paris. Later Erna's husband Fritz escaped by skiing over the Austrian border to Switzerland. After the German occupation of Paris, Erna, pretending to be Moroccan (she had a dark complexion) left Paris on foot with my cousins Ruth and Liz. They later met up with Fritz in Marseilles and finally escaped (though were arrested by the Guardia Civil on the way) via the Pyrenees and Lisbon to New York. My parents with my older brother, Klaus, my grandfather and my aunt Rosl, her husband and children, John and Susi (Czech citizens) came to London in 1938; for my mother and brother the flight entailed a lonely eighteen month journey via Luxembourg and the Netherlands, yet they too arrived safely. Many years later I asked my aunt Erna, the most politicised of the family, why, with the exception of Konrad, the whole family 'got out'. 'Jews from the East', she said, no doubt mindful of the family's early refugee experiences, 'had it in their blood to anticipate trouble'. But of course that wasn't necessarily so. There was no consistent pattern. Although World War 2 displaced a staggering sixty million people over the whole continent (Sassen 1999) in those years before the war many from eastern and central Europe didn't or couldn't leave. Some with businesses and established households left only at the last moment and lost all their possessions. Dolf Placzek, later Jan Struther's 'penniless Jewish refugee lover' who came from a wealthy well-connected Viennese family was among those who got out under the wire (chapter 4; see also note 15). Others, as Gedye so angrily recounted in his contemporary dispatches to the Times, killed themselves in despair as they became increasingly excluded, humiliated and unable to escape (Gedye 1939; Chapter 4) while yet others were taken by the German transports to the concentration camps and never seen again. Nobody really knows why some Jews left in time and survived while others did not, though a left-wing political analysis and involvement in anti-fascist

struggles made some more aware of the potential of a holocaust as well as more able to cope once incarcerated.

My parents' flight was not without pain: my mother gave birth to a full-term still-born child in Luxembourg after driving herself, in labour, to the hospital. She attributed the death to her shock after visiting the World War One graveyards at Verdun. My brother, aged three and four, certainly suffered on his long trek across Europe and what must have seemed like an endless string of encounters with new languages, new houses and new families. My father died too young, at sixty, to find time to tell me his story, and I was too young to ask; or maybe the memories were too painful to retrieve. In any case he didn't talk much about those years and, as far as I was aware, had no desire to return to Austria, either physically or imaginatively. No doubt this third flight as a Jew was very difficult for him also. But the point is that my parents and my brother got out. They survived. They were safe. Moreover their arrival in Britain was relatively easy. They were not categorised as enemy aliens and were not interned. Yet how their escape and survival affected them over the subsequent years is difficult to gauge. Anne Karpf in her testimony *The War After* (1997) explores the complex ways in which the legacy of surviving and not being able to protect others is transferred across generations through the minutiae of everyday cultural practices. In her case she cites her mother's poignant and obsessive attention to keeping her children warm: buttoning them up and overdressing them as they grew up in the relatively mild English climate in the 1950s.

In my parents' case the dues of survival seem to have been paid by always having an open house to which dozens of people gravitated, particularly in the postwar period, and by a commitment to aiding and protecting all those who had had a harder time than we. My father's insistent generosity and responsibility was facilitated by his financial success. He desired all those he cared for to have a house, a safe place, somewhere to belong. My mother also felt compelled to provide until the moment of her death and for her also housing was the lynchpin. This relationship to housing -- to having a house and maintaining an open house -- has in turn been my parents' legacy to me. A house, in the absence of a sense of national belonging, becomes the material means by which we try to connect to place, stability, the local. So this is one of the outcomes of diasporic existence: perpetual motion and the sense of not belonging anywhere exacerbate our longing to embed.

My parents' first house in England was in Hampstead Garden Suburb, (though my mother would have preferred Swiss Cottage, the choice of the more intellectual refugees) and from there, once the war was

underway, they moved to Newbury in Berkshire where my father was stationed with a unit of the Pioneer Corps. George Clare (1982) has described how Austrian and other foreign-born nationals volunteering for the British army (including at a later date 'enemy aliens') were attached to the Pioneer Corps which initially was a non-combatant regiment (though later sent troops to Dunkirk). So Newbury during those years had a small community of wives, children and other hangers-on of predominantly Austrian origin. My parents, who had bought a modest house there, were at the centre of this network and our kitchen was always full of Austrians. From this pool my mother recruited a cook, Frau Blau, and a much-loved carer, Greta Weinberg, to look after my brothers and me. I was born in London at the beginning of the war; my younger brother, Kiffer, three years later. Greta would later say that she always felt she had to compensate for the fact that my mother paid more attention to the boys than me. As a result I was very attached to her which may have contributed (as was the case for some of the people discussed in chapter 4) -- in combination with the cosmopolitan habitus of the family -- to my later radicalism: my feminism as much as my anti-racism. In any case, Greta's presence freed my mother to work for the Dutch government in exile, a job which entailed her travelling to London in a glamorous suit with, if possible, a rose in her lapel (I remember her stealing one from a garden on the way to the station). Exactly what the job entailed I never found out. My father, after Dunkirk, was released from the Pioneer Corps to direct the family sawmill in Somerset (established before the outbreak of war) where it was considered he could make a greater contribution to the war effort in part by employing Italian prisoners of war to make coffins and, as an Italian speaker, being able to communicate with them.

It was around the Newbury kitchen table that I learned German but it was not a great advantage in those days.<sup>16</sup> On the contrary: I remember vividly being in the park across the road from our house, waiting my turn to go on the swings. The park-keeper's wife stuck her head out of the upstairs window of the lodge beside the playground and, hair swinging loose like the wicked witches in my German story books, shrieked 'Don't let her on the swings! She's from that German family!' I was about three. It was probably the first of many painful lessons of exclusion and not belonging. I ran home sobbing with confusion. There was a lot of linguistic unravelling to do: Germans were the enemy in the incessantly-discussed war; germs were bad too; yet we spoke German. From then on the language at home was increasingly English, and I learned quickly that I spoke it 'better' than my parents and all the other adults around, that is to say with a native accent.

It was at about the same time that I saw black people for the first time. There was a US army base just outside Newbury, at Greenham

Common, and among the troops stationed there between 1942 and 1945 were negroes (as they were then called). One of them directed traffic on a tricky crossing that we had to manoeuvre on my way to nursery school each day (not many traffic lights then) and I imagine that because my mother was nice to him he felt it safe to be nice to me. I have a clear memory of warm greetings and of him carrying me across the road on his shoulders. In Newbury, as in towns across Britain, black GIs were often (though not uniformly) made welcome by the indigenous population, to the consternation of many white GIs whose views had been shaped by the entrenched racist culture of their own country. As pointed out in chapter 5, General Eisenhower himself observed, 'the British population lacks the racial consciousness which is so strong in the United States' (Gardiner 1992:155; White 1945; Kushner 2004). In some cases there were violent inter-racial conflicts between US troops, often triggered by the attention paid to their black colleagues by British women, many of whom were fully aware of the contradictions inherent in fighting a war against German fascism with a racially segregated US army. In fact one such incident, in which two black soldiers and a publican's wife were shot, occurred just outside Newbury in 1944 (Smith 1987; Gardiner 1992). Left-wing Jewish refugees from fascism, like my parents and their network, were particularly likely to feel indignant about 'racial prejudice' and so were deliberately hospitable and friendly to these marginalised members of the allied forces.

