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Liaisons dangereuses: Friends, Enemies & Others

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The eyes of others our prisons; their thoughts our cages.

Virginia Woolf,
'An Unwritten Novel' (1921)

Introduction

The *expository* aim of this paper is to map the emotional terrain occupied by friends, enemies and others. The *theoretical* focus – that is, the *explanatory purpose* – is to explore two quite distinct matters: the *psychological foundations* and the *moral appraisals* of the emotional expression of human relationships. Whether the emotional relations between individual persons are homologous to the relations between nation-states is a question this paper may provoke, but will not seek to answer.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for expressing *aversive* and *associative* emotions¹ in social relations may be stated in these terms:

- a) We *appeal* to friends. Toward friends we express, as well as *lay claim* to, positive emotions that move us to acts of recognition, affection, solidarity, intimacy and mutual undertakings of many kinds. The emotional effects include association, affinity, trust, love and identity.
- b) We *exact claims against* enemies through negative emotions that express dispositions of hatred, anger and fear. These may move us to acts of aggression and violence. The emotional effects are aversive and negative, seeking exclusion or destruction.
- c) We *ignore* the others. This disposition may, subsequent in time and the acquisition of cognisance, lead to *treating* with others.

The emotional spectrum between *friends* and *enemies* is dynamic, intense and complex. Toward *others*, the emotional scale lacks intensity but may eventually exhibit emotional and psychological complexity. When treating others, we may be moved to acts ranging from non-recognition to caution, curiosity, communication and commerce (in the original Latin senses of moving across, making a journey, negotiating an exchange). The more intense forms of 'treating' are exhibited in the risks of exploration and in missionary zeal. For states, a 'treaty' or 'treating with the enemy' is a potential transitional phase when parties temporarily suspend the posture of enemies to consider moving from the disposition of enemies toward the less intense emotional treatment appropriate to others.

Regarding Friends

The relationships and emotional expressions of friendship are complex, dynamic and unstable. We know this intuitively and experientially. This complexity underlies the

rich etymology of ordinary language (briefly documented in the endnotes, *infra*) and is recognised, often by default, in political philosophy, law and politics. The *positive* emotions embedded in the word friendⁱⁱ are interwoven, implicated and complicated in familial, sexual, friendly and civil relationships. In the idea and experience of *fraternity*, for example, its positive expression of emotional affinity can be seen favourably: essential to social harmony, solidarity (in the ideal of the French Revolution) and equality. The intimacy implicit in friendship is expressed in the untranslatable French expression, *nos semblables*: our familiars, our like, our own kind, those in whose face we see a reflection of ourselves.

However, ties of intimacy and close family-like bond interposed in social relations raise questions of nepotism, secrecy and betrayal. The emotional, moral and political complexity of friendship may even be seen to have seditious effects. E.M. Forster (1965) boasted that ‘...if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the guts to betray my country.’ Love, especially erotic love, has long been regarded as a deleterious influence upon public obligations. Set apart as an irrational or corrupting influence in civil affairs and relegated to the private sphere, love has effectively been quarantined in Western political theory. This ‘prejudice’ has been directed against both heterosexual and homosexual love as having potentially, indeed probably, insidious effects upon the probity of public life. ‘Getting into bed with someone’ is a clichéd sexual metaphor for dishonesty and corruption. The prejudice sanctions marital and conjugal love as something to be sequestered and carefully regulated even in the domestic domain, but is inappropriate or subversive in the political domain. When ‘legitimate’ conjugal relations are publicly observed, the liaison tends to be characterised as decadent, effete, pathetic: thus the caricatures of Prince Phillip, the sniggers meted out to Maggie Thatcher’s milquetoast Dennis, or the assumptions of strife, ambition and conspiracy between the Clintons.

By contrast, at the personal and private level, friendships are highly valued. Yet they are notoriously costly, dynamic, risky and unstable. Friendship easily converts into the negative emotional terrain of jealousy, envy, anger and hatred.ⁱⁱⁱ The ambiguous boundary between these emotional dispositions was long ago identified in an aphorism attributed to Aesop: ‘A doubtful friend is worse than a certain enemy. Let a man be one thing or the other, and we then know how to meet him.’

Similarly in politics (for example in groups, factions and parties; and perhaps especially among nations), friends are almost inherently unreliable, never far from suspicion of duplicity and betrayal. Friends become the bitterest of enemies because of the potential for lost emotional investment, the inherent risk of mutual knowledge, and the betrayal of trust that feeds anger, aggression and hatred. Machiavelli, among other political thinkers, made a point about the greater reliability of the negative emotion of fear in political relationships, between sovereigns as well as between the sovereign and the subject.

