

The Wandering Jew

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Abstract:

This essay examines the interaction between the myth of the Wandering Jew, diaspora history and the notion of cosmopolitanism. This is a paradoxical synthesis that points in several directions: towards the ideals embedded in international education; towards the roots of anti-Semitism; in the direction of the notion of cosmopolitanism as a crime against the nation (something that Hitler, Stalin and Henry Ford agreed upon). The figure of the Wandering Jew has roots in history and myth and is a presence in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The figure wanders through history as an emblem of a cursed outcast, the possessor of arcane secrets, and a sophisticated global *flâneur*. The essay explores Biblical, literary, and historical sources with further reference to memoirs including Edmund de Waal's *The Hare with Amber Eyes*.

Introduction: the legend of the cursed shoemaker

Being weary thus, he sought for rest,
To ease his burthened soule,
Upon a stone; the which a wretch
Did churlishly controule;
And sayd, "Awaye, thou king of Jewes,
Thou shalt not rest thee here;
Pass on; thy execution place
Thou seest nowe draweth neare."

And thereupon he thrust him thence;
At which our Saviour sayd,
"I sure will rest, but thou shalt walke,
And have no journey stayed."
With that this cursed shoemaker,
For offering Christ this wrong,
Left wife and children, house and all,
And went from thence along.

Anonymous Ballad (Percy, 1858, pp. 236-237)

The figure of the Wandering Jew in myth, as metaphor, and in history sustains a number of paradoxes that connect simultaneously, and at various points, with Jewish identities: those imposed upon them and those assumed by them.

In the context of study abroad, the figure suggests that identity is a construct not a natural or necessarily inherited condition. It is forged in the conjunction of the imaginations of those who

identify with a collective consciousness and in the imaginations of those who may be hostile to that construct. We are all made in our own consciousness and in the consciousness of others. Identity may, therefore, be problematic: a fluid, sometimes contradictory, manifestation of the collision and co-existence of things.

Therein the core paradoxes reside: the Wandering Jew is cursed while simultaneously being a repository of all human wisdom and experience. He is the recipient of both contempt, as the abuser of Christ, and awe, as a witness to all human history. He is, to a degree, the ultimate cosmopolitan: restrained by no borders and, often, able to speak all languages. He resides within time and beyond it, belongs nowhere and everywhere. He is human but condemned to live forever until the Second Coming of Christ releases him.

Elements of this identity resonate with a form of parodied cosmopolitanism (even an extreme version of the "*flâneur*") that became connected with the Jews, particularly in the 20th Century, by those who distrusted and hated them. They were seen as residing in the major European cities without belonging to specific nations. Furthermore, the idea that the Jew had access to special knowledge connects with conspiracy theories that envisage secret Jewish dominance of the world (the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is the most persistent and notorious example of the Jewish world-domination-conspiracy theory). The figure also offends ideological nationalism in that the suspicion is that the Jew has primary allegiances to shadowy sets of values or associations beyond the nation-state. Cosmopolitanism contains a critical ambiguity; it expresses internationalist values and ethics that we tend to affirm while also offering a stereotypical version of a fifth-columnist, working within but against the state.

The Wandering Jew is given many names and has been invented in many contexts. A shared characteristic is that he is condemned to rootlessness and a permanent state of movement as punishment for a crime committed against a sacred or iconic figure.

The origins of the legend are unclear; the myth does not derive from Jewish sources but was a Christian creation, often used as a mechanism for imposing negative characteristics:

The Wandering Jew is not Jewish. It is an ancient Christian legend: an anti-Semitic iconic projection that encodes and enforces difference using a vocabulary of attributes seen in sources ranging from medieval manuscripts to neo-Nazi blogs (Bricchetto, 2006, p.1).

Alberto Manguel's summary reflects the most common form of the legend:

Christ, having stumbled twice under the weight of the cross, stumbles once more, this time by the door of a Jewish cobbler called Ahasverus. The cobbler pitilessly pushes Christ away, telling him to move on. "I will move on," Christ answers, "but you will tarry till I come." From that day onwards, Ahasverus is condemned to wander the earth, and is only allowed to stop here and there for short respites. His shoes and his clothes never wear out completely, and every 100 years he is miraculously rejuvenated. His beard hangs down to his feet, he carries five coins in his pocket that match the five wounds of the man he offended, and he is able to speak every language in the world. Since he is a little over 2,000 years old, he has witnessed countless events of historical importance and knows every story there is to tell (Manguel, 2009).

