

THE FACE OF A CHILD

ALIEN HEIMAT

My father used to talk in questions. He once opened a book and showed me a photograph of a baby, then next to it a more familiar photo of the same person with trade-mark moustache and arm outstretched in salute. ‘What made this baby become this man?’ my father asked with a sigh.

All my life I look at events and images in the same way. The why and how are more important to me than the event itself.

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This piece is a response to a general anxiety felt by Muslims and Jews in Europe today in response to intensifying Islamophobia and anti-Semitism; specifically the deep concern among the latter that people do not appreciate what to them is a crucial difference between the phobias. European nation states play on this dilemma, encouraging each minority to mistrust and fight the other, while governments and majorities abdicate responsibility for the mayhem that ensues, declaring: ‘Muslims and Jews hate each other because of Israel and Palestine. This no longer has anything to do with us.’

The recent refugee crisis, people from former European colonies in the Middle East, the Far East and all over Africa searching at whatever the cost, money and life, for peace, work and a better life has revealed Europe’s deep-rooted nationalist xenophobia. Nationalism aspires to institutionalise self interest, which excludes foreigners. Rabindranath Tagore called it ‘organized selfishness’. This form of xenophobia is thinly disguised as protecting a

specifically Christian heritage from alien influences and faiths, an attitude all the more deceitful now that many leading Christian Churches, including Catholics and Anglicans, in an increasingly secularised market-led Europe are on the decline. Europe doesn't 'do God' anymore.

It is always a dangerous and ultimately self-defeating policy to pit minorities against each other. By playing on their insecurities and discouraging them from feeling at home wherever they live encourages young people in particular, those with frustrated ambition and vulnerable to ideological persuasion, to follow extremist paths, with destabilising consequences everywhere, including their home country. However it is important to register the fact that their attempts to destabilize countries pale into insignificance against the aggressive and destructive actions of major world powers which create situations in which terrorist ideologues can flourish.

All my life I have thought about the root causes of nationalist phobias. Now turning 70 some kind of understanding is forming in my mind. Wiser and cleverer minds have already analysed at length Freud's theory of projection in human relationships to shed light on the causes of human phobias. Intellectual analyses of xenophobia have on the whole been superficially political and social, focusing on sexual envy, academic inferiority, and with the present influx of so-called 'economic migrants' and 'asylum seekers', all of them refugees, resentment of people taking jobs and burdening the welfare system. Beyond these identifiable if mostly irrational anxieties, antipathy to foreigners expresses a universal insecurity. This particular phobia forces the unwelcome question: what is 'home'? What constitutes the place to which we can stake claim and what legitimizes this claim? The question immediately reveals disturbing historical truths. For instance it is declared emphatically that 'Israel has a right to exist'. Everyone sympathises and agrees that all people have a right to a homeland.

Factual history, as opposed to mythological history, tells us that often this right denies that right to others. The homeland of Israel is also the homeland of Palestine. This problem has a history going back to the beginning of recorded time. The Old Testament narrates a mythological history which purports to be also factual. It concerns the search for and the promise of a homeland. In the Old Testament this search is bound to a community's relationship with its God who promises the land. This contract links the search to the promise. The prophets of the Old Testament stress the importance of this contract. Home is assured so long as people follow the law which is clearly stated not only in the Ten Commandments but also in books of unconditional laws and detailed observances. The contract comes with a warning. If it is broken, God will turn his back on the community. In other words a homeland is not guaranteed. People have to earn the right to it.

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The Germans have a special word: 'Heimat', which means more than home as a place of birth and ancestors, more than homeland as a nationalist construct. 'Heimat' describes that place where people feel they belong, where we put down roots and enjoy a secure relationship with the world around us. It is best illustrated in the paintings by Pieter Breughel the Elder, particularly those that illustrate the four seasons. They depict people dedicated to making a home in their natural surroundings, however challenging the conditions. They work and they play. Breughel illustrates how the vagaries of climate and politics in the shape of war, then as now, threaten the security of the homes we so painstakingly build. At the same time Breughel's loving portrayal of nature creates a sense of wonder and gratitude at the beauty of the world we inhabit. His paintings are not just idylls. They suggest that the human race has to take responsibility for its environment.

Lest we forget that nothing in this world endures, not even a home; and that our life is short, shorter even than the life of the elephant, the crocodile and the crow. Joseph Roth.

Crows are a prominent feature of Breughel's paintings.

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Recently the media published photos of a shyly smiling boy who grew up to become a callous terrorist executioner. The implied question infuriated many people who are demanding to know why anyone should be bothered with asking it. This terrorist is an evil man, they say, and should be hunted down and killed. His childhood, history and circumstances are not considered relevant.

The current neo-liberal view is that enemies are our adversaries. This means that they should be eliminated. The logical conclusion of this politics is perpetual war leading inevitably to Armageddon. Such a confrontational approach to the world and its problems is ultimately self-defeating; and absurd, because it is impossible to kill all ones enemies without also destroying ourselves. It is also the exact opposite not only of my view but that of respected world figures like Gandhi and Mandela who advocated peace building by talking with enemies to turn them into friends.

The neo-liberal philosophy is based on fear. Ovid said in his *Metamorphoses*, 'Fear breeds fear when knowledge fails.' Escalating conflict makes it all the more necessary to talk with enemies and learn: to discuss the questions of why and how, to dissipate fear and danger.

My father's question about the two photos of Hitler goes to the heart of the matter. At what age does a baby become a victim or a killer? Ethnic cleansers are not impeded by such considerations. The child of a Bosnian Muslim is as unwanted as its parents to a Bosnian Serb. Besides which there is always the danger that the child will grow up to be a fighter and

exact revenge. In the same way a Jewish baby is as unwanted to a Nazi exterminator as its mother or father; and Palestinian babies are considered a future danger to Israel. Yet every human being on the planet, apart from ethnic cleansers and demented psychopaths, regards a baby as totally innocent. The baby has not chosen to be born in a particular ethnic, religious or social grouping. So, at what stage does a baby become guilty and present a danger? When is it old enough to be punished for being born? And what moment in life does this innocent creature with an open approach to the world become a dedicated killer of other future babies?

‘It is the blood that flows in their veins which sentences them,’ declare ethnic cleansers.

Foreign blood pollutes. But we know that blood is universal. We are all descended from the same progenitors of the human race. What is it then that makes Jewish or Muslim different from other people’s blood? How does it pollute?

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These questions lead to two more, each quite unrelated. First, about racist murder: what is it about ethnic cleansing that makes the victim feel shame rather than the murderer? Second, about current terrorist grooming: why do those in authority refuse to understand the self-evident causes of impotent rage that impels young people to become murderous rebels? What is it that makes these future killers feel alienated and disenfranchised from the liberal society they are born into? This second question brings to mind a traditional African saying: ‘If you do not involve the young in village life, they will eventually burn the village down.’

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At present there is a fear of a new breed of Islamic terrorists who have successfully taken control of the social media to stoke fear, who massacre anyone they disapprove of, and whose aim is human and cultural genocide. These terrorists do not emerge from nothing, with no

history. Like those who brought shock and awe, laying large-scale waste to countries and lives, they are not born murderers and destroyers, nor are they the distillation of evil in its purest form. Their actions reflect and even mimic the violence and disregard for human life and culture carried out by the nations who invade, colonise and control. Those they execute in snuff videos wear the same orange jump-suits as tortured prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. The message is: 'We do the same to you as you do to us.'

The implications of understanding the why and the how demands acknowledgement that foreign policies such as invasions as well as lack of social cohesion and economic unfairness at home nourish the growth of terrorism. But even when responsibility is grudgingly accepted, it is done myopically. At school in history lessons students are regularly asked to write essays listing the causes of wars. Naively as a pupil I assumed the question to involve human psychology. The history teacher groaned with frustration at my insistence on trying to go deeper into cause and effect. Such an approach did not guarantee good exam results and he would put red lines through my reflections on human fallibility, even when I quoted the Old Testament and made a point about the contract between people and God, based on law and good human behaviour, and the dire consequences of breaking that contract. My history teacher impatiently reminded me that causes of wars have nothing to do with waffle about contracts, but political decisions by rulers and their generals. I stupidly hoped the examiners would understand and be impressed by my fresh perspective. The decisions of leaders may facilitate wars, but the causes of human conflict are to do with the more fundamental matter of fear. Even then I wanted to discuss the causes of fear.

With grinding persistency fear leads to wars that in Europe and Asia continue the barbaric traditions going back to the Old Testament and the Iliad. Our continuing wars in the Middle East have their roots in the Crusades. These began with the fanatical Christian sacking of

Jerusalem when the streets famously ran with the blood of Muslims and ended in the final Crusade with the equally fanatical Muslim Mamalukes who, mirroring Crusader brutality with terrifying violence of the kind now practiced by Isis, inflicted a decisive defeat on the Christian invaders' final Crusade. Europe's influence in the Middle East waned for several centuries, although its colonial ambitions led to violence and cultural destruction in other continents. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War redrew the regional map with the Western victors imposing a new order with the intention of controlling the global economy solely in their own interest. Like the final Crusade, this order is now crumbling. With the invention and sale to all sides of ever more sophisticated military hardware, the neo-liberal notion of turning our enemies into our adversaries with its logical resolution of mutually assured destruction urgently needs to be challenged.

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Two short poems describe the lethal consequences of fear. Both focus on the central image of a poison tree, which is exploited by man to kill his enemies.

William Blake's poison tree is nurtured lovingly so that the enemy comes to eat the fruit and then dies:

I was angry with my friend:

I told my wrath, my wrath did end

I was angry with my foe:

I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I waterd it in fears,

Night & morning with my tears:

And I sunned it with smiles,

And with soft deceitful wiles.

*And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.*

*And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole;
In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.*

Note the line: 'Waterd it in fears...' and also the observation that anger with a friend can be resolved, but anger with an enemy leads only to death.

Pushkin's equally disturbing poem on a similar theme describes how a warlord dispatches a slave to harvest the poisonous leaves of the Anchar tree : 'created by nature on a day of wrath'.

*In a desert, barren and stony
On ground, scorched by heat,
The anchar stands alone in the wilderness
Like a stern sentinel*

*Nature and the parched steppe
Gave birth to that tree on a day of wrath,
Saturating its leaves, branches
And roots with poison*

*Dripping from its bark,
The poison melts at noon from the heat,
And hardens to a thick transparent gum
In the cool of the evening.*

*No bird flies past,
No tiger comes near –
Approaching breezes brush the poison tree
Before continuing, impregnated with plague*

*And if a passing cloud happens to
Wet its leaves with occasional rain,
The moisture, now polluted,
trickles on to the burning sand.*

*A man was sent by another man
With a look of command to the tree.
The wretched slave obediently went by foot
And the following morning returned with the poison.*

*He carried the deadly gum
and branches with faded leaves,
And the sweat ran in a cold stream
from his pale forehead.*

*He delivered and lay exhausted on the carpet
Under the tent's vault,
And the poor wretch died at the feet
Of the mighty unconquered lord*

*And this King dipped his faithful arrows
Into the poison
And delivered death with them
To neighbours in foreign lands.*

Note Pushkin's focus on the wretched obedient slave, and the way he is treated equally to his master (*chelovyeka chelovyek poslal: a man sent another man...*), making a point about

human relationships between those in authority and those who at the cost of their lives are made to carry out orders.

