Chapter 4

Constructing the alien: seven theories of social exclusion

The level of public hostility in recent years in the European Union towards 'foreigners', 'outsiders', 'immigrants', 'third country nationals', 'Muslims', 'gypsies', 'those from the Third World' (the labels and targets fluctuate) is now all too evident. Although there are depressing similarities, there are certainly also important variations in the strength, character and timing of this hostility when we look at different European countries. In Germany and Britain, for example, xenophobia has long roots. In France, with its stronger tradition of citizenship and assimilation, it has come as a relatively recent realization that some groups – particularly from the Maghreb and West Africa – are unlikely to be accepted and peacefully absorbed. In the southern countries of Europe (Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece) with their complex Mediterranean history of trade and migration and a familiarity with emigration rather than immigration, the general recognition of alarming levels of xenophobia is a post-1990s phenomenon.

There are complex and overlapping ways of understanding the phenomenon of xenophobia among social psychologists, historians, social theorists and literary scholars who have developed a large theoretical armoury with which to bombard the problem. I cannot hope to do full justice to the rich array of possible alternatives, but want nonetheless to provide an exposition and develop a modest critique of seven broad strands of relevant and stimulating theory. I do not wish to reject any particular position, but I shall lay special emphasis on those more recent ideas that I find more innovative. The seven strands, which I deal with in turn below, comprise discussions of: (a) prejudice, (b) racism, (c) Otherness and difference, (d) boundary formation, (e) the construction of social identities, (f) the reconstruction of nationalism and (g) diasporic formations among minorities.

The nature of prejudice

In the Anglo-American tradition the study of prejudice has essentially been a preserve of social psychology. The mechanism involved is quite simple. In the case of negative prejudice (remembering that technically there can also be positive prejudice) there is an attribution of commonality to a total group. 'They are all like that', 'they are dirty', 'they are thieves' or 'they are taking our houses/jobs/women away'. The collective ascription will sustain, even when a rational observer can point to evidence in the opposite direction. In that case the prejudiced person will claim that this is 'an exception': the general rule holds good. These elements of irrationality and refusal to listen to contrary evidence have suggested to social psychologists that particular kinds of personalities are prone to prejudice.

The most notable and still influential study along these lines is that of Theodor Adorno et al. (1950). There they surmised that certain people were prejudiced because this met certain needs in their personalities. Those who were exceptionally prejudiced were held to have 'an authoritarian personality'. They were submissive and obedient, but rejected out-groups in an angry and hostile way. Such sentiments applied not just to one out-group but to many. The in-group was celebrated as the normal, while all out-groups were seen as deviant. Characteristically, a number of out-groups were aggregated. In a number of European countries, for example, all Muslims, North Africans, West Africans, Indians and Bengalis were normally classed together as coming from 'the Third World'.

Although studies of prejudice are important vehicles for understanding current expressions of xenophobia, one should remember their limitations. Adorno and a number of other refugee scholars were preoccupied with trying to find an underlying explanation behind the Nazi and fascist regimes. They found this in an attack on 'reason' and the Enlightenment itself, which they saw as leading logically to totalitarianism – a theme Bauman (1991) picked up later – and in an abnormally repressive and insecure personality shaped by childhood experiences. Clearly, this stress on individual pathology is inadequate. Subsequent scholars have pointed to the social context as being a more significant cause of the development of an authoritarian personality. Peer group pressures and expectations, a threat to employment prospects and a

general decline or perceived decline in living standards may all trigger the expression of prejudices at both personal and collective levels (Cashmore 1988: 227–30).

What do we mean by racism?

Because the term has been used as an epithet rather than a concept – in street demonstrations rather than lecture theatres – we have to be very cautious in deploying it in a scientific sense. I fully accept that when people experience discrimination because of racial appearance or assumed biological differences (technically, labelling through phenotypification or genotypification), using the term 'racist' to describe the perpetrators of such discriminatory acts is perfectly proper and appropriate.

Difficulties in deploying the term arise, however, when differences and prejudices are acknowledged to be socially, culturally or ideologically constructed – either by the social actors themselves or by observers and commentators – *without* explicit reference to appearance or biology. The proliferation of meanings of 'racism' in such contexts has led two well-known scholars to provide a divided entry in a *Dictionary of race and ethnic relations* (Banton and Miles 1988: 247–51). Both accept that 'the word has been used in so many ways that there is a danger of it losing any value as a concept' but, whereas Michael Banton is content to abandon the term in modern settings, Robert Miles wants to continue to employ the term, with the following explanation: for him racism 'is the attribution of social significance (meaning) to particular patterns of phenotypical and/or genetic difference which, along with the characteristic of additional deterministic ascription of real or supposed other characteristics to a group constituted by descent, is the defining feature of racism as an ideology' (Banton and Miles 1988: 250). Additionally, these characteristics must be evaluated negatively and justify unequal treatment of the defined group.