Regarding Enemies

Political theorists have paid little attention to the negative emotional terrain that both divides and connects enemies. Perhaps there is some kind of denial at work in that aversion, at least in the Western traditions of Christian virtue and Enlightenment rationalism. The hegemonic Christian morality grounded in humility and charity, that Machiavelli dared to reject, imposes an expanding taboo, in both law and scholarly inquiry, against the full range of mortal passions. Indeed, *offence* and *hate* have in recent decades been gradually subsumed as crimes by legislators and political theorists. These emotions, in their expression and disposition to action, have been quarantined as beyond the pale of what is natural, normal or tolerable (Morris, 2003; Herrick and

Berrill, 1992). Rarely have there been attempts (Corcoran 2001, 2003) to explore this unpleasant landscape better known to ancient philosophy.

The emotional disposition toward an enemy involves *fear* and *hatred*. As with friendship, this involves a complex interweaving of acquaintance and feeling. It is an aversive posture based upon the paradoxical identity of a ‘known stranger’^{iv} – the adversary, the barbarian, whom one does not know personally or intimately or intelligently, except for knowledge, generational or even legendary, of the hated enemy. Indeed one’s acquaintance may be limited to the elementary knowledge that they *are* the enemy. Poets, revolutionaries and military strategists have long repeated the counsel, ‘Know thy enemy,’^v attributed to Sun Tzu, the 5th Century B.C. Chinese general, military strategist and author of *The Art of War*.

Aristotle: Hating the Enemy

Aristotle was explicit in designating hate as the appropriate emotional disposition toward enemies. This connection is, in fact, an integral and unified conception expressed in the very phonetic and semantic roots of those two terms, *hate* and *enemy*. The Greek nominative for hate is ἔχθος, and the verb ‘to hate, to be at enmity with’ is ἐχθραίνω. *Odi*, the root for the Latin *odium*, is the nominative case for ‘I hate.’ A Latin synonym, *enmity*, is a derivative construction for *enemy*, the two words effectively serving as variants of the same root.

Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Rhetoric* provide the *loci classicæ* for the philosophical and psychological analysis of hate. His analysis of this topic lies in his still influential account of the human emotions. Importantly, Aristotle does not calibrate emotions – in their expression, experience or effect – along the ethical scale. That is, the emotions are neither distinguished nor classified as ΕΘΙΚΕ: vices and virtues. Rather, they are natural organic forces. Nevertheless the emotions, for Aristotle, have a share in reason, and function as important resources available to give effect to actions. Aristotle ignores Plato’s revolutionary principle in the *Republic* (I, 335d-e) that the path of wisdom and right action invariably directs us to will and do the good, even to one’s enemies. Aristotle argues, to the contrary, that the emotion of hate is appropriately directed toward enemies, while friendship and love are directed to our fellow citizens, families and lovers. There is a subtle but crucial distinction between anger and hatred, both powerful negative emotions.^{vi} Aristotle stipulates that ‘Enmity and Hatred ... should be studied by reference to their opposites,’ namely, forms of friendship such as ‘comradeship, intimacy, kinship, and so on’ (*Rhetoric*, 1382e).

On the other hand, anger plays an associative and protective function with respect to ‘gatherings of men, in social life.’ Anger is something that we may well feel and needfully express even among fellow citizens:

so much is plain, that the middle state [good temper] is praiseworthy – that in virtue of which we are angry with the right people, at the right things, in the right way’ (*Ethics*, 1126b).

Similarly, in the *Rhetoric* (1379e), Aristotle states: ‘We feel anger with those who slight us in connexion with what we are as honourable men bound to champion – our parents, children, wives, or subjects.’

By contrast, the emotion of hate (enmity) is cold, remorseless and ‘unaccompanied by pain.’ It is how one deals with an implacable enemy in whom one has no hope or investment. Here is Aristotle’s chillingly detailed definition of hate.

Now whereas anger arises from offences against oneself, enmity may arise even without that; we may hate people merely because of what we take to be their character. Anger is always concerned with individuals – a Callias or a Socrates

– whereas hatred is directed also against classes; we all hate any thief or informer. Moreover, anger can be cured by time; but hatred cannot. The one gains at giving pain to its object, the other at doing him harm; the angry man wants his victims to feel; the hater does not mind whether he feels or not.... And anger is accompanied by pain, hatred is not; the angry man feels pain, but the hater does not. Much may happen to make the angry man pity those who offend him, but the hater under no circumstances wishes to pity a man whom he has once hated: for the one would have the offenders suffer for what they have done; the other would have them cease to exist (13822a).^{vii}

Aristotle's allowance of a *telos* for the emotion of hate appears to acknowledge the Homeric morality of warfare. For example, he exemplifies the virtue of courage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (III, 8 circa 1116-17) by frequently quoting or alluding to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The same idea is conveyed in Plato's *Republic* when Polemarchus quotes the poet Simonides as his guide for right action: 'to render each his due.... Friends owe it to them to do them some good and no evil ... and there is due and owing from an enemy to an enemy what is also proper for him, some evil' (*Republic*, 331e-332b).

