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provide the strength for her originality); she has received little academic attention. Brookner, on the other hand, writes from the heart of the establishment. (Before taking to writing novels, she had been Slade Professor at Cambridge University and Reader at the Courtauld, University of London, and published four academic studies of French Art.) Critics treat her seriously.⁶ Her fiction has helped to define the postwar Woman's Novel, having refined the form in over twenty novels. Their apparent Englishness, to the point of caricature, has obscured her own Jewish, Middle-European background and the Jewish identity of many of her characters. That identity forms part of a critique of "Englishness," a project that she shares with other Jewish women writers but that has not been critically recognised.

Both *Mate in Three* and *A Family Romance* treat issues of assimilation and masquerade like those in *Farewell Leicester Square*, and raise equally poignantly the resultant problem of authenticity and self-disavowal. Similar dilemmas propel the first novel by a Jewish author of the next generation, Linda Grant's *The Cast Iron Shore* (1996).⁷ This is another book that deals with maintaining appearances. The trope of clothing/dress/costume that figures in all three novels is emphasised by Grant to indicate the masquerade engaged in by Sybil Ross, her central character. Sybil is always highly conscious of what she wears and she spends much of her life working in the dress section of department stores and reading the fashion articles in women's magazines. This is cover for her underground work as a communist and parallels her inherited secrecy about her divided background. She was born in Liverpool to foreign-born parents: her father was a naturalised Serbian-Jew, her mother a German who masqueraded as Dutch in Liverpool during the Second World War. Obsessed by clothes and appearances, parading the wealth gained from Mr Ross's business as furrier, they raise Sybil to dress as a middle-class Englishwoman.

Relevant here is Joan Riviere's theory that women masquerade as "feminine" in order not to antagonise men. She argued that "womanliness could be assumed and worn as a mask"

but, when asked “where to draw the line between genuine womanliness and the ‘masquerade,’” she added that “they are the same thing.”⁸ As Simone de Beauvoir said, women are not born, but made.⁹ Girls are educated to dress and behave in a feminine manner. In a similar way, working-class children used to be given elocution lessons and classes in deportment in order to avoid class prejudice and escape their regional origins. Authors concerned with racial hostility often emphasise how racially insecure characters may try to “pass” for insiders, masquerading through their clothes and behaviour as assured members of the dominant order. Indeed parents may pay for a public-school education that enables their sons to “masquerade” in this way in order to succeed in society. Girls would be sent to convent in order to become “ladies.” In other words, the signs of gender, class, race or ethnicity are not all innate; most can be performed.

That does not mean that the performance will convince. Indeed Homi Bhabha argues that the “almost but not quite” standard is crucial to the power of the dominant culture.¹⁰ The judgements made about the Jewish public-schoolboy by Robert Nicolls in Miller’s *Farewell Leicester Square* and by Isabella Oliver in Virginia Woolf’s 1941 novel, *Between the Acts*, can be compared with Al Alvarez’s views in his autobiography *Where Did It All Go Right?* Alvarez’s father had been educated at Dulwich College; Al went to Oundle, “the austere, non-Jewish world to which I did not properly belong.”¹¹ This was his comment on the subtlety of upper-class British anti-semitism:

It didn’t matter how well-mannered or cultured they might be, Jews, by definition, weren’t gentlemen and never could be. The Alverezes, who had all the trappings of gentlemanliness as well as an in-built Sephardic sense of superiority, found this particularly galling. After all, the family had been in England for generations; what else did they have to do to be English?¹²

In *Farewell Leicester Square* the first time Alec Berman is seen through the eyes of a powerful Englishman, the marks of his racial otherness are immediately discerned:

“characteristic” blunt head, black tough hair, hooded eyes and the “trace of racial sibilance” which Nicolls expects him to lose, so anxious is Alec to adapt and conform:

Five, ten years would see him talking, acting like the English public-school Jews whom Nicolls periodically encountered at the board meetings of his companies. Men who always gave him a slightly odd sensation when he conversed with them; who had succeeded in the extraordinary feat of ousting all trace of their origin, not only from their accent and behaviour, but actually from their physique. Despite which complex achievement (for which he was not without admiration) they struck him always as essentially unreal, hollow men. They existed in a curious limbo between

her opposition to apartheid, she and Jack have accepted a free holiday there), she perceives the evening clothes, the dinner-jackets and long dresses, of the well-groomed white hotel guests as an “outward show of gentility and civilisation, as absurd as fancydress at a funeral.”¹⁶

Similarly, in Anita Brookner’s *A Family Romance*, Jane’s dazzling Aunt Dolly is

own image as “a good pastiche of English society:” “If you had hung her on the wall you would have seen a collage of magazine cuttings.” Together with her parents, during her upbringing Sybil had lived “an exquisite imitation of life.”²¹ The traditional concern of the Woman’s Novel with the psychological and emotional life of its protagonists is, in these three novels, not only related to appearance and masquerade: it becomes a critique of dominant western culture as itself an imitation, a pastiche, a hollow masquerade.

