

BUSHY

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He has to go back and forward in time as if his life were a cave-painting of a hunter and an eland engraved a hundred thousand years ago, and coloured-in every generation since then. Of an eland, not dying, but losing her present body so the people may eat. Her back legs are crossed because she is passing away and her very weight as the heaviest buck in Africa cannot be sustained by her ebbing energy, poor creature.

What will her offspring do without her, and her male mates? In spirit s/he goes to live in the crescent of the moon. Death is grief even for animals when all are hunted by drought, hunger, predators, the ageing process. But according to the Bushpeople's belief, spiritually the dying eland does join other eland-people, and human-people in the moon. They are not ghostly or absurd but happy: they will wax and wane for ever. That is because they believe it is so. They believe in a joyous leap into faith. It is no more absurd that Kierkegaard's leap across the abyss of nothingness from a cliff made of aesthetics and ethics onto the firm ground on the other side which entails a belief that God could impregnate a Virgin with His Son Who died to redeem us from sin. Or in my case that Moses receiving the whole of the law and all future – 3,200 years – of rabbinic teaching after 40 days talking to God on Mount Sinai.

My name is Xhabbo which means “dream” in the old Cape Bushpeople's language. My full name is Xhabbo /Xam. The /Xam are my people. The stroke / and “X” in /Xam, are, respectively a lateral click /, and a guttural as in “loch” in Scots dialect (=X).

But to make social intercourse easier with the Europeans, I, Xhabbo /Xam, am introduced to non-Africans as Bushy Kham – I have to spell even my English-phonetic name for them. I am beyond alienation. Non-Bushpeople treat me as exotic. They ask me to recite a poem or a story in /Xam as if I am an alien from another planet. There are four other clicks in /Xam. When the prey hears us or catches the faintest smell of us stalking her, s/he is reassured that the clicks s/he hears amongst the hunters are really only insect noises, so our language is a kind of camouflage.

In case you didn't know we now are to be found in the wild, so to speak, mainly in what was South West Africa and what was Bechuanaland, which – the latter - in 1966 became the Republic of Botswana. S.W.A. became Namibia when the Afrikaner Nationalists let go of apartheid and in 1994 became independent of South Africa. Before the First World War ended in Germany's defeat, S.W.A. was German South West Africa. There are other Bushpeople in Namibia who speak !Kung.

In case you didn't know the titular and quite informal head of the British Commonwealth is Queen Elizabeth II. Is she the Queen of Botswana? No. Except that she knighted Sir Seretse Khama the first president of Botswana who was then called Sir Seretse.

*

I, Xhabbo /Xam, have a best friend who is Mordechai Pekarsky. The relationship is reciprocal but we are both heterosexual. Mordechai is descended from Russian and Lithuanian Jews whose parents and grandparents immigrated to South Africa after the Anglo-Boer War in about 1905. Those they left behind, in Europe, the Pekarskys, and his mother's family, the Sachs, the Oshrys, the Yaffsitches, the Jaffs, the Pomerances, who were all killed by the Nazis in the early 1940s – by the charmingly named project-groups, the *Einsatzgruppen* in eastern Europe or died in the death camps, mainly in Poland. Mordechai's maternal grandmother, Rose Sachs, who died in 1985 over a hundred years of age, was haunted by the Holocaust. She spoke Yiddish and when she heard German, even spoken by German Jews who immigrated in the 1930s, highly refined and educated people, the depression of her final years became paranoid and the spirit of Hitler lurked around every corner.

She rang the front door bell of the distinguished Arnstein family living in number 14 Muizenberg Mansions (next to number 12, there wasn't a 13 because Judas Iscariot His betrayer, so-called, was the 13th apostle of Jesus) and when poor, dear Frau Arnstein answered Rose screamed "Hitler!" in the flabbergasted lady's face. Fortunately I was close behind and urged her to apologise profusely in my dog-German ("Bitte machst sie ein Enschuldigung! Frau Arnstein bin ein liebe Deutsche-Yiddishe Frau, nicht ein Nazi!").

I was able to calm Rose in my dog-German which I had acquired from my missionary teacher Mrs Moffat who was originally German from the old German South West Africa the colony of Namibia which was close enough to Yiddish for her to understand and could, I knew, from my elementary psychology studies have a counter-conditioning effect since she liked and trusted me. In fact I was her care-person. She used to glue herself to the wireless for the 6 o'clock in flat number 1 to listen to the news from the BBC which we shared when I was her daughter Minna's manager from 1945 hoping to hear that Hitler and the Nazis were dead, with me translating into dog-German. She wept with relief at the news of the Fuhrer's demise in 1945 in the bunker in Berlin. "Hitler is dead!" said the announcer. "Hitler ganz tot?" echoed Rose without needing translation. She grabbed me and danced a Polish / Zionist / German folk-dance, singing and clapping as we circled each other first in one arm then in another: "Hitler ganz tot! Gluckliche Tag!"

*

Mordechai and I, Xhabbo, Bushy, were at Witwatersrand University, which had so far, in 1953, our first year, resisted segregation, by fighting against the exclusion of black students, and then we went to Oxford - free at last to go around with twin sisters, non-identical twins, Astrid and Avira Cooke originally Australian who had a Jewish mother, Ethel Cohen who married Herbert Cooke, a Christian. They lived in flat number 23 above the Arnsteins in Muizenberg Mansions.

I was what they called “a phenomenon” – practically unknown in those days – a Bushperson who had broken through the colour bar and achieved an academic career– not only in Bechuanaland, on the north western borders of South Africa which was home to me, but at Witwatersrand University, and then at Oxford.

What all four of us in the younger generation had in common was that Bushpeople and Jews were once treated as “vermin” – in Afrikaans and Dutch the word was “*ongedierte*,” and in Hitler’s German *ongeziefte*. Of course not in Australia overtly but certainly in South Africa when I first arrived there in 1936 when I was 10 and was more or less imported as a child to live in flat number 1 with the widowed Rose Sachs who although only 60 showed signs of anxiety/depressive illness, poor woman, for which in those days there was only a barbiturate, sodium amytal. In return for looking after her and hiding the barbiturates until the time came for her dose – helping her three daughters, Minna, Hannah and Shoshana - I would be educated by Lazarus and Minna Pekarsky who had heard about me from their cousin Maurice Pekarsky, a shopkeeper in Ghanzi who “discovered” me as a bright child with a gift for languages who played with his own small children in this town, the capital of the Kalagadi Wilderness, and whose English, Afrikaans and even some German I had picked up. The German came from customers who drove into Ghanzi from what had been German West Africa to buy and sell produce.

My parents were originally true hunter-gatherers, until some family crisis – a marital problem – drove my father away to work in Crown Mines in Johannesburg where he was killed in a fight with a Zulu miner who disparaged him as a Bushman only 5 foot 2 inches tall. Even more unfortunately or perhaps heroically, just after the knife attack by his enemy in the mine restaurant - already bleeding profusely, he killed his enormously taller assailant – drunk – because my father had on his person a steel tipped hunting arrow on the point of which there was a paste of the deadly grubs he brought with him and carefully nurtured on their favourite plant which he had managed to grow secretly in the fertile garden of none other than the mine-secretary – one of the white English-speaking officials who lived near Crown Mines and who employed my father as a gardener whose Bushman skills in the world of nature were legendary.

Fortunately my missionary-teacher Dr John Moffat far from being shocked and repelled by this tragedy, as a good Christian, taught me how to take consolation from the Biblical maxim: “‘Vengeance is mine’ saith the Lord”. And that God redeems those who suffer. My father bled to

death quickly but the Zulu assailant slowly succumbed to the paralysing poison before he or his friends could get him to Baragwanath Hospital.

*

Hitler and what he and the Nazis did to the Jews, and the way South African whites and the Australian whites exterminated Bushpeople and Aborigines could never be forgotten. The South African killers were largely of Dutch, French and German origin – who together made up the Afrikaners or Boers, and the white Australians were mainly British people. Given the universality of imperialism and colonialism could they be forgiven? Perhaps. But never forgotten.

*

I, Xhabbo /Xam, Bushy, went around with Avira Cooke and my best friend Mordechai went around with Astrid Cooke - the two young women born in Australia in the outback on their father's farm, who lived in number 23 Muizenburg Mansions. Before them there had been the great depression and later bad droughts and then the war and then the Cookes emigrated to South Africa where the father Herbert Cooke went into partnership as a brickmaking entrepreneur with Mr Nathan Levi, one of Mordechai's mother's tenants. The Levis lived in number 3 Muizenberg Mansions on the ground floor underneath the Arnsteins

The building was in Bellevue East at number 39 Delarey Street. On the corner of Hopkins Street.