Blake illuminates the psychology of hatred and fear; Pushkin the frightening and unquestioned political reality in which the mighty take advantage of nature to keep control and subjugate others. These two poems illuminate the relationship between war and fear; Blake's subjective perspective illustrates the lethal consequences of hatred projected on to nature. Pushkin's poem is in two parts. The first describes the tree and its place in nature: no bird or wild animal goes near, and passing clouds become infected. The second part is about man's relationship with nature that is ultimately destructive..

Blake focuses on our individual fear. He does not explain the cause of the quarrel. Anger engenders the poison. Pushkin describes how man exploits nature to wreak death and destruction. Like Blake he doesn't explain the reason for the ruler's invasion of his neighbour countries. Hatred and the desire to conquer are undisputed givens. Both poems tell the consequences. Blake's describes a seductive invitation to a friend's theft with lethal result. Pushkin's ends with war being waged on neighbours 'in foreign lands' to make sure they do not invade. Now we build razor wire fences, walls and concentration camps to keep foreigners at bay.

Blake and Pushkin understand the terrible consequences of hatred, anger and fear.

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ANTI-SEMITISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

I blame the Jews. It's simpler that way. An American stand-up comedian

The terrorist shootings in France and Denmark recently have encouraged European nations to unite in fear and condemnation. Governments and the liberal establishment are careful to restrict blame to terrorist extremists. However there is an overt challenge to the Islamic community as a whole, which is judged to be falling short of discouraging terrorist acts. A major consequence of this condemnation, intentional or not, is to pit the Muslim community against the Jewish community. Those who consider themselves the majority hypocritically wash their hands of dangerous confrontations, turning a blind eye to their own, saying as it were: ‘you minorities have a problem with phobias about each other; we are raised in democracies and have none. We may insult, harass and discriminate against you, but we are not anti-Muslim or anti-Semitic and we do not have a racist bone in our bodies.’ Football hooligans are less hypocritical and proclaim their prejudices loudly with pride.

These events and responses to them spotlight Europe’s attitudes to minorities and raise questions about the state of the European Union and its relationship with the rest of the world and to the crisis in the Middle East and North Africa spilling over with boatloads of unwanted refugees and thousands fleeing the wars in the Middle East claiming asylum in Europe.

Andrzej Wajda’s controversial film *The Promised Land* doesn’t answer the questions but sheds light on them through the perspective of a corrupt, ruthless and voracious European capitalist market economy at the end of the 19th century, which depended for its success on widening the chasm between the rich who have the power and the poor who have none. One of the film’s main storylines has to do with the position of Jews within that system, and focuses on the wealthy Jewish families who controlled industry. *The Promised Land* is based on a book published in 1897 by a contemporary of Chekhov. Like Chekhov, the novelist Wladislaw Reymont describes a society on the cusp of what neither could foresee but which turned out to be revolution – a fact that Wajda’s film spells out in the film’s final frames.

Anti-Semitism is a major theme of *The Promised Land*, and the film's lack of wide distribution in the West, particularly in the United States, can be attributed to the unapologetic way Wajda deals with it. Anti-Semitism was a fact of life in Central Europe at the time of the novel, and literature treated it as such, in the same way Mark Twain writes about Jim the runaway slave in *Huckleberry Finn*. Mark Twain's deliberate irony places an accusing question mark over American racism. Wajda makes no judgement about anti-Semitism. Therefore his film, coming so close after the end of the Second World War, caused controversy. Viewers in the United States in particular assumed the director to be sympathetic to such bigotry. He strenuously denied it. Whatever judgement can be made on him, the film is honest about the period of the novel, and also the decades in Poland under the Soviet Union, during which anti-Semitic attitudes were expressed openly, unhampered by any notions of political correctness. The film addresses the dichotomy of attitudes to Jews: on the one hand considered social vermin, on the other hand as rapacious members of the capitalist elite. Both are seen to suck the blood from nation states, as well as pollute it. Because refugees from all countries and minorities emigrated to a hopefully freer way of life in the New World, and despite bruising competition and rivalry between ethnic groups they faced less prejudice than in the countries they fled from. However, as Woody Allen regularly quipped in his comic sketches and films, Jews in particular never entirely escaped prejudicial distaste. They continue to be mistrusted. Another American stand-up comic once opened his routine by saying: 'I blame the Jews. It's simpler that way'.

History shows that minorities of whatever ethnicity in Europe are encouraged to create wealth and become the engines of economy and even culture, but must accept they can never be assimilated. The sword of Damocles perpetually hangs over these communities so long as Europe insists on its separate national hegemonies. Regardless of the reality of diversity which has long ago turned the continent into a multi-racial society, the fantasy of pure

ethnicity persists at the core of every nation state. During the present crisis with a steady stream of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria and other war-damaged countries of the Middle East and North Africa, Hungary in particular is reminding Europe that such fantasies still exist. While benefitting from membership of a multi-cultural, multi-racial European Union, Hungary claims that by forcefully preventing refugees entering, it is protecting the continent from outsiders: specifically Muslims. Since the government also claims to be preserving Europe's Christian identity, Jews are also under threat. It is this dream of racial purity that prevents Europe from working as a Federation like the United States, in which there has been a struggle from the moment of its inception to create a country with civil rights for all. In a federation of nation states there is no choice but to struggle for equal rights and recognition. Individual nation states insisting on sovereignty can choose to discriminate in favour of the majority, leaving the minority at a disadvantage, forever uncertain about its place in that society.

STORIES OF IMPOTENCE AND ANGER

Timothy Snyder the Harvard professor analyses the relationship between the destruction of state structures and ethnic cleansing. He describes Nazi Germany's dismantling of these structures in all the countries they invaded, and how the ensuing chaos permitted the Holocaust to be carried out there. He is making a point that when invasions destroy countries, they create the conditions that permit large-scale atrocities. The chaos also inspires apocalyptic thinking. Fear of retribution and terrorist attack encourages nationalism masquerading as patriotism: 'We must protect our country at all costs.' This prepares the ground for future holocausts. The ethnic cleansing that took place during the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia proved that the Holocaust during the Second World War could be repeated. The fighting between Croatia, Serbia and their invasion of Bosnia after the collapse

of the communist totalitarian regime plunged the region into chaos which allowed the establishing of killing camps that horrified the world with their echoes of Dachau and Auschwitz. What the world assumed to be a terrible aberration during the Second World War turned out to be an inevitable consequence of the collapse of state structures.

Post colonial attitudes that persist in delusions of global influence and power are closely linked to racism and mistrust of minorities. Being a dominant global power influencing poorer countries in the interests of the richer relies on force. Peaceful negotiation is for losers. The example presented to the young generation is that violence is a necessary resolution to problems. Aggression is couched in terms of patriotism, bravery and heroism. The enemy is always wrong: patriots and heroes are fighting terrorists and the forces of evil. The enemy believes exactly the same. They see the patriots and heroes as invading bullies, infidels and a force of evil. The killing continues in an endless cycle.

I once knew a terrorist sympathiser in the 1970s. For a while we were colleagues on the Urban Ministry Project that trained social workers and clergyman posted in the most deprived, neglected and difficult parts of cities in the UK. Kornelius Burghardt, a Lutheran pastor in Germany, counselled and defended members of the Red Army Faction who had been arrested for killing an industrialist and for planning revolution on the streets of German cities. Ulrike Meinhof and Andreas Baader were the leaders. Kornelius Burghardt knew them both. His vociferous defence and involvement in demonstrations caused such controversy that people threatened to stop paying the Church Tax unless the Lutheran Church sacked him. The Church sent him to serve as an assistant in the parish of St Peters Morden where I worked alongside the vicar on the Urban Ministry Project.

This being a period of history unfamiliar to several generations born after the 1970s, background explanation is necessary. The 1960s and 70s were the decades of civil rights and

student revolution. This can be partially explained by the post-World War Two generation's response to a European-centred order that had generated slaughter and destruction on a global scale. This angry generation believed in radical change. Fury among students was fuelled by learning about the crimes committed not only by Germans and their allies during the world wars but also by other European nations throughout centuries of violently oppressive colonialism. Their parents unapologetic about history and traumatised by the brutality of what were considered 'righteous' wars assumed they knew best. Refusing to engage with the students they ruthlessly and violently crushed uprisings. The Red Army Faction in Germany grew out of this political oppression. 'We hate what you did,' the young people declared to their parents, 'and we hate you.' Those few war criminals caught, tried and imprisoned were considered to have been patriots, only obeying orders and defending Germany from its enemies. Such half-hearted justice enraged disaffected students even more. Because the Red Army Faction resorted to violence they were glibly labelled Hitler's Children, despite their hatred of fascism. These urban terrorists defended all oppressed minorities, including the Palestinians, which led to another mistaken label, that they were anti-Semitic. The leaders of the Red Army Faction were educated students, and their resort to nihilistic measures came out of despair at the world situation, the injustices, the oppression and the focus on material wealth for the privileged ambitious few at the expense of everyone else.

On the long drives from parish to parish in the UK, Kornelius Burghardt tried to convert me to terrorism. These conversations oppressed me with their fundamental insanity. I knew then, and know it even more strongly now, that violent action, whether it be armed invasion or terrorism, is not only cruel, criminal and repellent, it is also pointless, self-defeating and stupid. I sympathised with the students' impotent fury, but even if I could have been persuaded to take up arms, I knew that the state always crushes such opposition even more ruthlessly than punishment of 'patriotic' mass murderers. This was the case then. The Red

Army Faction members were imprisoned in conditions so unpleasant that they led to suicides. Nazi murderers with the blood of hundreds and even thousands on their hands were treated quite differently: humanely, all rights and privileges respected. Just as today the Far-Right nationalist anti-Muslim extremist Anders Breivik who massacred seventy seven people is jailed in comfort while those who are even only suspected of terrorist sympathies and have not caused the death of anyone, are imprisoned under excessively inhumane conditions.

On these long drives Kornelius Burghardt talked incessantly about his terrorist friends, the importance of violence in the struggle, his contempt for those who wavered or were cowardly, and of his plans to blow up the Houses of Parliament, presumably with my assistance. The car windows kept misting over. The rooms we shared in cramped suburban or inner city vicarages became prison cells from which I longed to escape. My head ached and my heart pounded not so much with fear as with boredom and irritation. It all ended when this terrorist sympathiser beat his wife, throwing her down the stairs. She complained to the diocesan bishop who then sacked him. He left and I never heard from him again or found out what happened to him.

Part Two of Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* includes a long-fuse narrative about the education of a terrorist, Helga. Over several episodes the story observes her relationships with family, friends, lovers and fellow students. The epic nature of the film gives time to examine the process that turns a politically radical young person with a poet's sensibility, someone who wants to change a corrupt, morally oppressive, materialistic and unjust society, into a ruthless urban guerrilla. A person who is alienated from family and society searches for another home. In Helga's own words, she at last found a place where she is needed, in which she can be useful. Today teenage girls are leaving secure families and schools where they are high achievers for the same reasons. They travel abroad to join terrorist organizations because

there they are offered a purpose in life secure in a specific role given them, however demeaning or challenging. Petty criminals, uneducated and unemployable, also join terrorists, and are happy to die, killing and being killed, because this has become their purpose in life. Educated and relatively prosperous, successful people are seduced into death cults for the same reasons.