Gerti Wagner, my parents' friend from Vienna, was another member of the Austro-Newbury network. She had come to UK in 1937 and done an MPhil at London University, 'Saving and Spending in Worktown', based on her research as an investigator with the Mass-Observation Bolton study. There she met Bill Naughton, later to become well known as a novelist and playwright, but at the time a local lorry driver and a Mass-Observation diarist, with whom she was to have two children. The first, Barney, was born in Newbury in 1941 and brought up with my brothers and me. Gerti lived for long periods both during and after the war in my parents' house whilst also conducting research for the Wartime Social Survey on attitudes to food, rationing, diet and evacuation (Wagner 1943). Although there were other friends with children in the Newbury network, none had any of my age (and all were boys) so I was the only 'foreigner' in my class at the small progressive primary school that my mother managed to find for us. I was quite happy there but had no close friends. I think my family was too strange -- both foreign *and* assertive about their cosmopolitan political and educational principles -- despite their serious attempts at learning to be 'English'. 'There was always talk of assimilation', remembers Larry Naughton, Bill Naughton's son from his earlier marriage, who was eight years older than I was and another of the regulars at the house, 'but they never really succeeded'. Yet I at least now spoke 'proper' English so other

ways of justifying my difference had to be found by my school contemporaries and their parents for marginalising me: 'you're so dark', some people used to say to me. One ten-year old announced she didn't like Jews because they killed Jesus. But on the whole I found xenophobia more commonplace than antisemitism.

As soon as the war was over my parents bought a house in the countryside not far from Newbury.<sup>17</sup> Inhurst House a large neglected country house, mostly built in the early nineteenth century, with outhouses and twelve acres of land, had been used for evacuees during the war.<sup>18</sup> The rain came in, it was bitterly cold, had an overgrown garden and was not connected to the main electricity, gas or sewage systems. No-one wanted it and it was cheap. But it was beautiful and large enough to accommodate with ease twenty five people all at once -- and indeed for the next fifty two years until my mother sold it, often did.<sup>19</sup> In 1947 my mother's sister Miekie and her family came from Holland for several months. They had had a much tougher war than we had. Both my maternal grandparents had died. Miekie and her husband Kees had had two children in the first year and a half of the war and another in 1944. The Germans had invaded Holland in 1940 and from 1942 had started to arrest and deport the Jews. From 1942 to 1944 my uncle and aunt, displaying similar 'instinctive extensivity' (Cohen 2001; chapter 4) to my mother, and a good deal more sheer bravery, *force majeure*, hid some Jewish friends and their baby in a *duik*, a secret recess built behind a book shelf in the attic eaves of their house. In 1943, when the occupying powers ordered Dutch men to be conscripted into labour camps, Kees was forced into hiding as well. He became part of a network of underground resisters and, as a skilled carpenter, undertook the building of *duiks* -- used for secret radios as well as people -- in the area in which they lived. At that point Miekie became the only adult with the documentation permitting her to connect the two-family household to the outside world and, during the devastating famine in the winter of 1944/5, would cycle on a wooden wheeled bike to the east to barter possessions, such as her leather riding boots and family jewellery, for food and fuel. Her underground activities, which consisted of finding safe houses for Jews, continued throughout the period.

The well-known *Diary of Anne Frank* has been used since the war to suggest that it was commonplace for Jews to be hidden by Dutch families and that participation in the Dutch resistance was widespread. In fact this was not at all the case. Of the 80,000 Jews resident in Amsterdam before the war, only 5,000 survived. Their transport to the death camps was as efficient as it was from towns inside Germany and was shamefully unobstructed by most of the Dutch population (Mak 1999: 267). For my aunt and uncle to hide a family with a young baby in their house was therefore an unusual and

dangerous thing to do, particularly since their next-door neighbour was a known member of the Nazi party, and their own children, my cousins, old enough to give away secrets. In fact my grandmother, who had been living with my aunt after the death of my grandfather in the early years of the war, fell out with her daughter over her involvement in the resistance movement. My grandmother moved out of the house and died not long after. The Jewish family and my aunt, uncle and cousins survived -- though inevitably scarred.

The symbolism of a safe hiding place has surfaced in my own adult life in semiconscious ways that half bemuse me yet generate visceral tears as well -- even now as I write. My house in twenty-first century London has a cupboard under the attic eaves hidden behind a bookshelf; it is used for suitcases but is big enough to hide about five people lying down. Likewise, a *cortijo* that we bought in rural Spain many years ago has a secret cave in which, again, about five people could hide -- could be *ondergedoken* if necessary. The word comes to me in Dutch -- because it is from a deeply sedimented level of childhood consciousness that my fantasies of concealment, protection and rescue bubble up.

It was at the end of the war that I started to learn Dutch when the first of an unceasing stream of Dutch relatives, friends and au pairs came to stay in my parents' house. It was in Dutch that I first overheard the stories of my aunt Miekie's clandestine wartime activities. She, Kees and their three children, my cousins Niels, Katinka and Maud, came to stay for about six months in 1947. Gerti, her partner Bill, his two older children from his marriage, and their child Barney were there as well. A second son was born in the house the following year. They and my parents and their children formed the nucleus of those who were at Inhurst in the famously hot summer of 1947 but there were at least another dozen friends of these three families as well (figure 9). If there were not enough beds or rooms, people camped in the garden. We had dogs, cats, chickens, rabbits, grew food (wartime rationing was still in place) and went swimming in a nearby lake. A gardener and cook came in from the village. Then we acquired pigs and horses. My father by that time had a business in London which seems to have supported us all and he commuted each day (often after an early morning swim in the lake). The local villagers were astounded by all the goings-on. I don't think my parents anticipated how traditional and conventional would be our rural neighbours or how strange our household would seem to them. My mother stood for election as a Labour parish councillor -- a naïve and brave thing to do -- and, as a woman, a foreigner with a Jewish name and a newcomer to the area, got just six votes. Over the following years the flow of visitors, long-term guests and helpers from abroad continued. They came mainly from Holland, Austria, and France,



mostly friends of my parents and their friends, or their teenage children keen to learn English, often non-Jewish Jews. There were too some business friends of my father's from Australia, Hong Kong, Egypt and other places. The English country side seemed an ideal place for those who had endured the trauma of the war to forget and start again. Among the visitors was Alex Weissberg who, after his years in the Soviet prison system and occupied Poland, finally got out and came to England with his Polish wife. About the same time my mother helped look after some orphaned and homeless children shipped out of Vienna to England as part of an Anglo-Austrian Society holiday scheme. One of them, aged five, became my adopted brother John.

Very slowly some local contacts were made. My mother tried hard to encourage us to fit in -- and also to be accepted herself -- but the main activities for children from big houses were pony clubs and gymkhanas. My older brother liked that world and was determined to join it. He wanted to be a farmer and indeed that is what he became. But, after a brief early foray into the country set and life with ponies, during which I was made to feel very different -- too bold, too clever, too foreign -- despite being a good rider, I realised that the city and abroad were more to my taste.<sup>20</sup> In fact my pleasure in the English countryside was destroyed by these early experiences and I have rarely visited it since. Several years passed before I understood that foreigners could also be conservative, unfriendly, withholding, and English people eccentric, expansive, cosmopolitan and radical: it was my progressive -- albeit rural -- boarding school which introduced me to a more liberal English world and taught me to distinguish between types of Englishness. Yet that too became constraining and from thirteen on I went to London and the continent (as it was then called) as often as I could, often on my own, where I honed my Dutch and French and acquired some Italian. At school I studied Russian as an extra language for O level -- a defiant and unusual thing to do at the height of the cold war -- and spent holidays with Russian-speaking families (in France) in order to improve my competence. My first important boyfriend at school was French, from Algeria, and bilingual.

Foreign languages during those years were not only an everyday feature of my family life, they were also a skill that bright girls were expected to acquire to enable them to do well at school and become bilingual secretaries if they wished, or, if very ambitious, interpreters. But although linguistic ability was an educational asset, it was also a symbol of otherness as well and some of my class-mates sneered when I returned from an exchange holiday in France with an accent that was too authentic. Nevertheless I persisted because in the 1950s, unlike today, French was an exotic foreign language which stood for a more sexual and intellectual place:

for bohemia, cafés, wine, Sartre, Juliette Greco and so on. As Fussell pointed out of the 1930s, abroad represented culture, romance and sensuality while England seemed small-minded, prosaic and xenophobic (Fussell 1980; chapter 5) and, despite the war, this was still the case in 1950s. Among the authors I encountered during these years and who articulated the allure of abroad to me and its countercultural evocations were Aldous Huxley, D H Lawrence, Camus, Orwell, Henry Miller, Malcolm Lowry and a little later Lawrence Durrell. None of them women I now note. The pleasures of Jane Austin, George Elliot and Virginia Woolf -- of a past female vision of Englishness -- came to me much later.