It was its own world, yet another colonial world, only apparently a world away from Australia and Nazi Germany and Bechuanaland and German West Africa. Herbert Cooke's great-great-great-great-grandfather had been convicted of manslaughter in England and sent to Australia's penal colony in its early years in the late 18th century. He was a dealer in livestock who killed a gentleman who had cheated him by clouting him a bit too hard. He was not related to Captain Cook who "discovered" Australia.

*

We, the Bushpeople, had a collective Southern African identity as hunter-gatherers, but unlike the Europeans, we did not then become fully part of a modernising, industrialising nation-state. The Batswana, led by a ruling tribe, the Bamangwato, dominated the nation-state in Bechuanaland. after colonialism

In Europe too, the nation states, were preceded by hunter-gatherers of the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic and the Bronze Ages.

Becoming European nation-states, as everybody knows, meant conquering the world and the indigenous hunter-gatherers everywhere – the North Americans, the Australian Aborigines, the Brazilian Amazonians all suffered. Native dwellers from time immemorial were subjugated to white British, American, South African, Rhodesian and Australian colonialism or before that at the hands of some other more aggressive prehistoric tribe.

And genocide. And millions of Africans enslaved. For which you needed modern weapons and the tactics of annihilation. Commandos, horses, regiments, carts, ships, whips, ropes for hangings and confinement short of death - shackles, chains. Buying and selling human beings in a market place.

Africans were too valuable to be wiped out. They obeyed their chiefs and were sold as slaves through Arab merchants and if they survived the Atlantic crossing which itself killed millions, were again sold to European slave-owners, and settled in the Caribbean and the Deep South of the United States and South America. African slaves growing sugar, and cotton, and making rum, kick-started the Industrial Revolution in Britain which spread throughout Europe and the Americas. Central and South American gold pillaged from the Incas, the Mayas and the Aztecs by the Spanish and Portuguese paved the way for Iberian national glory and the colonisation of Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Brazil, Argentina and the rest of central and south America.

The /Xam, the Bushpeople, were either wiped out in South Africa or often more or less enslaved in Bechuanaland unless some person or philanthropic society helped them stand up and fight for them or a few tens of thousands, no more, managed to go on in their traditional ways.

Before that for between 25,000 and 75,000 years the /Xam hunted and gathered in the open veld. It was all theirs' and the animals' and the heavenly bodies,' all of whom spoke and sang in /Xam.

Only after the invention and spread of writing, did hearing the voices of animals and stars become mixed up with the language of the mad.

Rather for them it was their religion.

Because, at first, they had no writing, the moon, the stars, the sun *spoke* to them. The animals *spoke* too, because, they, the Bushpeople could understand their animal codes of behaviour.

In this respect the animals were human like the Bushpeople and the Bushpeople were created beings like the other animal creatures. Vultures adopted a human woman as their sister! Although with dire results.

Even the veld could speak and tell them which animals were nearby. For hundreds of thousands of years, when they were still hominids - before about 250,000 years ago when they became human until the present - they learned to read and interpret the animal-peoples' footprints, their cries, their roaring, their bleating, their whistling, their humming; and we, the Bushpeople could examine their excretions which told what the animals were doing and whether they were sick or well, healthy or wounded.

The sun and the moon and the Milky Way told them the time of night and day and about the seasons of the year.

Mantis was especially revered but he was big, like a giant human being. Yet he still looked like the praying Mantis insect on a double-human-sized scale with his eyes on stalks, his front legs like hands and his fingers jagged like saws. And the most gorgeous transparent wings.

*

So, many of us had become "villagized", we who once owned the whole of Southern Africa.

We could name the genus of every bird just hearing the first notes of its song, from just a flash of its colouring the kind of snake that slithered, we knew all the species of grasshopper, the cricket, the cicadae, the butterfly, the moth, the dragon-fly, the mosquito, the midge even if it just flashed by. We had names for every kind of veld-food, roots, nuts, shoots, leaves, grasses, seeds. Eventually we were introduced to money in exchange for fresh carcasses and skins and hides and could buy Sunlight Soap and Persil and smelt clean.

We could tell when the dreaded mass-killers, the locusts were on their way.

We felt and heard them afar off.

We were, perhaps, telepathic. We would feel the on-coming of a creature or a person or a change in the seasons or in the weather in the form of a certain throbbing in our bodies or a flash of insight in our minds even when the message came from miles away.

When someone died the *hamerkop*, the hammer-head bird, came to tell us and then s/he went for a dip in the river. When a star (later I, Xhabbo /Xam learned it was a meteorite) fell, we also knew that someone had died.

We loved music and dance as well as cave painting. Our trance-dance made us happy, cured us of misery and fear.

*

Being and beings are everything in the universe.

I ask why there is Being. Because of the laws of physics creating the near-infinite *density of the mass*, and near-infinite *condensed space of the mass*, and near-infinite condensed space of the time which is measured in the singularity by the speed of light. Energy is mass multiplied by the speed of light squared. Einstein said it better.

I fumble towards it and around it because Being is more difficult than the being of the singularity, the origin of this universe.

There may be other universes the totality of which, even if an infinite number, may be Being in itself immanent, as well as a series of beings as Being for itself transcendent because of the birth and death of stars let alone life in the totality, side by side with immanent, empirical, individual life and matter. Sartre understood this in "Being and Nothingness". But we, s/he, human individuals cannot grasp the whole of Being transcendent and the whole of beings immanent. Only God can do that. Sartre concluded that therefore "Man is a useless passion".

For me it is enough to revere an hypothetical God. S/He binds me together, S/He anoints my head with oil. S/He makes me lie down in cool places. S/He guides me through the valley of the shadow of death. Through Her I fear no evil. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.

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But Being neither increases or decreases. It may change form.

Black holes hover between immanent pure inward gravity in themselves, and being transcendent at their event horizons, still entities for others not yet pulled into their complete gravity.

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As I explained from the pupae of one insect we made arrow-poison which paralyses and kills the game and can murder murderous human beings.

*

We believed there was one great star which gave all the other stars their names. That star and the other stars and all Being are God although S/He might speak largely through the moon or the sun, or through the springbok mothers grunting a lullaby to their kids.

God is both For Herself and In Herself. At least I think I understood what Sartre meant when Dr Moffat, using the male gender, described the *pour-soir* and the *en-soir*.

Humankind as such is For Herself, consciousness, transcendental.

Individual women and men are in themselves, empirical, immanent.

We loved Jupiter and called it the Dawn Heart's Star.

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Later I learned that it was not a star but a planet circling the sun. That was when I was 7 in 1933. For-Ourselves as part of our collective transcendent consciousness - we saw Jupiter as the Dawn Heart's Star.

Empirically in-itself, immanently, Jupiter is the largest planet. A gas giant with a 4 billion year-old storm raging clockwise in its great red spot.

*

At first in 1933 I was afraid of Dr Moffat's school in Ghanzi Town next to the Anglican church where I was being drawn into an entirely different world from my Bushpeople's culture.

With some reluctance when I was old enough I understood Dr Moffat suggesting that God was Being and Being was God and it was possible that ours was one of an infinite number of universes which started with an infinite number of singularities. Why? No one knows why. Instead perhaps ask, why not?

*

In the library of his school there were newspapers brought in by train and lorry from Johannesburg.

I, Xhabbo, Bushy, saw newspapers about Hitler and pictures of his followers humiliating old Jews by making them clean the streets with toothbrushes, old men with beards, young mothers with children being abused by Nazis – big, strong, blond, blue-eyed men attacking humble shop-keepers and gentle women and children and smashing them and shop-windows to pieces as if they – the Nazis - were Aryan gods.

*

I, Xhabbo, Bushy, was born in 1926 here in what was Bechuanaland and as a child I learned veld-lore with my mother and father and brothers and sisters, uncles and grandfathers and cousins.

Then there was drought and the game went north and family and clan members began to split up and the mortality rate rose. Some starving families of sick or malnourished Bushpeople began to work for African chiefs and white farmers. My mother worked in the kitchen of the Ghanzi clergyman, Dr. John Moffat, - he who started a school for his own children and who was amazed that I, Xhabbo, Bushy, could pick up English and Afrikaans and German from Mrs Moffat and what to them was common-sense scientific knowledge.

So, at 7 in 1933 I, Xhabbo, Bushy, learned English from Dr Moffat and Afrikaans and German from Mrs Moffat who was originally from Freiburg. She was colossally bright. She even brought Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* presumably from pre-war Germany. I think she may originally have been Jewish. Her maiden name was Hirschberg. She actually did a medical degree at Freiburg University and had a clinic near the church in Ghanzi but was never seen at religious services. It was amazing that in colonial Africa one found such exotic people.