Britz, Peter Kominsky's television series describing the education of a terrorist, observes the choices that turn a person from being amiable and sociable into a resolute mass murderer. It is not just one reason, but a confluence of different experiences, failed relationships, family conflict, sibling rivalry and above all a sense of injustice that lead to such impotent fury that it needs to find outlet. The series describes the chaos and confusion of the young woman's experiences in England and then in Pakistan, where she resists an arranged marriage at the cost of being ostracised by her family. It becomes inevitable that she either commits suicide or finds a new home, a new set of friends and above all a mission in life. Her reappearance in England as a fully fledged terrorist, preparing a suicide vest with a bomb powerful enough to destroy a stadium and kill many of the people inside it, is both terrifying and heart-breaking. We have come to know and sympathise with this character. Now she is more alone than ever. The mission isolates her from everyone, as she prepares to die. The loneliness of a suicide bomber is key to understanding this present-day phenomenon. She has no ties with her birth country, which discriminates against her, nor with her family whose expectations she cannot meet. Her closest friend committed suicide for the same reasons. She has nothing to lose. Yet she finally finds purpose, dignity and peace with herself. The preparation of the suicide vest is done calmly, precisely and with the solemnity of a priest delivering the Eucharist to a congregation.

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JEWISH HEIMAT

A significant difference between Jews and other ethnic minorities had until the creation of Israel to do with the lack of a nation state, a place to call home, a Heimat established over many generations and centuries. Israel is a nationalist construct, too recent to have developed a history of Heimat. Furthermore the founding of this nationalist construct involved the expulsion of those for whom the place had been and remains Heimat.

Culturally my Heimat is Central Europe, specifically from my grandparents' side Germany, Russia, Austria and the Czech Republic, not Israel. But my parents and their families were expelled from those countries simply because they were Jews. I could return there, but the knowledge that I was once not wanted even to the extent that people were prepared to murder me is discouraging. Those countries are not anymore my Heimat and I have now to create my own homeland in a different country that also sees me as alien. My parents who had only just escaped the pogrom of the Second World War focused on anglicising themselves to the extent that they wrote and published books in fluent English. They deliberately refused to raise me bilingually. I consider myself English until people note my name, and all my life continue to ask me what country I come from.

With the exception of gypsies who are stateless and carry their sense of belonging in a resilient web of traditions, other minorities have access to Heimat. Muslims in the UK look to Pakistan and Bangladesh among many countries from which their ancestors came, in Germany from Turkey, in France from Algeria, etc. They might be countries from which they were forced to flee or had lost touch with for generations, but those places of Heimat still exist for them if they wish to return, and it could be anywhere across the Islamic world. As a Muslim friend told me, wherever he sees a mosque he feels at home.

After the murder of Jews in Paris at the same time as the Charlie Hebdo massacre, the Jewish communities in Europe sensed danger from a rise in anti-Semitism in the host countries, quick to blame them for their plight. Feeling unwelcome in Europe they began to consider emigration to Israel. A number did so, and were welcomed by the Israeli government. This idea attracted those Jews wanting to practise their tradition without needing to be self-conscious and vulnerable to attack. However the idea did not appeal to all Jews who do not think of Israel as Heimat. Many were and remain suspicious of this aggressively nationalist racist nuclear armed construct in a region where most concede its existence, and some want to wipe it off the face of the map. For a community accustomed over centuries to exile that it became a necessary tool for survival to create home wherever they might land and be allowed to settle, the ancient idea of the Promised Land and the Chosen People resonates more in fantasy than reality. This is nostalgia for a time over two thousand years ago when an all-powerful King Solomon ruled in peace over a respected affluent nation to which foreigners came to pay tribute. When Jews in Western Europe or America dream of Heimat, they are thinking of more recent times, of life in Central Europe, a region from which they were expelled after generations of being assimilated, so my grandparents in Berlin considered themselves as German, and Jewish only by bloodline not religion. For this reason they did not flee the oncoming pogrom even though they saw it coming. They saved my father's life by sending him to England, even though it broke their hearts. Germany was their Heimat, and they preferred to die there, even if it meant being murdered, which is what happened to them.

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Though the threat of another holocaust has subsided, Jews still feel threatened and insecure. I have never felt completely at home in my birth country. History teaches me how quickly and easily the tide can turn against foreigners.

Another minority that consists of a wide variety of communities from different parts of the world is now feeling the same threat and insecurity. Because of the political situation in the Middle East, and specifically Israel and Palestine, these two minorities are threatened by each other. Muslim terrorist attacks in Europe target Jews. As a result the host nations, which welcome both communities only grudgingly, play one against the other, so deflecting any criticism of the fact that they themselves habitually discriminate. For the moment it is the Muslim community that receives most opprobrium, because of terrorism and the fear of it destabilising Europe. The Jewish community while only too aware of those who presently attack them must not be fooled into thinking they are safe from their hosts. History has shown how Jews have been used for their skills, but when the powers needed to pay back or had no more use for them, they were forcibly expelled. Kings used the Jewish community to raise money for costly wars, and when the reckoning of debt needed to be honoured, found persecution to be the cheapest option. Far Right groups, traditionally anti-Semitic, now also use Jews and specifically the Zionist state to support them in the fight against the 'rising tide' of Islam in Europe. However these groups remain anti-Semitic and should not be trusted.

The political situation in the Middle East manipulates enmity between the two groups who face similar discrimination. Neither feels welcome let alone at home in Europe.

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SINGING

When the former Yugoslavia plunged into a conflict of a brutality reminiscent of the Second World War between the different ethnic groups music crossed the front lines. Politically the communities remain enemies after the war. The region has split between the ethnic groups: Catholic Croats in Croatia, Orthodox Serbs in Serbia, mostly Muslims in Bosnia. Despite being enemies, at the Eurovision Song Contest all regions vote for each other. Football

matches turn into proxy battles, but singers appeal to all groups equally. Balkan songs and dances reflect each others' influences. Music is the Heimat in which even enemies can feel at home together.

Joseph Schmidt and Richard Tauber were two of the most popular and respected tenors of their generation, in the years between the two world wars. They were German Jews. Two films made at the height of their fame provide an instructive perspective on what it means to be both admired and alien. In *A Song Goes Round the World* (*Ein Lied geht um die Welt*) Joseph Schmidt's diminutive size explains why he fails to get the girl and must be resigned to his fate. However it is clear that his small physique is not the real reason. In the film, as a Jew he sings his heart out and is appreciated for the beauty of his voice and artistry, but he still loses. In life Joseph Schmidt did fail in the Opera House because of his short stature, but he enjoyed a successful career as a recording artist. Then the Nazis hounded him to death. Jewishness trumped talent and popularity.

Size never got in the way of Richard Tauber's stellar career. Round like a barrel, this superlative artist nevertheless achieved global fame and success. He married a beautiful actress. As well as being a star in opera and operetta, the composer Lehar writing roles specially for him, he also gave affecting performances of German folk and art song. His performance in *Hearts Desire*, a mid 1930s joint German and British film, poignantly illustrates the position of Jews in Europe, specifically those whose families have lived here for so many generations over the centuries that they consider Europe their home. The plot of the film hinges on the idea of 'home'. Lured to the bright lights of international opera houses a beloved performer of popular songs leaves the taverns in his home-city of Vienna. Like Joseph Schmidt the character Tauber plays is deluded into thinking his vocal prowess gives

him social acceptance. Jilted and disappointed he returns to Vienna, telling himself that this is his home, and he should never have left.

But off-screen for Tauber it is not home. Germany annexed Austria, which followed the Third Reich's anti-Semitic agenda with particular enthusiasm. Tauber had to flee the land of his forefathers. His home was nowhere.

In *Hearts Desire* he travels by train back to Vienna. Alpine scenery passes by the window. This scene struck resonances in my own life and family memories. My refugee parents insisted on being culturally integrated in the United Kingdom, the country that adopted them, speaking and writing only in English. But as keen fell walkers they missed mountain holidays which had been a feature of their childhoods. The Lake District sufficed for most of the year, and I would be dragged up Scafell, Helvellyn, Great Gable and walk for miles across scratchy moorland to distant bed and breakfasts. Then every summer vacation we moved for several weeks to as remote an Alpine Valley as my parents could find, a place no English speaking person would know about. I grew to appreciate the bleak beauty of Cumbria and the Yorkshire Moors, but felt an immediate bond with the landscape where my parents felt most at home. The highest peaks presented challenges so intrepid climbers would be invited to write comments in a book stored in a stone case on the summit. Social history could be read in these pages that dated back to the 19th century. At first people wrote poetry and left sketches of the view. These were followed by pages of hymns to socialism and revolution. From the 1930s onward the pages were filled with patriotic hymns to the Aryan fatherland, and such implications of rejection momentarily made me feel an unwelcome guest on these peaks. Yet here I was. They had not succeeded in wiping me out. Meanwhile far down in the valleys the village churches were decorated with frescos depicting heavily armed SS soldiers ushering Aryan children into the heavenly kingdom. I have not returned for many decades to

this valley. It is associated with my parents and their dreams of homeland, expressed in the need to conquer every peak. So determined were they to belong they tackled rock climbing on perpendicular glaciers to the consternation of local guides who knew that speed counted in early morning hours before the sun melted the surface enough to make them lethally slippery. In my mid 20s I paid two more visits with friends, to exorcise my parents' competitiveness and spent time enjoying the beauty of the mountain streams, the pine wood fragrance, the flower-filled meadows and views. For one last time I climbed my favourite peak, the Seespitze in Defferregental, a moment when memories of my childhood, nature and sense of belonging came together. This included a sudden violent storm near the summit, a wide panorama of the Dolomites stretching for miles along the horizon to the south in front of me, the glaciers of the Gross Glockner and Gross Venediger behind me to the north, and a long descent, sliding, jumping, and discovering fields of sky-blue gentians and wild arnica on the way. All of that and the final dusky return to supper and bed Richard Strauss evokes with precision in his Alpine Symphony. We might have been on the same hike.

Perhaps the intensity of the experience inhibited my return. I knew that such moments cannot be repeated. Since then easy access to a motorway has turned the remote and unspoilt valley into a ski-resort. I fear to sully that memory.

Richard Tauber's return to Vienna in *Hearts Delight* is as much about conviviality as landscape. His character feels at home singing popular songs for customers in the wine gardens. Yet these same people who love and cheer him for the beauty of his voice and inimitable style would also hound him out of the country. For me I can't listen to his intimate interpretations of German folk songs and light music without aching awareness of what would happen to him. The Alpine landscape glimpsed through the train window suggests a homecoming that could never be.

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Memories were recently awakened of Israel before the 1967 war, when kibbutzim sprouted across the country, being established by a young idealist mostly socialist generation keen to be examples of a new way of life for the world to follow. The Zionists who deliberately and aggressively encroached on Palestinian land came later. The idealist hard-working young kibbutzniks I met then welcomed the challenge of greening the desert. After the war ended in Bosnia I witnessed the same intensity of building and settlement by returning Muslim refugees. However the Muslims were returning to razed villages and towns, determined to rebuild and take ownership of homes they had always lived in. Israeli settlers were settling on land that they considered had been promised to them by God, but had for almost two thousand years been home to other people. As one of the earliest Zionist pioneers wrote to friends at the beginning of the 20th century about the ‘promised land’: ‘The bride is beautiful; but she is married to someone else.’

In both cases, Israeli settlements built on Palestinian land as well as resuscitated Muslim villages and towns in Bosnia, the place thrummed with construction. Trucks delivered bricks and cement; shops did brisk business and people were busy everywhere. At the same time as Israeli settlements were forcing out the poorer and weaker Palestinian inhabitants, Bosnian Muslim returnees were focusing on rebuilding what had been destroyed. Those refugees who had found work abroad sent money home, to the consternation of the Serbs who had tried to wipe them out and now lived in comparative poverty, unable to afford materials for rebuilding. They envied the refugees and complained bitterly at what they perceived to be injustice, that the people they tried to get rid of had the nerve to return, more prosperous than before. Muslim returnees showed chutzpah in the face of Serb hatred. They were even

prepared to remake homes near places where their relatives had been murdered in killing camps.