The problem remains that in addition to overtly racist acts, we are often concerned with forms of exclusion that do not obviously or instinctively seem to fit the 'racism' label, even if we treat 'racism' as a generalized ideology of difference. In short, it seems doubtful that the word 'racism' (used in English only from the 1940s) can be deployed to describe all forms of discrimination. Some of the strongest discrimin-

atory sentiments – for example anti-Muslim feelings – deploy cultural and religious categories to target their victims with little or no allusion to colour or descent. Of course, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim sentiments or the exclusion of white migrants like Albanians, Bosnians or Russians from behind the old iron curtain can all, with a degree of theoretical inventiveness, be reconstituted as forms of 'racism'. Indeed, a number of authors have sought to do so in some or all of the cases mentioned. They usually rely on the power of simile to make their case. The argument would go something like this. Of course groups like the Albanians are not a separate 'race'. But we all know that 'races' are artificial social constructs anyway and, as they are treated like a different race and alluded to in race-like ways, they are 'racialized' and can thus be considered the victims of 'racism'. In short, we can have 'racism' without 'race'.

Other authors have sought to reduce all cognate phenomena to 'race' or 'racism' by a process of rather indiscriminate aggregation. One example is provided by Sarup (1991: 89), who writes of Britain: 'It is evident that many racists have the capacity to link the discourses of Englishness, Britishness, nationalism, patriotism, militarism, xenophobia and gender difference into a complex system which gives "race" its contemporary meaning.' This tendency reached its apogee in the title and subtitle to a book, namely *Racialized boundaries: race, nation, gender, colour and class and the anti-racist struggle* (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993). The aggregation procedure is not so much wrong as it is tenuous – stretching the elastic band of 'racism' around a fatter and fatter bundle of related (yet importantly distinct) phenomena so thinly that the band is in grave danger of snapping and flying off out of sight. Despite my doubts that racism can be used currently with any conceptual precision, there are at least two innovative and insightful accounts of racism that bear further analysis.

In the first account considered, Bauman (1991: 62–82) seeks to refute Taguieff's notion that racism and heterophobia (fear of difference) are closely related phenomena. Instead, he proposes a suggestive trichotomy:

- *heterophobia*, a phenomenon of unease, anxiety, discomfort and a sense of loss of control commonly (and normally in the sense of sanely) experienced when confronted by the unknown;

- *contestant enmity*, a form of antagonism and hatred generated by the social practices of identity-seeking and boundary-drawing. Here, the contestants dramatically separate, or keep a required distance from one another. Separation is necessary precisely because the alien threatens to penetrate the opposing group and to blur the distinction between the familiar and the strange; and
- *racism*, which differs from contestant enmity by not admitting any possibility for a certain group of human beings to become part of the rational order. Endemic blemishes and deficiencies make the group unreachable by scientific, technical or cultural manipulation. Racism demands discrimination, territorial exclusion or (as in the case of the Holocaust Jews or Roma) extermination.

Without developing a full critique of Bauman, I would simply add that curiosity[1] and contestant enmity might mediate heterophobia through mutual interest. Only racism proper (in his sense) is beyond rational challenge.

The second innovative account of racism to which I want to allude is Goldberg's *Racist culture* (1993), a treatment by a philosopher who is closely aware of the comparative experiences of racism in South Africa, Europe and the USA. A lengthy book is not going to be easily summarized for my purposes, but I take Goldberg's principal starting point to be that race and racial thinking have become increasingly normal and diffused among many social actors in most societies. Therefore, whatever the scientific, technical or logical difficulties we (namely commentators or academics) encounter in using the terms 'race' and 'racism', it is our job to trace the way in which the notion is inscribed in people's consciousness and lends meaning and direction to their everyday conduct.

Like a tenacious tracker dog, Goldberg makes a creditable job of following all the labyrinthine trails and tracks where his rabbit of racism leads. Sometimes he doubles back on himself; sometimes he seems to lose the scent. On many occasions he closes in, but perhaps inevitably never manages to catch the creature by its throat and shake it to death. In the manner of a Bugs Bunny in a conceptual forest, Goldberg's rabbit of racism somersaults free, then multiplies, appearing again and again in different guises – one time as the anthropological 'primitive' or 'tribal', on the next occasion as 'the Third World', on the third occasion as an

urban 'underclass'. Though Goldberg would probably be unhappy at the medical comparison, I could not help but think of a free floating virus, where the particular disease contracted is contextually specific and takes different forms, but the virus itself remains potent and continually mutates.