I learned arithmetic, later geography. Dr John Moffat and Dr Doris Moffat gave me extra lessons in astronomy, physics, chemistry, maths, biology, zoology, history so that eventually I could go to Johannesburg in South Africa itself into an advanced class to get my Cambridge school certificate in a post-war, liberally run commercial college where there was no segregation, Damelin College.

He did it for the love of God. It was his mission. Unlike those who persecuted us, he loved Africa as the mother of mankind. On that his possibly atheistic wife left out the God bit, but also loved Africa as the mother of humankind. For my love of both of them I studied and worked for the general good because God implanted that love in my Being. I was convinced that woman and man are born free but everywhere in chains. *L'homme et la femme naissent libres mais partout enchaînés*. Rousseau. Pity he put his own children in orphanages. Dr Doris Moffat taught me some French and a great deal of German. As for Heidegger, she bought me an English translation of *Sein und Zeit* when it came out in 1962.

Eventually by the time the war broke out in 1939 and I was 13, and more so by the time it ended in 1945 when I was 19 I had learned *about* Copernicus, Galileo, Leonardo, Newton, Faraday, Darwin, Einstein, Sartre and Heidegger. Now my computer helps me and the students at Gaborone to learn philosophy.

Of course, in still-racist Southern Africa people regarded me as an anomaly, an anachronism, a Bushman freak who could think. A clever dick. I was supposed to be primitive and prehistoric. I had to keep quiet about all this European stuff because boasting was punished in our culture and intellectuality was suspect as a forerunner of a betrayal of our ancient way of life.

All this secular and scientific knowledge was unknown to most Bushpeople. They feared and even hated it.

What good was science, I wondered, when I re-joined the dispersed family clan, when the drought and certain epidemic illnesses were over, and when we could start hunting and gathering again? Leave our crushingly boring and badly-paid jobs as shepherds and herders and farm labourers? Was hunting and gathering not a happier state of nature?

Compared with what one of their philosophers, the Englishman Hobbes, called the “Leviathan” which emerged as a social contract with the state so as to keep the peace, our original state of nature, although hazardous was comparatively happy.

Even in segregated South Africa and somewhat segregated Bechuanaland. But by that time our days in the Garden of Eden were gone. Like Eve we had eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The greatest evil of all was the coming climate crisis and the pollution of the planet. I had an intuition that our children and grandchildren would have to return to the Kalagadi Wilderness and become hunter-gatherers again.

But at least then it seemed as if the Moffat teachers in the Anglican primary and high school were right in warning the Bushpeople that the farmers and eventually the mines would encroach on the Kalagadi, and that many Bushpeople would then be prevented from hunting and gathering as they had done for perhaps 75,000 years.

The “Leviathan” in Bechuanaland wasn’t that bad compared with the “Leviathan” of the Boers when they came to power in South Africa itself in 1948. Black and brown people eventually had no national vote at all until 1994 in South Africa itself. And after that there was corruption. Ruinous. The poor remained in townships and were mainly black and brown, and the rich, now after 1994, both black and white, lived in the elite suburbs. What should have gone to the poor was stolen by the rich even though apartheid was gone.

*

Xhabbo and my parents thought about the problem of what the two Drs Moffat called “Xhabbo’s unusual intellect” – my mind.

However advantageous it is, you cannot eat knowledge, no matter how rational and scientific unless you implement it technologically and educationally.

My thought was influenced more by both the Moffats who painted a picture of a world in which people were individually and culturally varied but potentially as souls and minds could rise above tribe, religion, equal (according to John Moffat) before God who was Being For Herself as universal consciousness and was constituted also by beings-in- themselves empirically and immanently.

Dr Moffat was a philosopher and theologian by training. He had read everything from Plato to Sartre and Heidegger by way of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and passed it on to me.

It was he who explained again and again that Being was God and God was Being transcendently and beings were God immanently. But we could not exist in both modes simultaneously, except hypothetically with Her assistance.

In doing so we might avoid the Devil who, metaphorically, was a very fallen angel. The epitome of evil.

I, Xhabbo, Bushy, now, of course know that there are good and universal truths and of course there are evils. But what were the Bushpeople to eat unless we entered modernity altogether as *educated* wage-earners when there was a drought or an epidemic? Not many people could be bothered either with our traditional lives or our adapting to contemporary life.

This was frightening.

Did you have to become a socialist to fight evil? Did that mean capitalism was evil?

Different parts of capitalism and different parts of socialism could be both evil and good.

The reality of Bechuanaland was that the smaller tribes and Bushpeople could be enslaved by the Batswana chiefs. They were stuck between the modernity of the few and the “backwardness” (traditionalism) of the many. Thank God the two Drs Moffat educated me. Thank God after my father was killed in Crown Mines in Johannesburg my mother worked for a “bohemian” artist-farmer Andre Cilliers who made her his *de facto* wife. His portraits of her face became famous as prints all over Botswana.

The king of the ruling tribe, the Bamangwato, negotiated for the whole nation – whatever that might be - when independence came in 1966.

A London-trained barrister Seretse Khama and his white English wife, Ruth Williams, became president and the first lady.

This happened after the couple were initially separated and Seretse was exiled by the British government to pacify the apartheid regime across the border in South Africa whose uranium, mineral riches and economy were deeply involved with Britain’s national interests, including defence, the uranium needed to make their atom and nuclear bombs and power their submarines.

The Boers couldn’t stand mixed marriages like Seretse and Ruth.

A lot of Boers had concubines over the 350 years they had settled in South Africa. That’s why there were mixed-race Afrikaans speakers, the Coloured people, although some they classified as such were Cape Malays, Muslims. All these they regarded as “stock” – extensions of their property.

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Diamonds in open-cast mines in the eastern edge of the Kalagadi eventually transformed poverty-stricken Bechuanaland into a wealthy Botswana. After 1966 there was a democratically elected parliament, and eventually small and poor tribes like the BaKalagadi and the Bushpeople could become part of the legislature, an Africanised civil service and Africanised criminal and civil justice systems.

There would be an African university in the new capital Gaborone which would eventually take in all ethnic groups and be staffed by all ethnic groups, based on merit.

But to ordinary, still tribal people, modern society and scientific knowledge were not edible.

Modernity can eat *you* - twist and turn your mind in a hundred directions.

Still the ghosts of my ancestors returned to haunt me unless I exorcised them in the trance-dance. Both Drs Moffat allowed me to confess to them my griefs and pain and they assuaged me.

There were even Israelis in Gaborone and Kalagadi Town and local Jewish professionals and traders who had Sabbath and Festival services in people's homes or in a local classroom. One of the Gaborone university professors and his wife taught me Hebrew, biblical and modern. I did biblical Hebrew as one of my courses at Witwatersrand University. Avira and Astrid Cooke were born in Palestine in 1936 and Mordechai my friend spent some of his holidays in Israel. I felt sorry for the Palestinian Arabs and the Arabic-speaking Jews who had been forced to leave their homes in Arab countries. 700,000 people on either side.

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Dr Moffat had an illiberal recent ancestor who was with the British South Africa Company which invaded King Lobengula's Matabeleland and Mashonaland in the 1890s.

The old dead Reverend John Moffat of the 1890s haunted the living doctor Moffat of the 1910s who lived into the 1990s.

Dr Moffat had to tell me, Xhabbo, the terrible story of Rhodesia over and over again: "Imperialism and Colonialism Were Theft, the Price of Modernity".

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He was a clergyman so he could not hate his ancestor the other John Moffat. But he had to tell the story of his perfidy.

There had been two big African empires in what became Rhodesia and much later Zimbabwe.

The empires of the Rozwis and of Mwene Mutapa.

One of these African civilisations built Great Zimbabwe as their castle and fort with African slaves. This had narrow passages so that the rulers could block and kill slaves and enemies who were in revolt or besieging them, wanting to enter the zimbabwe to overthrow the ruling elite.

Those Empires died.

God knows why.

Disease. Drought. Locusts. Tribal war.

The Europeans brought money. They had already made huge sums of money digging for diamonds in Kimberley and gold on the Witwatersrand the centre of which was Johannesburg. This was in the middle of Queen Victoria's reign in the 1860s and in the 1880s.

They wanted more land, more gold, more diamonds.

They stole land. They could farm it commercially with tractors and harvesters on a huge scale. They had access to mass-markets in Africa and abroad.