The message rang out, nothing will put us off, this is our home, and the worst traumas you can inflict on us will not prevent us living here. With exceptional courage and determination, our friend Mirsad who escaped being murdered in the Omarska killing camp by the skin of his teeth, saved by a sympathetic Serb friend, returned as soon as he could to the family home where he had witnessed the massacre of his uncles, and where out of spite the local Serbs had burnt down his orchards. He started again and raised his two sons to be peaceable, forbidding them to play with weapons. 'War is not the answer,' he tells them.

The sweet irony of all this reconstruction of the Muslim town of Kozarac next to the Omarska killing camp is that the returnee money also built a public swimming pool to which Serb children are invited to share, welcomed by the people their parents had tried to ethnically cleanse. The pool is bringing the communities together again, under the auspices of former victims of ethnic cleansing, people who returned to their homeland and now insist on recreating it as it used to be, a land for all.

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What of Jewish Heimat nostalgia? Apart from the land promised by an invisible God around three thousand years ago and where Jews made a home for just a few centuries, no homeland was ever exclusively theirs including the land of Israel Palestine. The 'wandering Jew' has become the prototype of the Jew forever moving from place to place, never settling or being allowed to establish roots. This has been interpreted by committed nationalists as a sinister tragic figure, but the Old Testament tells stories of people finding themselves homeless, expelled, wandering and searching for a place to settle, starting with Adam and Eve thrown out of Paradise, followed by Abraham setting off to find that promised land.

God himself is described as always on the move, like the wind, Jahweh, Jehovah. The narrative about search and finding home constitutes the heart of the Old Testament and has resonance for all people, not just Jews. Homeland is dependent on a contract. God is quite specific about what he expects of his people. As said above, if the people break this contract and behave badly, for instance treating strangers disrespectfully and ungenerously then God will turn his back on them. In the Old Testament homeland is not guaranteed, and punishment for bad behaviour brings catastrophic consequences.

Jews have a particular bent for Heimat nostalgia. As a second generation English born Jew I am susceptible to this also. When I travel through central Europe, the landscape touches on a longing for a home that is not mine. Third and fourth generation UK born Jews share this nostalgia. Still in his twenties, my friend Ben born and raised in Glasgow recently travelled to Poland, the country from which his grandparents had fled as young refugees. The intensity of a feeling of recognition surprised him. Although not even his parents had ever been there, he nevertheless experienced a powerful sense of homecoming. This is hard to explain because there is nothing left of a traditional Jewish way of life.

Nostalgia has to do with land. Old photographs of Orthodox Jews observed in groups in shtetls across central Europe are far removed from any recognizable reality and instil no sense of nostalgia. The paintings of Chagall that celebrate this way of life, violinists playing on the rooftops, brides floating in the sky, young men lying in picket-fenced gardens under fruit trees, chronicle a way of life long gone and for which there is no desire to return. For future generations the knowledge of pogrom imbues these scenes with terror. The rolling hills, woods and fields do however awaken memories not disturbed by threat. The smell of the earth in these lost homelands, the sound of the wind in trees and the shape of the landscape remain in ancestral memory.

THE PICKET FENCE

A few of the most enterprising Jews who fled European pogroms to settle in the New World of the United States established and built up the Hollywood film industry. They created a culture that had its roots not only in the Old World but absorbed native and African American influences and developed a unique language.

Milos Forman's cinematic riff on EL Doctorow's *Ragtime* celebrates these young go-getters. This strand of a narrative portrait of America in the early years of the 20th century counterpoints the main story which is an updating of Heinrich von Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* about how an unpunished crime and act of injustice can lead to revolution and its brutal suppression. In *Ragtime* it is a jazz musician, Coalhouse Porter, who because of the colour of his skin, cannot find justice. His search spirals into violent national civil unrest. *Ragtime* among its many themes raises concern over human rights, and how injustice is ingrained in an oppressive system which discriminates. The names Coalhouse and Kohlhaas make the connections clear between Doctorow's epic and Kleist's novella. In both a crime is committed against a lower-class person. In both, a determined protagonist reacts to injustice by fomenting war. Setting his story at the time of the Reformation Kleist describes how the leaders of religious revolution, Luther in particular, keen to preserve order, sided with the powerful aristocracy to suppress the citizen's revolution with extreme brutality. *Ragtime* similarly shows the liberal and conservative establishment combining forces to put down ruthlessly this upstart musician who should know his place. Both narratives raise the question about home. Injustice disenfranchises. Who does the land belong to? Whose home is it? Once people no longer feel it belongs to them, then they have nothing to lose and violent revolution is the inevitable option.

The young Jewish entrepreneurs charming people with their invention of cinema is not a side-story in *Ragtime*. These people are celebrating the limitless possibilities of a country where they are no longer guests but significant contributors and members of a New World. They make it a home in which they at least are not discriminated against. This makes Coalhouse Porter's situation especially poignant, because the colour of his skin determines that he does not have equal rights, and is resented in the same manner as the Jewish entrepreneurs had been in in the Old World.

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When these film entrepreneurs took over Hollywood and became moguls, they developed a highly commercial brand of entertainment, the Hollywood Musical, which indulged in Heimat nostalgia that resonated with a wide public across the world. Not only directors, but many of the films' composers and lyricists were Jewish: the Gershwin brothers, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin and Rogers and Hammerstein. The studio bosses put their stamp on this particular art form, a musically updated version of 19th century European operetta, moved to the prairies and metropolises of the New World. The picket fences of *Oklahoma* and *Meet Me in St Louis* are reminiscent of those in the shtetls of Eastern Europe, fixed in the memory by the paintings of Chagall and the stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer writing in New York about a country now foreign to him, but tapping into the nostalgia for home in his Jewish American readership. These fences having been transported whitewashed to the New World enclose technicolor ideal homes and gardens peopled with immaculately groomed girls and boys, wives in the kitchen, dads at work or cleaning the car in the driveway, each member of the family assigned a specific role. This image represented an impossible ideal which would be subverted by those directors, many Jewish themselves, who identified its oppressive expectations. Film Noir brought serpents into this version of paradise, to undermine the

ordered world of picket fence Heimat nostalgia. The consequences need not be inevitable expulsion from paradise but the chance to explore alternative ways of life, and a perpetual reminder that home is never guaranteed. Film Noir also showed that what is a paradise for some is a hell for others.

Heimat nostalgia became a significant aspect of wartime morale-boosting. To entertain the soldiers through the years of combat in frequently appalling conditions, the film studios produced a steady stream of musicals that reminded the marines in the Pacific and soldiers in far-away Europe of a home they would be only too keen to return to. Girls next door with beautiful legs who were also motherly, strong and dependable waited for them, singing seductively and dancing to frenetically upbeat rhythms. The corny narratives were swathed in a syrup of sound that blurred the gap between gritty reality and a dream made more fantastic in Technicolor. They served as a comfort blanket for those facing brutish death abroad, and numbing anxiety at home. The mostly Jewish moguls running the Hollywood studios understood this need for home with an intensity particular to refugees.

While the classic era of Hollywood musicals brought nostalgia for the Central European Jewish shtetl life in idealized, flawless and disinfected form to the American prairie, the myth about the shame of the Wandering Jew evaporated in the New World. No longer considered a pollutant, this sinister alien figure of suspicion disappeared in the new society whose constitution was supposed to encourage ambition, business and self-betterment in all communities. The scarring exception of racial discrimination rooted in slavery remained. The new society transferred its prejudice and need to oppress, a trait imported from the cultures the New World had tried to escape, on to the African American underclass: the white population in control of those with darker skin, including Native Americans.

As to those disruptive outsiders hovering on the periphery of this strictly ordered society, threatening the security of an idealized suburban life, Marilyn Robinson's *Home* gets to the heart of the matter. These outsiders cannot be identified as Wandering Jews, and are never judged as vermin. Their function is to question the expectation of an idealised way of life founded on strict religious principles while offering new alternatives. *Home* weaves the story of the outsider, the prodigal son and challenger of preconceptions with the dispiriting theme of racism and religious oppression. As the title suggests, the notion of 'home' begs the question for whom? And who is included or excluded? And at what cost to all sides?

The Hollywood moguls' yearning for a ghetto-haunted past being exorcised in the towns and cities across America placed mother at the centre of this idealized home. Seductive interlopers like Curly, Billy Bigelow and Gaylord resisted being tamed by woman. Such an image of womanhood imposed an oppressive expectation on half the population, as discriminatory as racism. Directors, many of whom had fled persecution, responded to this injustice with striking ambiguity. Women who did not conform to this male ideal of the woman's role had to be punished. In their films a host of seductive, independent and powerful femmes fatales challenged the ideal home image. Although culture decreed such transgression from the inflicted norm needed to be punished, the power and beauty of these women presented an even more challenging response. They might be manipulative and dangerous, but they also took charge and showed themselves to be capable. In Douglas Sirk's *All I Desire* Barbara Stanwyck, a specialist in such roles, plays an ambitious businesswoman who leaves restricting small-town life, then misses her roots and returns to disrupt the cosily married life of a childhood flame. The film reveals how the painful compromises of life, human desire and energy resist being boxed and regulated. Relationships that transgress what is considered the 'norm' might be considered unwise, but they also open up the emotions and

thoughts to other possibilities, necessary dangers and utopian promises. The powerful female in *All I Desire* resists discrimination and oppression and returns home on her own terms.

Douglas Sirk, like Fritz Lang, was an émigré, a refugee from fascism, but not a Jew. Billy Wilder was Jewish, and fled Nazi Germany for his life. He also used Barbara Stanwyck in what is one of her most iconic roles, the manipulative murderess in *Double Indemnity*. Billy Wilder's personal experience and understanding of what it means to be persecuted made him allergic to sentimentality or Utopian hope. The film peers into the moral abyss in which the main foundations of what constitutes normal behaviour in an oppressively discriminatory society are removed. Relationship, family and work are not only jeopardized, they are dismantled, ending in violent death and a sense of purposelessness. The film is ice-cold from the beginning to the final confrontation between the boss and his colleague, which makes the expression on Edward G Robinson's face in the final seconds so telling. He had been more than a boss: he had been a friend and father. The plot hinges on life-insurance, a concept predicated on a society focused on money and materialism. Relationships are given financial value. A determined and manipulative woman permanently shackled to a man we hardly get to see makes a bid for independence which can only be achieved through access to money. Love and emotion let alone family and home don't come into it. 'There's a speed restriction', the woman says without the flicker of an eyelid when at their first meeting the man makes a play for her. The juxtaposition of the jewelled anklet drawing lascivious attention to her legs with the image of a fast car sums up the materialism of the inept attempt at seduction. The final confrontation between the man and the woman contains a telling shot. They come intimately close for the first time. It is not his phallus that penetrates her, but a gun. She barely winces at the realization, having just shot him herself, because any notion of love has been obliterated from the start. The bleak film's power lies in the acknowledgement that this

is what social relations have boiled down to. There is not even the fantasy of a picket fence and no hint of nostalgia for a way of life that might have been and that could offer hope.

HEIMAT OF CULTURE

In conversations about 'where and what is home', there is a marked difference between Jews and most other immigrant groups. This says more about Jewish character than about other groups who have in common the shared identity of faith traditions. It doesn't matter where in the world a person might be, the sight of a church or a mosque immediately creates the feeling of home. The synagogue only has that pull for devout but not for the majority of Jews who are secular. Among minority groups Jews possess the ability to assimilate and be part of the tradition and culture of the country where they settle.

