

# “MUTHA”

## A fiction by Michael Picardie

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### AUTHOR’S NOTE:

The authorial voice in this story is Peter-Sipho Muthwa who descends originally from the very few survivors of an 18<sup>th</sup>- century genocide of the Cape Khoisan, the /Xam. In 1650 they numbered between 150- 300,000 people according to Richard S. Lee.<sup>1</sup> They were wiped out during the colonisation of the interior of the country by Dutch *trekboers* (who later called themselves Afrikaners.) Many of those who were not killed were enslaved. British people did the same in Tasmania and other parts of Australia and the Portuguese and the Spanish to the indigenous in Central and South America. The Germans in Namibia (then German South West Africa) embarked on a total mass-murder of the Nama and the Herero, before the First World War, a sort of rehearsal for the Holocaust.

Most of the Cape Khoisan who survived, but who lost their culture and language were assimilated into the mixed-race or Coloured population.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard S. Lee and Irven De Vore “Introduction” p 5 *Kalahari Hunter- Gatherers – Studies of the !Kung San and Their Neighbours* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1976.

I, Sipho Muthwa, a Bushperson, know that the Lord God and His Son Jesus in the leap from reason into faith both comfort us with the reassurance that we are human like the rest of *homo sapiens sapiens*, and they, the Others are human like us, the Us. Christian redemption means that God or Christ take on our sins even the great sin of the Dutch farmers calling us, the Bushpeople *ongedierte* – vermin. That's what the Nazis called the Jews, and Mordechai my lifelong friend shares that stigma with me. Our originally Welsh wives, Gwynedd and Ffion, descend from mining engineers. If you go back in time the Welsh were seen by the most arrogant of the English ruling class as little better than colonial natives fit for digging coal for the British Navy, except for the odd genius like Dylan Thomas.

I can imagine what God says to us if God *is* the voice of Being, rather than the tribal god of the Israelites and the Judeans. Perhaps it is psychologically necessary in history for the king or leader or prophet to be counter-pointed by a deity who is immune to pain and death. Perhaps it is psychologically necessary that we face pain, loneliness and death accompanied by God. In this sense I believe in God, in the sense of God as compassionate Being. But is we who imbue Being with compassion. Being itself is cruel and ineluctable. Nothing can stop the sun from exploding into a red giant when it has exhausted its nuclear fuel, burning up its nearest planets and then imploding into a blue dwarf in about 5 billion years' time.

We don't live long, at most a hundred years. If we're lucky which is also somewhat random given the arbitrariness of our genetic inheritance, and our educated and lucky or unlucky health environment. Now a remnant of us are educated we can still ask: why should we give up myth? Myth is comforting. Mantis the creator God is indestructible, our cathartic trance-dance, our ritual communication with our supernatural folk-creatures like the Rain-Bull and the Girl Who Made Stars make us feel at one with nature so we become reconciled to dying.

History is sometime kind. The ancients spoke and wrote of *Fortuna*. A few of us migrated back to South Africa from Botswana, from the Kalahari Wilderness where a few Cape Bushpeople, the old /Xam, escaped from the 18<sup>th</sup> century genocide. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was assimilation of the remnants of our people into the Coloured people. In the same way the Jews took on some of the characteristics of the Christians who would otherwise seek to eradicate them. These were the *marranos*, the secret Jews of Spain.

*The word refers to "pigs".* Knowing that pigs are not *kasher* they were so filled with hate of secret Jews because of the deicide myth (we, Mordechai himself was supposed to have been partly responsible for the death of Christ because he is also expressive of Jewish intransigence now as his guardian Jewish angel was then). Read the great Dostoevsky on the hateful Jews preparing the way for Stalin (only we know that, but no wonder the Tsarists subjected him, Dostoevsky, to a mock execution to knock some sense into him. Nothing could knock sense into people like that. Stalin

executed every single Jew on the Politburo in the 1930s because they were “rootless cosmopolitans” and dared to want international socialism).

But many of us Bushpeople felt there was no room for us with the universe occupied by God, Jahveh, Elohim, El Shaddai, El Elyon, the One and Only Infinite. If He was One, why did he have so many names? The answer is not difficult. Mordechai whose father was Lazarus Pekarsky and whose whole family are Jewish calls the One (“God”) Being.

Mordechai has occasional seminars at the university although he is officially retired and he still cycles to work to avoid the traffic in Bellevue, Hillbrow and Braamfontein and I catch a plane occasionally to and from Gaborone when they need me for a seminar.

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Apartheid ended. My friend Mordechai and I Peter-Sipho Muthwa could live in the same house in Cinnamon Square, St. David’s Road, Bellevue East without me having to be a servant of Mordechai, carrying a pass, making it legal for me to live only in the back yard.

We met our wives at the Witwatersrand University where they were doing Honours degrees in the relatively new subject of ecological science. We all four were at Oxford together.