In the 1890s Cecil Rhodes through the BSA Company paid King Lobengula a few hundred out-of-date rifles and some ammunition and a river-boat for the whole of Mashonaland and Matabeleland. And then acquired Nyasaland.

This was a colossally successful fraud. There was no notion of selling and buying land amongst African pastoralists and farmers or the African kings.

Traditionally land reverted to the dynastic King on the death of the tenant or was simply inherited by the tenant's African tribal heir.

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Later statues were put up in honour of Cecil Rhodes but not to the memory of King Lobengula or the Nehanda and Kagubi spirit mediums of the amaShona until much later.

Lobengula and the amaNdebele, the most recent pre-colonial hegemonic regime, and the Shona leaders and spirit mediums, earlier the subjects of the amaNdebele, were hunted and killed for rising up against the European settlers. They had killed white farmers who were given the best cultivated and grazing land when the Africans realised they had been cheated by the Rudd Concession and there was a mass revolt.

The Rudd Concession was witnessed by this other Christian clergyman, the Reverend John Moffat, the ancestor of Dr John Moffat of Ghanzi and his wife my revered teachers.

They, the British South Africa Company hanged the Shona spirit mediums Nehanda and Kagubi for rebellion after settlers were killed on the order of the ancestors speaking through the mediums.

The hegemony of King Lobengula died with him when he was hunted like a criminal.

But the amaNdebele were eventually outnumbered by the amaShona whose liberation movement under Robert Mugabe became the ruling group from 1980. This man and many in his party and his national army were cruel. Like the whites in the Rhodesian regime.

Eventually even South Africa itself gave up racism and Nelson Mandela and the ANC came to power in 1994. Mbeki was deluded about AIDS and Zuma was corrupt. Mandela was an icon, a great hero and a great human being. But he was an old man when he was released from Robben Island and then Victor Verster prison. He had all that trouble with Winnie, his second wife who, harassed and tormented by the Security Police, placed in solitary confinement, exiled to a nowhere place, Brandfort in the Orange Free State, drank too much and ran a gang of criminalised youth on her

return to Soweto. The courts did not dare send her to prison, even after Nelson divorced her. Her driver Jerry Richardson was convicted and imprisoned for the murder of a young boy, Stompie Mogestse, whom she accused of being a Security Police spy. As for Nelson as president he did not delegate properly because he did not follow through the administrative decisions of the cabinet. The first minister of the police and state security was too proud to take up the offer of skilled help from the New York Police Department. Chaos and crime went up on the streets of the big cities and farmers became afraid of armed attack on the remotest houses in the furthest-flung isolated homesteads and distant villages. There could be no question of forced requisition of white-owned land when the African peasantry had not the skills and resources to engage in commercial farming. The ANC had only to look at the tragedy of farm invasions in Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe.

And here I was, finally ending up at Gaborone University as a senior lecturer in philosophy in the department of theology and religious studies when Avira, Astrid, Mordechai and I came back from Oxford with our various postgraduate degrees in 1962.

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My own group of Cape Bushpeople found refuge in the Kalagadi Wilderness, north-west of the old Transvaal, north of the Orange River in the 1700s. There were already other groups of Bushpeople there. We were being subjected to genocide into the 1830s even when the British ruled the Cape Colony.

There was still no money amongst the Bushpeople. We used to buy and sell by exchanging game for mealie meal, sugar, tea and coffee. We learned how to tan hides and skins so as to trade. We traded with the Africans for iron for bladed spears and tips for our arrows.

The Batswana started to deal in cattle. The British Protectorate government sometimes stopped protecting Bushpeople against rich Batswana and Afrikaner farmers and tourism. They wanted the Kalagadi to make this part of the Empire profitable.

Anthropologists from Europe and America tried to tell the world about Bushpeople's culture which protected and loved the game, blessing them with eternal life.

Cash – and products - that became the only reality fuelling the African Batswana cattle barons, the Afrikaner and the English cattle barons and the tourism industry. And the new surface diamond mine

in eastern Botswana made the elite rich. There was now an industrial working class which became acquainted with socialism and trade-unionism.

The Bushpeople and the smaller tribes like the BaKalagadi became like the peasants in the early Middle Ages in Europe and Russia. Serfs.

Before, in South Africa itself, the Bushpeople and the African tribal nations fought against the whites like the Druids against the Romans.

You already know that barbarian tribes fought against Romans who had swords, shields, the phalanx, siege-engines, battle-catapults, a vast imperial organisation, roads, bridges, border walls, trading, administration. Taxation. All you needed to do was speak Latin and acknowledge Caesar and then you would be civilized, however barbaric the Roman games in their amphitheatres.

You could inherit Greek science and philosophy and become Greek and then eventually Roman which saw itself as furthering Greek culture before the Roman empire itself became great.

With awe we learned that the Romans conquered much of ancient world, after the Macedonian Greeks under Alexander conquered much of known world. The British followed in their footsteps 2000 years later. The known world was now as big as the globe itself.

*

Today, now the Batswana and white farmers pack cattle into lorries for the Lobatsi abattoir. A five-hundred-mile ten-hour journey in the heat.

And one eats the meat.

Next to the abattoir, there is the jail and next to the jail there is the psychiatric hospital.

Slaughter, punishment and madness.

It is organised.

It is according to the laws of economics, sometimes without pity.

The courts give precise judgements. Murderers are hanged in the jail.

Diagnosis, drug treatment and electro-convulsive treatment happen in the psychiatric hospital.

This is civilization.

*

When we speak at meetings of the First People Society, the government has informers who report on dissidents. One has to be careful what one says.

So, I, Xhabbo, Bushy Kham and Mordechai Pekarsky teach philosophy at Gaborone University. After we completed our Oxford degrees.

Avira and Astrid our girl-friends also got lectureships here and South Africa.

Under the Boers, inter-racial marriage, such as between me and Avira and settling down in South Africa was impossible until apartheid ended finally and completely when Nelson Mandela and the ANC were elected to power in 1994.

*

To be educated is to suffer more because one understands how one is being exploited.

The leading parties and tribes offered elections for parliament but the majority tribe government decided how taxes on diamond-mining and cattle-raising are to be used.

Now, how were people going to pay for school uniforms for their children, rent for the government houses which they didn't want when they were forced out of the Kalagadi, money for water that comes through taps in the kitchens and bathrooms and toilets?

The boreholes were for the wild animals to stay in the central game reserve, so as to encourage tourism, not for the Bushpeople to drink.

The First People's Society managed to collect £50,000 to fight the government to acknowledge the Bushpeople's ancient right to hunt and gather in the Kalagadi.

Having switched off the taps at the boreholes to deter the Bushpeople, the government turned on the taps in the Kalagadi because the Botswana High Court ordered them to do so.

And what makes the drought so bad these days? Climate change. Global warming.

Industrialisation for hundreds of years in the developed world and now India and China.

The Republic of Botswana has a name for us - for the Bushpeople.

Although here in Botswana my name is Xhabbo /Xam and my nickname is Bushy Kham, they call me one of the Basarwa and in Setswana, "sarwa" means a "son". So, they actually call us *their offspring* rather acknowledging that we are fathers and mothers in our own right.

Children in fact.

Have you seen their new Bushpeople's villages?

Full of alcoholics, full of desperate single women with too many children and not enough reliable use of contraception, children with no belief in any ancient religion, converts for the evangelical Christians. Mordechai and I, Xhabbo /Xam, Bushy, teach social philosophy to social workers at Gaborone University to improve conditions in the San or Bushpeople's villages and to help other disadvantaged groups. Avira and Astrid do psychology and sociology – teaching and research.

Then, the radicals talk of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Is this anything like the poor inheriting the earth? Where has that not led to the dogma of the churches or one-party-rule and dissidents living on the streets or concentration camps? The commissars becoming the new bourgeoisie? Jesus, did he foresee what colonialism and post-colonialism would become?

*

As a teenager, I went to live and work in Jo'burg, at Muizenberg Mansions to earn money for /kweiten ta //ken my mother and my brothers and sisters and the extended family. My father had been murdered in Crown Mines near Johannesburg.

In Jo'burg one met the peoples of the books. Not just Jews. There were good Jews and bad Jews. Just like Christians. Just like Muslims and Hindus.

As I said when I was only 10 my boss was Minna Pekarsky. To most of us she was the white madam. She was a Jewish person who owned and ran the flats. She was very kind.

She and her husband Lazarus Pekarsky were also teachers.

She taught music, and he taught English and maths.