One must remember that the ancient Greeks had enemies aplenty – real enemies. Sometimes they were Hellenes (the Spartans) but more profoundly and 'naturally' the enemy were βαρβαρος — foreigners. It is apposite to Aristotle's view that even for Socrates it was 'unnatural' for Greeks to fight Greeks,^{viii} whereas it is natural that the barbarians would be enemies to the Hellenes.

I affirm that the Hellenic race is friendly to itself and akin, and foreign and alien to the barbarian.... We shall say that Greeks fight and wage war with barbarians, and the barbarians with Greeks, and are enemies by nature, and that war is the fit name for this enmity and hatred. Greeks, however, we shall say, are still by nature the friends of Greeks when they act in this way, but that Greece is sick in that case and divided by faction, and faction is the name we must give to that enmity (*Republic* V, 470c).

Aristotle brings the emotion home when he claims in the *Politics* (1312b) that hatred is a disposition particularly directed toward tyrannies, that is, regimes that exclude the participation of its subjects. Such regimes are thus the object of condemnation and have no claim upon a person's sense of obligation or emotional attachment. Here again Aristotle makes comparisons between anger and hatred, and it is significant that anger is characterised as irrational, while hatred is rational:

There are two chief motives which induce men to attack tyrannies – hatred and contempt. Hatred of tyrants is inevitable, and contempt is also a frequent cause of their destruction.... Anger, too, must be included under hatred, and produces the same effects. It is oftentimes even more ready to strike – the angry are impetuous in making an attack, for they do not follow rational principle.... Hatred is more reasonable, for anger is accompanied by pain, which is an impediment to reason, whereas hatred is painless.

For Aristotle, hate is the natural disposition toward those who oppose, threaten, deprive, invade, oppress and bid to destroy our freedom and extinguish our lives. It would be unnatural, irrational and unmanly not to feel this. Aristotle's rhetorical and ethical systems assume that it is virtuous to know and hate our enemies and ultimately seek their destruction. In a Homeric moral universe, it would be perverse, cowardly and irrational to feel, think or act otherwise.

Regarding Others

The prominence and elaboration of ‘the Other’ in recent theory, critique and rhetoric is probably too widely known to require much exposition here. As a term whose etymology is relatively straightforward, *other*^{ix} has received what can only be called fervid, intermingled theoretical attention: in feminist theory (Ahmed, 1998; Butler, 1990; Hughes, 2000; Irigaray, 1985a 1985b, 1995; Lapinska, 2005); ethics (Levinas, 1987, 2000; Guenther, 2006; Tascón, 2003); Lacanian psychoanalytic theory (Lacan, 2006; Grosz, 1990; Kristeva, 1982; Mitchell and Rose, 1982); Orientalist critique and post-colonial theory (Ashcroft et al., 1989; Barker et al. 1985, Bhabha, 1990, 1994; Buyze, 2005; Jain, 2006; Said 1993, 1995; Spivak, 1987); and literary and historiographical theory (Bammer, 1995; Todorov et al., 1996; Sharrad, 2005). This welter of critique has proliferated into wider regions such as education, journalism and health communication (Horsti, 2003; Johnson *et al.*, 2004).

Recent theoretical treatments of ‘the other’ draw upon an earlier body of sociological and anthropological literature on the place of ‘the stranger.’ In important respects, the postmodernists have inverted the earlier investigations of ‘displaced persons,’ especially in a normative sense.

For Georg Simmel (1971), Alfred Schuetz (1944) and Margaret Wood (1934), the ‘stranger’ is defined from the point of view of the ‘group’ or the ‘in-group’ – although they readily acknowledge that the ‘in-group’ members are equally strangers from the point of view of the stranger. Their analytical viewpoint is ‘toward’ the stranger; their theoretical interest – the ‘problem’ as they see it – is the question of assimilation. How may the stranger reconcile with, fit into, accommodate and learn the ways of the group.

By contrast, contemporary postmodern theorists, with few exceptions (Werbner, 2001), effectively reverse the ‘problem.’ In this view, the cultural burden and moral initiative are transposed to the implicitly or explicitly dominant in-group of Anglo-European nations or ‘Western society.’ The analytical and critical perspective is ‘toward’ the dominant group from the point of view, or on behalf, of the Other, a phenomenal presence variously, and contradictorily, conceived as ‘constructed,’ inevitable or even ‘natural.’ The effect of this confrontation is to disempower, displace and dispossess the Other. Yet paradoxically, the perceived danger of its presence threatens the dominant group by engendering confusion and fear, and by exposing its ideological failure and lack of will to provide resources to accommodate the stranger’s presence.