London was beginning to change in the 1950s and I was visiting it more often. Some of my school friends lived there and my parents inherited from some Austrian fiends who returned to Vienna a rent-controlled flat in a mansion block near Notting Hill which became their London base and allowed my father to avoid the increasingly arduous journey from his office to the Hampshire countryside. Coffee bars were popping up and my mother, with her memory of interwar café culture in Vienna, Amsterdam and Paris, was an early habitué. On shopping expeditions we sometimes went to El Cubano in Knightsbridge, a stone's throw from one of London University's commonwealth student residences in Hans Crescent and so a comfortable place for African and Caribbeans to hang out as well (chapter 6). My mother's satisfaction in the cosmopolitan interracial atmosphere of the place was palpable. Along side the pleasures of abroad I began to have a much better sense of the injustices of race politics and took a militantly anti-colonial line. At fifteen I argued with my boy friend about Algerian independence; with my older brother about the colonial war in Malaya where he had been sent with the British army; and had vivid fantasies about joining the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. On one occasion, when I was about sixteen or seventeen a decorator working in my parents' flat expressed crudely racist views about West Indian immigrants in Notting Hill; as my parents were not there I took it on myself, with spectacular adolescent righteousness, to sack him. He left the hall half painted, the paint cans open. When my parents returned they were exasperated by my arrogance and the unfinished job, but my memory is that they were also quite proud, particularly my Dad.

I don't know how to unpick and explain the dynamic and origins of these powerfully held and boldly expressed political views and emotions, other than to situate them in the kind of chronological and domestic account I have presented here. My own marginalisation combined contradictorily with my bourgeois survivor's privilege and the inheritance from my parents' culture of both a sense of displacement and the need to protect others and correct injustice. Together these gave me a kind of

innocent but fierce defiance which extended into most corners of my life (though did not affect my brothers in the same way -- but that is another story). I spent a couple of rebellious years around that time neglecting school work (I was doing my A levels in London) and hanging out in Soho with artists and students from the Slade, mostly much older than myself.<sup>21</sup> My liberal parents didn't seem to mind the transgressive social life but made it clear that if I failed my A levels I would have to take them again, which made sense to me. But I got the grades required for entrance to London University (not high in those days) and decided to study philosophy, not because I was so desperately interested but because no one else I knew had thought of doing so. Being different was in itself desirable. I was interviewed by A J Ayer and offered a place for the following year.

I went to New York to fill in the intervening months (and therefore missed the 1958 Notting Hill riots). I was just eighteen and hungry for the artistic life. In the end I lived there for three formative years, became a painter and gave up on philosophy and university. I loved New York and felt more at home there than in London. I spent the first few months with my aunt Erna and her husband Fritz, still radicals, who taught me, among other things, not to cross a picket line. This was not a lesson I had learned in England. One of the reasons I felt so at home in New York was that, for the first time in my life, I didn't have to spell out my surname. It was also the first time that I came across religious Jews, not among my friends or family but on the streets of the Lower East side where I acquired an apartment. My childhood had been profoundly marked by my father's Jewish history and my parents' flight from central Europe yet was also wholly secular. I knew nothing at all about Judaism either as a religion or in terms of its cultural practices. In that respect I was a direct inheritor of my father's non-Jewish Jewish Viennese culture. So it was a great surprise to see how divided were the cultural communities in New York and how *orthodox* was the life of many New York Jews (not my aunt who was militantly anti-Zionist until the end). In England I had been called 'foreign' and 'not really English'. In New York I became Jewish, though not entirely willingly because I could see it was an appellation of exclusion as well as inclusion. Besides as a category it was not large enough to encompass my particular and maverick history.

But shortly after my arrival I fortuitously crash landed into the epicentre of the New York cosmopolitan art world. This was the late 1950s and the cusp between abstract expressionism and the reassertion of figurative art and the beginning of post modernism. I was a part-time student of George Grosz's, by then in his declining years, at The Art Students' League, but spent most of my time socialising downtown with a group of artists in their twenties and thirties, from whom (as I wrote to my

parents) I was learning more about ideas than I would have if I had gone to university. Among them were Mary Frank, the sculptor, and her husband Robert Frank, the photographer and film maker; Dick Bellamy, curator of the earliest 'happenings' and Sheindi Tokayer, his partner; Alfred Leslie who made the short film *Pull My Daisy* about the beats with Robert Frank; Dody Muller, widow of painter Jan Muller and later lover of Jack Kerouac, with whom I shared a house in Provincetown one summer; and Arthur Tieger, a good friend but not very famous. Red Grooms, Jay Milder and I opened a gallery together -- City Gallery -- which showed post-abstract work by Claes Oldenburg, Jim Dines, Mimi Gross, Bob Thompson and others (including me) and I directed a teenage cast in Wedekind's *Spring's Awakening* for an off-off Broadway theatre. At night when we had the money we hung out at the Five Spot and listened to the modernist jazz of Ornette Coleman; I had a job as a waitress at the Jazz Cafe. During those years my boyfriend was Leo Raditsa, at the time part of the same social network as me, a writer and defender of the radical work of novelist and critic Paul Goodman and psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich, but in later years to shift to the extreme right and become a neoconservative ally of Kristol, Podhoretz and the Commentary set (Bronner 2005 has described this context). We lived together on the lower east side. My mother's unconventional advice was that you should live with your lover for at least a year before getting married, but in the socio-sexual climate of late 1950s America cohabitation was not a respectable thing to do, particularly for women, and Leo's well-connected parents (Yugoslav and Italian) considered me (and I think my family) not good enough for their Exeter and Harvard-educated son. This is relevant because their disapproval and Leo's resentment of my independence and productivity contributed to our break-up and to setting the stage for my next and most significant romantic-sexual relationship.

In the summer of 1960 I took off for a holiday in Mexico. After Leo and I split, I no longer had anywhere to live so it seemed a good time to go away, but I wasn't yet ready to return to Europe. I did a bit of reading about the history of Mexico before I left but otherwise went recklessly, with no Spanish and no contacts. Familiar with authors such as Lowry and with the emerging revolutionary politics of Latin America (I had heard Castro speak in Central Park in 1959) I expected Mexico to be negotiable and comprehensible, like France or Italy. It wasn't. But although it was tougher, more hostile and more enigmatic than I expected I was determined to travel on my own in order to have an unmediated experience of the country and people. I took buses to Oaxaca and then Chiapas where I fell ill with hepatitis (not the dangerous kind) and spent two weeks in a provincial hospital, as a result of which my Spanish improved fast. After six months, and some time spent in Mexico City, I visited Acapulco. It was already a tourist resort with a range of hotels to suit all purses but was nevertheless a

dramatically beautiful place with lush tropical vegetation and a long looping Pacific coast line fringed with deserted beaches and backed by steep mountains that were etched sporadically by the makeshift barrios of the poor. It was in Acapulco on the beach that I met José (Pepe) Nava. The connection was visceral and immediate. We fell in love and were to stay together for eighteen years. We remain very close friends. He was twenty-four at the time, I was twenty-one. Before I met him he had been a fisherman and more recently had made friends with a Spanish Civil War refugee, Isidro Covisa, an anarchist and an artist. Together they had set up a beach hostel consisting of palm-thatched shelters and hammocks, where, for two US dollars, people could have two meals, stay the night and if they wanted, have access to Covisa's library. José had started to paint and was increasingly integrated into the network of local and Mexico City artists who would visit the bar, a broadly left-wing group that socialised together even though sometimes riven by political rivalries between its Communist and Trotskyist factions.