The Wandering Jew belongs within the collective myth of the Jews as the betrayers and killers of God's son.

Where he came from

A biblical antecedent is Cain who, having murdered his brother Abel, suffers God's judgement:

And he said, what hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth (Genesis 4: 10-12, King James version).

The legend of the Wandering Jew is only tenuously connected to biblical sources however. The figure first appears in early modern Europe in the 13th Century but becomes widespread in various guises in Europe only from the 17th Century onward.

Collectively, the legends of the Wandering Jew create a set of paradoxes. The figure is a wretched outcast without home, condemned to wander the earth alone. Simultaneously, he has experienced all known history. He owns the secrets of the world from which normal humanity is excluded. Scorned and feared, cursed and privileged, he embodies something of the burden that Jews have carried throughout their troubled history. Mystic and mysterious, with access to secrets beyond common comprehension, an alien outsider, the Jew offends Christian orthodoxy, transcends and affronts the evolution of nationalist ideologies. The circumstances of history align with myth to create an identity that permeates the consciousness of our times.

Wandering Jew in History

They say that the pain he suffers cannot be told, and that it makes the flesh creep to think of it. And thus Jesus Christ condemned him for his great treason (Crane, 1885, pp.195-6).

The history of the Jews needs no tortuous retelling. There are a multitude of authoritative, expertly researched studies. Instead, I will focus on a selective view of trends and consequences that resonate with the idea of the Wandering Jew. This ahistorical approach melds biblical narrative, myth, ideologies and verifiable events. A set of interwoven threads creates identities and establishes perspectives that demonstrate that history cannot be disentangled from myth, and that both are dynamic factors in the construction of identity. Identity is, thus, not a given but a product of melding of perceived fact with persistent fiction.

In the historical context, the notion of expulsion from home characterizes both Jewish identities: the Sephardic and Ashkenazi traditions. At the most basic level, the bifurcation of the Jews into these two groups is a direct consequence of the disconnection of the Jews from home – a product of wandering that reflects, firstly, geographic dispersal:

The word Ashkenaz appears in the Bible a number of times and seems to refer to a land and a people bordering on the Upper Euphrates and Armenia. No one knows how and when it first came to be used of the communities of Germany and northern France. Today the term embraces all of the European Jewry north of Italy and Spain, including Jews and the descendants of Jews from Poland, Lithuania, and Russia. It designates the civilization of the

Jews who wandered for centuries through the chill world of Europe and is used in contradiction to Sephardic, the form taken by Rabbinic civilization during its encounters with the world of Spain (Potok, 1980, p. 394).

There are complex debates about the distinctions between these two groups but, broadly, the first distinction is geographic and historical, factors that led to differences in custom and worship. The degree to which the two groups suffered exclusion or profited by some level of integration into mainstream society, also had impact on the evolution of community distinctions. However, for these purposes, an emphasis on what unites rather than divides Ashkenazi and Sephardic traditions demonstrates the relevance of the Wandering Jew within both traditions; the legend became part of the weaponry that hostile forces were able to turn upon the Jew regardless of origin, tradition or faith.

A key theological rationale was that the Jews collectively were guilty in one way or another for the suffering of Christ. For at least 800 years, this was a filter through which hatred could pass and, in many contexts, it acquired legitimacy through Christian Church orthodoxy. Popular prejudice and religious authority coincided in ways that led to centuries of sustained persecution. The coincidence of Easter and eruptions of anti-Jewish violence is a reflection of the degree to which the responsibility of the Jews for Christ's death became embedded into popular belief. This was also not limited to the pogroms and slaughters that became commonplace in Eastern Europe, it was also found in Latin America, as Fidel Castro recalled:

I remember when I was a boy... when I was five or six years old and when I lived in the countryside, and I remember Good Friday... They would say the "The Jews killed God." They blamed the Jews for killing God! Do you realize this? (Goldberg, 2010)

Fidel Castro identifies the core of a particular Christian mythology that helped validate and justify the historical treatment of the Jews over centuries. The Wandering Jew is an emblem of the guilt carried by the Jews.