In what might be seen as a further paradox, this new wave of postmodern theory, despite its reversal of perspective and moral burden, once again displaces and denies the agency of the Other, rendering them needy, subliminal and impotent. It is the dominant culture that is culpable and morally responsible for the presence (indeed the very existence) of the Other, including its threat of danger. The dominant society is charged with the heroic moral duty to foster, maintain and accommodate the Other. Confront the danger by embracing it: ‘Love thine enemy.’

This poses an interesting question about the emotional terrain that must be traversed to achieve this reconciliation. I suggest that this challenge underlies the revival of ethical theory – specifically the influence of Emmanuel Levinas and the emergence of care theory (Nortvedt, 2003; Groenhout, 2004) – and the implicit restoration of natural law in human rights advocacy (a pagan Trojan horse, one might say, for Christian ethics).

Simone de Beauvoir’s (Beauvoir, 1949, 1950) distinction that women, despite their intermingled cohabitation, embody a kind of *terra incognita*, an ‘absolute other,’ became a seminal and highly heuristic concept that inspired a broad theoretical turn.

Ever since, the 'Other' has become an overarching critical category. As often happens in theoretical critique, the term has been inflated with normative solemnity, freighted with ontology, dignified with metaphor (*subaltern*), reified to its own theoretical realm (*alterity*), and neologised to express process and intention (*othering*). Over forty years ago, however, philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1965, 22) defined the term in relation to cultural identity with surprising clarity and simplicity.

When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and consequently at the time that we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with the destruction of our own discovery. Suddenly it becomes possible that there are just *others*, that we ourselves are an "other" among others.

I summarise more recent theoretical treatments of the Other (provocative as I know this to be) with the observation that they are principally critical appraisals of cultural 'invasions.' These intrusions affect not only continents and peoples, but classes, groups and cultural objects or identities many kinds, subjecting them to illegitimate institutionalised cultural and sexual power. The ensuing 'empires' and hegemonies, established violently and driven by racism, are shown to 'produce' Others as subordinate, colonised, exotic, subaltern or infantile constructs. This confrontation builds and sustains privilege on the one hand and victimhood and oppression on the *Others*, who are silenced, caricatured in representation, exploited and marginalised. Their authentic identities, both subjective and cultural, are tragically vitiated. Yet the 'differences' themselves eventually constitute a challenge and a threat to the identities that unified the 'centre,' whose 'borders' are breached and endangered by the consequent dynamics of populations, cultures and technology.^x

While acknowledging the formative importance of this theoretical perspective in academic writing and its critical extension into literature, theatre, painting and many other creative areas, I intend to lay it to one side. I propose to take a cooler look at a term often employed for zealous moral condemnation of familiar enemies (*nota bene*). Indeed, villainous perpetrators of hegemonic 'Othering' are so well-known that critics not infrequently take the liberty of caricature and derisive irony. In effect, I want to view 'the Other' afresh and turn the concept to a quite different theoretical purpose. Whether the effect of my doing this alters the orthodox critical focus may well be a topic of further speculation.

Seeing Others

As I defined Others in the introduction, I refer to people (individuals, groups, peoples and entire civilisations, perhaps dating from centuries ago) concerning whom one has very little contact, very little knowledge and very little interest. Jean-Paul Sartre (1944) famously aphorised in his play, *No Exit*, that 'Hell is other people.' For my purposes here, I disagree. I want to suggest that we are not sufficiently familiar with 'others' to make that irascible, condemnatory judgement. Nor would we be able, or inclined, to do anything to them, even to intrude upon their 'cultural space' (Simmel, 1971; Schuetz, 1944), or feel that they have inadvertently intruded upon ours, unless we encounter them fortuitously in circumstances not of our own doing or choosing.

When speaking of 'others' we are not, like the character in Sartre's play, shut up for interminable hours with strangers in a featureless waiting room. In any case, the people who make life hell for us are generally those we know all too well, including members of one's own family. That, I think, is the meaning and personal reference of Virginia Woolf's enigmatic note for an unfinished novel (Woolf, 1921): 'The eyes of others our prisons; their thoughts our cages.'

Nevertheless, far from consigning unknown, anonymous strangers to hell, we typically exercise a mild and well-disposed curiosity about complete strangers. How

often have you heard someone admit to being an inveterate ‘people-watcher,’ confessing to the more or less harmless play of imagination? This anonymous spectation might even be pleasurable, ranging from æsthetic observation to voyeuristic or erotic fantasy.