Bernice Rubens’ previous novel to *Mate in Three*, the extraordinary *Madame Souzaatska* (1962), was made into a Merchant-Ivory film in 1988, starring Shirley Maclaine, in an adaptation by Ruth Praver Jhabvala. The novel after, which was her fourth, *The Elected Member*, won the Booker Prize in 1969, and the next one was a runner-up for the Booker. Between these, *Mate in Three* (1966) was passed over in silence. Why? At first sight it appears to be less artfully constructed, with only two main characters, a deadpan narrative voice and a straightforward plot concerning a love relationship. Yet that appearance is deceptive. The second part of the novel circles around three stubbornly allegorical events in South Africa which resist any easy interpretation, and the open ending does not resolve the dilemma of the novel or the future of its characters. A book written in the clear prose of a Mills and Boon pot-boiler, with a forward narrative drive, short episodic chapters and plenty of dialogue, it nevertheless fails to deliver the comforting certainties of popular fiction.

Mildly subversive in its refusal to keep to the aesthetic rules of the game, *Mate in Three* was outspokenly radical in drawing attention to its two interlocked themes: internalised racism and an abusive marriage in London, which it relates to apartheid in South Africa. The year the novel was published, 1966, was the year in which the National Front

was formed out of the detritus of earlier extreme right-wing groups. At that time in the mid-1960s, the anti-apartheid movement was well established in Britain, with a boycott of South African imports and support for imprisoned opponents of the regime, such as Nelson Mandela and Jewish activists like Helen Suzman. Influenced by the Civil Rights Movement in the USA and parallel with anti-apartheid agitation, there were street demonstrations in Britain by the growing Campaign for Racial Equality, and race riots against discriminatory immigration procedures, which resulted in the Race Relations Act (1976) and the Commission for Racial Equality. However, to relate anti-Black prejudice to anti-semitism in Britain was, despite the ideology of the National Front, not common, particularly in the way in which Rubens made the connection. *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon's classic analysis of racial alienation and the black inferiority complex, which related the black African and Jewish situations, was not translated into English until 1967.²²

Equally revolutionary but more original was Rubens' portrayal of domestic violence, especially in a middle-class marriage where both partners had trained as teachers. The

implication is that these are Jews who are so anxious to assimilate to Gentiles that they would sacrifice their own first-born son.²⁵ Unlike Jack's school-friend, Helmuth Kahn, who was killed at Auschwitz along with all his family, Jack never had a Barmitzvah. Consequently he hates his mother for cheating him out of his manhood.²⁶ He also knows his parents will hate Ruth, who with her thick black hair looks undeniably Jewish, "almost ugly;" that seems to be precisely why he chose her.

Ruth Lazarus is the daughter of a tailor, himself a rabbi's son. She was born in Wales but her parents are what the Millars call "*Ostjuden*" from Lithuania. Mr Millar explains what this implies: they were like the Eastern European Jews who had arrived in Germany "in their droves" before the war, behaving as if they were still in the Ghetto, wearing long beards and sideboards [*sic*] and speaking Yiddish publicly. By making themselves conspicuous, "They were to blame for what happened to us."²⁷ By contrast, Mr Millar claims, "We've never denied we're Jews.... We just don't make an issue of it."²⁸ However, Ruth, partly angry and partly from a sense of the ridiculous, refuses to be silent and discreet in return as Jack would wish. Her response becomes the central moral of the book:

'It's not what you do or what you think. It's what other people see in you, and it's this that is your identity. It's this you have to come to terms with.'²⁹

This view coincides with Sartre's in *Anti-Semite and Jew*. Sartre had argued that the figure of "the Jew" was socially constructed by other people, but an "authentic Jew" was one who nevertheless asserted his Jewish identity "in the face of the disdain shown toward him" rather than keep quiet about it.³⁰ Ruth's orthodox family has an "unassailable sense of identity."³¹ They may not wear the long beards and sidecurls of Hassidic Jews, but they continue to speak Yiddish and have maintained their ethnic way of life. When Jack is first introduced to them, it is clear he does not understand Yiddish and knows next-to-nothing about Jewish culture. As the conversation about *gefilte* fish for the ritual Friday evening meal hints, Jack's Jewish identity has been filleted out of him a

Demonstrative where the Millars are frigid, the Lazaruses regard Ruth's relationship to Jack as "almost marrying out."³² The two families are not each other's "kind of people."³³ The question is how a marriage between Ruth and Jack can bridge such a gap.