They joined us in this terrace of old working-class dwellings which had been in a “white” area in the apartheid era. We have had children and now grandchildren but they live in London. Gwynedd my wife and Mordechai’s wife Ffion still run a landscape gardening firm part-time here in Jo’burg. Rachel, Gwynedd’s and my daughter and Jack and Lily’s mother died on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1997 in the Bruce Street Clinic in Hillbrow, in Joeys (Johannesburg).

Now we have two houses in Cinnamon Square, one for the Muthwas and one for the Pekarskys. Our wives have part-time lectureships in ecological science at Witwatersrand University.

Cinnamon Square are two modernised, corrugated-iron roofed, brick walled and plastered terraced cottages painted yellow-brown, more yellow than brown, on the edge of the suburb of Observatory. They have old-fashioned verandas. The dogs like the cool of the shade in the summer on the *stoep* of each house. Even in the winter the sky is always blue. Within each house there is an

inner courtyard like a Roman atrium, but with glassed-in roofs where we eat together in one house or the other depending who is doing the cooking.

On the shelves of the atriums we germinate seeds in late autumn and spring for planting out in the summer in the long back gardens and across the road where we have an allotment.

We grow lemons, apricots, peaches in the plot, and in the gardens and on each veranda shrubs like poinsettia and wisteria climbing up the pillars onto the corrugated iron terracotta painted roof. Across the road there is an open piece of ground, a plot big enough to grow maize, beans, tomatoes, squash, pumpkins and a small orchard. It belongs to the Afrikaans Children's Orphanage and we give them a share of the produce which their children helped to grow.

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The houses date back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the city outgrew its origins as a gold-mining camp.

We have Alsatian dogs called simply "Hond" and "Inja" – "Dog" in Afrikaans and Zulu. They helped to save us from death when in the middle of the night a gang armed with knives and guns threatened to take over both the houses, in the increasingly dangerous late-90s when the great man Mandela was handing over power to Thabo Mbeki after a general election.

That night the security alarm went off. The security firm arrived with guns and powerful searchlights and torches. There were confrontations and Mordechai and I were wounded by knives. We know the attackers suffered two killed. The security guards dragged their bodies into their vehicle as forensic evidence for the police who took a long time to arrive. We had to go to court to give evidence at the inquests. This is what people have to endure in Johannesburg. Apartheid built up many deprivations, hateful psychological complexes. Post-apartheid for all its obvious benefits has not produced a radical redistribution of resources.

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To begin with the ANC had not worked out the details of policies. They were a liberation movement not a political party which could advise itself by using think-tanks, trained administrators, experts

from other developing countries. There were too many careerists, out to make money. There was factionalism. They distrusted competent non-South Africans who might show them up about how you run a well-organised, reformist, slow revolution. People were drunk with the illusion of freedom. They castigated overseas help as a neo-colonialism.

Anybody from the surrounding civil wars or anarchic regimes including Eastern Europe could get into the country and exploit factionalism. The Department of the Interior abandoned border controls and checking of immigrants credentials and stopped patrolling the borders so that thieves, gangsters and conmen streamed in.

Still, we are luckier than most. One just has to compare a previously “white” suburb like Yeoville or Observatory where well-off European and now well-off black house-owners can afford to hire security firms on duty 24/7, and a largely African township like Alexandra or Orlando/Soweto where criminals can and do rule the day and the night. At least if you are well off and live in a township you might be able to hire a security firm to protect you and your loved ones and your property. Am I a bourgeois? So be it. A step towards welfare-capitalism. No more socialist sloganeering, mere identity politics.

There is a long-standing discrepancy in provision causing differences in achievement and welfare in the classroom and the playground as between white, brown and black people. There is physical, sexual and verbal abuse caused by huge inequalities in care and provision starting from early childhood, creating crime-cultures which are self-perpetuating because they confer a privileged and disparaged sense of identity as between previously and still now largely white schools and previously and still now largely African and other “Non-European” schools. In some areas educational achievement is well-nigh impossible.

This was and is our country. We wanted to have children, grandchildren and a great-grandchild here in South Africa but it was too dangerous. We and they think of ourselves as ex-patriate South Africans, Jewish, gentile, mixed and Bushpeople. Living in the mother country is sometimes worse than exile. We go back to Cinnamon Square which we can afford to keep going whilst we do part-time research and teaching at Witwatersrand and Botswana Universities.

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INYANGA STORES

Inyanga Stores is a shop and local rural post office near Greytown in Natal. An *inyanga* in Zulu is a witchdoctor, more politely, a traditional healer. The general store that goes by this name in Kwa-Zulu Natal going back to the 1930s still has a post-office and a range of traditional and modern remedies as well as clothes, food including vegetables and fruit, meat in a freezer, milk and cheese in a fridge, stationary, school textbooks, religious-books, farmers' seeds, tools and general agricultural implements.