At first, I was a flat-boy although I was educated when I started at Muizenberg Mansions in 1936 and even though I was as young as 10. She promoted me to manager at 19 after I got my Cambridge school certificate. I even had a flatlet on the ground floor. I wore long khaki trousers, a tweed jacket, over a decent shirt, a khaki shirt, and leather sandals. The "boys" wore blue denim shorts and tunics trimmed with red piping and they made themselves shoes out of rubber tyres and tyre tubes for straps. They who were descended from King Shaka's regiments.

*

The war against the Nazis was being fought in north Africa and Italy in the '40s and then came the freeing of the concentration camps: BERGEN-BELSEN, AUSCHWITZ, SOBIBOR, TREBLINKA, DACHAU, SACHSENHAUSEN.

Mordechai's grandmother, Minna's mother, Rose Sachs, shouted out these damnable names when her mind began to wander in old age and she became obsessed by news of the murder of their relatives left behind in Poland and Lithuania. I knew how mad she was because I had to contain her in my flatlet number 1 Muizenberg Mansions as manager because Minna had bouts of arthritic illness caused by a virus.

I had to calm both of them. The old lady would talk to me in Yiddish in my flatlet which I shared with her when she became a widow. Yiddish is written in Hebrew characters. I had to ask Minna Pekarsky to write words phonetically in Latin characters to calm the old lady. Now I have a computer to help me transliterate, besides I learned enough Hebrew from the Israelis in Botswana for me make a start with Yiddish on my own and by chatting with Rose Sachs and using a Yiddish/English dictionary. And there was Doris Moffat's German.

"Tsi nit zorg, bobbe. Hitler vet farlirn di milkahmah. Etlekhe fun deyn mishpokkeh ken antloyfn di kansantreyshan lagern."

"Don't worry, granny. Hitler will lose the war. Some of your family may survive the concentration camps."

She would call me "Xhabbo – Bushy the good boy!" and give me half-a-crown – two shillings and sixpence. She slept in my bed-sitting room and I looked after her as her care-person sleeping in the one bedroom of the flatlet at 1 Muizenberg Mansions.

But the war. Many of the whites still called all Africans and Bushpeople "boys" although we were helping them fight their war. They wouldn't give us guns to fight Hitler's field-marshal Rommel in Libya. We and the Coloured people were batmen and trench-diggers and stretcher-bearers. They were afraid if we learned how to use guns they would turn them on them, the Europeans.

They – we - invaded Italy. I was only 14 in 1940. We, for the first time went to opera-houses and art-galleries. We appreciated the richness of western civilization not just the colonial version of it. We saw the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican by Michelangelo and his statues of King David naked with his sling, and Moses with his Book of the Law.

When the liberation movements came of age then they called us men and women. Out of fear or respect for our dignity acknowledging that their days as masters were over, they called us people.

*

The Pekarskys and Mordechai Pekarsky were exceptionally good.

Mordechai was newly born when I, Xhabbo was a boy of 10, and by the time he was 13 and I was 23, Mordechai and I were able to share an equal on-going education, me with the Drs Moffat in Bechuanaland, and Mordechai at Queen Victoria School and then me, at Damelin College in Jo'burg City.

Using what the Drs Moffat taught me, Xhabbo, in Kalagadi Town, Mordechai and I shared school books when he went to Queen Victoria High School and I, Xhabbo was at Damelin College.

*

At Muizenberg Mansions I had learned how to organise the other men, although I was a Bushman and they were Zulus, very big and brown, compared to me with my ripe-apricot colour and only five foot two inches tall although I was strong and broad.

I had worked in the East Rand Premier Mine on the Witwatersrand before becoming a flat-boy. I wanted to know how my father had to work as a miner before he was killed at Crown Mines.

So, I became Minna Pekarsky's manager at Muizenberg Mansions. They politely asked for wage increases in the block of flats. They got them. From 5 pounds per month to 7 pounds per month. For each of the five of them. I got twice that and a flatlet when Minna's mother Rose Sachs had to be looked after. The tenants paid £40 per month per flat. 12 flats. Plus rates, electricity, water. Minna

and Lazarus took 20 or 30 years to pay off the mortgage. I had number 1 Muizenberg Mansions free of rent in lieu of managing when Minna was sick with viral arthritis, and for looking after her mother Rose Sachs.

And then in 1969 Minna died aged 70 and, still in his right mind, but bewildered Lazarus Pekarsky aged only 71 was cheated of Muizenberg Mansions by a con-man.

What a tragedy.

The man got it like this: he said he was a conveyancing attorney and he could convert the flats from rented accommodation to leasehold ownership for tenants and make a total profit of 100,000 Rand for Lazarus, less conveyancing costs, which, in the end amounted to 100,000 Rand! The building was worth 600,000 or a million Rand!

So, by deft manipulation and fraud, which he hadn't the strength of mind to report to the police or the energy to start a civil action Lazarus was left with nothing and this man owned the building for free.

Lazarus died in an old people's home at 93 still believing secretly in Jesus Christ. He had become a Christian.

How was this possible, that out of good should come such evil?

*

It was alright in the 1940s when the Pekarskys still had their small, fruit and vegetable farm in the western Kalagadi growing under green shading and drip-irrigation installed by their Palestinian kibbutz relatives the Berlinskys.

They had a manager, a big, clever, Batswana woman Onkegetse Moloji who learned the methods of desert-agriculture from those who were then Palestinian Jews.

So, imagine the scene: before and during and after the war, me going backwards and forwards from Bechuanaland/Botswana to Jo'burg travelling by the Rhodesian / South African train 3rd class non-whites only, and Mordechai and the granny and the Pekarsky parents in 1st class, in the Easter and Christmas holidays, only able to communicate under the doleful eyes of conductors and station-masters when the train stopped at a small country platforms.

They gave me books and journals to read including textbooks about all the -ologies. Anthropology especially. And dictionaries for hard words. I seemed to have an insatiable hunger for knowledge.

Everyone thought I was what they called "gifted".

And I taught the flat-boys what was appropriate of what I had learned from the Drs Moffat in Bechuanaland / Botswana and from Mordechai and Damelin College in Jo'burg in our crowded two rooms to the Ngubane Zulus and the maids who were usually local Sotho speakers. I already had my flatlet where I looked after Grandmother Rose Sachs who outlived her own daughter Minna. She lived to be over a hundred – about 105 - dying in 1980.

*

Ngubane was their surname – all it means in Zulu is "What is your name?" As if the European name "Watt" is given to someone who answered the bailiff or the tax-collector with "What? when asked what his surname was". "What? Then that's your name – What. Watt is easy to spell. Your name is William Watt."

*

I had questioned Mordechai about the South African Communist Party. After the war we both did politics in our first degree at Witwatersrand University. We already knew how Stalin purged the Russian Communist Party of Jews who criticised his dictatorship in the name of the proletariat, and had them executed in the Kremlin prison.

So, Mordechai and I read Marx in opposition to Marx. Marx said: "Until now philosophers have only tried to understand the world. The point is to change it." We said: "Until now revolutionaries have only tried to change the world. The point is to understand it first and then to change it."

*

To begin with they, the Pekarskys, had their one and only child Mordechai who was born in 1936. He was the one more interested in stories than in food.

When he was a toddler he was very thin. When he laughed at my stories Minna Pekarsky would put a spoonful of food in his mouth. And he then would eat. I was 12 and he was 2. I told him Bushpeople's stories till he laughed. Not the gruesome stories like the baboons playing football with the head and the eye of the son of Mantis, their god, until Mantis retrieved the head and the eye and recreated his son with the eye washed clean.

But beautiful stories: like the girl who made the stars.

These were Jewish people, often worried about food, worried about being Jews. Because of what Hitler and the Europeans were doing to them in Europe, calling them "vermin" and killing them in their millions during the second world war. The war changed everything for everybody. When we were fighting the Germans in Italy we remembered how the farmers in South Africa called the Bushpeople "vermin" too – *ongedierte* – and wiped them out in the 18th century and under the British in the early 19th century because we stole their cattle to defend our homeland where we had existed for 75,000 years.

One quarter of a million of us. So they say: according to the American anthropologists from Harvard - Richard Lee and Irven De Vore. They studied our neighbours the !Kung San.

They kept telling the British Bechuanaland government and, after 1966 the independent Botswana government that our way of life was being destroyed, but most whites hardly regarded us as human no matter how many times we told them the San or Bushpeople were once all over South Africa. We and the Khoi-Khoi were the only people there long before the first Africans arrived from 500 to 1500 years ago.

These Africans tried to build a new zimbabwe at Lydenberg. Something stopped them. Drought. Disease. Tribal war.