Homes

An essential aspect of the myth of the Wandering Jew is expulsion from home and, in that respect, the myth resonates with biblical and historical experience. The first and most formative of all expulsions is embedded in both Islam and the Judeo-Christian tradition in the form of Eden: the home from which mankind is expelled as a consequence of sin.

The statement made by Euripides, in 431 B.C., has a persistent significance throughout our history and remains profoundly relevant to contemporary experience: "Of troubles none is greater than to be robbed of one's native land" (Euripides, *Medea*, l. 645). The significance of the land myth has, in the light of successive expulsions, shaped, and continues to shape, the Jewish psyche in fundamental ways. Damian Le Bas, a Romani scholar, sees this as a core distinction between the Jews and the Roma: communities who otherwise share an identity constructed through the hostility of others. The Jews, unlike the Roma, have a written tradition, a land myth, and a shared sense of history:

Beginning from somewhere between 1200 and 800 BCE, a people connected by language, religious beliefs and ancestry lived in an area west of the river Jordan.... By the time of the

first millennium they were living under Roman military occupation...Cycles of suppression, followed by revolt climaxed in colonial war. This led ultimately to the destruction of the Second Jewish Temple by the Roman Army in 70 CE and the exit of many Jews from the land (Le Bas, 2010, p. 62).

Thus, began the cycle of expulsion and temporary integration that characterized Jewish historical experience. From the end of the 14th Century, the experience of the Sephardic Jews in Spain exemplifies a historical cycle. The 500,000 residents in Spain were ostensibly secure and represented effectively half of the entire Jewish population of Europe: the largest and oldest Jewish settlement outside of Palestine.

A massacre in 1391 led to the death of 100,000 Jews (20% of the entire population) and the false conversion of another 100,000 (known as “conversos”). The Inquisition initiated by Queen Isabella in Sevilla in 1482 and led by the Grand inquisitor, Tomás de Torquemada, intensified the persecution of the Jews. It became the catalyst that forced the Jews of Spain to become refugees, to abandon the lands in which they had gained sanctuary, protection and influence. They faced essentially three choices: conversion, slaughter, or escape.

Over the next 100 years the mobility of the Sephardic Jews was driven by the need to flee from the emergent power of Spain and the ever-encroaching Inquisition which spread throughout much of the known world in the last 50 years of the 16th Century: “In their own generation, they [the Spanish] had defeated the Moors, kicked out the Jews, enslaved the Indians, and conquered more territory than Rome had in five centuries” (Kritzler, 2009, p. 51).

The expansion of Spain progressively reduced the territories in which Jews could feel some measure of security. The direction they took was towards the New World in search of a haven in which to escape the expansive spread of the Inquisition. Columbus was considered a kind of Moses opening safe havens. For some time, Jamaica served that purpose. Jews and Moors, in an alliance against Spanish power, harassed the trade routes. From 1630 to 1654, Recife in Brazil (held by the Dutch as New Amsterdam) offered another refuge which proved illusory as Spanish power expanded. The New World contained only temporary, fragile, spaces of relief from persecution. The reality was that Jews were driven from their successive homes by shifts in the geo-political power structure. They were subject to the vagaries of consequent hostility:

On January 26, 1654, New Holland surrendered. Two days later, Recife was occupied; agents of the Inquisition moved in... Jews were given three months to leave or be handed over to the Inquisition. For twenty-four years, Recife had been a Rock of Israel. Now threatened with the Holy Fire, the Jews were forced to hit the familiar Diaspora road again (Kritzler, 2009, p.148).

The mythic status of America as a refuge for the dispossessed has roots in this experience even though the political realities of early colonial America did not match that later rhetoric.

The arrival of a group of Jews in New Amsterdam in September 1654 was hardly welcomed by the Governor of New Amsterdam (later New York), Peter Stuyvesant. Their property was seized, two were imprisoned, the Governor wanted them sold as slaves, and finally required them to leave,

as he indicated in a letter to the Dutch West India company (which suggests a far gentler treatment than was the reality):

The Jews who arrived, nearly all like to remain, but fearing that owing to their present indigence they might become a charge in the coming winter we required them in a friendly way to depart (Peter Stuyvesant, letter to the Dutch West India Company, September 22nd, 1654: Mendes-Flohr & Reinhartz, 1980, p.452).