Mordechai's father, Lazarus ran the shop before Mordechai was born which was in 1936. I was already 11. We, whom the local Zulus call generically Batwa (my surname is Muthwa which is the singular of Batwa in Zulu) lived a mile from Inyanga Stores. We worked for the Zulu headman, or sub-chief in the area. Sometimes we were paid, sometimes we were little more than slaves depending on which headman or sub-chief was ruling.

Lazarus was trained as a philosopher and English teacher, and Minna became an English and music teacher trained in Jo'burg and London. Sometimes they left the running of the shop in Kwa-Zulu Natal to an uncle, Harry Glazer and they let him have the profits. Later Lazarus and Minna came back to run the shop and lived in the bungalow they had built behind the shop and travelled around in a little car giving piano lessons (Minna) and English lessons (Lazarus), supplementing the education of Afrikaner and English farmers wives', daughters, and the occasional gifted son or daughter destined for a profession. They persuaded the authorities to let them into the missionary schools where Minna taught music and singing, and Lazarus told stories from the Hebrew and Christian bibles.

When I was still a teenager at Dr Moffatt's primary and junior school near Greytown I was taught by Lazarus and Minna and developed a gift for telling Khoi San folk-stories in English and Zulu. From my great-grandmother and my great-grandfather on my mother's side who lived to a great age I learned /Xam the almost extinct language of the Cape Bushpeople. They were literate in English, Zulu and could read a book partly in /Xam *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* by Bleek and Lloyd.

Behind the business premises the Pekarsky family lived in the bungalow in which there were scores of serious books and an upright piano.

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Lazarus Mordechai's father soon became well-known in the Greytown area and the Natal hinterland as a kind of informal therapist consulted for a range of illnesses and troubles that were beyond the scope of the available medical care. Actually, he did philosophy, psychology and

anthropology before he did his teacher's diploma and he could diagnose various psycho-social troubles and help in their partial resolution.

In the 1950s Mordechai and I studied for our Honours degrees in philosophy and theology. We got scholarships to Oxford and acquired B.Litt. degrees from Oxford and worked at the Witwatersrand University as lecturers so we had money, cars, security. Gwynedd and Ffion came from a wealthy family and paid their own fees at Oxford. Through a pre-school playgroup and evening classes which we started in Temple David, a progressive synagogue in Hillbrow, an inner-city area, we tried to keep in touch with what became a deprived community, but that was years later.

Teaching theology and philosophy at the universities, Mordechai and I kept being consulted inside and outside the classroom about how we thought the new post-apartheid government was doing after 1994. We tried not to spread alarm and despondency.

So many had died, suffered torture and exile in the liberation struggle. In memory of them we had to say "the struggle continues. *A luta continua*" - Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane, then Samora Machel of Mocambique built morale with this rallying call.

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The pre-school playgroup and the adult evening classes we later helped to start in Hillbrow were sources of hope. Even the Observatory Golf Club had built a kind of dormitory and small school-room and employed a teacher - on the caddies' request - because the township streets and schools were unsafe. They spoke of gangs and *tsotsis*. A *tsotsi* is a petty street criminal.

We shut up about our violent and traumatic experience of the robbers' break-in and spread the good news about the pre-school playgroup and evening classes in Hillbrow.

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Occasionally mass demonstrations would occur at the university indicative of unrest over a whole range of issues. In Cinnamon Square we lived near the Observatory Golf Course, and we heard that caddies would sometimes simply disappear. Some of them became homeless because of some violent political or domestic crisis. Hence the golf-club dormitory and its special school-room as a

refuge. When a caddy disappeared, we would often be told that he had an accident. We suspected the worst. Sometimes, to our great relief, he would re-appear, swathed in bandages or apparently unharmed, lucky to be alive, despite knife and bullet wounds.

Our wives, Gwynedd and Ffion have been car-jacked, and like Mordechai and myself took time to recover from the violent robbery. Similar things kept happening. Their cars were stolen by armed gangs in suburban ambushes whilst they were driving, but they were never harmed. They still work in landscape gardening and part-time teaching of ecology studies.

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From our houses in St. David's Road, across the valley you can see the Observatory dome painted a terracotta-red nestling amongst blue-gum trees, on Observatory *kopje*. It is south of us in Cinnamon Square. The shadowy side. If you come from Europe you have to get used to the sun shining from the north.

Dr Piet and Mrs Hanna Rousseau were the astronomer and his wife. Retired now, they still live in the Observatory garden. In a flatlet. Their grown-up children, Gawie and Hetty, and their grandchildren still visit them and us.

Our daughters are Judith and Rachel and grandchildren Jonathan, Thom, Jack and Lily. Our beloved daughter Rachel died young, at 33 in 1997 of breast cancer. They were all already in London.