If I have understood Goldberg correctly (and I am not sure I have), he posits the idea of a free-floating set of exclusionary possibilities that attach themselves to different objects ('hosts' in my analogy), and are therefore expressed in different discourses and forms. When sufficiently distinct they become different 'racisms' (with emphasis on the plural). This notion would work quite well with my subject matter in Chapter 3 of this book as a theoretical explanation of the way in which different groups have been targets of deportation at different periods. Whereas most historians would insist on providing a causal explanation specific to each period and group, Goldberg's analysis of different, but logically connected racisms would allow an underlying pattern to emerge. He is aware of the danger of attributing a timeless functionalism to racisms and argues that, although success is not guaranteed, resistance to racisms is possible, even if only along the lines of a gruelling guerrilla campaign (Goldberg 1993: 224, 226):

> Resistance to racisms consists in vigorously contesting and disputing exclusionary values, norms, institutions and practices, as well as assertively articulating open-ended specifications and means for an incorporative politics. Where racisms are openly and volubly expressed, it is likely a matter of time before a more or less organized resistance by its objects, often in alliance with other antiracists, will be promoted in response. ... Antiracist means may include confrontation, persuasion, punishment for racist expressions, or sometimes imaginatively rewarding anti- or even non-racist expression.

Otherness and difference

A different strand of theory arises from notions of 'Otherness' and 'difference'. Though often vague, literary theorists have used them with dramatic effect while cultural anthropologists have deployed similar concepts to show how Eurocentric views of the world came to be dominant. For example, Pratt (1986), a scholar of comparative literature,

shows how travellers' descriptions of the San of southern Africa (once pejoratively called 'Bushmen') codified difference and fixed 'the Other' in a timeless present. All actions and reactions are thought to be habitual and predictable. The ethnographic present gives a history to the observer (characteristically the European, the insider 'the self'), but denies coevalness to the observed (the outsider, the alien, 'the Other').

Such an atemporal attribution can be bent to a positive depiction of national character – as in Carlyle's description of the English[2] – but is also highly amenable to racism in the sense used by Bauman. By suggesting that members of 'the Other' are incapable of change, they become unamenable to reason, incapable of change, adaptation or assimilation. This notion of a fixed and negative Other is, as I have shown (Cohen 1994 and Chapter 3 in this book), very close to the thinking of officials at the British Home Office who, as late as the 1920s would have found it inconceivable that seven or eight of the descendants of what they called the 'unassimilable' Slavs and Jews would become ministers in Mrs Thatcher's cabinet 60 years later. Early in the twenty-first century one member of this group, Michael Howard, became the leader of the Conservative Party. There is a similar essentialism in (say) Enoch Powell's descriptions of British people of Caribbean descent who were assumed to be incapable of change in their new environment despite the fact that most are now born and raised in Britain (according to the 2001 census).

Useful then in showing how those outside the charmed circle are denied an historical consciousness, 'the Other' has also been used to show how Europe distanced itself from other world regions. Said probed this process brilliantly in *Orientalism* (Said 1991: 1–3); he argued that the Orient had a special place in Europe's experience in being its main cultural contestant and a source of rival civilizations, languages and cultures. The Orient was the source of Europe's 'deepest and most recurring images of the Other. ... European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.' Though Said's thesis ruled the day for two decades, specialist historians of India were always aware that there was considerable cultural intercourse between the British and the Indians until the nineteenth century, though it diminished thereafter in the wake of imperialism and Social Darwinism.

The evidence of extensive social interaction was brought to the reading public's attention by Dalrymple's (2003) brilliantly realized popular history of eighteenth-century India, centred on the love affair between a British representative of the East India Company and a Mughal princess. However, as Dalrymple makes clear, this liaison was not a one-off. About one-third of British men were living with Indian women, there was continuous intellectual discourse between enlightened Europeans and the scholars and poets of Lucknow (Dalrymple 2003: 271), while Anglo-Indian or British women joined the Avadhi harem. One woman, a Miss Walters, had a mosque built for her by the nawab (the local governor's title). Dalrymple (2003: 270) has a telling description of hybridity in Lucknow:

> If the Nawab sometimes amazed foreign visitors by appearing dressed as a British admiral, or even as a clergyman of the Church of England, then the Europeans of Lucknow often returned the compliment. Miniature after miniature from late-eighteenth-century Lucknow shows Europeans of the period dressed in Avadhi gowns, lying back on carpets, hubble-bubbles in their mouths, as they watch their nautch girls dance before them. Some Europeans even married into the Nawabi royal family.

The Orient was thus a rather more complex construction in the European imagination than Said allowed. The extent of creolization in Africa, in the Caribbean and in South America also suggests that the spectacles of imperialism have tinted European views in a rather monochromatic way. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that Africa and the indigenes of the Americas were so easily enslaved, conquered or infected with European diseases that their inhabitants (and descendants) became lodged in the European consciousness as inferior beings placed on the lowest rungs of a static hierarchy of racial excellence.