This was an excuse that barely masked Stuyvesant's deep anti-Semitism that had, at its root, the idea of the Jews as betrayers of Christ:

We pray that this deceitful race – such hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ – be not allowed further to infect and trouble this new colony (Mendes-Flohr & Reinhartz, 1980, p. 452).

This is far from the America that was, later in the 19th Century, constructed as the distant magnet for Ashkenazi Jews in Eastern Europe:

America was in everybody's mouth. Businessmen talked of it over their accounts; the market women made up their quarrels that they might discuss it from stall to stall; people who had relatives in the famous land went around reading their letters for the enlightenment of less fortunate fold...children played at emigrating...; all talked of it, but scarcely anyone knew one true fact about this magic land (Antin, 1899, p.12).

The notion of the distant magnet as a haven for the displaced and dispossessed originates in the 19th Century. It finds iconic expression in Emma Lazarus's poem that graces the statue of Liberty.

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore;
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door (Lazarus, 1883, p. 203).

The route from Stuyvesant to Lazarus signifies the transient nature of the myth of America as a haven for refugees. It reflects a moment in history, not an intrinsic characteristic of a national identity.

From 1348 onwards, eastern and central Europe suffered recurrent outbreaks of plague, known as the Black Death or “das grosse Sterben,” the great dying in German. There is a continuity between Stuyvesant's notion of “infection” and a catalyst for waves of persecution in Northern Europe.

Clearly a demonic malevolence was at the root of this catastrophe. People grew suspicious of strangers. The most vulnerable stranger of all was the Jew (Potok, 1980 p.433).

The association of the Jew with the arrival, metaphorically and literally, of the plague is recurrent. It is expressed, for example, in Eugene Sue's *The Wandering Jew* (1884). The figure carries cholera and, on his arrival, “a fearful distemper suddenly broke out” (Sue, 1884, p. 580).

Anti-Semitic ideology melds with the history of the plague, a fatal infection visited mysteriously upon many parts of Europe. The notion persists for centuries as evidenced by the rhetoric of Edouard-Adolphe Drumont writing in France in 1886. In the notorious bestseller *La France juive*, he describes Jews as “a sort of perpetual discharge which is impossible to stop...dropping vermin wherever they pass, offering a constant danger for public health” (Drumont, 1886, p. 456). The idea of infection is combined with mobility to sustain the notion that Jews belong nowhere and bring sudden disaster to Christian communities.

The emergence of the Enlightenment in Europe in the 18th Century appeared to offer a significant improvement in the situation of Jews, especially in Germany where restrictions on Jewish life were eased. The Enlightenment ostensibly offered a progressive, inclusive philosophy while German nationalism, after the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, appeared to create a location in which Jews might integrate into a “High Culture.” What they failed to recognize was that anti-Semitism was embedded in Enlightenment attitudes, and that a significant element of the German political elite regarded the Jews with disdain and, later, with virulent hatred.

The American-Jewish writer, Chaim Potok, argued that “contempt and disgust for the civilization of the Jews was a view of the mainstream of the Enlightenment” (Potok, 1980, p. 483). In Germany, as in France and Russia, Jews may have aspired to integration and to a sense of belonging but the political and religious realities were that the Jews would always be aliens, convenient scapegoats for national ills. They did not belong within prevailing national myths but were archetypal outsiders, wanderers whose primary loyalties were not to the nation but to other mysterious, alien codes. The transition from the Wandering Jew to the displaced person to the victim of the Holocaust reflects a transition from myth to history.

This history demonstrates that, for the Jews, home is not a permanent place or a haven of security. Be it Recife or Berlin, it offered only temporary rest. In these circumstances, the yearning for home, call it Jerusalem, Zion, Israel or wherever, becomes a defining characteristic of a people for whom mobility was a necessity for survival, less a going towards than an escape from.

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither: Next year in Jerusalem?

The Passover festival ends traditionally with the exhortation “Next Year in Jerusalem!” In the Passover services, Jews celebrate the escape from Egypt (circa 1300 BCE) when Moses led them from slavery. In an archetypal narrative, the Jews wandered for 40 years before reaching the Promised Land.

When the Jews of London, New York and, indeed, Jerusalem end the Passover prayers with this exhortation, they are expressing a desire to go to a place beyond current geographic reality. What is dreamed is more like Eden than Sweden: a place lost in a mythic history where (in one concept) the Temple is rebuilt and the righteous are at one with the will of God. It expresses a spiritual rather than geographic space and relates to the historical Diaspora: forced dispersals from homelands. In that respect, it reflects a desire to return to some constructed notion of home both on earth and in heaven: a landscape of perfection to which return is a spiritual as much as geographic reality.