The ‘others’ I am considering are people who, for all practical and even moral purposes, we know nothing at all about: hardly know and indeed hardly care. In other words, strangers or foreigners^{xi} – literally, as in the French, people who are *far away*, impossibly remote from our own immediate knowledge, experience and interests. We do not need to ‘construct’ them as ‘other’ because what captures our attention is external: an easily observed ‘difference’ (in culture, language, skin colour or even religion, if visually symbolised). We may barely know of their existence or what these external characteristics signify, much less their meaning and significance to others.

Consider this at a personal level. What do you know of or think about the people who live three doors down from you on your street? And people two streets away from you?

Consider this hypothetical case. Hearing that I live on Clifton Street, and a friend asks me if I know whether Al Pine lives on Harrington Street, two streets over from my house. I reflect a fraction of a second, look at the questioner, and merely say, ‘No, I’ve never heard of him. In fact, I don’t know anyone on Harrington Street.’ I have little interest in why this person asked me about Al Pine. To be interested I would need to know something about him, but I have no knowledge of his existence.

If my friend then tells me that he very much wants to contact Al Pine and was hoping that I could supply him with some information, I may feel sympathy for my friend. I may even offer to help by lending him my telephone directory. But I feel no remorse or guilt for my ignorance of Al Pine’s existence or place of residence. I feel no moral compunction or obligation in this regard, either toward Al Pine or my friend, because Al Pine is a total stranger, one of the many, many people in my suburb I do not know. I have had no need to know him, and unless I hear further reasons or information that situation will remain as before.

Of course it is possible that my friend will provide me with reasons or information that will arouse my curiosity, sympathy or interest. My friend might tell me that Al Pine is a capital fellow, or very entertaining, or an excellent political theorist; or that he has a fine, or a wonderfully peculiar, house; or that he is a master plumber who works for very reasonable rates.

At this point I may indeed develop an interest in Al Pine, even though he remains, to me, a complete stranger. But I may not. My friend might continue to encourage me. By coincidence I might suddenly need a plumber. Still, Al Pine remains just as much a stranger to me as I am to him.

In the unlikely event that my friend should challenge my ignorance and indifference by asking me if I did not appreciate the fact that I shared a common humanity with Al Pine, I would be very surprised. Of course I would willingly agree that I certainly did appreciate that. But on reflection, I might point out to my friend that I share a common humanity with every person on earth, very few of whom I could ever expect to know, care about or communicate with. I could go further and point out that the sharing of a common humanity was not, on its own or automatically, a strong foundation for social and moral obligation. For example I could rejoin to my friend that I fully acknowledge a shared common humanity with my bitterest enemies, as well as with murderous criminals and other desperadoes.

I should anticipate a theoretical objection to this hypothetical. A critic may wish to condemn the example of an ‘ordinary’ situation on the grounds that it presupposes a

'liberal individualist,' subjectivist or reductivist perspective. It might be argued that the hypothetical case of my ignorance of Al Pine fails to incorporate the moral and structural properties of community and shared culture. I am not entirely convinced of such objections, given that those very properties reasonably and inescapably inhere in *any* coherent idea of an individual person, hypothetical or actual. Moreover, it is difficult to see how philosophy can analyse the ethical implications of emotional dispositions without employing perceptual psychology and the ordinary language that captures life as it is experienced. Schuetz (1944, 499), for example, notes the theoretical relevance of 'the typical situation' as it 'presents itself to the common sense of a man who lives his everyday life within the group among his fellow-men.'

How far, then, can we take the hypothetical vignette? Can it be applied more widely, even globally? What about the vaunted 'global community' that is metaphorically but no less influentially created by electronic communications?

The mass media do create in our minds an ephemeral, superficial perception of people and places far distant and remote from our own experience. Documentary cinema and news broadcasts convey powerful images of wars, natural catastrophes and a selective sense of a globally inclusive political and economic drama. This experience was largely invisible to us one or two generations ago – and remains largely invisible, or irrelevant, to most of the world's population in their day to day, face to face struggle to live. Mass mediated perceptions lend a degree of visual acquaintance, information and impressions of humanity's common plights, even while these fleeting images may actually reinforce the strange and impenetrable character of other peoples' lives, or indeed offer us grounds for fearing and hating them. The dramatic stories and images are often very successful in engendering in us powerful emotional responses, ranging from empathy and joy to disgust and hatred.

These forms of mediated recognition undoubtedly produce at least a superficial experience of psychological recognition. The question is whether this experience create a sense of family, community and solidarity, especially when the images are projected as powerful and proud symbols of cultural 'difference.' These mediations – of dreadful suffering, exotic culture and terrain, symbolic undertakings of international sport, charity and philanthropy in times of crisis and disaster – unquestionably elicit emotions of empathy, sorrow, magnanimity and pride. Yet it is far from clear that Olympic heroics and the succour afforded to the vast suffering and death from a tsunami effect a transformation from Other to kindred friendship. The mediated images seem at least as likely to intensify a sense of the remote and the strange.