Yet, despite the degrading heritage of disparagement, Europeans sensed some affinity with Africans even if they sought to deny and repress their attraction. Missionaries were terrified of being converted by the heathen; Victorian scholars like Burton provided suspiciously prurient ethnographic descriptions and the novelist Rider Haggard's heroes were always being tempted by magnificent and sensuous women, sometimes diplomatically transmogrified into paler-complexioned examples, as in *She* ('who must be obeyed'). Sadomasochism lurked not far beneath Victorian surfaces. As Brantlinger (1986: 215) shows, Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of darkness* displays many of the resultant contradictions. In his unrestrained lust and hunger for power he displaces his own 'savage' impulses onto Africans. As Europeans penetrated the heart of darkness, symbolized by the Congo River, they discovered 'lust and depravity, cannibalism and devil worship; they also discovered, as the central figure in the shadows, a Stanley, a Stokes, or a Kurtz – an astonished white face staring back.'

This unexpected twinning of Anthropos, this recognition of commonality behind the difference, is paralleled in psychoanalytical writings by Freud's discovery of the unconscious and Jung's theory of subconscious archetypes. These represented a collective personality manifested in dreams, myths and religions (and also in the fantasies of the psychotic). It is notable that Jung's work on archetypes was based on fieldwork among native Americans and Kenyans. In both the literary and psychoanalytical articulations of the Other with the self, the self is on a journey of discovery that turns into a quixotic, reflexive and surprising journey of self discovery. The externalized becomes internalized, because it had always been there.

'One only knows who one is by whom one is not.' Although expressed in a very simple form, this proposition fits well with the more complex discussion of the self–Other relationship I have highlighted. As the 'asylum-seeker', 'foreigner', 'stranger' or 'alien' is silhouetted and identified, the native majority are, so to speak, delineating one or other aspect of themselves. Their national identity is thereby being continually defined and redefined. The processes of exclusion and rejection uncover and reveal and become constitutive of the national identity itself.

Despite their allusive, metaphorical and literary quality, discussions of Otherness are inherently more heuristic, subtle and optimistic than many discussions of racism (or 'racisms', to accept Goldberg's corrective). The latter are often pessimistic and denying of the human spirit and characteristically assume that dominant groups are likely always to maintain their hegemony and self-regard. While it is true that some writers seek to articulate an anti-racist strategy, their nostrums remain ultimately unconvincing because of the overwhelming sense of the

inevitability and ubiquity of 'racism' that they have previously depicted. By contrast, discussions of Otherness easily admit more liberating possibilities of self-examination and auto-critique. Psychological insights can expose the aspects of the self that resemble the Other or how the self displaces and projects onto the Other. Equally, an appeal to conscience, common humanity or self-interest can be used to reduce perceived difference. The ethical and progressive possibilities of this strand of theory are particularly marked in Sampson's (1993: 175) plea to engage in *Celebrating the Other*, the title of his book:

> We are obliged to work together with others in a responsible way because who and what we are and who and what they are [are] intimately and inextricably linked. We cannot be us, nor can they be they without one another: our responsibilities, then, are not simply to avoid the Other but of necessity and in recognition of this inherent bonding, to work together on our collective behalf.

Boundary formation

A closely related strand of theory looks at the processes of boundary formation. In trying to describe how some distinctive objects are made by the mind, Said (1991: 54) suggested that a group of people living on only a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land, its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, often designated as 'the land of the barbarians'. It is not required that the barbarians accept the 'us–them' label for the distinction to work. The difference may be arbitrary or fictive: it is enough that 'we' have set up the boundaries of 'us', for 'them' to become 'they'. 'They' have a culture or an identity incompatible with ours. As Said reasons, 'To a certain extent, modern and primitive societies seem thus to derive a sense of their identities negatively.'

Said's basic contention can be greatly extended by reference to an anthropological debate started by Barth's (1969) notion of ethnic boundaries. For Barth, boundaries can be real or symbolic, visible or invisible. The markers that divide can include territory (see my later discussion of nationalism), history, language, economic considerations, or symbolic identifications of one kind or another. But there are a number of other potential markers – perhaps, Wallman (1986: 230)

claims, as many as 14. She further avers that once having listed the range of boundary markers, the problem still remains as to when, whether and which markers the social actors will choose.

In addressing this question Barth had used the metaphor of a boundary 'vessel'. The contents of the vessel would determine the firmness or weakness of the boundary and the significance of the diacritics that differentiated the 'us' from the 'them'. Wallman's important addition to this tradition is to suggest that differences between peoples only turn into ethnic boundaries when 'heated' into significance by the identity investments of either side (irrespective of the actors' consciousness or purpose). In the case of the boundary between the British and the Others, I suggested (Cohen 1994) that the diacritics include race, religion, language, ethnicity, nationalism and symbolic identifications of many sorts (like dress, appearance, accent, manner, the flag and the monarchy) on the part of the British.