The Wandering Jew is, thus, both a figure of Christian myth and a reasonable metaphor for the historical experience of the Jews in the Diaspora. A complicating factor is the notion of Jerusalem and Zion: a place of golden, spiritual wholeness that is not identical to the geo-political reality of the State of Israel. The biblical representation of these places conflates them into one metaphorical entity: an idealized, dreamed landscape, a place out of time and space that exists only in the imagination yearning for spiritual completion. Through that notion, all Jews, even the Jews of Jerusalem, live within a state of exile. That condition is a complex spiritual isolation from the Kingdom of God.

This Jerusalem is clearly not the place served by numerous airlines: it is a construct of the mind, a metaphor for yearning for some version of idealised perfection. It exists as an idea: a dream, not geography; a projection formed out of synthesis of religious orthodoxy, persecution and mythology.

The Psalms of the Old Testament further define this place, most potently in Psalm 137:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
... How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning (Psalm 137: 1, 4-5).

Jerusalem is melded into Zion throughout the Old Testament. These dreamed locations are symbolic worlds that reflect the myths and histories that shaped Jewish experience, that cannot be visited by train or plane.

Such spaces have a special significance for Jews, dreamed places of location and security. However, such spaces are not exclusive to the Jews. In the age of exploration, fabled, imaginary worlds of exotic riches were commonplace, including Walter Raleigh's El Dorado, Ponce de León's Fountain of Youth, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado's Seven Golden Cities. Zion, Jerusalem, Avalon, Atlantis, Eden are metaphorical, countries without land, borders or territory. The Jerusalem of contemporary Israel is not the Jerusalem mourned in Psalm 137.

The connection between these various concepts of place is that they originate in an idea. They are not dependent on territory, or on a political structure, or on some form of statehood, citizenship or constitution. They are nevertheless precisely analogous to one manifestation of what we mean by national home. Whereas a country or nation-state may be defined by political structure and geographic boundaries, and is a concrete place (planes fly there), a nation may or may not have such a tangible existence. The Native American nation is, for example, a group of people historically displaced from both traditional governance and territory. That may offer the nearest parallel with Jewish experience; the lands from which they were expelled include both territories and legendary constructions.

Cosmopolitanism and the Wandering Jew

The cosmopolitan is the myth made flesh. The myth of the Wandering Jew is an extreme and abstracted version of a cosmopolitan stereotype. There are also significant differences, most notably in so far as cosmopolitanism is an ideology with ethical prescriptions but without spiritual or religious implications.

The cosmopolitan idea that our connections are, or should be, stronger than those forces that divide us gains new resonance in our times partly as a consequence of the hideous historical barbarism of two European wars, and partly because we now know so much more about each other through enhanced technologies. To be a parochial, isolated person in these times would be, for most of us, a reactionary act of political will: a retreat from the present-future. A moral and political imperative that recognizes that human similarities transcend differences shaped by nation, tribe, ideology, or custom etc. may or may not be an attractive ideology (for nationalists, for example) but it clearly resonates with our human condition.

There are, though, other meanings accumulated around the concept of cosmopolitanism that resonate with the ambiguous form of the Wandering Jew. It has, for example, been seen as a form of criminal disloyalty. In this construct, the cosmopolitan has allegiances beyond the nation to entities that may be shadowy or secretive and that, subsequently, subvert patriotic ideals. This figure is a privileged internationalist empowered by wealth and familiarity with the world of finance, an urban playboy, almost inevitably, of the Western World. Without any real sense of purpose other than personal gratification, the figure saunters through the city with his close friend “the man about town”. The figure synthesizes sophistication and wealth with an amoral, mostly aimless, pursuit of pleasure or gain: a foreign elite with values and standards that are alien to more rooted communities.

Cosmopolitanism also resonates with the notion of exile, especially when aligned with Jewish histories. Even when ostensibly at the center of late 19th Century upper class French society as patrons of the arts and artists, the Jews were neither fully accepted nor, despite (perhaps because of) their internationalist values, integrated into the fabric of the society: “Jews, vomited from all the ghettos of Europe, are now installed as the masters in historic houses” (Lindemann, 1991, p. 57).