Meeting Others

This brief overview of people in faraway places – whether at the distance of two suburban streets or an unvisited continent in the opposite hemisphere – begins to open up a view of emotional dispositions that it is *normal* (and for purposes of argument I will say is *natural*) toward strangers. This is an *ordinary* disposition toward 'others': people we do not know, make no pretensions to care for and have no desire to establish relations with. In other words, I am suggesting that, apart from the transient curiosity discussed above, there is no inherent instinct or necessity to recreate or dominate others, no drive to subjugate, weaken or destroy. Yes, humans are gregarious; but naturally so, it might be said, only toward their own kind – their tribe, *gens*, skin, kin – whose language and 'look' you share. Indeed, even granting a degree of playful curiosity.^{xii} There is no natural obsession (akin to an original sin?) to interfere with, conquer, dominate, transform, enslave, convert or exploit those about whom we are ignorant. Even in the event of having a vague perception of 'others,' the experiential and moral context of that knowledge is that they are...not *here*, but *there*: foreigners.

This of course is not to deny that sheer ignorance or vague associations may become informed sufficiently to arouse purposes more fixed and interested than idle curiosity. This may give rise to cultural purposes to explore, contact, examine, compare, communicate with and, of course, eventually to share and perhaps even to impose those purposes. These aims are at least in part shared by modern day migrants and refugees, whose circumstances are often precarious and adventitious. This was true of seventeenth-century colonial settlers, many of whom did not survive the precarious circumstances and were not happily welcomed by those peoples upon whom they imposed themselves. Trade and militant religion are no doubt the two paradigmatic purposes for communication with strangers – or at least that appears to have been the view of many people in both the East and the West over the centuries.

Political theorists know that early European contact with North and South America and their archipelagos led to immediate curiosity, both scientific and philosophical. It also led the Roman Catholic Church to debate the proposition that, if it is granted that savages possessed human souls, the Church must acknowledge an evangelical duty analogous to the civilising obligation embraced earlier by the Roman Empire.^{xiii}

Curiosity and *attraction* are, I suggest, well documented and in some ways benign emotional dispositions that people feel toward others: strangers. Spontaneous wonder, of course, may easily expand to several aversive emotions of *fear*, *embarrassment* and *shame*. These are emotions one often feels when meeting total strangers with the passing from curiosity to incomprehension, confusion, an inability to speak the same language (in the literal as well as the figurative sense), and the potential for, or inevitability of, intimacy. Here I mean the shame of intruding upon the milieu of others, and in turn being oneself exposed to them. There may also be *disgust* at how they are (or are not) dressed, at how they smell, what they eat, what they wear and how they adorn themselves. Perhaps there is even a simultaneous, mutual mixture of these emotions in how they treat each other, and how this in turn may dispose or oblige one to treat those in authority, for example, or if you are invited to eat with them, worship with them, sleep with them. It is, of course, just as easy to imagine that visiting strangers will feel the same toward you. You, also, are strange, very much the outsider to the stranger's world of evaluations and expectations.

We see – in a veiled but noticeable way in las Casas, in Hobbes and Locke, in Montaigne, Montesquieu and Rousseau – how early encounters with others quickly became a mirror in which Europeans could see *themselves* in a new light, again with emotional overtones of pride, envy, shame and guilt. Here was a revelation of their own strangeness of manners and culture, showing the European inferiority in health compared to the savage's robustness against the elements. Here European Christians became witness to the meanness of their suspicion, pomp and pride in the light of the candour, modesty and open friendliness of the natives. Such reactions are well-documented in the 16th and 17th-century travel literature of European explorers and colonists. Some Europeans saw the nakedness of the savages as a clear sign of their immorality and cultural inferiority. But other Europeans saw with new eyes their own clothing as ridiculous, gaudy, pretentious and bizarre, to say nothing of its inaptness for climate and mobility – a view which the 'savages' must surely have felt with curious amazement.

It was inevitable that this otherness, with its accompanying mild range of emotional dispositions, would give way to stronger, partly romantic and eventually hostile dispositions as the sense of strangeness gave way. That is to say, the strangeness dissolved, just as I would evolve different (and perhaps equally unpredictable) dispositions should I actually meet Al Pine and make his acquaintance.