The tradition Barth pioneered essentially considered ethnic group boundaries without reference to state formation. Parallel work by historians and political philosophers has made useful inroads into the supposed 'naturalness' of national boundaries. One historical account by Sahlins (1992) focuses on the Cerdanya region of Catalonia, divided between France and Spain in 1659. His micro study reveals just how problematic is the assumption that nationality is (or should be) coincident with territory. Locals found themselves insiders, outsiders, and then insiders again in bewildering mixes. They became 'political amphibians', donning two or three masks of nationality – sometimes finding that when they sought to discard one or other, their assumed identity embarrassingly 'stuck to their skins'.

The political philosopher, O'Neill (1993a), is equally convinced that far from normally being coincident, boundaries and national identities are characteristically permeable and variable. Boundaries can be made more or less permeable while national identities 'can be reshaped, reformed and recombined'. Her and Sahlins's stress on the indeterminacy, malleability and variability of identity boundaries perhaps goes rather further than I have suggested in the case of the British frontiers of identity, but I share their arguments that boundaries are legitimated not legitimate, that key political and social actors selectively construct the walls that separate, or selectively permit access through the turnstiles

and gateways linking the inner and outer worlds. Such selectivity is often supported by an economic ideology, as in the stunning neo-liberal hypocrisy that defends trans-boundary free trade and capital flows but restricts population mobility (see Barry and Goodin 1992 and Chapter 9 in this book). Again, as O'Neill (1993b) emphasizes, moral philosophy could not defend an interpretation of sovereignty that constitutes an arbitrary limit to the scope of justice. Yet that is precisely what a national boundary does. It constrains crossing (whether for asylum, travel, migration, abode, work, settlement, or to take up citizenship) but permits transnational economic interaction without transnational powers of taxation or a convincing transnational programme to relieve poverty. In short, while there may be such things as *just* (fair) borders, generalized and taken-for-granted claims to impermeable boundaries made by nationalists cannot be ethically sustained.

The construction of social identities

In recent years, cross-cultural studies in history, sociology, anthropology and psychology have greatly enhanced the study of identity. The key point of departure for much discussion is the 'real world' observation that nationalist, regional, racial and ethnic mobilizations are occurring globally and pervasively. At the same time, within (and to some degree between) national, racial or regional units of identification are other kinds of social groupings – organized often on the axes of age, disability, gender or class. These too are claiming rights or advantages in the name of their particular social affiliation. Such are the persistence, universality and simultaneity of these claims that some academics argue that the construction, reproduction and reshaping of identity is the crucial preoccupation of our era.

Understanding the concept of identity means at least briefly alluding to the ways in which humankind situated itself in nature. Virtually all the major intellectual breakthroughs of the modern world have threatened simplistic notions of self-regard and the over-inflation of our egos. This process probably started with Galileo, who decentred the earth itself when he demonstrated that the planets and the sun did not revolve around us. His compatriots sought to hang him for this bad news. Equally, Darwin showed that man was not a uniquely privileged creature, but simply one species that survived. Other dominant species

preceded us; others may follow us. For his pains, the fundamentalists and creationists ban Darwin's work or anyone who adheres to his theory. In his insightful article, Hall (1991) lays emphasis on three key thinkers who fix our current notions of identity – Marx, Freud and Saussure. In each a process of decentring, of humbling and rendering humankind into relative insignificance, takes place – in Marx through the power of economic forces, in Freud through the role of the unconscious and in Saussure through the underlying system of language.

These observations have yielded four major insights, which have informed my use of the notion of identity:

- First, in the contemporary world, identity is fragmented, a process that started with the fragmentation and humbling of the human ego itself. Whereas some Eastern philosophers welcomed this insight, the fragmentation of identity proved too threatening for the children of the Enlightenment. In their attempt to recover their identities, or to overcome identity irresolution, groups lash out, often violently, at other neighbouring groups. This is what makes the fragmentation of modern identity-constructs both so important and so potentially dangerous.
- Second, in seeking to overcome fragmentation, there is an important class of identity-constructs that focuses on exclusive *territorial* claims. These I have considered as 'nationalism' and have discussed earlier.
- Third, the modern study of identity has yielded convincing evidence that the phenomenon of multiple social identities is much more common than previously had been assumed. These data have dished the old 'essentialisms' – for example, the Marxist idea that all social identity could essentially be reduced to class identity. This does not mean that class-consciousness does not exist, but rather that there are other competing claims for affiliation that cannot be reduced to epiphenomena. Thus, gender, age, disability, race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, civil status, even musical styles and dress codes, are also very potent axes of organization and identification. These different forms of identity appear to be upheld simultaneously, successively or separately and with different degrees of force, conviction and enthusiasm.
- But how do individuals attach themselves to, or withdraw from, any

one label or category? This question leads to the fourth major insight I deploy – the notion of situational identity. The basic idea here is that an individual constructs and presents any one of a number of possible social identities, depending on the situation. Like a player concealing a deck of cards from the other contestants, the individual pulls out an ace, a two or a knave – namely a religion, an ethnicity, a lifestyle – as the context deems a particular choice desirable or appropriate.