*

So, this was their traditional culture: for 75,000 years: they lived side by side with the animals who, in their innocence, they respected and regarded as people. The hare was a human-person-hare. The jackal, the lion, the hyena, the cheetah, they were jackal-people, lion-people, hyena-people, cheetah-people. They spoke to them.

They pleaded with them saying they would go on living after they died temporarily because we hunted them. Even when their bodies were eaten, they would come alive again. As did Mantis, god, immanent in the praying mantis insect. Who was butchered as a hartebeest and then he transformed and resurrected as Mantis, as big as a human being, bigger, an insect-giant.

So, the moon being a woman or a man, we would pray to her to give us good hunting and make us round and fat like her and not disappear as s/he did, nor become thin like s/he did. We called the moon *!kau!kauru*. So this is how we prayed to the moon and related the story of death:¹

*

“We, when *!kau!kauru* the Moon has newly returned alive, when another person has shown us *!kau!kauru*, the Moon, we look towards the place at which the other has shown us *!kau!kauru* the Moon, and, when we look there, we see it, *!kau!kauru* the Moon, and we shut our eyes with our hands, and we shout: ”

!kabbi-a ! Take my face where you are! You shall give me your face where you are! Please take my face and give me yours, dear Moon! My face feels thin and hungry.”

“Dear Moon give me your face, with which you, when you have died, again you return living, that I may also resemble you.”

“For, the joy of living forever, you possess it, you can return alive, because we know you were just hidden in space, you were perhaps somewhere on the underside of the earth.”

“Only later we learned the earth is not just curved, it is a globe, it spins on its axis making day and night.”

“The old hares told us one lives forever and once upon a time, we, like the old hares lived forever. Yes, the old hares and all would one day die if they were hunted or murdered but we, the humans and all the animals would return alive after a little death – more like a deep sleep

¹ From *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*, by W.H.I. Bleek and L.C. Lloyd, [1911], at sacred-texts.com. See the introduction to Bleek and Lloyd for Bushpeople’s orthography. I have taken the liberty of adding a modern quasi-political stratum to the ancient story.

– and we would again be alive forever. We would be resurrected as much as or more than Jesus because our world was completely our world and we were so happy in it, we could not “die” forever. It was inconceivable.”

“Every dream we had was a story with a meaning from the still-living or the recently dead, all of whom resurrected.”

“Not like Shaka Zulu, or Lobengula or even Cecil Rhodes: they were remembered by *their* nieces and nephews, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren when they, their ancestors were actually *dead*.”

“But the young hare, he was the one who ruined it all. He spoke and he wouldn’t be quiet. He refused to be silent, for, when she fell into a deep sleep he felt his mother would not again living return; for his mother, he felt, was altogether dead. Therefore, he would cry greatly for his mother.”

“Moon replying, said to Hare that he should leave off crying; for, his mother was not altogether dead. For, Moon and Hare’s mother knew that she and he would again living return. Hare replying, said that he was not willing to be silent; for, he knew that his mother would not again return alive.”

“For, she was altogether dead. Why? Did he hate his mother? No, he was bitter. Because not only was he verminous, he was angry because he was infested with vermin. In fact, we, the Bushpeople, who were clean, we were just called *verminous* by the white man whose cattle we stole in defence of our country.”

“Hare was so *actually verminous* he welcomed death and going to a clean place after death, a heaven in the sky: death would be a blessing. When the Boers and even the British farmers and the Bastards, the Griqua commandos tortured and killed us we also longed to be without vermin and die and become spirit or ghosts in a clean heaven in the crescent of the new moon”

“But Moon became angry about it, that Hare spoke thus, because Hare defied Moon. Hare knew what real suffering was. He saw with his very eyes the Boers treating the Bushpeople as *verminous* and killing them.”

“Even the Moon said you must fight them, and the animal-people must fight them because they were hunting the animals to extinction too, so as to extend their farms.”

“Death came into being because of greed. You would have lived forever under my rule, the rule of Moon which temporarily disappears like a dead person. But the *verminous* Hare over-ruled the Moon.”

“He wanted to die and be a clean animal in the sky. So, the Moon came down to earth and hit the rebellious Hare with his fist, cleaving Hare’s mouth; and while s/he hit Hare’s mouth with his fist, s/he exclaimed: “

““This person, her mouth shall altogether be like this, and death shall be death forever because s/he cannot obey and therefore although before Hare’s life was magical when s/he was half a person, half an animal, now s/he cannot learn how to be a clean animal. S/He shall always bear a scar on her

mouth; s/he shall spring away, s/he shall run zig-zag. The dogs shall chase her; they shall, when they have caught her, tear her to pieces, s/he shall altogether die because of her accursed vermin.”

“Like we who were called vermin by the Boers and the British farmers”

*

“Our mothers told me, that, the hare has human flesh at her *//katten-ttu*; the hollow of her thigh, therefore, we, when we have killed a hare, when we want to eat the hare, we take out the "biltong flesh", which is human flesh, we leave it; while we feel that s/he who is the hare, her flesh it is not altogether hare.”

“For, part of her flesh belongs to the time when s/he formerly was a woman, it is human flesh. We believe the moon that when we die we live forever in her crescent. It is not quite life and not quite death, except for Hare, who suffers death completely.”

“Moon spoke, saying that s/he (Hare) should lie upon a bare place; vermin things should be biting her, at the place where s/he was lying; s/he should not inhabit the bushes; for, s/he should lie upon a bare place; while s/he did not lie under a tree. S/He lay upon a bare place where the vermin were free to run around in the sun which they love. Like ants. Fleas. Beetles.”

“Therefore, Hare is used, when s/he springs up, s/he goes along shaking her head; while s/he shakes it out, making the vermin fall from her head, in which the vermin have been hanging; while s/he feels that the vermin hang abundantly in her head. Therefore, s/he shakes her head, so that the vermin may fall out of her. Even the sky will not be clean for her when s/he dies. For she will be totally consumed except for her human flesh.”

“And that is our story too when the Boers and the Bastards and even the English farmers called us vermin: *ongedierte*: we lost our forever-future. It wasn't just Hare who had no faith. We lost our faith as well. Only a very few of us still believe we will be clean and alive forever in the crescent of the moon. But that gives us hope. That our descendants will remember us at the time of the new moon.”

*

He, Mordechai, often broke down, because he too had no faith. To tell you the truth Mr Lazarus Pekarsky the father although he was born and brought up a Jew, was a secret Christian. He loved Jesus. He loved all sorts of religion, but not just the Jewish religion.

*

The boy Mordechai was divided in himself. He wanted a father who could teach him to be brave like Moses and Aaron, King Saul, King David. His father Lazarus was too interested in Jesus. Turning the other cheek. The boy was confused. You should be above all one kind of identity.

*

So I, Xhabbo /Xam, Bushy Kham, had to teach him to be brave.

The first test was Mrs Hibbert.

He was 6 and I Xhabbo /Xam, Bushy Kham, was 16. The Europeans couldn't manage the click sounds.

It was the first day at Queen Victoria Preparatory School, Louis Botha Avenue and Oak Street, Upper Houghton, Johannesburg. January 1942.

He was waiting in the yard of Muizenberg Mansions, playing squash all by himself against the outer wall of the lift-shaft with a ball on a long elastic string attached to a heavy wooden block. He was dressed up in his new green blazer with the crown of Queen Victoria on the top outside pocket and Q.V.P.S. embroidered underneath, his white shirt, red and green horizontal striped tie, neatly knotted, grey short trousers, polished black shoes and green socks.

Minna Pekarsky said to me: "He loves you, Bushy Kham. You be the one to take him to school on the first day. Wait at the gate in case he wants to come home. That is what happened on his first day at the kindergarten in Observatory Avenue when he was 4.

He is over-attached to me, you understand. It's partly my fault. I lost my first baby who was still-born in 1935, 7 months after pregnancy began. You're brilliant with him telling him how brave the Bushpeople and the animals had to be after Hare thought her mother died. Tell him his mother hasn't died. He will not die under the Germans. It's my mother filling his head full of horrible visions."

Mrs Sachs, Mordechai's grandmother was agitated as she walked up and down in the corridors between my flatlet where she usually slept, the Pekarsky flat and the Levi flat on the ground floor and on the first floor of the building from which there was access to Dr Bacher, the child psychiatrist's flat and consulting room. She was a German Jew.

She was the head of a child guidance clinic on Hospital Hill at the Hillbrow General Hospital. She had already had a talk to Mordechai and played out his fears with toys in her consulting room in Muizenberg Mansions.