The idea of the rich Jew as an exploiter of Christians is rooted in that stereotype.

Two Books

The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance (2010)

Edmund de Waal’s memoir is a case study of the destruction of cosmopolitan lives and families in Europe in the late 19th and 20th Century. The narrative goes between London, Vienna, Paris, Odessa, Tokyo and New York. These locations reflect the international reach of the upper class Ephrussi family while simultaneously carrying the darker implication of Jewish history: a story that reveals the illusion of security; places of residence and influence that become sites of persecution and exclusion.

De Waal details the life of his relative Charles Ephrussi (1849 – 1905) in Paris. He was a wealthy, influential patron of the arts whose place in society was, beneath the surface of celebrity, fragile and insecure. Anti-Semitism was embedded in the fabric of French society, as reflected in the report of English columnist, Theodore Child in 1866:

Through the loophole of art, one of these energetic Israelites (Charles Ephrussi) penetrated the salon of an ex-imperial highness (Princess Mathilde). He made room for his uncles and aunts and cousins, who gradually introduced their friends and their friends’ friends, until at last the Wednesday receptions of the amiable hostess . . . have come to be in large degree receptions of the descendants of the tribes (Child, 1866, p.486).

The contempt felt for Jews was apparent just beneath the surface of the ostensible status bestowed by wealth, artistic taste, and patronage. This is exemplified by Pierre-Auguste Renoir who, from 1878 to 1881, benefited significantly from Charles Ephrussi's support but subsequently manifested virulent anti-Semitism.¹

The security and status of even the most influential Jews in Europe was fragile. Despite their wealth and status within the European elite, the Ephrussi were to suffer the same expulsions and persecutions that were soon to engulf all European Jewry. From the wreckage, De Waal focuses on what survives – a collection of netsuke: small carved Japanese figurines. They embody the reality that only that which can be carried is likely to be retained – fragments against ruin. The objects are also the objective correlative of cosmopolitanism: removed from the national context of Japan they become symbols of lives superficially privileged but lived in forced mobility – in retreat from the hostility of others.

The experience of the Jews in Paris was mirrored in the lives of Jews in most European capitals: rich or poor they were forced down a very traditional path from social exclusion through persecution towards extermination.

The Wandering Jews of history did not share the immortality of the legendary figure. Collectively, the Jews of Europe also embedded a paradoxical status. They were the dispossessed and impoverished who were a despised burden upon the fabric of the nation and, simultaneously, rich, privileged aliens who exploited their Christian neighbours and had no loyalty to the society they inhabited.

Emergent nationalisms across Europe in the 20th Century exposed the Jews in some very specific ways: they were seen as living in the nation but not belonging to it. They personified the ambiguities of cosmopolitanism, encompassing the idealist, the rootless wanderer, the traitor, the sharer of elite and secret knowledge, and the privileged playboy. The concept carries significant historical baggage. In Nazi Germany and Stalin's Russia to be a cosmopolitan was a capital offence in that it implied allegiances beyond the nation. Rootlessness and internationalism became associated with the Jews and added to the mistrust and distaste that resonated around the idea of a cosmopolitan imagination. De Waal's memoir is an elegiac and tragic record of a family who exemplified the privileges of international wealth while sharing the fate of the rest of the Jews in Europe. De Waal records the experiences of the family in Vienna:

There is no longer a Palais Ephrussi and there is no longer an Ephrussi Bank in Vienna. The Ephrussi family has been cleansed from the city. It is on this visit that I go to the Jewish archive in Vienna, the one seized by Eichmann, to check up on the details of a marriage. I look through a ledger to find Viktor, and there is an official red stamp across his first name. It reads 'Israel'. An edict decreed that all Jews had to take new names. Someone has gone through every single name in the list of Viennese Jews and stamped them: 'Israel' for the

¹ In the notorious Dreyfus Affair (1894 – 1906), Renoir was outspokenly against Dreyfus. On a later occasion, he derided Gustave Moreau's painting as "art for Jews," cited in Rosalind de Boland Roberts and Jane Roberts, *Growing up with the Impressionists: the Diary of Julie Manet*, Sotheby's Publications, London, 1987, p. 127. Renoir's views were hardly unique amongst impressionist artists including Degas. In microcosm, the artistic community split in ways that reflected French society as a whole.

men, 'Sara' for the women. I am wrong. The family is not erased, but written over. And, finally, it is this that makes me cry (De Waal, 2010, p. 259).