There are obvious limits to the manipulative use of situational identity. It is relatively easy to change a religion or one's clothes. It is less easy to change one's accent, manner and language, though Eliza Doolittle managed it in G. B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*. It is very difficult to alter one's physical appearance, one's phenotype. Difficult, but by no means impossible – as is demonstrated by the large sales of skin and hair-altering products and by the successful strategy of 'passing', even in such racially divided societies as the USA and South Africa. There are some cultures where the possibility of mistaking one phenotype for another has led to mutilation at an early age to inhibit cross-identification (facial scarification by the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria is one example).

The fragmentation, territoriality, multiplicity and situationally specific aspects of identity all need expression. One way of understanding racist and nationalist claims is that they seek to simplify complexity, reduce diversity to singularity and provide an artificial unity in the face of a plural reality.

The reconstruction of nationalism

The attempt to make the boundaries of nationality and identity coincide is, of course, the nationalists' project. I cannot begin to analyse the thousands of scholarly tracts on the sixth strand of theory considered here, namely nationalism. But it is relevant to notice that an influential book (Anderson 1983) treats the nation as an imaginary identity construct, though as real in people's minds as it is in the world. As I indicated in Chapter 3, for Anderson (1983: 15–16) the nation is an 'imagined community' partly because, regardless of actual inequality, its members can conceive of themselves as sharing a form of comradeship. These ties of solidarity are, to be sure, somewhat situational and

intermittent – for example, when a fellow national is recognized abroad, when sporting contests arouse popular passions, or in times of war.

This last element of nationalism is a particularly potent explanation for the extraordinary loyalty that the idea of nationalism can command. Women and men apparently willingly die for their nations and go through endless sacrifices to get a nation-state (a territorialized identity) of their own. One can hardly look at a newspaper's front page without seeing an example of this phenomenon, be it in ex-Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, Africa, Asia or Europe. The progress of the idea (but, some might add, also its dilution) over the last 60 years can be measured by a simple head count of those nations that have acquired recognized status. When the UN was formed after the Second World War, its membership comprised 51 nation-states; by 2005 there were 191 members.

Numbers alone cannot tell the whole story. There are two additional factors fuelling nationalism in the contemporary world – the rise of nativist sentiments in response to increased immigration and a more familiar splintering into nation-states following the break up of an empire, in this case that of the Soviet Union. An innovative way of understanding nativism in Europe is advanced by Husbands (1994) who revives the notion of a 'moral panic' first proposed by Stanley Cohen (1972) to characterize public overreaction, fanned by a news hungry media, to deviant youth movements. Husbands suggests that anxieties about national identities in Britain, Germany and the Netherlands (and, by inference, France) have analogous features to a moral panic. Sensitivities about Muslim fundamentalism, political asylum and illegal migration have fostered fears of a 'cultural dilution' of the majority's cherished ways and threatened the collective psychic wellbeing. As Husbands concedes, there is not a perfect fit between the upsurge of national moral panics and changes in economic and social conditions that would help give the concept some predictive force. Nonetheless, a creative use of the concept provides a useful way of coming to grips with the exaggerated responses to the challenges posed by the presence of non-nationals in European societies.

There is an instructive contrast between nativist ideas in Britain and France. While there are some similarities between the ideas of the British National Party and those of Le Pen, the more educated English right

talks of cultural threat while its French equivalent fears the invasion of harmful microbes into healthy biological specimens. Perhaps this is because the classical bias of the New Right English intelligentsia contrasts with the natural science bias in France. However, both are building elaborate bastions against insidious alien forces. I simply respond to such notions by pointing to the naïve, ahistorical and simplistic ideas of the nation to which such thinkers apparently subscribe. Society and nation (like culture and biological organisms) have always been, and continue to be, enriched and invigorated by diversity and difference.