José had spent most of his life on boats or the beach in the sun; he had hardly attended school; his beloved father was murdered when he was thirteen. These are all important factors in his life and the lives of those he has been close to.<sup>22</sup> In the context of the narrative for this book, his ethnic and 'racial' provenance is also relevant. Many of the inhabitants of the Costa Chica region in Guerrero (which includes Acapulco) are of African origin, the descendants of released slaves. His mother was from such a family. They were also Catholics. His father was the child of a Spanish Evangelical missionary and a Mixteco Indian; people who knew him before he was killed told me that he was quite light skinned -- his cheeks would go pink if he spent too long in the sun (like mine, they implied). The religious differences seem to have been unimportant and as a child José went to both churches because both handed out food to their congregations. Physically, José looked more like his mother, which, later, when we left Mexico, was going to signify. In Acapulco it did not however: as Bobby Vaughn has argued, the Afro-Mexicans of the Costa Chica and their mestizo neighbours have, even now, an unusually un-racialised consciousness compared with elsewhere in the Americas (Vinson and Vaughn 2004; Vaughn 2005).<sup>23</sup> Within a few weeks of meeting Jose and I rented a small house with a view across the roof-tops to the bay in the rough barrio above the old town and spent a year there, getting to know each other, painting, and then giving lessons in English and art -- the skills we had available to impart -- to the curious kids who lived in the shacks further up the mountain and who came to watch us and sit on our scrap of terrace because they had nothing to do and no school to go to. Socially we were still connected to the local intelligentsia and also to some of the ex-pats then living in the town. During that period we participated increasingly in the politics of the region and a campaign to

remove the corrupt municipal president. José had grown up with the inhabitants of this barrio and his aunts lived a hundred meters down the mountain. So although I was visibly an outsider the local people treated me very well, not like a tourist, and drew on my typing and English language skills when needed. It was around this time that I dropped my given, usually mispronounced legal name, Michaela, and its invariably misspelled Dutch diminutive, Miekie (after my aunt) for the simplicity of the Mexican abbreviation, Mica.

My parents began to fear I would never return and sent us one-way tickets for a cargo boat that was to sail from New York to Antwerp. José had never left Mexico and was keen to go. We were aware that travel by bus through the still-segregated southern states of the US was out of the question for us. During those pre civil-rights years 'inter-racial' marriage was still against the law in over half of the US states and violence against black men with white women commonplace (see eg Henriques 1974 chapter 3). So we flew to New York, over the top of the most virulent racism, and from there caught the boat. We were married by then because even sharing a cabin was not possible without a marriage certificate (regardless of epidermal difference). Moreover, although I was against marriage in principle, I wanted to be able to demonstrate publicly, on our arrival in UK, my commitment to this unlikely partner. And in those days, in the Anglophone world, to retain your 'maiden' name was a gesture of ball-breaking assertiveness. So this is how I became Mica Nava.

After a domestic and snowy Christmas at my parents' house with all the relatives from everywhere,<sup>24</sup> José and I set off to explore Europe. France was not a hospitable place for people who could be mistaken for Algerians during those tense decolonising years and we were turned away from hotels and encircled by police with machine guns at a campsite. Amsterdam was much more welcoming but we returned to England where at least one of us was a native speaker and where, protected by my cultural capital -- my 'accent' -- and aided financially by my father, we paid key money for a large cheap flat near Chalk Farm. It was the period of fictional and cinematic representations of migrant others in films and fiction that I explore in chapter 6. We were both of that world and not of it. José's Mexicanness and beginner's English set him apart from the Caribbean migrants despite the physical resemblance, and as there were very few Mexicans in London during the sixties, he was an outsider everywhere. Temperamentally that suited us both quite well. We liked belonging to the growing community of non-belongers and, in rapidly-changing London, our friends, mostly artists, writers and student types, included people from South Africa, US, Sudan, Holland, Surinam, France, Israel, Trinidad, India, Italy, Spain as well as Mexico and of course UK. It is important to note that

for us 'not-belonging' did not mean being excluded. In the world we occupied, and with accommodation sorted, it did not appear to be a disadvantage for José to be Mexican and dark-skinned. We were not subjected to the hostility and ostracism experienced by many West Indians - - at least not obviously. Michael Banton and Sheila Patterson's descriptions of the white women partners of black men, women like me, as 'deviant', 'subnormal' and 'social outcasts' (Banton 1955; 1959; Patterson 1963; chapter 6) might have been a widely-held view at the time and their patronising misogynistic tone stings me now, but my personal encounter with such prejudice then was relatively rare -- as, I think, was José's. Our most persistent harasser in those days was a middle-aged woman neighbour who used to shout racist abuse at us and chop at our front and back garden hedges as often as she could, but even the police dismissed her as mad and reprimanded her. On the whole we were shielded from racist excess by our alternative network and social capital. But it was also the case that by then many people beyond the London bohemian middle-classes were beginning to welcome the cosmopolitanisation of the city.<sup>25</sup>

So, we had no urgent desire to return to Mexico, even though nostalgia for its visceral pleasures ran as a persistent undercurrent in our lives. I also missed the dynamism of New York and the sense of participating in the unfolding of history. But the fact is we were stuck in London because we had no money to return. Travel to Mexico was relatively far more expensive then than now. Moreover, as time passed the cost became yet more of an impediment because during the 1960s we had three children: Zadoc, Orson and Jake (figure 10). I worked as a translator and a teacher of English as a foreign language. José decorated houses, made children's toys and painted. One way of surviving and supporting our travelling impulse was to exchange our flat, and later the house we inherited after the premature and sudden death of my much-loved father, for accommodation in Paris and then Andalucia. Going to Spain while Franco was still in power troubled our consciences but we reminded ourselves that at least half the population of Spain opposed Franco in the civil war and they deserved the support of left-wing visitors. So, given the impossibility of getting to Mexico, coastal Spain became a substitute: the weather was hot, José could fish, the kids could play and people spoke Spanish. We went as often as we could, and still, over forty years later, go to the same village where now we own the hillside cortijo with the cave behind the bookshelf.

The 1960s was to be a political decade and as it proceeded we got increasingly involved in anti-Vietnam war and international left-wing politics. José met people involved in the London black power network, among them Trinidadian filmmaker Horace Ové (chapter 6) at the Mangrove in Notting Hill.<sup>26</sup> In 1968 he went to Paris with New Left friends

to witness the student uprising and was also involved in the Hornsey Art School occupation. I meanwhile looked after the kids. 1968 was also the year of the CIA-supported massacre of student demonstrators at the Mexican Olympics and we were involved with a group of Latin Americans in London in publicising and protesting against the event. In September of 1969, just weeks after Jake's birth, I went to my first and life-changing women's meeting<sup>27</sup> and, in the same year, finally overcoming my resistance to formal study, applied to the London School of Economics (LSE) to do a degree in Sociology. I started in 1970. In the same year José joined an experimental theatre group, the People Show, with which he performed all over the world for the next decade. The group was later dubbed the Rolling Stones of experimental theatre, but, in contrast, was a lot more cosmopolitan (and had some women members too): in the seventies it included an Armenian from Lebanon, a Pakistani, a Nigerian, a US-Italian-Jew, a UK-German-Jew, a couple of Brits and a Mexican, though significantly, racial tabs of this kind were not kept at the time.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile I was totally swept up in the historical tide of the women's movement and have remained actively involved -- first mainly in consciousness raising and feminist theatre,<sup>29</sup> later in political debate as a member of the editorial board of *Feminist Review* (Nava 1972, 1992) and now, less directly, in developing the argument in this book -- for over thirty five years.