The perhaps original and certainly controversial point I am suggesting here is that the result of curiosity and interest is often negative, but *this potential for conflict, conquest and colonial domination destroys, not 'constructs,' otherness. We do not 'make an enemy' (note well the common phrase that does imply a process of construction) by creating and imposing otherness. Rather, we become enemies when otherness, the stranger-ness, is overcome, rubbed away.* It seems to me that this is an important distinction. In taking 'possession' we destroy the others (often in the literal sense). We go to war. We do what enemies do: conquer and destroy each other, in part by violence and death, and in part by a gradual process of corruption and expropriation of the other culture. In an encounter – a prolonged, curious, seizing of each other, a recognition of similitude, the unfathomable, the rare – you become often enamoured of the other: jealous and greedy and possessive. This in turn leads to force, deception, disillusionment, conflict, and hence to hatred and the desire to destroy.

Conclusion

Encountering strangers has happened from time immemorial, not simply since the creation of the nineteenth-century empires and their largely disastrous de-colonisation after World War II. For the ancient, awful record in the Middle East and Europe, one can simply turn to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible for the chapter and verse of it. Or go see *Gladiator* again. Review Attila's successful swathe across Europe to Rome in the 5th Century, the 8th Century Islamic conquest of Spain and Portugal under the command of Tarik ibn Zeyad, and the medieval Crusades. But this is not to say that the West has not made a number of enemies since World War II. Something of the same process, and on the same scale, is now being played out in Serbia, Turkey, Chechnya and Georgia. It raises the rhetorical question of whether the world might enjoy greater peace with a bit *more* otherness.

That speculation calls to mind John Lennon's song, *Imagine*, which seems to have become an anthem for Western peace movements. Here is an archetypal evocation of the desire to embrace, or perhaps ignore, difference: to imagine a union of hearts while renouncing so many other passions that divide us into races, nations and congregations. There have always been aspects of the lyrics, apart from the dreamily saccharine music, which appalled me, but for reasons that were never very clear. Lennon conjures up an Epicurean range of pagan values and pacific emotions,^{xiv} imagining a communal utopia of comfort and passivity; freedom from guilt, power and want; and pleasures of all kinds, especially the erotic. The cosmopolitan yearnings are definitely Hellenistic, complete with the sensual mood of sharing and caring, while allowing for a postmodern twist in the Christian theme of 'peace and love.' This *mélange* suggests how Lennon's sentiments are indeed congenial to the late Roman Empire. There is the undercurrent of the ideal life as a luxurious sensorium, but the song's staunchly universalising intent also proposes an imagined empire in which a lot of different things would first have to be destroyed. 'Imagine' a world in which you cannot imagine any other creed or way of life, '...and the world will be one.'

Imagine: one, big, happy family, no doubt speaking English. – '*Tellement affreuse!*' the French would surely exclaim. Sartre would probably expand his definition of hell to include Lennon's utopia, and so might Virginia Woolf.

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ⁱ *Emotion*, an English rendering of the Latin *animi motus* or *motu animalium*, refers to the feeling of ‘inner motion,’ the *commotio* [commotion] or *concitatio* [tumult] we experience when we find a poem ‘moving’ or a piece of music ‘exciting.’ An emotion is experienced as a ‘feeling’ that, when sufficiently strong, may dispose us to action: *passio* to *actio*. Psychologists have clinically established how these inner motions are organically expressed by elevated pulse, altered breathing and blood pressure, tears, blushing and muscular contractions, especially of the face, arms, hands and torso. The inner feeling is not simply mentalistic in character, but is ‘expressed’ physically. Emotional expressions in language, we may say, are linguistic evocations of the physical phenomena.

ⁱⁱ ‘A friend is a lover, literally. The relationship between Latin *amicus* “friend” and *amo* “I love” is clear, as is the relationship between Greek *philos* “friend” and *phileo*, “I love.” In English, though, we have to go back a millennium before we see the verb related to friend. At that time, *freond*, the Old English word for “friend,” was simply the present participle of the verb *freon*, “to love.” The Germanic root behind this verb is *fri-*, “to like, love, be friendly to.” Closely linked to these concepts is “peace,” from a Germanic a noun from the root *frithu*. Descended from this noun are the personal names *Frederick*, “peaceful ruler,” and *Siegfried*, “victory peace.” The Germanic deity *Frigg*, goddess of love, lives on in the word *Friday*, “day of Frigg,” from an ancient translation of Latin *Veneris dies*, “day of Venus.”” Extract from AHD (2006).

ⁱⁱⁱ The profound connection between love and hate is a theme of poetry and song from ancient times, and has been discussed widely in the literature of theoretical and clinical psychology. Leo Tolstoy (1969: 214), in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, expresses the idea in its extremity when the central character describes the marriage that ended in murdering his wife: ‘A period of love, a period of hate; a weak period of love, a brief period of hate; an intense period of love, a prolonged period of hate. We did not then realize that his love and hate were different aspects of one and the same animal feeling.’