While panics by their very nature flare up then evaporate, I think it a reasonable supposition that in countries like Britain, France and Germany undiluted nationalism will not provide a long-term palliative for anti-foreigner fears, particularly if the ideologues seek to offer the 'nation' as an *exclusive* focus of loyalty and identity. This is for two principal reasons. First, the named countries are locked into regional blocs and tied by their dependence on world trade and foreign investment – thus an excessive anti-foreigner position would compromise their national interests. Second, in mature nation-states a Pandora's Box of multiple loyalties and identities – nationalist, ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural and gender based – has already been opened. All compete for attention and it is unlikely that nationalism will be able to subordinate all the remaining foci of affiliation and identification.

Of course one has to concede the ultimate possibility that the admixture of strangers can eventually fundamentally alter and even subvert a host culture. But in both Britain and France we normally are talking of small fractions of the population (fewer than 6 per cent are of New Commonwealth origin in the UK and a similar figure for residents of Arab origin in France). The implication that the adults of these minorities share nothing in common with European society is wholly fallacious and, of course, the children of such minority groups are already strongly socialized into the language and social norms of their host societies. To proclaim intellectually that hostility to such small groups is legitimate and 'natural' is the moral equivalent of celebrating the virtues of a bully in a playground.

I need say little enough about the second factor fuelling the wave of nationalism characteristic of the early 1990s, namely the break-up of empires and federations. A similar phenomenon accompanied the end of

the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, British, French, Portuguese and Dutch empires. Of the 26 members that joined the UN over a three-year period, no less than 18 were formerly part of Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union (see Table 4.1). In a number of these new nation-states, the displacement of populations, contests about how to develop exclusive citizenships and even ethnic cleansing accompanied their birth and recognition.

Table 4.1: Members joining the United Nations, 1991–3

1991	Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Estonia, Federated States of Micronesia, Latvia, Lithuania, Marshall Islands, Republic of Korea
1992	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, San Marino, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
1993	Andorra, Czech Republic, Eritrea, Monaco, Slovak Republic, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Source: United Nations.

Diasporic formations among minorities

My final strand of theory will consider changes in patterns of international migration at the turn of the century, in particular the revival, refurbishment and invention of diasporic formations. I have dealt with the general theme of diaspora at book length elsewhere (Cohen 1997). Here I want to consider just two aspects of diasporas. The first is the cultural one. Diasporic communities have always been in a favourable position to interrogate the particular with the universal. They are better able to discern what their own group shares with other groups and where its cultural norms and social practices threaten majority groups. Such awareness constitutes the major component of *sechel* (being 'streetwise' in Yiddish), without which survival itself might be threatened. This vulnerability may also be the basis of success in trade and business, which is so often noted in the Indian, Armenian, Jewish and Chinese diasporas (Kotkin 1993). It is perhaps because of this need to be sensitive to the currents around one that diasporic groups are also typically

over-represented in the arts, cinema and entertainment industry. Awareness of their precarious situation may, finally, also propel members of diasporas to advance legal and civic causes and to be active in human rights and social justice issues.

In the case of some diasporas knowledge and sensibilities have sometimes enlarged to the point of cosmopolitanism (or universal humanism) while, at the same time, traditional cultural values have often been reasserted. This capacity to combine universal and particularistic discourses has proved attractive to many ethnic groups and not merely to those traditionally defined as diasporas (Dufoix 2003). The result is a proliferation of identity politics and cultural alternatives that the nation-state, some commentators fear, cannot contain. For example, Dickstein (1993: 539–40) argues, from a liberal US position, that 'many groups in America risk destroying the delicate balance between a common culture and a particular difference.' Far from resolving the issue, 'multiculturalism' has provided a platform for separatism and has propelled the frightened majority into its own forms of cultural nationalism. In the conditions of late modernity there is, Dickstein (1993: 535) suggests, a significant difference from the minorities of old:

> Once, minority groups had been desperately eager to join the mainstream, to become assimilated. They were looking for simple justice, not ultimate approval. Now, an angry, self-destructive separatism, an assertion of group pride at the expense of practical goals, often replaced the old desire for legal equality. Minorities no longer looked to be admitted to the club; instead they insisted on changing the rules. ... Cultural conflict from the trivial to the transcendent became the order of the day: from the gestural politics of media events and feel-good symbols to the moral politics of irreconcilable differences, righteous demands, and absolute beliefs.

A second feature of contemporary diasporas is their potential ability, not always realized, to connect to original homeland politics and to bring homeland politics to their places of settlement, an aspect of diasporas that has been described notably by Sheffer (2003). This too has caused adverse comment and harsh reactions by policy makers. Although the events of '9/11' are used to explain many repressive acts by state office holders, security issues arising from diasporic consciousness have long provided a cover for state intervention in Europe.