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Mordechai and I and the astronomer's children, Jan and Marika Rousseau grew up together.

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Even when I was still working for the Zulus as a teen-ager in Natal I was half-time Mordechai's carer. I was 11 years older than him. His mother, Minna, and his father Lazarus, as well as owning Inyanga Stores, had saved up enough to build and manage a block of flats looking out across Rockey and Delarey Streets. Because Observatory Mansions had no real garden, we played cricket and rugby on the Observatory house's lawn with Jan and Marika.

And at night we were allowed to look at the stars, light years away but visible via telescope and photographs. Before the street lights went out at 1.a.m. Which is when Piet Rousseau's serious work began. Without light pollution.

A new astronomer, an eminent scientist, Dr Amos Mphahlele was appointed when Mandela became the first president after pre-democratic apartheid ended in 1994. We visit the Mphahleles. For Sunday tea. And they come here, to Cinnamon Square.

In the Karoo, a semi-desert in the middle of the Cape Province, five-hundred miles away there is an extensive radio telescope linked to a world-wide array of deep-space technologies picking up signals from satellites circling the earth.

We now know how our habitat, as earthlings on Earth, look. Piet Rousseau showed us the originals of photographs we saw in the newspapers taken of the earth from the transit to the moon years ago in the 60s when NASA's first flights made history. A blue planet the night lights of which, somewhere, on the other side of the turning globe, never go out.

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There was a writer, Nadine Gordimer, who said to be a South African you are born twice. Once from your mother's womb and a second time when you realise what racism is, in you and in others and, hopefully you overcome it.

If you want to know about the epitome of the old apartheid system, here it is: Mordechai's friend Jeanette Goldmann, had a cousin, a brown Jew from Israel, Shira Batsheva.

She was asked to leave an expensive Johannesburg restaurant situated above the foyer of His Majesty's Theatre, a favourite venue for touring English stage companies and their audiences. That was 1957.

A financial magnate may have owned it - the His Majesty's and a whole chain of cinemas and theatres. He could have been a Jew, a gentile, an Afrikaner, or an English-speaking gentleman – who knows? The Indian waiters who asked Shira Batsheva to leave were only obeying orders.

This thing happened in 1957 when Mordechai was 21 and the Afrikaner Nationalists were in power. I, Muthwa, originally a Bushman – a /Xam person from Bechuanaland was 32. We were just finishing our bachelor of arts honours degrees.

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Eventually I had a good education thanks to Mordechai, and his father and mother, Lazarus and Minna. And Fate. Good genes and a lucky environment. I eventually wore a sports jacket and a linen shirt and brown leather shoes.

People said it was impossible for a Bushman to go from illiteracy to an Oxford B.Litt degree. I had worn a denim tunic and denim shorts piped with red when I was on all fours polishing the floors singing old Khoi San songs barefoot at Inyanga Stores and later at Observatory Mansions. Mordechai's job as a child was to help in the garden of the bungalow. We both studied during day in the bungalow with Mordechai's parents, Lazarus and Minna. Or at the flat in Observatory Mansions. So, as children Mordechai and I were educated at King George V Preparatory and High School (Mordechai) and at Dr Moffat's Anglican Primary and High School near Greytown, Natal (me).

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At Christmas time sitting on Mordechai's and Ffion's or Gwynedd's and my sofa I tell our and Mordechai's grandchildren stories about the old /Xam. We put on the CD and I hum the theme of the Beethoven 9<sup>th</sup> and even sing the chorus. The words are Schiller's "Ode to Joy". *Freiheit* is the theme. I think of Europe. Not Napoleon, Bismarck, Hindenburg, Hitler. Eleanor Marx, Olive Schreiner, William Morris.

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"*Arbeit Macht Frei*" in metal letters arching over the entrance to Auschwitz-Birkenau. We learned what whites could do to whites. The TV channels show World War 2 archive documentaries.

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I mention this because as a child of 4 Mordechai had nightmares. His maternal grandmother who lived in Berea, Johannesburg, was *messhugga* and thought Hitler would invade South Africa and kill us all, Jews and blacks. *Messhugga* is Yiddish for mad. She wasn't really psychotic. She was just old and missed what, amazingly, she still called the *heim*. The homeland. Lithuania. Memel. Rose Sacks.

When he was 4 and I was 15 Mordechai would sleepwalk or at least wander from the bungalow near Inyanga Stores to my parents and the other /Xam's huts nearby at 2 o'clock in the morning, disturbed we thought by Rose Sacks' dire prophecies about Hitler.