Not long after their wedding, Jack erupts in the first of his "bouts of violence." It is the culmination of an argument about how Ruth is dressed. First he twists her arm. Then he throws her to the hall floor and kicks her thigh "as she lay there stupefied." He kicks her again.³⁴ Afterwards they make love violently, his verbal abuse ringing in her ears: "Grow [your hair] as long as you like.... As far as I'm concerned, you can trip over it and break your neck."³⁵ Her loose black hair is to him a sign of her physicality which "threatened him" and "fed his fears of his own inadequacy."³⁶ Instead of an apology he assuages his guilt with

published in 1970—and none of these considered race as an issue.⁴⁰ It was not until 1974 that Erin Pizzey shocked middle-England with *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear*,⁴¹ revealing the extent of violent abuse (even) in middle-class families and the need for women’s refuges. This stimulated the foundation of Women’s Aid projects and the Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Violence in Marriage in 1975. Pizzey showed that “women of all areas, classes and races” were subjected to domestic violence; in 1996, a report on London’s black communities by Amina Mama agreed that “violence occurs in all creeds, cultures and classes.”⁴² Adrienne Baker’s 1993 study of Jewish women drew on the 1990 Norwood Annual Report to show that, mirroring the wider society, one in three Jewish marriages ended in divorce, the breakdown frequently accompanied by domestic violence.⁴³ Jewish social workers spoke of a “massive denial” about this in the Jewish community, confirming Mama’s view that “women’s abuse remains a shameful and buried phenomenon.”⁴⁴

The first novels by Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, *The Bluest Eye* and *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, specifically related the violent abuse of women by black American men to internalised racism and self-hatred. These novels both appeared in 1970 (four years after *A Mate in Three*), but their analysis did not really reach a wide popular consciousness till the success of Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* in 1982. By that time the Women’s Movement was growing in confidence on both sides of the Atlantic. The 1980s saw the publication in Britain of several works concerning sexual violence within the family, including Nell Dunn’s play, *Steaming* (1981), Pat Barker’s novel *Union Street* (1982) and Fay Weldon’s *Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983), all of which reached a wide audience through film adaptations. Joan Riley’s first novel, *The Unbelonging* (1985) specifically related sexual abuse in a Jamaican immigrant home to British racism. Domestic abuse is now widely recognised, as the common term “battered wives” testifies. (Roddy Doyle’s novel *The*

Woman Who Walked into Doors (1996) was notable for being written by a mainstream male author. It sensitively depicted the bruised state of mind of an abused wife.) However, when

and receiving comfort and forgiveness, and so the cycle of marital violence perpetuates itself.

Both Morrison and Rubens analyse this situation in terms of a racial hierarchy within the minority ethnic group. The racial hierarchy mimics the class hierarchy of the dominant society. Thus, among African Americans, “colored people” who are “neat and quiet” distinguish themselves from “niggers” who are dirty and loud;⁴⁹ among Jews, assimilated German immigrants feel superior to “*Ostjuden*” who retain overt signs of their Judaic

Ruth, bringing them together in an experience of commonality: “We must stay together” Jack determines, siding with Ruth’s perceived Yiddishness rather than with his own adopted Europeaness. Previously they have been driven apart by their families’ different ideas of Jewishness; now they are drawn together by the fact that they share a reviled Jewish identity in Gentile eyes. This is the key to their marriage. Jack feels that if he could understand how “Jews and the Negro” are related to his own personal situation he would be free of his inner problems and able to love Ruth freely. It might also kick-start his unsuccessful writing career.

What he also struggles to understand is the significance of their encounter on the same beach with the rotting body of a scarred black bull-seal, half-buried in the sand at the edge of the sea.⁵⁸ Jack feels some affinity with this exposure of black impotence, of wounded pride; it reveals to him that “you could die from impotence.”⁵⁹ He senses that he has to make a connection between the two discoveries. For the reader to see the connection is to grasp one of the enigmas of the novel. This parallels Morrison’s revelation of the way in which Cholly’s experience of sexual humiliation by armed white men psychologically emasculates him; continued degradation and joblessness turn his sexual tenderness into brutality. He has no way of earning the respect which could permit him to accept love.⁶⁰ Instead he hates the woman who witnesses his helplessness in white culture. Similarly Ruth’s realistic observation that Jack relies on humiliating her in order to function, diminished him still further by reinforcing his sense of moral inferiority: “She had shown him to be what he feared he was, a frightened man, uncommittable, cruel, selfish, vain.”⁶¹ Cholly permanently internalises his sense of the mockery of his manhood under white eyes. A similar sense of permitting a third-party judge to intervene in his marriage haunts Jack.