Islamophobia in extreme cases can drive Muslims back to the countries of their forebears. These places offer another home they can be part of, even though the culture and tradition are so markedly different from the country of their birth and education that Muslims end up feeling not at home in either place. This is the central theme of the TV drama *Britz*, which, as said above, focuses its narrative on the making of a terrorist. Anti-Semitism that used to threaten real pogroms now presents Jews with a different dilemma. They have no homeland to turn to. Israel opens its doors, but the politics and history of the region make it hard for Jews to feel this country is their homeland. That they take such effort to become part of the culture of their birth countries presents problems for those who resent their presence, considering Jews to be an alien infection: the greater the assimilation, the deeper the resentment. This explains why Germany initiated the Holocaust. Jews had become more embedded in that culture than in any other country. It started with expulsion, then with creating ghettos to isolate the ethnic infection, which then made it easier to liquidate them.

For all their successful attempts at assimilation in the UK, my parents' Heimat remained Central Europe. I am second generation, and share that sense of again wanting to feel at home there although I consider myself traditionally and culturally British. Jews assimilate not so much out of circumstances like mine, but out of a need to feel at home in a world that constantly rejects them. So for instance the conductor and polymath Daniel Barenboim embraces his European heritage as well as the culture of his place of birth and education Argentina, while making Israel his home. By creating bonds with Palestinians in his West East Divan Orchestra consisting of Muslim, Jewish and Christian players he opens up this heimat to all those who live there, especially those who feel excluded. Jews have absorbed cultures for centuries, wherever they lived, often excelling in the arts. But other cultures have assimilated Jewish culture too. The West East Divan orchestra is a good example of two-way assimilation. The brilliance, precision, elegance and passion of performance is typical of the best Jewish instrumentalists, but it is a quality now shared by Arabs and Christians in the orchestra, to the extent that you cannot tell them apart. This particular natural-born flair for performance is unique to Jewish musicians, for example so many who appear to have been born fully tutored child prodigy violinists. As an adolescent not yet lacking confidence I worked in Israel and played Schubert and Bach at evening social gatherings. I met young Israeli soldiers who were studying music and could play the most difficult pieces from memory with such assurance, that I knew I would never be anything more than a middling amateur pianist. A music teacher sat in on one of my recitals, and without speaking, smiled in embarrassment, shook her head and looked at me with pity, as much as to say: 'Keep playing the way you do, but never imagine you will be a professional.' The best Jewish instrumentalists have talent in their genes. Others have to learn painstakingly, like the violinist in the old Hollywood movie *Humoresque*, who drives his family insane with incessant practice.

Jewish brilliance alas has also been its undoing. Like all minorities facing discrimination, children have to strive harder, even when naturally gifted, which means that, like Muslims in Europe today, they excel at all the major professions such as the law, finance and medicine in which depth of knowledge and grasp of detail demand the kind of persistence minorities have had to adopt in order to survive. Such success invites jealousy and resentment. The pogroms of Eastern Europe and the holocaust grew out of frustration felt by oppressed national communities being taken out on Jews and other 'foreign' or despised elements. The sacking of professional Jewish musicians during the Third Reich meant jobs in orchestras being available to non-Jews. I possess a boxed set of LPs celebrating old recordings of Wagner made by singers in the first decades of the last century. The potted biographies make grim reading. So many of these great Wagnerians were Jews, and alongside the year of birth, the year of death remains unknown with the bald statement: 'presumed to have died in a concentration camp'.

There was an upside to this catastrophe for those Jewish musicians who survived and fled to the UK and America. They established first class music groups, chamber ensembles and improved orchestral standards. However, before this culling of musicians, discrimination did not figure large in the field of the arts, only in the well-paid professions of the middle classes. The arts were considered entertainment and could be patronised, so long as musicians knew their place: to gratify the needs of their peers. White people slummed it in Harlem, gypsies and Jewish musicians accompanied weddings and other celebrations in Eastern Europe.

These outsiders fascinated and inspired serious composers, and styles cross-fertilized. Liszt riffed on Jewish and gypsy cafe music. Initially disapproving of what they considered theft of their compositions the performers then riffed on Liszt's creations. In America, Jewish and African American traditions blended to create various jazz styles. It is generally the alien

culture from discriminated people that exerts the most potent influence. This has to do with intensity of oppressed voices penetrating and stimulating tired traditions. Their music expresses yearning for home, roots and existential stability.

Nationalist movements in the 19th century talked about pollution of culture, aiming specifically at Jewish artists, musicians and composers in particular. Wagner disparaged Mendelssohn as the creator of weak and sentimental compositions, an opinion that still infects attitudes to this towering musical figure. Mendelssohn in his short creative life absorbed influences from the past, resurrected Bach as the single most important composer in Western music, and influenced future artists, including Wagner himself. The Nazi's followed Wagner's criticism by banning performances of Mendelssohn, to the bemusement of musicians across Germany. When it came to providing incidental music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, theatre directors wondered why they needed a new score: the most atmospheric and beautiful was already to hand. When the conductor Kurt Masur studied composition during the war, his teacher recommended playing Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words*, which he did, at some risk. People listening were probably grateful to hear these banned musical gems and never reported him. Even respected admirers of Mendelssohn's compositions, notably Daniel Barenboim, still criticise him for not contributing to the development of music, in the manner of Beethoven or Wagner. Mendelssohn is a striking example of cultural assimilation. This composer called the Mozart of the 19th century had absorbed the experiments and achievements of composers before him, and always without losing his particular character, lightness of touch, transparency of scoring and a passion that sometimes threatens to go off the rails, but held firmly in check by rigorous technique and gift for melody. Perhaps the apparent facility of his genius made critics doubtful about his sincerity. In fact Mendelssohn edited his work meticulously, hardly ever satisfied. Simon Schama the historian identifies a unique ardour in the Violin Concerto, music that he says

could only be composed by a Jew. Despite Barenboim's criticism there is no doubting Mendelssohn's influence on Liszt, who then himself composed for the future. Wagner's famous opening of Rheingold uses a similar musical idea in Mendelssohn's *Fair Melusine* overture. Originality and experiment abound in Mendelssohn's less performed works for the piano, the Capriccios for instance, or the elaborate op 35 Preludes and Fugues, inspired by Bach. Mendelssohn did sow seeds for the future. When listened to with an 'innocent' ear, his chamber music can be mistaken for Brahms who represented the next generation.

As well as successful assimilation it is inspirational modernity that irks those who are suspicious of Jewish influence. A century after Mendelssohn, Schoenberg, Kurt Weill and Korngold dominated the European musical scene, but were forced to flee their homeland.

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A new refugee crisis is hitting Europe. People fleeing war, persecution and poverty are risking their lives to find safety and a future in a continent they hope will welcome them. Socrates said that the bad we do to other people damages us more than the hurt we inflict on them, because it damages our soul, our humanity. This insight forms the bedrock of any civilized society. The rule holds good for people within national communities but not necessarily for foreigners, those from different cultures. This is witnessed in a filmed performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony in front of an ecstatic audience of Nazi officials. Schiller's humanitarian words extolling universal brotherhood set to rousing music moved Goebbels and his colleagues to genuine delight. They were at the same time killing all those they deemed unfit to be part of the human race. Socrates dictum itself applied only to part of society. In Ancient Greece women and slaves were excluded from justice and fair treatment. It is now generally believed that rights should be extended to all people, including those excluded for millennia. The arrival in Europe of hundreds of thousands of refugees, asylum

seekers and people from different continents and cultures, all searching for a better life, is testing Socrates' dictum.

ON BEING AN ALIEN

Fear and antipathy towards refugees and migrants is a repetition of what happened to my refugee parents who were the lucky few who managed to breach the fortress island of the United Kingdom. While the Daily Mail then sympathetic to fascism, considering it a bulwark against communism, warned of the United Kingdom being invaded by 'swarms' of specifically Jewish refugees, mainly the Quakers organized themselves and managed with difficulty to overcome the deliberately stringent requirements set by the government. Those claiming asylum were told to wait in their countries of origin until the British authorities granted permission. My father managed to flee Berlin in good time. My mother had to wait in Vienna and escaped by the skin of her teeth on one of the last kinder transport. Those non-Aryans left behind would mostly perish in concentration camps, the Austrians being particularly thorough at ethnic cleansing.

My parents dealt with their trauma by not discussing the subject or by making light of it. Regularly we attended chamber music concerts in Lancashire. Many of the performers were Jewish refugees. My mother would look at my father, and with a loud laugh say in German, which was otherwise never spoken at home: 'Auch kein Aryer!' ('Another non-Aryan!').

Whereas my parents were never ashamed of their background and uncommonly brave in standing up to discrimination, a residue of embarrassment stuck to me all my life. This came from puzzlement more than fear or self-hatred. When boys scornfully called me a 'dirty Jew' in the playground, I always wondered why my ethnicity mattered. I accepted being possibly a dirty boy, despite having a bath every day, not being sporty and having an arty nature that made me different; but what being a Jew had to do with anything perplexed me. It didn't

annoy me that my attackers might be Christians. But I never stood up to them, the way my courageous, or possibly foolhardy mother did when as a 16 year old girl Nazi guards attempted to remove her necklace on the kinder transport train before it crossed the border into neutral territory. 'It belonged to my mother,' she protested, and despite threats held on to it. My father suppressed the trauma of being taken from his loving parental home at the age of 16, and adapted to the life of a farmhand in Yorkshire where his boss submitted him to all kinds of indignities and even torture, like making him test electric fences with his bare hands. At a time when refugees were expected to be grateful for anything given them, even the worst kind of work, my father had the guts to protest, go on strike and even leave the farm to find work elsewhere. Being identified as Jews never bothered them, and if people became objectionable, my parents treated it with amusement, whereas I felt ashamed for them and above all at myself for never protesting. I did notice in the expressions of the boys insulting me a look of fear, not of me, but of being in my position, someone foreign, not one of a group. It has taken me most of my life to understand that look. My difference and individuality upset them. I observed the same look of fear when these people insulted and attacked anyone of a different colour. This phobia made no sense to me. Whereas they hated, I felt attracted to that difference, finding out about how these people came to be in a strange country and wanting to learn about their traditions. Those making the insults were repelled by the foreignness and had no desire to learn why they were here and showed no interest in getting to know them. Only now am I able to make the leap of the imagination that helps me understand even if I cannot empathise with those feeling fear and insecurity in the face of strangers. It has to do with the archetypal fear of losing home, therefore having to be perpetually vigilant and keeping all threats at bay. Anthropology and history teach us that people have roamed the planet in search of home since the beginning of homo sapiens. Everyone has at one time been or is a refugee.