After we moved to Bellevue East, to Observatory Mansions, and he was an older child, still sleepwalking, and I an adult, he would ask for me, Peter-Sipho /Xam. I would take his hand, and bring him downstairs to number 2 Observatory Mansions, open the door with the key Minna his mother entrusted to me. I would knock on Minna's and Lazarus' bedroom door. Minna would wake and put him to bed. His bedroom was painted blue. The colour of the blue-bird of happiness in a story I had learned to read many years ago. But the wonder of it all was that it happened so often without mishap. He would ask me to sing him a Zulu lullaby. His mother and father and he trusted me so I explained to her in a whisper that this was a song about a monster that you can bring to nothing by just singing his name softly over and over again, so he goes to sleep as well.

Abiyoyo

Abiyoyo

Abiyoyo, Abiyoyo,  
Abiyoyo, Abiyoyo,  
Abiyoyo, yoyoyo, yoyoyo,  
Abiyoyo, yoyoyo, yoyoyo.

Abiyoyo, Abiyoyo,  
Abiyoyo, Abiyoyo,  
Abiyoyo, yoyoyo, yoyoyo,  
Abiyoyo, yoyoyo, yoyoyo.

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Before, back in the late 1950s, apartheid was considerably worse. If there was a Liberal Party party, I might be dancing and crooning something by Nat King Cole, or the Ink Spots: "You only hurt the one you love, the one you shouldn't hurt at all." Actually, I can't remember hurting anyone seriously. No doubt I did. Girls wanted to sleep with me for the usual reasons and to find out if

Bushmen's penises were always half-erect. Maybe because I had too much Christianity from my Anglican vicar Dr Moffatt and wanted to be like Jesus I did not walk about with a half-erect penis in my underpants under my khaki trousers.

My cousins the Ngubanes in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor servants' quarters of Observatory Mansions, were Zulu fighting specialists. They had assegais, ox-hide shields and knobkerries hidden away throughout the year. They celebrated the New Year on the Observatory *kopje* with a war dance and then a fight against the *amaShangaan*, also domestic servants, but traditional enemies of the Zulus. They brewed their own beer out of milk and sorghum.

Someone would call the police. Minna would bail the Ngubanes out of Yeoville police station and use a first-aid box previously borrowed from her brother-in-law, a doctor, in number 12 to patch up their assegai wounds and cracked skulls. She did a part-time first-aid training at Baragwaneth Hospital miles away, near Orlando, which became part of Soweto. She was revered by the Ngubanes as a "Queen" – *Inkosikazi*.

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Mordechai thought apartheid was a kind of neo-Nazism.

He was called up in 1954 to do his national service in the South African army where his sergeant-major called him "*Die Rooi Jood*" – the Red Jew because he read Marx, Engels, Trotsky and Sartre in his barracks' bed.

The Afrikaners were part of an underclass ever since the Boer War but their election victories made possible by a whites-only electorate in 1948 and onwards, and their secret society the *Broederbond* wrested political control from the wealthy English property-owning and capitalist class. This kept apartheid in place.

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For practicing a scorched earth policy against the Afrikaner farmers in 1899-1902 during the Boer War the Afrikaners and the moderate South African English blamed Generals Kitchener, Roberts and Buller.

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Above all Cecil Rhodes, the arch “Anglo-Saxon” (his description) racist and financial and mining genius, could be blamed for provoking the war itself.

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Rhodes was determined to destroy Paul Kruger. He said: “I would annex the stars if I could.” Now the students want to take Rhodes’ statue down off its niche in the upper façade of Oriel College. Rhodes opponents include an African who is a beneficiary of the Rhodes’ Scholarships.

Joseph Chamberlain was Colonial Secretary. This was a guerrilla war within and between competing racisms in Africa. Worse was to come during post-colonialism. The Congo. Rwanda-Burundi. And in Asia - Korea, Pol Pot. Vietnam.

For me – the barbarity of the Anglo-Boer War was a continuation of what the Bushpeople had known since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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We were the Khoi San, our tribal name was the /Xam.

We were all over Southern Africa for between 45,000 and 75,000 years until the 18<sup>th</sup> century genocide.

Except for a few survivors who worked for the Boers or the English or the Africans – the rest of the /Xam were massacred. I should have said why. Cattle theft. Ownership of the land. Access to the land.

Refugees fled to Bechuanaland where there were other clans of Khoi San. The 16<sup>th</sup>- 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were the worst. The centuries of the Enlightenment. In the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century Shakespeare and Descartes, and then Mozart, Kant, Voltaire.

Descartes: *Cogito ergo sum. I think therefore I am.* Not *I am* therefore *I think*. They didn't think slaves actually thought or even that the labouring classes fully *existed* at all in the philosophical sense of an aware intra-psychic and cultural extra-psychic existence. A sense of being-in-the-world.

The peasant colonists from the Netherlands and France and Germany in and around Cape Town were brought there from 1652 and wanted more land. They wanted what they called freedom. They stole the country from us the /Xam to get their freedom. At least Africans who invaded 500 to 1500 years ago co-existed with us and came to us for medicine and to make rain.