Dr Bacher had enthusiastically taken up the Bushpeople's story about death and the hare in play therapy. Minna repeated Dr Bacher's litany of reassurance. "You, Mordechai, you are not Hare. You are not verminous, not like Hare who wanted death in a heaven clean of vermin. The Bushpeople were called vermin, the Jews were called vermin by Hitler and killed in the concentration camps. What you must not fear is fear itself. Let me think of an analogy."

"Think of me, Minna Pekarsky, playing the Beethoven 5th piano concerto with the S.A.B.C. orchestra with no rehearsal, or only the first and last bars of the piano part for the orchestra to come in and go out, because the conductor is too busy to have a complete run through".

"I could easily break down and think ill of myself. If you poo in your pants the way you did during the first day at nursery school and Xhabbo /Xam, Bushy Kham, has to fetch you home, again, it will be a sort of defeat, what Dr Bacher calls a regression. We have to treat this with psychology which Xhabbo /Xam, Bushy Kham, can teach you, just as I encourage the nervous kids who come to me for piano lessons."

"Xhabbo has to be clever. Bushy Kham has to chat in a friendly way with the school caretaker and explain the position on the first day of the January term, 1942."

The African caretaker let me sit on a kerbstone in the shrubbery outside Mrs Hibbert's classroom.

Quietly I sang the story of the girl who made stars which Mordechai knew from before. It took his mind off Mrs Hibbert. For some reason he feared her from the first moment he met her in the preparatory week in January before the term began. Maybe because she always wore a black blouse and black skirt- that reminded him of his grandmother Rose Sachs and the concentration camps.

*

Rose was frightening. Even when I, Bushy Kham, consoled her in my flatlet she went from synagogue to synagogue in Yeoville, Berea, Hillbrow, Joubert Park every Saturday morning listening to the sermons in Yiddish and English of the rabbis warning about the concentration camps and the Afrikaner Nationalists Vorster and Swart whom General Smuts interned in South Africa because they were Nazi sympathisers. Dr Bacher had to give her a sedative injection to stop her frightening the tenants and the maids and the flat-“boys” and maybe committing suicide by jumping over the balustrade on the roof of the building. Her own cousins, the Jaffs and the Yaffsitches, who stayed behind in Lithuania and Poland had, she heard, been murdered by *Einsatzgruppen* of local Nazis under the command of the SS, or sent to the concentration camps: she would scream their names: BERGEN-BELSEN, SOBIBOR, TREBLINKA, AUSCHWITZ, SACHSENHAUSEN, DACHAU as if the whole world was responsible, until Dr Bacher’s injection began to work and she fell asleep in my flatlet or in her daughter Minna Pekarsky’s sitting room with the balcony door locked and the curtains drawn, cutting out the bright, hot, African sun in which Mordechai and I played cricket and rugby and swam when we visited liberal friends or the Queen Victoria playing fields on a Sunday where they would let a brown person practice with his white friend. Sometimes if Dr Bacher the child psychiatrist was on holiday, Rose Sachs might have to be sedated by Dr Mendel Klein and Dr Alex Pekarsky the uncles who were to go or had been Up North during the war and were a doctor and a dentist.

She kept on wearing black dresses, as if she was in mourning, and Mrs Hibbert, Mordechai’s first teacher, was also in black and in mourning because two of her sons in the South African Air Force had been shot down in their Spitfires over the Libyan desert, parachuted out, but died of thirst before they could make it back to their base camp, and Mrs Hibbert blamed God. Who in her mind was Jewish.

It pleased Mrs Hibbert that Mordechai’s father was a secret Christian who served as a medical orderly with Quakers Up North. But in Mrs Hibbert’s mind Mordechai was a Polish or Russian Jew, and the Jews were partly the cause of the war. So, at first, she picked on him because as well as being Jewish she thought he was spoilt rotten and needed toughening up.

Mrs Hibbert, sweating into her cotton black blouse and black skirt despite deodorants taught enough spelling to educate a horse into stamping his foot every time he heard her pupils recite vowels one by one in a rough order (“bad”, “fee”, “grip”, “hop”. “pup”). Then, incessantly consonants: “bed”, “cough”, “duffer”, “fool”, “gawp” and so till kingdom come. She was incensed when Mordechai yawned involuntarily and removed his blazer without permission. She suppressed her displeasure but invited him to tell the class one of his famous bushman “boy’s” stories. She had heard that Mordechai and Xhabbo, this particular Bushman, were far in advance of their years and cultures intellectually. The headmaster had asked her to assess him in case he should be put into a class of much older children – perhaps the nine-year olds. So, he put his blazer on again, stood in front of the class and listening carefully to my, Xhabbo’s song in /Xam (the rudiments of which he had learned from me Bushy Kham) just outside the sash window - a song which he had heard so often, but he now told it in English.

“So the girl got herself out of what they called the menstrual hut – I can’t explain what that means but you’ll have to wait till we are all older to find out - and went to the camp-fire where she was not allowed to eat springbok meat because that was reserved for the young men and her saliva being that of a girl, almost, but not quite a woman, might contaminate the young men’s weapons. Anyway, she grabbed hold of the quite cold ashes of the fire and threw them up into the sky and said: ‘You, wood ashes, must become the Milky Way so people can see at night, hunt, and visit people in their huts.’ Then she found husks of a reddish bulb good to eat with white roots and threw them up into the sky and they became the red stars which go and fetch the sun and the white stars which rise and set with the Milky Way. And so, she grew and grew year by year and one day she got married and had many children and was happy because now she was allowed to go about at night in the light of the moon and the Milky Way”.

*

Mrs Hibbert was pacified. Many of the seven-year-old boys had no clear understanding of the full implications of the story. This was obviously a bright boy. Perhaps the Bushman Xhabbo, Bushy Kham, was also an exception that proved the rule about Bushpeople’s backwardness.

In a moment of sudden clear vision, she anticipated that South Africa and Bechuanaland would one day be ruled by African or multi-racial governments. Nor was there anything wrong with the Jews who wanted a Zionist Palestine. How could she have thought God was Jewish? That was really primitive thinking. God was a cultural idea rather than an actual divinity.

It was now a year since her sons died. It was a terrible blow that had changed her. At least her husband in the army Up North had survived the war in the military intelligence service. But she felt that she and her husband were too old to start having children again.

But she started to dream about her sons living in an astral region. They wanted her to start enjoying life again, playing tennis, swimming, going on holiday with her husband when he was on leave from the army Up North and later retired. She knew what it meant to follow a dream and make it a life story. She stopped wearing black and enjoyed going shopping for floral frocks. She joined book clubs and the women’s group of her church welcomed her contributions of food-parcels to be sent Up North to the soldiers fighting Rommel in the desert. One only had one life. One had to start one’s life again, every new day.

She met the Pekarsky family at the school fete. Mrs Hibbert predicted a talented future for Mordechai and Xhabbo, Bushy Kham. Everyone was pleased that Mrs Hibbert's forbidding presence had gone and a new persona seemed to have taken possession of her. At least her husband survived the war. She decided her new motto would be: "Life goes on". It wasn't brilliant. But it was a truth.

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There were British boys at Queen Victoria Primary School. In 1945 when Mordechai was 9 and in standard 4 and I, Bushy Kham was 19 they heard that an English boy's father and uncle had died in a Japanese prisoner of war camp in Burma where the Japanese used them as forced labourers building roads and bridges. They were starved, deprived of medical care, subjected to racial abuse by a military regime both modern and barbarous, one of the Axis powers fully in accord with the Nazis and the Italian fascists in their aim of world conquest, fighting to the death of the last Japanese man in the Pacific Ocean theatre of war. Pearl Harbour had brought the Americans into the war and the final assault on Hitler would take place after a landing in Normandy of the Allies. But the Japanese refused unconditional surrender. Then in the first week of August 1945 the two atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Hundreds of thousands were killed instantaneously or died of burns, radiation sickness and cancer-related illnesses induced by the nuclear explosions.

And at the Queen Victoria Primary School an end-of-year opera performance of "The Mikado" by Gilbert and Sullivan was cancelled. No one wanted to be reminded of the Lord High Executioner who had you on his list of caricatured Japanese, whose heads would be chopped off. The English prisoners of war who survived Burma never forgot what an alternative racial imperialism could and did do before it was annihilated.

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I, Xhabbo, Bushy Kham, was 30 in 1956 when together with ex-soldiers from the 8th Army who had formed the Springbok Legion after their experiences of war in Libya and Egypt then in Italy and were interested in anthropology and the teaching and research in the social sciences, "adopted" me, Bushy Kham and Mordechai who was 20, and we became radical students, no longer a flat boy and his charge. From 1948 the Afrikaner Nationalists were in power and to get away from apartheid we both lived in the men's residence near the Witwatersrand University campus.