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Jewish heritage informs every part of my life. I am fascinated by the history and variety of my ancestors, the mystery of stemming from so many regions and traditions of the world. For much of my life, the mistaken attempt constantly to make myself accepted wherever I might be has been more for personal than ethnic or cultural reasons. This makes me a typical example of an assimilated Jew, cosmopolitan and allergic to all religions. My father wrestled with religion most of his life. He converted to Christianity out of admiration for Christ's teachings, only to be disillusioned with the Church; and having written several successful books of what many called 'mad theology', but one rooted in Jewish tradition, he returned to Judaism. Abraham had always been his ideal: the man setting out on a journey away from home to an unknown place and future and ending up as father to three of the main world faiths. My mother, ever curious and experimental moved from one philosophy and theology to another, taking what suited her and ending up with an idiosyncratic world view made up of all faiths, including Tao and Hinduism. I reckon myself lucky to have been a witness to all these changes in my parents' spiritual lives, because, without being convinced and zealous about any of them, I learnt much about human thought and spiritual aspirations. Books on every subject, including anthropology, architecture and bridge building would be read aloud while my mother knitted or mended. Discussions with a variety of guests around meal tables lasted for hours. Regarding the Holocaust they told me the bare facts on the road between Lostock Junction and Wigan in Lancashire, a bright summer day in 1955. My view of the world and the human race was set at the age of 10. Their immediate family traumas doubtless inspired my parents' search for answers and solutions, and to understand the causes of historic events. They spent time trying to understand the mindset of a culture that created the Holocaust. To my mind one of their best books, non-theological and therefore one that I could approach with interest, is *I Am Adolf Hitler*, in which they both try to get under the skin

of this ultimate 20th century bogeyman, imagining what he might have said and dictated to his secretary in the bunker during the last days of the Second World War. The fact that two Jews had written this book did not prevent the critics in the 1960s from misunderstanding its nature and complaining in the press that what they presumed were the actual thoughts of Hitler should never have been allowed to be published.

My parents showed me how to focus my enquiring mind not on victims, for whom one can only feel empathy, but on those who inflict suffering. Claude Lanzmann does this in parts of his monumental documentary on the Holocaust, *Shoah*. Note the seraphic glow radiating from the calm faces of all the survivors, despite their unspeakable traumas, in contrast to the surly disgruntled expressions of the perpetrators, denying guilt but carrying it. The crimes caused more trauma to those who carried them out, which bears out Socrates' dictum about how when we do evil to others we damage our soul more than those we hurt.

I experienced this phenomenon on my visit to Auschwitz in 1992. Looking at the ruins of the two incinerators which had burnt the murdered bodies of my grandparents and standing on the platform where they descended from the cattle train and were separated before being sent to the gas chambers, I did not for one moment feel the terror of the victims. They might never have been there. I did however sense the presence of the guards and the dogs. They were the ones haunting Birkenau, and not my grandparents or any of the million and more people who were killed there. This absence felt like their souls had made every effort to flee that place. The souls of those who killed out of fear and insecurity could not leave. They were bound to the spot as immovable as xenophobic nationalists clinging ferociously to their home.

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The nation states of Europe are now experiencing fear and insecurity once again at the prospect of opening borders to a fresh procession of refugees. Women and men brimming

with enthusiasm, determination and boundless energy, their attractive faces shining with hope, contrast with the peevish expressions of those who want to keep them out. The wealthy and privileged deliver self-satisfied homilies about having done more than enough to help, that we have enough problems of our own to sort out and need to keep doors shut to refugees and 'sort out' the places from which they are fleeing. The politicians do not explain how they will 'sort out' and how peace and stability can be brought to places they have been invading and devastating, not just recently, but over centuries of colonial rule. All that matters is to keep people out, even if it means they die. The peevish expression contrasts with the radiance of the refugees and those who are helping them. The unemployed former businessman in Berlin pouring drinks for the exhausted people spilling onto the streets from the railway station declares that he has never been happier than helping out, that never did his life have such meaning. This is how all the volunteers feel, even taking strangers into their homes. This procession of what the politicians and media prefer to call a 'flood of migrants', making them sound like pests rather than people fleeing war and terror. are a blessing for Europe. They will help revive its economy and humanity, demolish outdated nationalist sentimentality and make the continent truly global. These people include what are contemptuously called 'economic migrants' who are rigorously barred. These are people wanting to work and cannot find it in their home countries because of corruption and poverty often caused by war. European interference in these countries, including selling military equipment, destabilizes them and creates the misery these 'economic migrants' are fleeing. There is the responsibility of restitution added to the basic humanitarian obligation to help those in need.

My friend Labinot in Kosovo is an educated skilled man with energy and talent who despite the funds poured into his country from the European Union cannot find work. He lives by begging from strangers. He belongs to the 60% unemployed in his country and needs to leave

and find work elsewhere. How else can he care for his family? He cannot forever be dependent on handouts. Corruption at home and mismanagement, apathy and colonial attitudes from the EU combine to create a hopeless situation for him. He is a refugee, not from war, but from a post-war situation that those who took charge failed to heal and rebuild. Yet he is discriminated against, and will never be allowed entry into a richer country which could benefit from his skills.

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IMAGINATION AND BABYLON

Roots bind. Home requires roots. For a fish in a pond that only knows its few square metres, or a cat that patrols its limited space, what may appear a restricted world provides enough interest for survival and security. There is curiosity. The Troger family at the end of Defereggental in Ost Tirol, that remote valley I knew as a boy, travelled no further than the nearest town, Lienz, which to them constituted an adventure, a foray into exciting territory. Mother Troger never left the valley all her life. The Trogers sat every evening with us and German guests that regularly visited for climbing holidays. As darkness fell and hid the forests and mountains outside, the sons played violin and recorder duets by Telemann. Then the father accompanied folksongs on his guitar and sang Beethoven and Schubert Lieder. The Trogers joined in the folk songs and listened agog to tales of foreign lands. They complained of long snowbound winter days with nothing to do but tell stories. This was before the days of television. The youngest Troger son spent most of the summer in the high pasture with the cows, whipping them back home for milking each afternoon. His crimson sunburnt face beamed with delight when he saw us. The eldest son took me on fast climbs across pathless steep meadows to remote rock faces covered in edelweiss, holding me with a rope as I smiled up at him, my heart pounding with fear and trust. He knew every inch of this part of the

valley, and shushed me so that I might catch a glimpse of chamoix. The mother shared ghost stories in deep guttural tones, and was excited by my tales of life in England, especially disasters. I told her about waking up one morning and seeing the black print of a hand on the window above my bed, presumably a burglar hoping to enter undisturbed, but seeing me lying there, had fled. The Black Hand entered the Troger family folk lore along with tales of snakes in strawberry patches and mysterious sudden storms. These people welcomed strangers to enrich their lives and fire their imaginations. Haus Troger perched on a rock surrounded by gardens and forests, and looked down the valley like a medieval castle, for me the place of fairytale, fantasy and security.

Haus Troger also reminded me of my rootlessness. However much I might find and make a home, even set down roots, my Jewishness reminded me that I never belonged in any fixed place. This has an upside: it gives the freedom to move anywhere and everywhere and also liberates the imagination. This explains why painting has been a constant in my life and why Jews often excel in the arts.

Mother Troger appreciated my creativity. I once painted her a picture of a lonely young pine tree on the hillside of the mountain opposite the house. The mother looked at my simple little painting in awe and said: 'Wie mocht er doss!?' 'How does he do it?' She then hung it next to crucifixes and pictures of the Madonna and Child.

There is a telling reason for why I lost touch with this family in later years, even though I hoped to re-visit. When my parents stopped coming there on holiday I brought my friends to this piece of paradise. Eventually the mother said firmly: 'Next time you bring your wife.'

She had lost her husband in the Second World War, shot on the Italian border, and raised the family of six children on her own. Indomitable and intimidating she chopped wood every afternoon into old age, swinging the axe over her head. Peter the eldest son married and took

over the holding. Home and family are sacrosanct in these communities. Without family there is no continuation of home.

Painting is my home. The picture of the little pine tree with the Hochgall glacier behind it under a clear cerulean sky represented my claim to that Heimat. The mother's stricture, although I understood it and even if it was not intended as a moral reproach, nevertheless felt like an expulsion.

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Foreign minorities can assimilate the nationalism of host countries. Jews fought alongside Aryans in the First World War. Jewish and Muslim businesses in the UK today support conservative interests, even if they resist total assimilation and continue to celebrate their separate traditions.

On the other hand the leading voices of dissent and revolution come from these minority groups too. Nationalist hostility is then aimed at both right and left. International cartels are traditionally seen to be controlled by rich Jews who are suspected of not being prepared to share responsibility for national interests, and in fact, as part of a mythical Jewish conspiracy, work to undermine them. Biggest opprobrium is directed at those who also fight these cartels and all forms of discriminatory nationalism: revolutionaries who want to create a fairer society. The Jews among them, including Rosa Luxembour and Leon Trotsky, from the start found themselves struggling against and trying to reform the conservative elements in their own revolutionary groups, because these tend to turn nationalistic and discriminatory, as witness the Terror after the French Revolution and the Soviet Union under Stalin. Pogroms continue even under socialist regimes.

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A hooked-nosed swarthy-featured weather-beaten ragged wanderer strides through European mythology. He comes from nowhere and goes nowhere, because he has no homeland to leave or to return to. Nor does he find a welcome anywhere. In Christian mythology perpetuated by all Churches he is the killer of Christ.

The image of the Jew as a citizen of the world, rather than of any particular nationality, subverts that of the Wandering Jew, generally seen as a sinister nation-less figure. Secular Jews like me who do not feel at home in Israel, a political construct with mythological roots, continue to make our home wherever we land up living. The existence of the Israel Jewish nation state as the reward for almost 2000 years of yearning accounts for the aggressive determination not to lose what Zionists consider a Promised Land, even if that means perpetual suffering because of war with the people whose land was usurped. Before the establishing of the Jewish nation state the intensity of the Jewish desire to make a home wherever they lived in the world upset nationalists in whatever country they settled. The more Jews tried to assimilate and better themselves the greater the subsequent dislike and desire to eliminate competition from this 'alien' group, by whatever means.

The Grimm's fairytale, *The Jew in the Thornbush*, provides a traditional caricature of the European Jew as an ugly, whining, devious and ultimately disposable creature. He is mocked and when he has the temerity to seek redress he is crushed. The goodness of a handsome kind-hearted young farmer's boy brings rewards. However the sight of an old Jew he meets on the road and the incomprehensible way he talks provokes a nasty streak in the young man's normally friendly nature. He makes the Jew crawl into a thorn bush to fetch a bird and then plays a magic violin which forces the Jew to dance so he is scratched, hurt and humiliated. The Jew in fury exacts a terrible revenge, and is then punished with death. What comes over strongly in this old fairytale, going back to the late Middle Ages is the sheer

strangeness of the Jew with his wispy goat-beard. Rather than eliciting sympathy and curiosity, it permits cruelty. Generations of children brought up on this story would be taught to despise and hate the Jew.

This image of strangeness carried on into the 20th century. Fassbinder's epic series about the interwar years in Berlin, *Alexanderplatz*, opens with a disconcerting encounter between the main character, just released from prison, and a Jew who follows him down the street, inviting him into his flat. This caricature of a wheedling, slippery, obsequious Jew in ringlets and cap sets the political and social scene in which fascism and anti-Semitism could thrive. The Jew is seen as fundamentally repellent, physically, mentally and morally.

The caricature honed over the centuries is also the end result of the European anti-Semitic campaign to reduce the Jewish race to a social pestilence. This made it easier to exterminate the race.

THE JEWISH IMAGINATION

Over two thousand years before the Holocaust, Jews created one of the first and most influential works of literature. They gathered memories and stories so as never to forget who they were and bound them together in the Old Testament written during their first expulsion from the Promised Land during the exile in Babylon. This blend of history, mythology, prophetic and visionary utterance, poetry and detailed rules of behaviour celebrates not only human survival, but also the power of the imagination to deal with catastrophe and inspire hope for a better world, a way of living and being civilized human beings.