The whites actually stole it from God (the Being of Being, the transcendent) who "owns" the world, so they say, and only lets it out on leasehold. We nurtured it so S/he let us keep it for the whole of the years during which we became *homo sapiens* about 250,000 years ago and then 45,000 - 75,000 years ago when we were in Southern Africa.

The Afrikaner/Dutch saw themselves as Israelites in a new promised land. At least the original Judeans and Israelites, the peasants, the *am ha'arets*, although they were involved in wars with the other competing Semites, grew wonderful grapes, wheat and barley. And produced the prophets and the writings and eventually Jesus – the man – not necessarily a messiah - but in Palestine, at the cross-roads of the civilized worlds a man who could bring love where there was hate.

"God" which equals "Being-In-The-World" - the South African freehold - gave it, on condition, to the people which means, by and large, the Africans, the ANC, still reflecting the glory of Mandela. In the late 1980s and early 1990s.

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Why would President Ramaphosa, a majority shareholder in the Marikana Platinum Mine, urge "proportionate" action by the Rustenburg police who were all black, serving under a black woman commander, kill 34 platinum miners in 2012?

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The miners had grievances about housing and pay. They had no guns, although they had pangas and could use them. They had angry meetings and naturally would try and coerce strike-breakers, but only to express their demand for a newly autonomous trade union, independent of a supine official N.U.M. and consequently they came out on strike. The police actually hunted down the miners in the rough grass and bushes, the ones they took to be ringleaders, shot them like cornered animals. The dead happily don't feel any more. The loved ones they leave behind really suffer. The Marikana platinum miners who died under a hail of black African police bullets are happily..... Nothing.....

We should talk about Mugabe, Kenyatta, Mau-Mau. Idi Amin. Kagame. Africa was a beautiful but cruel place. Only now putting itself together.

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From 1652 Dutch, French and German peasants, the first Afrikaner/Boers grew food and kept livestock for a "refreshment station" so as to supply ships harbouring in Cape Town on their way to and from the Dutch colonies in Malaya.

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When they had enough of this they embarked on the Great Trek inland. Freedom trumped security.

The Boers left the masters of the Dutch East India Company behind. They had no capital to invest in shares in the Company.

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The Governor and his Board built exquisite houses on their wine estates in places like Stellenbosch, Swellendam, Tulbagh, Franshoek, Constantia.

Their sailors would bring back slaves, spices, precious jewels and silken materials from Malaya. The merchants in Cape Town and Amsterdam grew rich. The Malay slaves were particularly valuable because they were craftspeople. They built the gables and thatched the roofs and built the rest of the Cape Dutch houses in which the wine-makers lived. They were expert carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers. They learned by heart the law of Allah in the Koran.

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Mordechai was a Jew but was sometimes taken to be what they eventually called “Coloured” because he looked like a Tatar with high cheek bones, thick lips and a flattish nose. He was quite dark. In fact, dark yellow like our houses in Cinnamon Square. His friend, Isaac Jaffee nicknamed him “Chinky-Chinky Chinaman”

He didn’t mind that. He was proud of it. The Chinese had a continuous civilizational culture nearly as old as the Jews’. He saw himself as Jewish *and* Coloured whatever others saw in him.

His mother, Minna Pekarsky used to look at what she called, affectionately, his monkey face and say: “I wonder where you came from?”

As semi-professional actors (before we became academics) Mordechai got cast as a Japanese and a “Coloured” (mixed race person) in plays like *The Long and the Short and the Tall* and *A Taste of Honey* in South Africa and Rhodesia and then in England at the Worthing Repertory Theatre.

On the other hand, although short like a Bushperson – genetically I was a Bushman on both sides of my family although my father assimilated into the Zulu group only culturally, I fulfilled an adolescent ambition to play Othello. At Oxford in the Playhouse. For OUDS. My wife-to-be Gwynedd Vaughan directed it and Mordechai who married her twin sister Ffion, played Iago with Ffion playing Desdemona. I didn’t need to black-up like Laurence Olivier.

Mordechai who looked quite white although with Tatar features, played a young blonde Hamlet. He peroxided his hair. For some of the text he did a pre-recorded interior monologue like Olivier in the film. I played a black King Claudius and offstage wept when Hamlet says: “It is not and nor it cannot come to good / But break my heart... for I must hold my tongue.” So poignant. Under apartheid so many held their tongue, or, tortured, talked.

Dying young like Hamlet and Ophelia is terrible. My and Gwynedd's daughter Rachel died young, when her children, our grandchildren Jonathan and Lily were toddlers, still in South Africa. Rachel made memory boxes for them whilst she was dying to remember her by, little trinkets, post-cards, photographs, poems.