Feminism, although not usually considered in relation to the cosmopolitan, is relevant to this narrative in a number of ways. As a social movement it was influenced politically and in terms of its organisational structure by the 1960s US civil rights movement and subsequent growth of black power, the anti-Vietnam war movement and the global student uprisings of 1968. Although the emergence of women's liberation in UK in 1969 was in part a reaction against the male chauvinism of these movements, it was nevertheless deeply embedded in the same left-wing, libertarian, internationalist and antiracist culture. In common with the other groups it sought to expose and challenge the injustices of hierarchies of power based on class, skin colour, gender, sexuality, tradition and so forth. In the early years these radical social networks, which were composed predominantly of people under thirty, represented themselves and were perceived as revolutionary and alternative -- in sum, on the margins. Thus feminism also heightened the consciousness of women involved in the movement (as well as of the wider public) about other forms of exclusion and oppression.

As I have shown in this book, it was not new for women to identify with the marginalisation of other others, but the growth of identity politics associated with the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s shifted the balance of this process by placing questions of race more firmly on the



political and intellectual agenda. There were other contributing factors of course: Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech in 1968 and the migration to Britain in 1972 of tens of thousands of Asian refugees from Uganda were among them. Consciousness was stirred by global events as well as political debate. Racial difference could no longer be as relatively un-noted as it had been in the alternative modernist culture we had occupied in the sixties but the process of foregrounding it -- even within feminism and the left -- was slow.<sup>30</sup> In our lives British race relations were marked in different ways. One of the women in our house was half-Asian half-English from Uganda and her family were among the forced migrants of 1972. A couple of years later, while at a party with José, I was approached by Selma James, 31 a radical feminist activist from New York and the (white) former wife of Trinidadian intellectual C.L.R. James, 'I didn't know your husband was black', she said. I hardly knew her and hadn't thought it necessary to tell her, but her observation stayed with me because at the time 'black' referred to peoples in US and UK with a historical relation to Britain's colonising and slave-trading past so it was unusual for José to be thus labelled by someone on the left.<sup>32</sup> This was still the beginning of identity politics and the moment in which the category 'black' was broadened to encompass people of Asian as well as Caribbean and African origin in Britain -- and indeed anyone else who didn't quite fit, who was other (including for a while the Irish). It was a term that connoted 'coalition-building' (Mercer 1994:28). Moreover:

Black was created as a consequence of certain symbolic and ideological struggles.... In that very struggle is a change of consciousness, a change of self-recognition, a new process of identification, the emergence into visibility of a new subject. A subject that was always there, but emerging, historically. (Hall 1991:54)

But as a Mexican without a relation to Britain's imperial past, without a clear class location or ethnic community, José could only partially identify with the new designation.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, by the end of the decade -- with the rise of the fascist right in the UK, anti-immigration legislation and a frequently-racist police force, and with the associated mobilisation of the antiracist left, mainly in the shape of the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) with its multiple cultural branches -- he increasingly did. Stuart Hall has always stressed the impossibility of coherent identities and instead argued for the process of 'identification', so this broader more fragmented notion of *becoming*, with its connotations of *alliances*, was baggy enough to accommodate a wider range of people (Mercer 1994; Hall 1996; chapter 6). What seems increasingly clear to me now, as I argue in chapter 6, is that it was the period of the late 1970s through to the 1990s (not the 1950s to early 1960s), which saw a 're-racialisation' -- a heightened profile of race relations

-- in Britain. This was a process moreover which was productively generated by the new critical consciousness of Britain's colonial history and a new mobilisation around race issues on the part of black people themselves. It was an outcome of identity politics. Interestingly, Tariq Modood makes the related argument that 'political mobilisation and participation, especially protest and contestation' were themselves a means of 'integrating', and that this was a factor which distinguished British patterns of postcolonial settlement from those in other parts of Europe (Modood 2005:69). So, during these years, racial difference was both increasingly normal and, paradoxically, at the same time increasingly registered and analysed.

Meanwhile, more immediately, my life was dominated by children, study, my household and, perhaps above all, by feminism. In the present depoliticised climate, the 1970s tend to be trivialised, particularly by journalists, as a decade of mini skirts and flares, yet for those of us on the radical left, and particularly for those of us in the women's movement, this was the most seismically political period of our lives. In the second year of my course at LSE I wrote a conference paper (my first ever) which drew heavily on the debates that were around at the time. It was called 'The Family: a Critique of Certain Features' (Nava 1972; see also Nava 1983; Segal 2007) and analysed the 'myths' that sustain women's role in the nuclear family as child carers and wives as well as advocating group living, shared domestic responsibilities and the abolition of monogamous marriage. Thus it was both critique and polemic. Like most of the literature produced by the women's movement in those days, it demanded that we change the way we lived. After all, was not our most significant slogan 'the personal is political'? But the pressures to change our lives were more than most of us could bear. Between 1970 and 1980 I was a member of the Belsize Lane Women's Group, one of the many hundreds of groups in the loose cellular network which constituted the burgeoning international movement. The core group consisted of about nine of us, of whom seven had husbands or male partners and children. By the end of the decade *all* of these partner relationships had dissolved. José and I were in fact the last to go.<sup>34</sup> In our case, as in each of the others, there were many precipitating factors, among them the contradictions of the domestic sphere, particularly the unequal sharing of child care and responsibility for our complex extended household;<sup>35</sup> the creativity and madness -- not always productive madness - - of global touring with the People Show; the rollercoaster transformative effects of feminist politics and theory; the stringent demands of being a student and my first academic job; and, on both sides, the odd relationship with other lovers. I look back from a more stable, late middle age and am amazed that we survived this intense and often fraught existence as long as we did. Perhaps it was because unlike the other women in my group I didn't feel as subaltern in my relationship with José: in our case the power derived

from our gendered positions was less unequal (a situation I describe in chapter 5 and elsewhere in the book); moreover my contradictory sense of self both inside and outside Englishness and his as a non-white 'foreign' man may have meant that we identified with each other more. In a racialised patriarchal society we both had a tenuous relationship to white male privilege (chapter 4). Or perhaps he felt less free to abandon me/us. Or perhaps we just loved each other more. These issues are too complex and too private to rehearse here. But, despite the problems, one thing that bound us powerfully to each other, and does to this day, was our mutual respect for each other's emotional commitment to our children.

So we split up at the end of the 1970s and moved to separate houses in adjacent neighbourhoods in what was then a far less middle-class part of north London.<sup>36</sup> Our sons, who in looks and colouring had come out half-way between us, had been among the darkest in their old school (Fitzjohns Primary) and had sometimes been subjected to xenophobic comment (particularly from one member of staff) about the family's foreignness and lifestyle.<sup>37</sup> Now, in Tufnell Park, they were part of a middle-class minority, despite their skin colour, and already aware of race and class contradictions. Jake, aged nine, went off on his first day to the new primary school with some trepidation and a row of ANL skate-boarders-against-racism badges pinned to his jacket; on the second day he had a welcoming party of black and skateboarding kids to greet him. Thereafter there was no problem about settling in (figure 11). Zadoc was already at the local secondary school, Acland Burghley and Orson now followed. The school, which publicly declared its radical ethos at our first visit, was barely a stone's throw from our house, thus emphatically local as well as socially and ethnically mixed, which pleased me because I was determined that my kids would avoid the limitations of my own narrow boarding school experience. I became a governor and remained one for twelve years, so grew to be as attached to the institution as were my children and was one of a group of committed staff, parents and students who contributed to shifting it over that period, between the mid 1970s to the 90s, from a 'sink' secondary school to one of the most popular in London.