Pushkin came across a passage in Ecclesiastes which has startling power. Evidently impressed he simply transcribed it into Russian verse. The passage describes the birth of a prophet, and distils the experience of defeat, failure and spiritual death in exile and the

burning need for resurrection. In first person a spiritually parched man drags himself into the desert. A seraph appears and touches the man's eyes and ears. The man opens his all-seeing eyes like a startled eagle. The man hears the flight of angels in the distantly rumbling heavens, the movement of creatures in the depths of the ocean and the growing of distant vines. The seraph cuts out the man's tongue. Then with blooded hands replaces it with that of a wise serpent. The seraph rips open the man's chest, taking out the trembling heart and plants a burning coal into the gaping hole. Like a corpse the man lies in the desert. Suddenly he hears the voice of God telling him to rise, cross lands and seas and with prophetic voice inspire and ignite the imagination of people all over the world.

The images shock with bodily massacre and blood. Who was this unnamed Jewish poet who thousands of years ago wrote words of such visceral intensity? Exile from homeland ignites the imagination.

THE MYTH OF THE WANDERING JEW AND THE UNIVERSAL SEARCH FOR HEIMAT

Several kibbutzim lie under the Golan Heights, a dangerous border between Israel and Syria when I worked there in 1964. One balmy evening the celebrated violinist Isaac Stern performed Brahms' Violin Concerto at an open air concert. A full moon hung over the Golan Heights from which Syrians would regularly descend at night to attack and kill kibbutzniks. Dressed in a large white suit and bow tie, calm, dignified and with not a flicker of emotion ever crossing his features Stern drew from his instrument a constant flow of intense rich tone that rose into the night sky and floated across the border.

The stories and novels by Isaac Bashevis Singer celebrate the particular traditions of a community never sure of its security, vulnerable to the whims of its neighbours which regularly exploded into pogroms. These mainly poor communities could not depend on anyone for protection. Until the creation of the Israeli state they had no homeland to welcome them unconditionally. So as the conclusion of *Fiddler on the Roof* shows, these communities had always to be ready to pack belongings and move. On the one hand they led lives hermetically sealed from the outside world, clinging to a specifically Jewish tradition of life in a continent which never truly welcomed let alone assimilated them. On the other hand their culture absorbed influences from that same continent. They created a Yiddish language that sounds like German dialect peppered with words from various other countries across Central and Eastern Europe. 'Yiddish' derives from the German 'Jüdisch' and the word's contemptuous connotation, along the lines of 'nigger', expresses acknowledgement of Jewish lowly status. This accounts for Israel's determination to resurrect the ancient language of Hebrew.

While describing itself as a Jewish state, Israel contains its own class structure of communities among Jews. In the early days of the new nation's history the aristocrats were European settlers, nicknamed Yeckes, representatives of Western culture as expressed in its art and music. The socialists among them created the Kibbutzim. The Yeckes in general set themselves apart from Jews who came to settle from North African and other Middle Eastern countries, and who were considered lower class. Exceptions proved the rule. In 1964 I met Yeckes who ranged from the sophisticated and cultured to the least-educated working class. Jews from Iraq and Iran were equally cultured and were besides more self-confident and aristocratic in their demeanour than those from Europe who still carried with them a sense of persecution. For these Middle Eastern Jews Israel was as much Heimat as the countries they had fled. Even the poorer immigrants from North Africa, with only rudimentary education,

settled in Israel better acclimatised to the desert conditions and challenges of the terrain than those from Northern Europe.

Memory of the Holocaust is at the core of Israel's existence and determination to survive. This memory is a perpetual symbol of a European culture which murderously rejected Jews but which they used to and continue to excel at representing. European Heimat haunts Israel. I remember being struck by the nostalgia of horse-drawn carriages processing along the sea-front of Caesarea, while families strolled along the promenade as though in a Polish provincial town, operetta music playing from bandstands.

Outside the kibbutzim where I worked, I observed the Bedouin pitching camp as they crossed from North Africa to the rest of the Middle East, a tradition going back in time immemorial. The new country did not even try to stop them.

The Palestinians were by then the lowest of all the classes, and used for cheap labour in the orchards, vineyards and fields. My Jewish family and friends frowned at me when I engaged these workers in conversation. The Palestinians were themselves surprised. The women giggled and hid their faces. The men were happy to talk, but all the ones I met accepted their situation.

On the northern borders of Israel I could see the refugee camps in Lebanon, black tent cities under perpetual smog, a miasma of dust and rejection. In those days Palestinian refugees were an embarrassment to the Arab nations, who did nothing to alleviate their despair. Israel assumed it had nothing to fear from these outcasts and saw no parallels with their own history of persecution and exile. These Palestinians were considered the same as the Jew in the Grimm's fairytale, a pestilence.

ALIEN HEIMAT AND BABIES

The spectre of the Wandering Jew plugs into everyone's fear of homelessness, of bearing a race's guilt for a mythological crime which carries eternal punishment, and therefore being perpetually rejected.

Where is anyone at home? Who does Planet Earth belong to?

There are a number of names for God in the Old Testament, the most important being Adonai, Lord or Master, and Jahweh, known also as Jehovah. Adonai represents hierarchies and the rule of law. Jahweh is the spirit of God, like the wind for ever on the move, never settling, and followed by the Ark of the Covenant. That covenant resonates not just for Jews but for all societies because it addresses justice and fairness in human, social and political relationships. The covenant's intention is to make the world fair and peaceful. The masculine priority however excludes half the world's population, which could explain why the covenant has never achieved its aim.

Anthropology tells us the human race as we now know it originally came from Africa, and that before the male took control, there had been an even distribution of authority between men and woman.

The creation myth of the Old Testament sets the template for gender relationships. The business with Adam's rib immediately raises the question: supposing woman had been created first? This inequality leads to the first disobedience and expulsion from Paradise. Throughout the subsequent history of expulsion and exile, the grief over perpetual failed attempts to regain Paradise and inextinguishable hope is expressed in all the arts. Jews give especial intensity to this mourning and hopefulness. This blend of the prophetic and visionary is embedded in Jewish DNA.

In the days when I painted without understanding what I was doing, just focusing on an idea and trying to accomplish the picture to the best of my abilities, I worked on a commission for a Russian and Greek couple in Austria. They asked for St Francis. I painted my trademark naked young man conversing with wild animals in a sunny meadow under a clear sky. During one of those sudden and alarmingly loud Alpine thunderstorms they hung the large painting in the main hallway of their home. Standing back to look at it the Greek husband announced, appreciatively: 'That is not St Francis. He is Adam in Paradise before Eve.' I immediately felt guilty and ashamed at leaving Eve out. He had put his finger on a fundamental mistake not only in my picture, but in our culture. A specifically Jewish patriarchy which underpins the Old Testament and world history had ingrained itself in my psyche. The way the male takes control of the law and rules of behaviour provides significant cause for conflict.

Jewish patriarchs loom large in European culture. They lay down the law, make decisions and go into battle. They are also responsible for breaking the covenant, and for the consequences: expulsion and exile.

This leads me back to Alien Heimat. Such a homeland is not only a physical territory, it is also the intangible world of the imagination, thought and the spirit, what is sometimes called soul.

My aunt, who survived Auschwitz, loved Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman*. Being a Jewish composer like Mendelssohn this opera had been banned under the Third Reich, Just as Mendelssohn assimilated completely into Germanic Christian culture, so Offenbach epitomised post-revolution France, egalitarian, sensuous and witty, poking fun at mythology and traditions, subversively brilliant and always with memorable melodies. His operettas mock patriarchy. Powerful and beautiful women take the piss out of the men, pricking their pomposity and their delusion.

He intended *The Tales of Hoffman* to be his masterwork, a serious opera. Its subject is man's view of women. Based on three tales by ETA Hoffman, a contemporary of Mendelssohn, the author becomes the main character remembering and analysing his disastrous relationships with three different women. It is about failure and exile from love which as the popularity of this marvellous opera proves is a universal theme. Perhaps a Jewish artist could understand and express it with a particular intensity of desire to belong, be loved and accepted, and not to be deceived and exploited. It is striking that one of the first operatic recordings made in Germany after the fall of the Third Reich was of *The Tales of Hoffman*, featuring their best singers including Peter Anders and Erna Berger, who perform with the gusto of artists who have waited too long for this opportunity.

Hoffman's stories are in the tradition of fantastical fairytales popular in the 19th century because they stimulated the imagination fettered by an increasingly industrialized and rational society with its rigidly profit-orientated work ethic, puritanical and hypocritical. Each story describes a woman created and controlled by a male Svengali figure. Offenbach's protagonist becomes romantically involved with the women, hoping that each of them will become his ideal. His naive ardour blinds him to the fact that they are controlled in order to destroy him. Offenbach's sophisticated perspective deconstructs the stories as we experience them, all the while adorning them with music that insistently gets under the skin. They are both a critique of patriarchal society and evidence that this fundamentally warped gender relationship inevitably leads to expulsion and exile. There is no satisfying conclusion and not just because Offenbach did not live long enough to finish the opera. There can be no ending to this cycle of the emotions. The main character is destined to repeat his mistakes.

The first woman is a doll that is meant to attract men but have no life of her own. For me there is never any need to make her into a figure of ridicule, even though she suffers several

indignities, because we live in a world and tradition where the way women are supposed to look and behave is determined mostly by men. Olympia is an all too recognisable male fashion construct. Antonia, the second woman, depending on which order of the acts is followed, it not being clear what Offenbach intended, is an artist who is hypnotised by her Svengali to sing herself to death, a tragedy for her, but for the man too, who has to bear her loss. The third woman is a courtesan who steals men's mirror reflections for her master. Sex unmans. To lose one's reflection, like one's shadow is a sign of male vulnerability.

Psychology has much to say about the 'shadow', generally thought to express those urges that disrupt acceptable social behaviour. The arts deal with the fear of shadow loss in ways that transcend scientific theory. For instance Andersen's *The Shadow* is among his most disturbing fairytales. There is no moralising. The shadow is a charming alter-ego who separates himself completely from his owner, wanting total independence, and achieves worldly success while his owner, a man of intellect not passion, dwindles and disappears. For Offenbach the woman's theft of the man's reflection leaves him vulnerable, yet like Samson unwittingly succumbing to Delilah's haircutting, he is seduced into his destruction.

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I apologize for these ruminations being diffuse and rambling. Given the present world situation and threats to minorities in increasingly nationalistic states, I am trying to pinpoint the causes for why attraction and repulsion leads to massacre of those who are different.

Offenbach's depiction of exile from the 'Heimat of love', man's longing for his mate that is so easily manipulated, cheated and fooled, is no less real than exile from the 'Heimat of land'. Everyone knows there is a link between love and home.

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THE JEWS OF LEUTENBERG

In 1992 I travelled to the small town of Leutenberg in Thuringia to research a commission from my godmother Gabi for a painting. This region used to be part of East Germany and had therefore been difficult to access for Westerners. I witnessed a place and had the chance to meet people before the triumph of capitalism over communism changed their lives in ways that they were not prepared for: being inundated by the shark infested waters of the unregulated capitalist market. The heady euphoria of sudden freedom from fear of saying the wrong thing still permeated the town but tinged with anxiety for the future, an awareness that whatever material gains might make life more prosperous, traditional relationships and way of life would be negatively affected.

Unexpectedly I became aware of the effect of ethnic cleansing on those who had taken part and benefited. Because the place had not changed much since before the 20th century world wars, no modern infrastructure had been imposed on the landscape, as in West Germany, to conceal what used to be there, no new buildings and constructions that concealed the way foreign elements had been expunged as though they had never been.