Then theatre and everything else except wealth, went multi-racial in the New South Africa. At least Rachel lived to see it on the cusp of it happening. Rachel's children were toddlers when she died in 1997 and don't remember her. Luke, our son-in-law, Rachel's husband married Shoshanna a New York novelist and Jack and Lily have done well in America and England.

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I should tell you the story of Helena Dollard the honest wife of Joseph Shlomsky a leading communist, a minister in the first Mandela government of 1994. Helena was ousted from the Land Bank which was then pillaged by fraudsters who accused these two radical and efficient whites, of racism. When Joseph and Helena fought back and took them to court, they lost. The justices invoked the separation of powers. Only the executive and the police could remedy their cause. No one prosecuted the case. Joseph died, some say of a broken heart, Helena went to work for a commercial bank.

(I have changed these and other names and circumstances to spare their feelings but these are accurate facts.)

\*

Mordechai's father, Lazarus, went into a state of something like hypomania when his wife Minna, Mordechai's mother died in 1969. Believing himself now to be rich he was soon cheated of Observatory Mansions, their block of flats, by a fraudster.

So, Lazarus was a peripatetic school teacher and in his day a kind of psychotherapist / philosopher. As well in old age he had an unpractical streak of mysticism. I have explained that he was a kind of healer. He lived till 93 in 1994 in a home for impoverished white people. He meditated on his hero Jesus (didn't Jesus say "Follow Me"?) having signed away his life-time's savings (his share of Observatory Mansions) - previously carefully protected by the ever-watchful Minna. The fraudster probably promised to convert the rented flats to leasehold. Lazarus must have lost millions of Rand. Then the old man had to support his second wife, an impoverished divorcee married

previously to a senior political advisor to the High Commissioner for Palestine, who apparently left her penniless. Then when she died, a Mrs Magyarsky, batted on to his teacher's pension. For Mordechai, saving him from a Christian funeral seemed a *commandment*. To do this one paid what Jews call the Holy Society (the *Chevra Kadisha*) to bury him simply the way all Jews are buried in a plain deal coffin. He was, amazingly, happy when he was dying, probably believing that he would be raised from the dead as Lazarus was by Jesus. Didn't Jesus see his mission as converting the Jews to return to the law of Moses?

\*

If true, the New Testament Lazarus must have been catatonic or suffering from a temporary stroke which an experienced faith healer like Jesus would have been able to diagnose. More likely, it was just an embroidered fable.

\*

Following a eulogy from a rabbi who only knew Lazarus through Mordechai's taking him to Temple David in Hillbrow on Saturday mornings, he was buried as a Jew. At the West Park Cemetery.

\*

In our academic teaching Mordechai and I asked the question: "What is consciousness?" Only humans can ask and answer that question, and in this very response "Only humans can ask and answer that question", lies part of the answer to the question. The Germans call it

*Da-sein*. Being-there. A sense of being there, and when and how and to what end - those are the other *phenomenal* questions asked.

Consciousness is essentially intentional thought which pictures the world and sets a strategy for ethical or any other kind of survival in the pictured world about which one has questions given the constraints of climate, predation, the acquisition and storage of knowledge, power, persecution. One plays a language game to enact a language strategy for survival.

So far, we might gather this through Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and his *Philosophical Investigations* but before that the scientific and industrial revolutions shaped thought more broadly. And

Nietzsche and the ubiquitous Darwin, filtered through Freud, did explain the drives and defences against the drives including those which one would normally call unethical, criminal, psychopathic even if politically useful in a revolutionary or evolutionary struggle. One great leap for mankind. From Socrates to Freud to Neil Armstrong.

The Germans call human-being *Dasein* – Being-There. But this Being is being-in-the-world.

As soon as African-American George Floyd was killed by a white Minneapolis policeman, Derek Chauvin in 2020, for allegedly passing a counterfeit note of money in a supermarket and was revealed as having a criminal record including armed robbery, righteous indignation did not wane. Half-a-million black Americans were suddenly revealed as far and away the biggest ethnic group in the prison populations out of proportion to their percentage of the nation's ethnicity. And then, on his anniversary of his - George Floyd's - death, a great flood tide of sympathy was opened up.

\*

From the age of 12 Mordechai and I at the age of 23 were trained by Alexandra Taylor, a drama teacher with a flat and studio in Manners Mansions in Jo'burg city centre for a couple of hours a week. Minna and Lazarus paid for our lessons.

Mordechai did Shylock and Fagin as monologues for the South African Welsh Eisteddfod.

He played Ariel in "The Tempest" in Rhodes Park in Jo'burg and at Maynardville, an open-air theatre in a park in Wynberg near Cape Town when he was about 18.

I, Peter-Sipho Muthwawas an apricot-brown Caliban. I did Caliban in a Cape Coloured accent. Mordechai did Ariel in Received (English) Pronunciation.