Acland Burghley was -- and still is -- one of the micro publics in which London's vernacular cosmopolitan culture is lived out on a daily basis. It was not only profoundly diverse and mixed in terms of the cultural and national origins of its students, it was also, on the whole, comfortably convivial and moreover politically conscious about this everyday mixing. Already in the early 1980s, some staff criticised the banality of much multicultural educational activity of the time (which consisted of displays of national costume, music, food and so forth) and insisted that what was required was an anti-racist education which enlightened students about

British colonial history and the origins of racism.<sup>38</sup> This awareness probably enhanced the ability of kids to connect and my sons had a wide network of friends -- male and female, black and white -- over the school's north London catchment area which exists still. Class difference, rather than ethnic or epidermal difference, surfaced as a factor particularly after GCSEs when some kids left to get jobs. On the whole though, difference was recognised but -- despite identity politics -- remained 'mere' difference rather than 'alterity', a term which Richard Sennett has suggested expresses the provoking quality of the unknown unclassifiable other (Sennett 2002) (and describes my own childhood experience in the home counties). Indeed it was increasingly *ordinary* during these years in this part of town for young people to have parents who were not English, not white, and not culturally the same as each other; their mixedness formed the constituent parts of what was already the growing mongrel city. It was not just my children who had multiple strands of ethnic and 'racial' identity. Similarly it was not just mine whose parents were not, or were no longer, together.

In this part of town it was also not unusual to live in a 'collective household'. Definitions and working practices in these varied but most were consistent with the 1960s and '70s critiques of the nuclear family and based on the conviction that all would benefit from sharing the responsibility and pleasures of children and cooking. I deliberately chose to live thus, to avoid the intensity, isolation and burdens of single motherhood and sharply defined generations. The house was large enough to accommodate about eight people (including kids) and for most of the next two decades it did. Moreover, and this is how this section is relevant to the other narratives in this book, this way of living again reinforced the intimate daily connections between a mobile transnational population -- the *familiarity* of difference -- while making less claustrophobic the bonds of the immediate family. The people who moved through the house were, as before, from many parts of the world, from Peru, Mexico, Iran, India, Austria, Holland, Canada, US, Australia, New Zealand, Caribbean as well as from UK. Some are now part of the cosmopolitan populace of London. Others have moved on, or gone back. Many of them, who, in age terms, spanned the range from my kids to my self, have remained close friends with us -- the core family -- and each other. On the whole, the predictable frustrations notwithstanding, the practice of communal living worked well. It seemed indeed to strengthen the core family connections as well as the network of people from all over the world who spent years or months with us. The material house and its material neighbourhood are both central to this extended cosmopolitan network and to my existence as a Londoner. In the absence of other kinds of belonging -- in the absence of an attachment to the national -- the bricks and mortar of my house and the geopolitics of

the local area become, increasingly, my anchors. This is one of the paradoxes of cosmopolitanism.

A couple of years after moving to Tufnell Park I started a relationship with Pete Chalk which was to last, on and off, for the next twenty years. Wholly unlike José, he was blonde, a scientist, a political activist and from a family that had lived in north London for generations; so he occupied a different place in my own symbolic universe: physically like my mother, whereas José was dark like my father, Pete's Englishness (yes, we all operate with oversimplified typologies) positioned me in a different more exotic space than had been the case with José, while simultaneously enabling a greater sense of national belonging, thus confirming how mobile are identities, how variable our identifications and the component strands of hybrid consciousness. José and Pete's birthdays were on the same day however (although fifteen years apart) which, because they were so different, challenged the astrologically inclined. Pete fitted well into the extended domestic network -- he was as committed to this type of living as was I and a good deal more interested in the organisation of administrative systems for the household. In relation to the cosmopolitan, I and my family were his revolt against the parental culture.<sup>39</sup> His conservative working-class parents were not happy with his choice of an older, not-properly-English, middle-class woman with a ragbag of mixed-race children and a still-on-the-scene foreign ex-husband. During the '80s moreover we also had a couple of foster kids, one of whom, Gueke, had Nigerian parents. José also had two more sons, Emil and Joe, who, as my sons' half brothers (and physically much like them) have been a very present part of my extended family all their lives. All added to the unconventional package. Yet, Pete's political path followed pattern not unrelated to mine: he was a Labour Party councillor in the heady years of left-wing local government activism, first in Haringey, where he represented the residents of Broadwater Farm at the moment of the notorious race uprising (in 1985), and later, after he moved in with me, in Islington. In work terms we were compatible. Like me, he worked, and still works, in one of the culturally, ethnically and racially mixed 'modern' universities of the metropolis, at one point a front line of social interaction and now, in the early years of the twenty-first century, institutions in which such difference has become utterly routine (though of course not always unproblematic).

The former polytechnics and the inner city schools were just some of the sites of cultural mixing and conviviality between indigenous and new migrant groups. Such encounters were increasingly taking place across the spectrum of geo-social zones of the city: in the street, the work place, the gym, the baby clinic, the corner shop, the club, the art centre and the home. These interactive sites increasingly provided the foundations for a more

inclusive experience of belonging, for a blurring of boundaries and a new cosmopolitan structure of feeling to be distinguished from 'multiculturalism' in which the focus is on diversity and the other is held at arm's length (Hall 2002; Hesse 2002).<sup>40</sup> As I have argued throughout this book, despite the continuing existence of racism, xenophobia and anti-immigrant feeling in UK, domestic social interaction, miscegenation and fusion are daily phenomena, particularly in London, and moreover operate across social class and occupational categories. Princess Diana's very modern relationship with Dodi al Fayed was an example of such cultural mixing among the upper classes (chapter 7) and she was not the only one in royal circles to choose a partner who was visibly from somewhere else. One of the Queen's cousins married a Nigerian, Joy Lemoine, who, in the 1970s, was a member of the People Show alongside José.

These are typical of the transformations that have taken place in UK over the last decades, especially in London. The race relations sociologists of the 1950s and 1960s (chapter 6) could not have anticipated the extraordinary expansion of cultural mixing and intermarriage that would take place across the social spectrum over the next half century. Then numbers were tiny and relationships between native English and immigrants, between white and black, still deeply unconventional. Now, in contrast, this kind of mixing is absolutely routine. Figures are always hard to establish -- particularly since racial and ethnic origins are not easily categorised because of the constant process of dilution -- but in 1994 more than 50% of young British males of Afro-Caribbean origin and 35% of females were estimated to have white partners (Modood *et al* 1997). The latest (albeit not very recent) UK data (2000) suggests that an astonishing 90% of 'black' men aged twenty and in a relationship, are with partners who are not black (though how black is defined here is not clear) and that 40% of children with one 'black' (mixed?) parent also have a white parent. There is no reason to suppose that these trends have not proceeded at the same pace since 2000. It is important to note moreover that these changes are not confined to people of Afro-Caribbean origin: the Indian and Chinese populations in UK are heading in the same direction albeit at a slower rate (Berthoud cited in Parker and Song 2001:2). Least likely to marry out, and this was so even before the escalation of conflict after 9/11, are Muslims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin (though this is not the experience of our family -- see below). The extraordinarily high figures of black-white relations in the UK compare to the very low estimated percentage -- 3.6% only -- of African American males married to white partners in the US (Small 2001). Interracial relationships in Britain are also estimated to be ten times higher than the European average (Parker and Song 2001) (though it is not clear how Europe is defined here). All these figures are inevitably open to interpretation and contestation, but what is nevertheless clear is that 'mixed-

raceness', which in the London context is an appellation more likely to indicate complex historical and geographical trajectories than essential racial origins, has become commonplace; it is ordinary; it exists alongside and is fused with the plurality of contemporary British physiognomies. It is a sign of a deeply embedded cosmopolitanism and an astonishing and unique propensity of Londoners to merge -- to experience themselves as part of an imagined inclusive transnational community -- despite countervailing forces (as I must insist on interjecting throughout).