One need go back no further than August 1994 when the get-tough minister of the interior, Charles Pasqua, ordered mass pick-ups of Islamic 'fundamentalists' in France. The crackdown on the Islamic Salvation Front, the Algerian militant Islamic party, ramified into an essentialist conflict between the Enlightenment and the Middle Ages, between light and darkness, between good and bad. As Malik (*Independent*, 26 August 1994) suggested, 'Islam is one of the most powerful demons in French political iconography and Pasqua seems to have manipulated this to justify a wider campaign against immigrants.' Malik shows how French political debates have celebrated the secular, rational, republican tradition that has symbolized the content of French citizenship since the revolution, while excoriating Islam's obedience to theological strictures rather than to national laws and its theocratic principles fusing state, religion and ethics. Islam's enormous contributions to the world's art, architecture, mathematics and notions of jurisprudence (to mention the more obvious expressions of universalism) are reduced to insignificance Even the liberal paper *Libération* argued that Pasqua's actions were necessary 'to prevent French territory from being a base camp for Islamic terrorism' (*Independent*, 26 August 1994).

The terrorist attacks in New York in September 2001 much sharpened similar debates in the USA. After '9/11', patriotism, never a philosophy that has relied much on a reasoned defence, went into a mindless liftoff. Wal-Mart sold 250,000 US flags on 12 September 2001, while the US public re-elected a president who proclaimed an ill-defined 'war on terror' and invaded Iraq without legal sanction or immediate cause. The security aspects raised by diasporic mobilizations were highlighted by the conservative academic Samuel P. Huntington (2004), always a good weather vane for concerned policy makers on Capitol Hill. According to Huntington (2004: 290, 291):

> Increased and diversified immigration to America is multiplying the number of diasporic communities and their actual and potential political significance. As a result conflicts abroad between

> opposing homelands increasingly become conflicts in America between opposing diasporas. ... An ineluctable dynamic is at work. The more power the United States has in world politics, the more it becomes an arena of world politics, the more foreign governments and their diasporas attempt to influence American policy, and the less able the United States is to define and to pursue its own national interests when these do not correspond with those of other countries that have exported people to America.

In short, a number of nationalist politicians (and a number of observers) see diasporas in the twenty-first century as positively threatening and potentially dangerous to both the social fabric and the security of host states.

Conclusion

I have used the expression 'social exclusion' in this chapter, even though Brussels bureaucrats adopted the phrase in the 1980s as an official and somewhat bland platitude concerned with the growth in anti-foreigner sentiment in Europe. My reason for so doing is that the expression provides a neutral organizing concept for phenomena that have been too easily rendered into a *reductio ad monochromium*. My target has particularly been those who cry 'racism' at every expression of discrimination and hostility. This is not to say that there are never occasions when such a description is perfectly apposite. However, my argument is that 'racism' needs to be used more precisely and more rarely to capture particularly odious forms of social exclusion. Doing anything else both weakens the force of the term and fails to capture other, more subtle and complex, forms of segregation that rely on *sub rosa* and often more respectable appeals to cultural homogeneity, the protection of political liberalism, the defence of sovereignty or the necessity for security.

By looking at a number of ways of understanding exclusion and xenophobia I drew on insights from a variety of disciplines, elaborated on popular discourses and described contemporary policies pursued by governments. At least two important lessons have emerged. First, in the past, too much attention has been paid to identity formation among minority ethnic groups without looking at the shifts in popular consciousness and cultural practices among majority populations. These

dominant populations have often assumed to have inherited an identity fixed by history, tradition and habitus. In fact, such identities are often fragile and easily manipulated by threat and, often more importantly, the perception of threat. Second, angry denunciations of racist practices – real, imagined or exaggerated – often corner people who are not self-evidently racists by ideological conviction. Mere contiguity does not elide difference, unease, anxiety or discomfort. Anti-racist practices and the celebration of Otherness are aspired states to be reached by social engagement, political action and continuous dialogue with all who are open to the conversation. To neglect potential allies and to assume that harmony is normal feeds complacency and self-righteousness without addressing the many hateful forms of social exclusion.

Notes

1. A brief personal experience may be illustrative. When I lived in Nigeria, I had occasion to walk in the poorest streets of the city of Ibadan. The children had clearly never seen an *oyimbo* (white man) close up before and darted in and out pinching me while furiously rubbing at my skin with a wild mixture of excitement, inquisitiveness and consternation. They hoped, their parents explained, to rub off the lighter colouring to reveal the proper skin underneath. Within the bounds of their knowledge, the children's actions were driven by curiosity and rational enquiry, not by racism or heterophobia.
2. Carlyle wrote: '[The Englishman's] ... spoken sense is next to nothing, nine-tenths of it is palpable *non*-sense: but his unspoken sense, his inner silent feeling of what is true, what does agree with fact, what is doable and not doable, – this seeks its fellow in the world. A terrible worker; irresistible against marshes, mountains, impediments, disorder, incivilization; everywhere vanquishing disorder, leaving it behind him as method and order' (cited in C. Hall 1992: 283).