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The Afrikaner Nationalists' first target had been to destroy Sophiatown a multi-racial freehold township on the edge of Johannesburg and move its people to scattered and distant bleak areas with no facilities like so-called Meadowlands. We became involved in a Defiance Campaign in 1953 against unjust laws where we practiced Gandhi's *satyagraha*, non-violent resistance. We staged a multi-racial performance of *Julius Caesar* on the steps of the Great Hall amongst the fluted Greek columns. Mordechai played Brutus. I was a brown Caesar with a British accent coming out of a short but muscular body built up by my stint as a miner

at E.R.P.M. where I went underground for a short period after finishing my Cambridge school certificate matriculation year. I wanted to find out what it was like to be a gold-miner 6000 feet underground like my father who was murdered at Crown Mines. I made friends with miners who came from Bechuanaland and we spoke Setswana together.

*

In 1957 when Mordechai was 21 and I was 31 we were both were finishing honours degrees in political theory and government at Witwatersrand University.

By the grace of God who was transcendentally Being and immanently being, we fell in love with the non-identical twin Cooke sisters. Fortunately, one was mixed-race looking and the other white-looking. There must have been Australian aboriginal genes in Herbert Cooke's family whose ancestor was transported to the Australian penal colony in the late 1700s. I, Bushy went with Avira Cooke who had dark curly hair and a darkish skin, whose Australian accent saved her from being taken for a mixed race Coloured South African, and Mordechai went with the golden-red-headed Astrid Cooke who was as pale as many almost blondish red-heads are.

Ethel Cooke the wife of Herbert Cooke and the mother of the twins was originally Jewish. Her maiden name was Ethel Cohen who wanted to be with her South African relatives rather than on the lonely farm in the Australian outback. Herbert was now in the brick-making business with Mr Levi downstairs in flat number 3.

So, Minna Pekarsky didn't have to worry. The Jewish faith would be upheld by Mord and Aussie, the nickname of Astrid. As a matter of fact, I, Bushy felt Jewish because Avira or Abo as we called her was so lovely and I wanted to be Jewish like Abo.

Avira and Astrid born and brought up in the Australian outback then went to the Johannesburg High School for Girls in Barnato Park in Berea which was near Hillbrow and Yeoville. Sometimes Avira was teased because she was, so they taunted her, what they called an Abo, and Astrid was teased because she was an Aussie. So Abo and Aussie were their names in the playground and on the

hockey field and tennis courts, although the teachers were respectful and called Abo Avira and Aussie Astrid.

Eventually we all ended up at Witwatersrand University and after our bachelor degrees we got scholarships to go to Oxford.

We were a collective. Abo and Aussie, Mord and Bushy Kham.

*

Having girl friends was a totally new experience. It wasn't just the sex. Or the intimacy. It was a totally new identity. At least we would delay parenthood until we finished our B.Litt research degrees. The Pekarsky and the Cooke parents helped us with capital to put down a deposit to buy a house in Oxford. We would live as if part of one family. Bushy and Abo, Mord and Aussie.

My, Bushy's, girl-friend Avira / Abo was an ardent Zionist. Her twin Astrid / Aussie, Mordechai's girl lived for sport – cricket, rugby and tennis.

Abo was excitable and an intellectual. She wanted to become a post-Holocaust philosopher investigating Jewish existential identity. Aussie was laid-back: she wanted to show that sport had an existential philosophy of being the Self and being the Other.

I Bushy would investigate the philosophical basis of San or Bushpeople's existence in the Kalagadi.

Mord, would investigate an existential philosophy of Being-In-The-World for the mentally ill. He used to get depressed.

These were only bachelor research degrees so we would draw "just" on Kierkegaard, Sartre and Heidegger! You could write a library on each what with all the secondary literature! When we started we never dreamed our B.Litt degrees would become doctorates. We would have to change our ideas as we researched further.

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The Bushpeople or Cape San were virtually wiped out in the Cape Colony and elsewhere in South Africa in the 18th and early 19th century in a genocide committed by South African Dutch farmers - the Boers or Afrikaners - under the rule of the Dutch East India Company in the 1700s and under the British government in the early 1800s based in Cape Town and London and locally in bases located in provincial towns like Graaf Reinet, Caledon and Beaufort West. Those San or Bushpeople who survived became a helot class, virtually serfs working for Boer and British farmers and other Europeans, joining another ex-slave class the Cape Malays in a segregation and later apartheid hierarchy with whites at the top and black Africans at the bottom and Indian indentured labourers and merchants in the middle with “Coloureds” coming second last in terms of lack of rights and poor status. The Bushpeople and to some extent, the cattle-herding Hottentots the Khoi-Khoi when punished or killed were psychologically and physically “abolished”,² ceased to exist, became dead or nearly-dead objects in the minds of their persecutors who regarded their crimes including cattle-theft and the maiming of cattle they could not herd or eat immediately as the work of “vermin” – *ongedierte*.

Common sense terms can be reversed in the discourse of persecution. The transcendent Being of being-a-bushperson-in-the-world does not diminish because the individual Bushperson diminishes or dies under torture or is beaten to death, or is killed out of hand. The individual Bushperson is “abolished” as an object, but the transcendent collective entity of the wider Bushpeople’s family or local clan group may still exist even if only in the minds or descendants or anthropologists or historians or accurate novelists or poets. In Sartrean terms the *In-Itself (etre-en-soi)* is being-immanent, whereas the *For Itself (entre-pour-soi)* is the transcendent empirical individual consciousness. Transcendentally the Bushperson doesn’t exist in herself when abolished, but continues to exist immanently for herself in the minds of the observer or the guilt-ridden killer, shamed torturer or regretful punisher. But this immanence can and does spread and become a transcendent as in the case of a martyr. The transcendental is extensive in empirical individual or other-consciousness, even when immanently the victim doesn’t live anywhere as a human existence because the victim and the murderer-torturer have both died or been killed in terms of conscience.³

The genocide victim who is a Jew or an African or a Bushperson or a persecuted Hottentot, a Khoi-Khoi appears in profile in a successive number of appearances. This is her phenomenology. Her discourse is as important as her ethnicity or class or culture. Her discourse and profile may be infinitely varied, but should remain within the empirical truth or the aesthetically beautiful or the ethically valid.

² See ‘Journal of Genocide Research Volume 15, 2013 - Issue 2 “The British and the

‘Bushmen’: the massacre of the Cape San, 1795 to 1828” Nigel Penn Pages 183-200 Published online: 22 May 2013 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2013.793081>

³ See Hazel E. Barnes. Translator J-P Sartre *Being and Nothingness* Routledge, 2003. “Key to special terminology” “Abolition”, “Abschattungen” etc. pp 649 ff.

But the leap of faith into religion or ideology may be absurd, that is, it may try to become God, both free in herself, the transcendent, free of birth and death, and the absolutely immanent in-itself – the absolute.

Even just knowing may become a violation, an appropriation of the Other.

We asked each other about this.

Separately.

*

I, Bushy didn't suppose she, Avira, "Abo" would mind now being written about, now that she is quite old and married to someone else with her children, sisters and brothers'-in-law also old.

When you are "in love" you don't regard knowing about the Other as an "appropriation". Loving is loving. She was and I, Bushy hoped still she was and is a Jewish Zionist and a novelist living in America married to a distinguished research psychiatrist.

For me, Bushy, she is still the one and only Avira. She sent me a photograph of herself and her children, grown up and with her grandchildren in New York State. She wasn't young anymore. Yet when I, Bushy thought of her and myself in Jericho Road, off Walton Street in Oxford in 1958 and 1959, that terrible first winter ever in England I see electricity sparking off her curly Abo head into my Bushy head.

We would rub noses like Maoris and our hair would rub together too and generate a crackle of invisible electricity: Jewish girl and Bushperson man free, free at last in the greatest university in the world. Or the second-greatest.

We would take our evening meals sometimes at Pembroke, my, Bushy's college, or at St. Anne's Avira's (Abo's), or at Mordechai's Nuffield, or Astrid's (Aussie's) Lady Margaret Hall. Sometimes the Master or President or Warden or whatever his/her title was would invite us to dine at the high table. We would only go as a foursome.

Aussie would get involved with cricket- or rugby- or tennis-playing dons and her voice would shriek out in laughter and her gold-red hair bedazzle everybody. She would draw Mordechai into the banter and his depression would slip away. Avira/Abo would raise the political temperature by referring to the British involvement in South Africa's apartheid system and the pro-Arabism and anti-Semitism of the Foreign Office.

That was the first chapter of our lives.