This affective quotidian climate, when added to the domestic environment, was obviously going to influence the emotional and libidinal choices of my sons as they grew up. How could it be otherwise? Predictably, as a result of new partnerships, the family now has many more geographical points of origin with connections scattered yet further around the world. The partner, now wife, of my oldest son, Zadoc, is Mitra Tabrizian, Iranian exile, filmmaker and photographer. After twenty years together they have recently married and are now regular visitors to Mitra's family in Tehran. Orson's past girlfriends have been mainly 'mixed-race' with one or both parents from somewhere in Britain's former colonies -- Nigerian-Irish, Ghanaian-English, Jamaican-English, Pakistani. His partner now, dancer Jreena Green, the mother of his daughter, Cassima, grew up in Birmingham and is half Barbadian (which includes a bit of Scottish) and half Pakistani. Greta Wynn Davies, the mother of Jake's daughters, Maya and Sienna, my other granddaughters, is half Welsh, a quarter Jewish and a quarter English. Emil's girlfriend, Malika, is half Moroccan and half Mauritian. Joe, the youngest of José's sons, not yet with a long-term partner, who lives during the school term time with his (English) mother in a rural part of the south coast, has long sensed the allure of the city and the cosmopolitan; when he was no more than five he was asked by one of his older brothers what he wanted to be when he grew up: 'a Londoner,' he replied. Jake now lives and works a good deal of the time in Los Angeles, so for the first time part of a Mexican/Latino diasporic community, though at 6 foot 4 inches and with a London accent, is not easily accommodated there either; but he enjoys the proximity to his many Mexican Angeleno cousins. In work terms all of my sons, all of them film makers, all of them cultural translators, foreground in one mode or another -- whether avant-garde, political or popular -- non-white and 'other' worlds. All of them have been involved in the project of 'the centering of marginality' as Stuart Hall so compellingly put it (Hall 1987:44). And these are just the stories of the immediate family. There are first and second cousins of their generation -- from Holland, US and Mexico -- who have also acquired partners from beyond the confines of their ancestral imagined and geographical territories.

So, will this new generation be destined always to translate cultures, to be in between, a foot in different camps, to have divided roots? Or will they (in the case of those resident in London) simply belong to the tribe of London hybrid non-belongers -- to the nation of Londoners? And are these Londoners the new British? Or will they never be more than Londoners; ever only partially acknowledged citizens and therefore ever marginal in relation to the nation; destined always to feel unable to utter the 'we' of national inclusion (as I have always been)?

There are moments when these issues come to the fore, when they are highlighted by real and widely publicised political and historical events. In chapter 7 I argue that Diana's death was one of these in that it exposed to the world the fact that Diana's mourners bore no relation to the conventional heritage images of Britain. The grieving metropolitan populace was seen to be composed of an assortment of migrant and postcolonial physiognomies; it was no longer wholly white. Moreover, it was not just 'multicultural' either; it was mixed. Diana's love affair with Dodi, an Egyptian Arab, exemplified this mixing.

Such emblematic happenings have recurred more frequently over recent years and have consolidated not only the new image of London and UK around the globe but also the consciousness of Londoners themselves in relation to their sense of belonging to the city and the nation. Among these iconic events was London's bid for the Olympics in July 2005, which was successful in part because of the deliberate promotion of London as a global city and Londoners as the most culturally diverse population in the world. The brief moment of euphoria and metropolitan pride generated by the award was followed only hours later by a yet more significant event: the darkness of the bombs of 7/7 which, in mutilating and killing people from a wide range of national origins, again transmitted to the world an image of London's cultural diversity, and at the same time was constitutive once more of a new awareness of commonality and interdependence among Londoners themselves. Ken Livingstone, mayor of London, when interviewed immediately after the event, put it (approximately) thus: 'among those who died were Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, young, old, black and white, people from all over the world who live here in harmony because of the freedoms of the city. This disaster will unite Londoners, not divide them'. And perhaps on the whole the disaster did unite Londoners. But at the same time it also marked a new and dangerous phase of Islamic separatism and Islamophobia, escalated by the Bush-Blair axis foreign policy of recent years.<sup>41</sup> Yet, nevertheless, the poignant and intimate sharing of fortune and misfortune by the residents of London over those dramatic days was also indicative of the reach of this quotidian, local, twenty-first century



cosmopolitanism. It showed us all once more how *ordinary* is cultural difference in this city.

But this urban vernacular cosmopolitanism -- this sense of belonging to a cosmopolitan city -- does not guarantee a sense of a belonging to the nation or success in Tebbit's cricket test. And this is the case even for those Londoners born in this country, as I was.<sup>42</sup> In the summer of 2006 the World Cup put many of us on the spot in terms of national identification. Which team you back is quite a gut-level affair and exposes a normally below-consciousness register of loyalty and emotion. Moreover the matches, and therefore the 'test', are hard to ignore because they are such high-profile political events and I, like many other non-aficionados, read the sports pages with increasing attention. But the problem was *I did not know who to support*. I know I have a British passport, that English is my 'native' language, that I have been reared on English culture and history, but I have never paid much attention to my national identifications. I am not a patriot and cannot use the 'we' of national inclusion. I still avoid the English countryside. I am a Londoner. This is where I belong. Moreover, the England team seemed largely uninspiring. So who to support? The (black) journalist Gary Younge wrote an only partially tongue-in-cheek series in the *Guardian* in which he assessed the merit of national teams on the basis of their political regimes. This was one rational way of deciding and usually the one I found myself adopting. In the event however, when it came to England's final game, I had a minor epiphany: to my surprise I found myself *wanting England to win*. This was a very emotional experience for me, like acknowledging finally the depth of a love relationship I'd held at arm's length and long denied any importance. When England lost I wept with Rio Ferdinand and the other exhausted players, proud that feminism had done its bit to allow masculinity to co-exist with tears; proud that anti-racist struggles had contributed to an England team with black players; and perhaps above all, *happy to belong*.

But the euphoria didn't last. And what is worse, this fleeting sense of belonging and national identification has consequences beyond football; it opens the door to shame. I don't just feel anger now, as I write, a couple of months later, while Blair supports Bush's Middle East policy and refuses to condemn Israel's attack on Lebanon, *I feel deeply ashamed*. As Alex Danchev has argued, the collateral damage of war and degradation is the shame and degradation of those in whose name atrocities are conducted (2006). I loathe what Britain and the US have been doing throughout the Middle East, what the Israeli government, backed by many Zionist diasporic Jews, has done to the Palestinians and Lebanese. *'Not in my name!* I rage. So the sense of belonging to the English nation that surfaced so sweetly during England's defeat in the World Cup was not only short lived, it has made me even more offended by the UK's foreign policy. The connection to my non-Jewish

Jewish history, so vivid for me in the writing of this chapter, is similarly undermined as Israel renews its colonising project; I am reminded yet again that there is no simple 'Jewish identity' and that I cannot straightforwardly identify with 'Jewishness'.<sup>43</sup>

I am not entirely free of national chauvinism however. In my case it is somewhat circuitously expressed in a conviction, a sense of pride, that Britain's metropolis, London, my city, is much more comfortable with its cultural and racial mixing, with merger, hybridity and conviviality, with its acknowledgement of difference, its mutuality, its multiple connections to elsewhere, with its everyday ordinary visceral cosmopolitanism (despite the persistence and sometimes escalation of divisions) than is any other city in the western world. This new London created by us, by both its migrants and indigenous people, is my idealised imagined community. As Anderson has pointed out (1983), cultural texts and rituals are required in order to sustain these social worlds. Richard Sennett has stressed the importance of the expressive work of acknowledging others and *performing* mutuality in our lives (2004:59). Ken Livingstone's 2006 city-wide poster campaign declaring **WE ARE LONDONERS** is one such performative act. This chapter is my contribution to that symbolic process: my love song to the mongrel city and our mongrel selves.

## Notes:

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1. 'Actually existing cosmopolitanism' is a term used by Bruce Robbins (1998a).

<sup>2</sup> I make this argument at greater length in the introduction to Nava (1992).

<sup>3</sup> See chapter 2 for a reference to the connection between theosophy, feminism, cosmopolitanism and commerce.