^{iv} **‘strange adj.** 1. Not previously known; unfamiliar. 2. a. Out of the ordinary; unusual or striking. b. Differing from the normal. 3. Not of one’s own or a particular locality, environment, or kind; exotic. *Archaic* Of, relating to, or characteristic of another place or part of the world; foreign. **adv.** 1. In a strange manner. [Middle English from Old French *estrange extraordinary*, *foreign* from Latin *extraneus* adventitious, foreign, from *extra* outside, from feminine ablative of *exter* outward.] **stranger** n. 1. One who is neither a friend nor an acquaintance. 2. A foreigner, a newcomer, or an outsider. 3. One who is unaccustomed to or unacquainted with something specified; a novice: a stranger to our language; no stranger to hardship. 4. A visitor or guest.’ Extract from AHD (2006).

^v This aphorism has an interesting psychological dimension. The modern psychoanalytic profession, as well as advocates of popular motivational psychology, remind us that you are

your own worst enemy. Therapists of several well-paid disciplines depend upon causing you to know this.

^{vi} A test of this distinction is posed by the vituperative lyrics of rap and hip hop artists such as Ice Cube, *Waitin' To Hate*; Waterboys, *Be My Enemy*; Canibus, *Hate U 2*; Eminem, *3 Verses* or *Nail In the Coffin*. Their violent, obscene and nihilistic expressions of hatred – the gloating over crime, death, destruction and sexual despoliation – may for some be partly and purposefully subverted by irony, youthful bravado and the swagger of pop chart fame and riches. The aesthetic *frisson* of these songs is intensified by blurring the line between anger and hatred.

^{vii} Since rhetoric is devoted to the conditions and possibilities of persuasive oratory, here Aristotle draws the lesson: 'It is plain from all this that we can prove people to be friends or enemies; if they are not [enemies], we can make them out to be so; if they claim to be [friends], we can refute their claim; if it is disputed whether an action was due to anger or hatred, we can attribute it to whichever of these we prefer' (1382a19-23).

^{viii} This theme of unnatural combat is tragically mirrored in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, based upon Plutarch's account of the 5th Century BC Roman military hero, banished from his native city, allying himself with his former enemies, the Volcians, to do battle against his kinsmen.

^{ix} **other adj.** 1. a. Being the remaining one of two or more. 2. Different from that or those implied or specified. 3. Of a different character or quality. 4. Of a different time or era either future or past: other centuries; other generations. 5. Additional; extra. 6. Opposite or contrary; reverse: the other side. **n.** 1. a. The remaining one of two or more: *One took a taxi, and the other walked home.* b. **others** The remaining ones of several **pron.** 1. A different or an additional person or thing: *We'll get someone or other to replace him.* 2. **others** People aside from oneself. [Middle English from Old English *Ǽther*.] (AHD, 2006).

^x Alluding, *inter alia*, to Said (1978, 1993); Bhabha (1990, 1994); Spivak (1982).

^{xi} **foreigner** **n.** 1. One who is from a foreign country or place. 2. One who is from outside a particular group or community; an outsider. **foreign adj.** Abbr. for. 1. Located away from one's native country. [Middle English *forein* from Old French *forain* from Late Latin *foranus* on the outside from Latin *foras* out of doors, outside. (AHD, 2006).

^{xii} Western tourists returning from China several years ago remarked on the experience of peasants in rural areas approaching a tourist, pointing to and touching a tourist's blonde or red hair, laughing and pointing out to others its exotic colour and curls.

^{xiii} Accounts of cruelty by the conquistadors toward the natives of South America, published by Bartolome de las Casas (1474-1566), a Spanish friar, moved the Spanish king, Carlos V, to convene the Council of the Indies to determine whether the natives were human beings possessed of a soul and thus potential converts of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. Carlos V, by most accounts, saw the conquest of the Americas as an ardent pursuit of souls for salvation

on behalf of the Church rather than merely the pursuit of territory and material riches. (Palfrey, 1998). The Conquistadors, asserting otherwise, hired Gines de Sepulveda to argue the case that the natives were sub-humans and therefore without rights. Las Casas advanced the thesis that they possessed both souls and intelligence, and were thus deserving of the duties and privileges of the Church as well as the crown. Las Casas' publications probably served as a model for Thomas More's *Utopia*, which first appeared in 1516. An early English edition of las Casas' work appeared in the 17th century (Casas, 1699). A standard history of these events is Prescott (1966).

^{xiv} *Hedone*, sensual pleasure; *euphrosune*, fun, euphoria; *aponia*, lack of pain; *ataraxia*, lack of confusion; *katastematikos*, sedate, tranquil.