Viktor is a fortunate survivor but is a refugee, wanderer without home:

He is an émigré. His land of Dichter and Denker, poets and thinkers, had become the land of Richter and Henker, judges and hangmen. (De Waal, 2010, p. 268)

This is, of course, a familiar pattern. The Jews of Spain fled the Inquisition for over 100 years; the Jews of Europe, if not destroyed outright, re-enacted this history: wanderers driven by hate.

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

The idea of the Jew as a cosmopolitan also fuelled international conspiracy theories exemplified by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. First published in 1903 in Russia, the document purports to outline a Jewish conspiracy to govern the world, over and beyond national borders. It has had a remarkable longevity and is still sold in many parts of the world, especially in the Middle East. It describes a small group of Jews who have no allegiances other than to this shadowy, rich and powerful group who are planning world domination. The Elders are a remarkably persistent version of many other such trans-national conspiracy theories developed around associations that may or may not exist in one form or another (see, for example, the Illuminati, Opus Dei, Freemasons, the Mafia, Ian Fleming's Smersch, the architects of Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*, William Burroughs's *Mugwumps*, and so on *ad nauseam*).

Belief in the veracity of the Protocols was not limited to the totalitarian world. Henry Ford financed the publication of the document in the 1920s in the USA and published a series of articles in which the collocation of International and Jew was used to categorize the source of national ills. In this respect Henry Ford, Joseph McCarthy, Hitler and Stalin shared the view that cosmopolitanism was a symptom of traitorous counter-national loyalties. As a consequence, the exile of intellectuals from various hostile states enforced the idea of the cosmopolitan as a representative of a rootless elite, rather than a victim of racism and embedded prejudice: Bertolt Brecht, Kurt Weil, Peter Lore, Sigmund Freud, Thomas Mann, Josephine Baker and James Baldwin are examples of figures who chose, or were forced into, exile because of intolerable and/or restrictive situations at home. They exemplify an alternative cosmopolitan persona that resonates with the idea of the Wandering Jew: a reluctant or relieved internationalist for whom mobility is a mechanism for escaping from literal or figurative enslavement. However complex the term may be in historical contexts, it is clear that on an ideological spectrum cosmopolitanism is at the opposite end from nationalism.

Cosmopolitanism subverts, disturbs and disrupts archetypal values of hearth and home, patriotism and nationalism. In being intimately connected with cosmopolitanism through myth and history, the Jews acquire paradoxical identities that meld elitism and social exclusion, guilt and privilege; in transcending national identity the figure is simultaneously envied and despised, evoking fear and, at times, awe.

The history of cosmopolitanism offers a dramatic example of an ideological collision between nationalism and internationalism and encapsulates key conflicts in human history. The Wandering

Jew is a cosmopolitan who bears the curse of Christ and carries centuries of religious weight upon persecuted shoulders.

Conclusion: Lessons for Study Abroad

Firstly, and most obviously, the Wandering Jew demonstrates that mobility may well be a problematic consequence of hostility rather than a desirable outcome of freedom: an involuntary response to persecution, cruelties, and traumatic histories. This is an important counter to the rhetoric of globalization which ought to encompass, and teach, that the freedoms enjoyed by our students are privileged rather than the global norm.

Identities are also, as this analysis demonstrates, not necessarily or inevitably defined by community preference. They may be imposed externally by those who vilify, fear, hate or ridicule those who are outside of dominant communities. We are collectively not only that which we sought to be. We are also the product of those who have imagined us.

Strangers, Roma, refugees, natives, Jews or whatever, are dehumanized by myth and stereotype. They are constructed as “them” which empowers the dominant “we” to see them as outside of the acceptable norm; thus, not worthy of equality or, at worse, an unhealthy, undesirable element that needs to be cleansed: a problem requiring a solution.

In a wider context, the Wandering Jew exemplifies the power of religion and legend. Our reality is conditional, a matter of conflicting narratives shaped by religious, racial, historical, and national myths. In international education, our perspectives need to extend beyond myopic concentrations to include the dynamics of religion as a vital factor in the evolution of global histories. History is not given to us; we invent and construct it. Let us take care not to build these edifices on foundations of hate, with bricks of prejudice.

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