<sup>4</sup> However, the appreciation of 'primitive' art has also be interpreted as a form of orientalism (see eg Torgovnick 1990; Said 1978).

<sup>5</sup> Conforming to the second main tenet of Theosophy, 'the encouragement of studies in comparative religion, philosophy and science', she had on her shelves at the time of her death dozens of books about Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism and Christianity as well as a few about Theosophy.

<sup>6</sup> According to White, in 1911 4% of Londoners were foreign-born: 'London was more cosmopolitan than at any time since the Norman invasion' (White 2002: 103). The proportion declined in the interwar and then rose again. Today it is an astonishing 25-30%.

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<sup>7</sup> Emily Lutyens was the wife of the noted architect Edward Lutyens, sister of suffragette Constance Lytton and the daughter of the former Viceroy of India. Annie Besant was a 'free thinker', a socialist and a campaigner for home rule for India as well as one of the most influential figures in the Theosophical Society.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon Selfridge makes a similar observation about the sons of his German business associates during the same period (Nava 1996:76). The disparagement of trade, in which so many Jews were involved, may have been a factor which led me to study the cultures of consumption. Chapter 3 will probably be the last of my research on this topic.

<sup>9</sup> This was to change completely in the next generation. My father and his three siblings had nine children but of their spouses only one and a half were Jewish.

<sup>10</sup> In her latter years my mother often told me that most of her boyfriends had been Jewish.

<sup>11</sup> Jahoda's connection to Buttinger and the outlawed Social Democrats resulted in her imprisonment and deportation from Austria to UK in 1937.

<sup>12</sup> The book had various titles: it was called *Conspiracy of Silence* in UK; *The Accused* in USA; *Hexensabbat* in German and *L'Accusé* in French and was republished in 1993 as *Im Verbor: Ein Überlebender Der Stalinistischen Säuberungen Bericht*, Austria: Europaverlag.

<sup>13</sup> Before he went Kiffer asked Alex what he would like from the West. We had predicted he would ask for Levis for the kids but chose a Geiger counter to measure the effects of radioactive fallout from Chernobyl. So much for fantasies about the hegemony of Western popular culture!

<sup>14</sup> 'The File of Konrad Weissberg', transcribed by Alex Kharlamov in 1997 from Interrogation Record No. 016138, Kharkov District, Ukraine NKVD Archive, 1937. Interestingly the transcript corroborates Alex Weissberg's claim that Konrad's and Weissberg's association with a Czech physicist named Placzek, considered by the KGB to be a subversive Trotskyist, was the trigger for their arrests. This Placzek, coincidentally, turned out to be the first cousin of Dolf Placzek, Jan Struther's lover whom I interviewed for chapter 4. The interrogation transcript was also a useful source for the more routine information about the family history which I have drawn on for this chapter.

<sup>15</sup> With the help in Vienna of Ina Wagner, Gerti Wagner's (ex)daughter-in-law, and Don Flynn of JCWI.

<sup>16</sup> Not much of it remains.

<sup>17</sup> It was half way between Aldermaston and Greenham Common, then not yet iconic places.

<sup>18</sup> One of the evacuees wrote an account of arriving there for BBC People's War, see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/print/ww2peopleswar/stories/76/a4358676.shtml>.

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<sup>19</sup> From 1968-98 it housed a primary school of which she was principal until she was eighty five.

<sup>20</sup> Maybe I was partly responsible for my marginalisation; I remember three persona I became at fancy dress events around the age of eight or nine: a gypsy, a negro and a red Indian (in the nomenclature of the day). Each confirmed my otherness.

<sup>21</sup> In fact two young women of my own age who hung around with the same group surfaced in my network of feminist intellectuals twenty years later and are part of it still: Parveen Adams and Ilona Halberstadt were both as not-properly English as I was, which in those days was quite rare. All three of us rebelled against the discipline of school. I have lost touch with the artists.

<sup>22</sup> A version of his history has been made into a film, *Big Fish* (1996) directed by Zadoc Nava; script Orson Nava and Zadoc Nava; creative consultant Jake Nava.

<sup>23</sup> Spanish has been the first language of the Afro-Mexicans for many generations, unlike the indigenous 'Indian' groups, so they have long been more integrated into the mestizo mainstream culture and higher in the social hierarchy.

<sup>24</sup> I don't remember Jose's 'difference' ever being an issue -- in contrast to the response of the liberal parents in the 1967 US film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*.

<sup>25</sup> The Left was always ambivalent and, for instance, voted against being part of Europe in the 1970s.

<sup>26</sup> Horace Ov e's 'mixed' children Zak and Indra Ov e were to become life-long friends of our sons (see figure 9).

<sup>27</sup> This was the Tufnell Park Women's Group which at the time was composed mainly of US citizens with Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC) connections. A year later it had got too large and split into at least three smaller groups. I moved with about ten others to the Belsize Lane Group, nearer my home.

<sup>28</sup> The People Show celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2006.

<sup>29</sup> I was in the Women's Theatre Group from 1973-77.

<sup>30</sup> Although Fanon had been writing in French from 1950s (eg Fanon 1967, 1986) and was to be a seminal influence on the development of postcolonial theory in the Anglophone world, most 'race' work in UK during 1960s was produced by white sociologists and anthropologists (see chapter 6). This changed in the 1970s. The key texts of the late 1970s and early 1980s produced by the postcolonial diaspora included Said (1978); Hall *et al* (1978); CCCS (1982); *Feminist Review* 17 (1984); and later, Bhabha (1994); Gilroy (1987) and Mercer (1994).

<sup>31</sup> There is only one fleeting reference to her in Paul Buhle's biography of CLR James (1988).

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<sup>32</sup> See Horace Ové's film *Baldwin's Nigger* (1969) for a discussion of the linguistic transition from 'negro' to 'black'.

<sup>33</sup> In fact it is probably the case that we felt closer to the revolutionary movements in the Iberian Peninsula -- we spent some exciting weeks with the kids in Lisbon in the summer of 1975 and memorably travelled through the city in a Copcon (revolutionary army) truck.

<sup>34</sup> In 1977 I became part of another women's group, most of us PhD students in the Department of Sociology at London University Institute of Education. Now, thirty years later, we still meet and cook dinner for each other every few weeks.

<sup>35</sup> Among those who passed through it were Chilean refugees, US draft dodgers, an associate of the Angry Brigade, People Show members, Mexicans completing their PhDs, people from Italy, Sri Lanka, Holland, Germany, South Africa, Uganda, Israel, USA, UK.

<sup>36</sup> José still lives in London and still paints.

<sup>37</sup> See Orson Nava's autobiographical film *The Illiterate*, 2005.

<sup>38</sup> They also provided good feminist education and a venue for girls clubs (Nava 1984, 1992). Among the more recent alumni of the school are mixed-race singer, Ms Dynamite, and her younger brother, rapper Akala.

<sup>39</sup> When I interviewed Dolf Placzek, the writer Jan Struther's Jewish refugee lover and later her husband, for Chapter 4, he told me that Jan's greatest act of rebellion was to choose to be with him. See also note 15 above.

<sup>40</sup> The multiculturalism debate is shifting its parameters daily and in the context of the 'global war on terror' is acquiring new meanings as assimilation resumes a place on the agenda.

<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to note however that, as Jonathan Freedland reports, a 2006 survey by the Pew Global Attitudes Project found that 63% of non-Muslim Britons have a favourable opinion of Muslims, barely down on the 2004 figure before 7/7. These attitudes were far more positive than in US, Germany or Spain (2006: 9).

<sup>42</sup> It is estimated that at least one in four Londoners was born outside Britain (Kyambi 2005). The proportion has considerably increased since the expansion of the EU in 2004.

<sup>43</sup> I belong however to the political group Jews for Justice for Palestinians and the affiliated Faculty for Israeli Palestinian Peace UK -- that is to say among those diasporic anti-Zionist Jews who refuse to support Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territories.

**Bibliographic references can be found in the book itself**