Imagine what Bradford would look and feel like if all the Muslims there were removed. This expulsion had happened decades ago. I assumed that since no trace of my godmother's family remained, they would not be missed. The site of the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka after it had been dynamited and all stones removed, left a flat piece of ground like a car park with no sign that anything stood there before. Four hundred years of presence erased like it had never been.

On my visit to Leutenberg in 1992 I sensed the absence of people as tangible empty spaces.

Nazi neighbours reported twelve year old Gabi and her parents to the local authorities who before the start of the Second World War forced these unwanted Jews to leave their home. The neighbours then moved into their house, seized the property and remained.

Leutenberg is situated in the heart of Thuringia, surrounded by hills and forests. A castle overlooks the valley below. This is the landscape of fairytales and German romantic poets like von Eichendorff with whom all my life I feel a particular soul connection. At university I was mockingly called ‘that 19th century Germany Romantic’, implying I did not fit into the modern world. *Mondnacht*, *Moon Night* expresses for me the essence of this romanticism in which nature and the human being unite in an embrace which releases the soul so that it soars across the woods and fields ‘as though it were coming home’. The image of the moon that pervades all my paintings comes from this poem that is as iconic to the Germans as Wordsworth’s *Daffodils* and Masfield’s *Sea Fever* are to the English, words and sentiments that describe national character. Thuringia is the landscape also of the late-Medieval mystic Meister Eckhart who now inspires the Creation Spirituality movement which celebrates positive, gender equal, ecological and a holistic view of humanity and its relation with the earth. He wandered the hills, forests and meadows of Thuringia. The composer Bach followed in his footsteps being similarly inspired. This is the region of Weimar and the flowering of the Age of Reason, a time of dynamic revolutionary thinking and cross-fertilization of ideas, scepticism about the authority of religion and traditional oppressive social structures. Scientists, artists and philosophers conversed and exchanged ideas that crossed and broke boundaries between the different categories of thought and practise.

Thuringia is also the region of concentration camps such as Buchenwald near Weimar. From here ethnic cleansing spread throughout central Europe, and was organized with exemplary bureaucratic efficiency.

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Gabi considered this landscape a paradise where she had done nothing disobedient but from which she had been expelled. She returned decades after the war and met the neighbours. They expressed no regret for anything, shrugged their shoulders and told her to leave them in peace.

The fall of the Berlin Wall made it possible to travel freely, so I wasted no time in purchasing a Rail Europe ticket and visited the region, bearing Gabi's commission in mind. Several moments there inspired a painting which turned out to be my last complete large-scale composition in tempera. In a village I heard the clattering rusty weather-vane on the black steeple of a neglected church that reminded me of Schubert's *Winterreise*. I stood by forests through which sudden powerful gusts of winds shook the tree-tops as they do in Liszt's *Waldesrauschen* and looked across miles of fields and hills which recalled for me those mysterious few bars towards the end of Chopin's late *Fantasy* in which a violent storm is interrupted by a moment of total calm with the effect of a landscape stretching to infinity before the storm returns briefly then rushes away into the distance.

Every evening local people crowded into the small inn where I was lodging. They were eager to talk to me, eyes brimming with emotion, excited about the future, but also fearful and reflective. They remembered Gabi's return visit and felt regret for the past but did not want to talk about history. They could only focus on the present and future. History cast too dark a shadow, not only of the war but the following decades under another totalitarian regime. I experienced the chill of this shadow in a corner of the town's graveyard. Completely shrouded by heavy branches from trees hanging low, two neat rows of tombstones inscribed in Cyrillic script faced each other. They bore the names of children, aged between five and ten: an unexplained atrocity from the past.

The day before I left Leutenberg I took a walk around the town and stood on the edge of a meadow full of wildflowers that descended gently to a stream in the valley below. Suddenly I sensed the absence of Gabi and the other Jews of Leutenberg. I imagined Gabi as a girl running down the meadow, picking daisies and harebells. Immediately I became aware of her not being there as a presence. She had left an empty space like a vacuum, as real to me as the air which surrounded it. Then the scene filled with all the other absences: Gabi's parents, the town's Jewish tailors and shopkeepers. Some survived the war but had never been able to return. Others were put on trains to killing camps.

Gabi had given me an envelope stuffed with photographs from her past, including her future husband as a boy, their children and her mother who managed to escape. The landscape of Leutenberg had not changed.

Before I embarked on my journey we talked about our favourite Grimm fairytales, including *The Juniper Tree*. This story tells of a murder that is hidden and how magical forces reveal the truth. It is an archetypal tale of crime, punishment and redemption brought about by nature, in this case by the tree. The magic adds poignancy because without it there would be no learning of the truth. These stories express a yearning for justice, however impossible to achieve, and an awareness not only of the need for retribution but for reconciliation.

The composer Mahler provides an example of a uniquely Jewish perspective on Heimat. Admired by many he is also criticised by many for being over-emotional. Those commentators who find his music uncomfortable to listen to want to tell him: 'Get over yourself!' Jews among them too. I remember the cellist in Israel I regularly played trios with returning from a performance of Mahler's 5th Symphony in a state of deep shock. For a while he could not speak while his eyes darkened. Eventually he shook his head and said: 'Terrible music!' This surprised me from a musician, because criticism of being too emotional

misunderstands the mechanics of composition which requires the brain of a mathematician and the skill of a technician to orchestrate. As Richard Strauss said of *Tristan and Isolde*, that most emotional of operas: 'Wagner must have had a head of marble.' Whatever he might have been as a person, Mahler was without question a master at composition. Ken Russell's film *Mahler* portrays a difficult and neurotic man who was also intelligent and knew precisely what he wanted. The film also makes the disturbing observation that Mahler's race hampered his acceptance by the musical establishment. In one of Ken Russell's many irreverent but always telling scenes, Cosima Wagner, as anti-Semitic as her husband, calls Mahler: 'Jew boy'.

At the start of his compositional career Mahler drew inspiration from German folk tales and poetry such as the *Knaben Wunderhorn* collection of folk poetry. In his cantata *Das Klagende Lied, The Song of Complaint*, a variation on *The Juniper Tree*, nature reveals the truth of a concealed crime and brings about apocalyptic retribution. The conductor Bernstein ascribed prophetic properties to Mahler's compositions, suggesting that they forecast the catastrophes of the world wars to come. But these horrors were already being practiced and prepared for in Mahler's lifetime. His signature marches that cast a shadow over all his symphonies indicate that he was well aware of the reality of wars. These were a fact of life. At the same time all his symphonies celebrate nature. His longing for paradise and his awareness of the brutality of human behaviour are woven inextricably into his music.

At the heart of his second symphony Mahler sets a poem from the *Knaben Wunderhorn: Urlicht, Primeval Light*. Words and their setting for me illustrate with perfect simplicity an outsider's perspective on Heimat. The poem describes the world being in 'tiefster Not', in 'direst need'. The collection of folk poems emerged from one of the darkest periods in European history, the Thirty Years War, when a toxic blend of ideology, religion and

dynastic power-mongering among the royal families of Europe laid waste to Central Europe. The human consequences inspired Bertholt Brecht's *Mother Courage* which shows how the abject suffering inflicted on people destroys human bonds. The most harrowing moment in the play has the mother being forced to betray her son, just to survive. Brecht, as always, was shedding light on current events. Both world wars laid waste to land and humanity. The writing that emerged from the Thirty Years War inspired 20th century artists. There is contemporary relevance in the poetry of the time. Not only the Knaben Wunderhorn but also the religious poetry of Angelus Silesius, Silesian Angel, the pen name of a dissident and forward-thinking theologian who re-imagined God as being beyond gender or human comprehension. In hundreds of beautiful verses called *The Cherubic Wanderer* God is described in ways that transcend theology or science, embracing all of nature, positive and ultimately hopeful. His thinking may also have inspired Mahler. *Urlicht* proceeds: 'Der Mensch liegt in grösster Pein', 'Humanity lies in greatest pain'. An angel appears to point a different way for the wanderer but all he wants is to be with God. Does this mean he longs for death, or to be embraced by the cosmos and so leave behind the world's pain? 'I want to go to God again, to God again.' Is he referring to being born, that he once came from God as a baby?

This longing for God is a longing for Heimat. The discrimination Mahler had to face because of his Jewishness, despite his willingness to convert, is so intensely expressed in his music that people still react with discomfort. The comparable fervour of the quintessentially English Elgar in *Nimrod* is acceptable as an expression of England Heimat. However, as the National Socialists' ban on his music showed, Mahler cannot escape being seen as an alien interloper.

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Gabi wanted her commission to be both a reminder of this paradise and also a meditation on exile from home. I chose to paint it on a roundel three foot in diameter. The figures in my painting which I call *In the Forest* range from childhood to old age. I place her two children as pivotal points, the daughter at the top of the picture, the son at the bottom. They balance the circular structure. I portray the son doing what I do, painting illustrations to fairytales. These include Andersen's *The Shadow* for which Gabi's husband Peter and I shared a particular admiration. Years earlier I had painted it as a gift to him, my godfather. The academic sits passively while his shadow looms, stretches and grows away from him, ready to separate and become his louche and sophisticated alter-ego, as in the story. The sheets of paper with these illustrations are blown across my painting, among them the familiar entrance to Birkenau, and the empty spaces which the Jews of Leutenberg and elsewhere across Europe had left behind.

My painting attempts to make these spaces sing the truth as in those traditional folk tales.

Eichendorff's *Mondnacht, Moon Night*, is at the centre of the painting which is structurally a portrait rectangle enclosed by the roundel's circle: two opposites in harmony, just as night is balanced by bright day. Entwining vines make up the rectangle's sides, softening the sharp edges, and echoing the embracing lovers at the foot of the tree. They are enjoying the warmth of a moonlit summer's night, but also suggest mythical lovers like Tristan and Isolde. My godparents, inspired by DH Lawrence, used to make love in the open like this. They are conceiving their children. Gabi's grandmother holds one of the babies. Her face is lined and hardened by life's experience. The baby's face is wide-eyed innocence.

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There is no end to humanity's relish for war and inflicting suffering. Each of the 20th century World Wars had been declared the war to end all wars, but the fighting continues, if not in

Europe, then in other parts of the world, proxy wars in which the world powers flex military muscle and vie for control. A Third World War remains a perpetual threat.

Meanwhile children's faces prick humanity's conscience. Refugees continue to flee the wars we instigate. They carry children whose tear-stained and exhausted faces stare beseechingly at us. Many of these children die en route, drowned.

Children transcend ethnic difference. At a later stage in their lives they will be identified as friends or enemies, 'one of us' or someone foreign, and therefore either to be protected or made unwelcome, unwanted, to be shunned and discriminated against. When the ethnic cleansing starts even the children must be killed because their bloodline sentences them to death.

In my journeys round the world, and especially over the last fifteen years in the Balkans I have learned that most people of every race, faith and background have no other ambition but to get on with their lives, to make their conditions better, to raise families, work enough to survive in comfort and find as much time as possible for recreation to enjoy the years they have. Apart from wanting to create the conditions for peaceful living, I have observed how people are with few exceptions sociable, curious and open to new experiences and strangers. The drudgery of daily existence welcomes change and difference. All people hate war and disruption. However these man-made catastrophes continue, and those who decide these matters dictate that this is how the world is, and any other view is naive, immature and even dangerous. Politics and ideology make certain that war never ends. People complain, but have to put up and endure.

Who makes these decisions? Why do people have to put up?

Added to these is the question my father asked me while showing me the photograph of a baby.

Now that I have written this piece I realize that all my paintings have been a search for the answer to my father's question.

19,687 words