These men do not feel their marriages are with their equals. Neither Jack nor Cholly can admit to being emotionally dependent on a wife they are forced to judge as racially

inferior, ugly and unworthy. Part of their problem certainly stems from the diminishment of women in patriarchal society which only grants a man his status as a man from the power he wields, the perceived worth of the women he controls. However, what Morrison and Rubens are depicting is the way in which race qualifies patriarchal power relations. In fact the inherited rituals of the ethnic minority culture (such as the ceremony of barmitzvah) can serve to empower men and give them a secure sense of worth (as we see by the contrast

apes being an Englishman, but the party reveals that the appearance of white civilisation, with its formal robes and regalia, is itself a masquerade of nobility and less to be respected than the “noble savage” ideologically civilised by Europeans. If womanliness and masquerade are “the same thing” as Joan Riviere argued, then so are whiteness and masquerade.

The effect on Jack is cataclysmic. The sad, decadent despair of the party-goers speaks to his own state; he hates them and is disgusted by them just as he needs to destroy the rottenness inside himself: “it was himself he hated more than anybody.”⁶⁴ Rushing outside, to get his fury out of his system he paints two slogans on a wall. Above “ONE MAN, ONE VOTE” he writes “MISCEGENATION IS THE ONLY SOLUTION.” He is arrested and sentenced to six months in prison.

The party seems to force Jack to recognise not only his own sexual dishonesty but also the sexual corruption of the white society, which mirrors its political rottenness. Yet this is an extreme form of the European civilisation to which he and his parents had tried to assimilate. (That England may be only apparently better than South Africa is hinted at by Ruth’s fearful nightmare of a normal English garden-party, where, of course, as at the Queen’s summer garden party, ladies will be expected to wear not only high-heeled shoes and stockings, but hats, handbags and white gloves—the costume of the Queen herself and the outfit that Mrs Millar required of Ruth.) Jack hates himself for conforming to such a hypocritical civilisation, symbolised by the comically absurd scene in the township on Christmas Day. Jack and Ruth had sung Christian carols round the piano with a black African family and their anti-semitic tour-guide, omitting the word “Jesus.” South Africa has been revealed as anything *but* Christian.

Ruth has managed to survive in the marriage by splitting herself and dissociating from her pained awareness of Jack’s duplicity and cruelty. Jack survives by fragmenting

himself, continually forced in South Africa to assert that he is a Jew, and thus despised, and yet pretending to be one of the whites, whilst realising that that makes him subject to the same political contempt with which he detests them for despising and exploiting the Black Africans. He recognises that he has a huge problem, which he pictures to himself as the need to fit the pieces of his experience together into a coherent jigsaw. “Give me time,” he has continually promised Ruth. The week he actually spends in the South African prison should give Jack ample time to reflect and solve his problem before his release.

In fact his time in prison is occupied by a surreal experience that seems to owe more to the hallucinatory fantasy of William Burroughs than to derive from the polite tradition of Elizabeth Bowen. Jack spends his time eavesdropping on an underground communication system that operates through the lavatory pipes. Listening in via the lavatory pan in his cell, which serves as receiver and mouthpiece, he overhears phone-sex between a prisoner called Joseph and his black “pen-pal,” Lena. This releases for Jack a dream-desire for black

character in himself” and “runs away from this insupportable situation.”⁶⁷ The violence of Jack’s denial is meted out to Ruth, who is punished for representing his Jewishness. His adultery with a gentile who falsely assures him, “You’re a man, Millar, a man, man, man,”⁶⁸ is a fugue from the marriage that binds him to the insupportable situation of his Jewish identity. In South Africa he had felt forced into authenticity. Although he “hated the word” and felt a “momentary hatred for the Jews in South Africa,” “[h]e faced the fact that he was a Jew” and “he felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility towards every single Jew in every part of the world.”⁶⁹ So he repeatedly asserted out loud, “We are Jews.”⁷⁰ Existentialists like Sartre and Camus believe

has actually assimilated to through his role-playing. Rubens' originality is to link this analysis of racial masquerade and humiliation to an analysis of the subordination of women. Thus the marriage figures as an allegory both of a racist society which camouflages its own internal violence, as well as of the divided self of a man who hides from himself his own racial humiliation. At the same time, the novel displays the mechanics of an actual marriage. As a woman's racial markers are fetishised and used as excuses for sexual punishment, so she is forced into accepting the eroticisation of her own violent subordination.

⁶¹ *Mate in Three*, 82.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 191.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁶⁷ Sartre, 84,93.

⁶⁸ *Mate in Three*, 74.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 139, 167, 150, 168.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 168, 173.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 238.

⁷³ The peculiar status of Jews in the racial ideology of whiteness is discussed in Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997).