There were plenty of mixed-race people and foreigners in Elizabethan England known to Shakespeare and he must have heard fables about monstrous, island creatures like Caliban and sublime spirits like Ariel trapped by witches in trees.

Surely, he knew about Jews like the embittered Shylock, and his treacherous daughter Jessica who was ashamed of being a Jew, and the quite ordinary Tubal, Shylock's friend whom he habitually meets in the Venetian synagogue. Shakespeare made Tubal normal. So, he didn't *have* to make Shylock the stereotypical ferociously revenging, cruel, money-obsessed Jew. But he did.

Because he knew what festers in the broken human heart. Perhaps somebody – the gentiles – broke Shylock's heart. Antonio spits in his face before he, Antonio, gets into financial trouble. The very Antonio who gets depressed.

Jessica Shylock's daughter, the self-hating Jew, also breaks what is left of his heart.

And then the Doge of Venice breaks what is left of *that* by confiscating his property and forcing him to convert to Christianity for the crime of threatening the life of a citizen of Venice.

So, there is no redemption for Shylock. *That* was about the ethical level of the Elizabethan groundlings and the gentlefolk in the gallery. One still talks of Shakespeare's "greatness." Complexity. Passionate complexity.

\*

As a special favour, when I was at the age of 23, Alexandra Taylor trained me, Peter-Sipho Muthwa I was just a flat-boy – a migrant worker from Zululand - discovered to have hidden talent. I was already studying at home for my matric using Mordechai's text books and exam papers. She taught me and Mordechai how to act.

My family lived amongst the rural Zulu in the Lower Drakensberg and my uncles and aunts married Zulus and were called "Ngubane" which, ironically, is a surname meaning "What Is Your Name?" We lived all over the place, eventually Observatory Mansions in Jo'burg. You couldn't quite place us.

So, if you asked an Ngubane what his surname was, you would say "Ngubane?" And he would reply "Ngubane".

So, everybody would be absolutely clear about that. Like everybody in Wales being called Jones. John Jones. John the son of Jones the son of John Jones. John the son of John Jones, the son of John Jones, the son of John Jones. So, the English landlords and the officer class knew exactly where they stood.

We had no surnames in pre-colonial times. As a matter of fact, when a white man spoke to us before our names had been mentioned he would call every single African he met “John” or “Jim”.

\*

The struggle over colour was a form of class-struggle and identity to do with this issue: who was in the elect ruling class and its allies and who was in the subordinate or slave classes.

That is what Mordechai read into his Marx and Engels when he was on his bunk in the South African reserve army. South Africa’s only enemies were us, the apricot-browns and the brown-blacks.

When they came into the townships with their Saracens and Hippos you couldn’t tell the difference between soldiers and police. The purpose of national service was to train the white boys to shoot and kill black men, and women, kill even boys and girls in an emergency. After finishing his military training Mordechai could have been called up to join the army reserves to help the police kill me, and my children and his own children!

\*

People, even historians find it hard to plumb the depths of South African politics. In the 1990s the President after Mandela, Thabo Mbeki said there was no AIDS virus: it was all down to *poverty* and *malnutrition* virtually caused by the white man and the capitalist-colonialist class. Whether you survived AIDS *did* depend *in part* as to whether your position in society enabled you to access anti-retroviral drugs and *knowledge* about contraceptive means of reducing transmission.

Everybody knew that some of the ANC fighters in the liberation army *Umkhonto We Sizwe* brought the AIDS virus with them coming back from Angola in 1986 and onwards after the *détente* with Presidents Botha and De Klerk, and the soon to be freed Nelson Mandela.

\*

Mandela was said to be the greatest man in the world. There was a big squabble over his estate between members of his family when he died in his 90s. Had he been gifted a house by a white business man in Lower Houghton, a superb Northern Jo'burg suburb? He deserved it. Or perhaps he earned it with his best-selling autobiography "Long Walk to Freedom". Winnie Mandela had to endure exile in a godforsaken, isolated little township house outside Brandfort in the Orange Free State. She seemed to be driven mad. When her exile ended she surrounded herself in Soweto with impoverished pre-adolescent children and disturbed adults including a chauffeur who took the rap for killing a child who ran away from this gang, bizarrely called the Mandela United Football Club, a boy called Stompie Moegetse.

\*

In our youth there was no AIDS. Some of us were gay, and some were straight. I was straight. So was Mordechai. Being just a non-white "flat-boy", I couldn't possibly have a white girl friend. There was the Immorality Act and the Sexual Offences Act. I talked a lot about that to Gwynedd Vaughan my girl friend at Wits and Oxford and now my wife in Cinnamon Square.

As under Hitler, "inter-racial", "Aryan"-Jewish and black-white marriages *and* inter-racial sexual relations were illegal. Mordechai's identity document said he was white European.

\*

Gwynedd Vaughan, my wife, put on *The Merchant of Venice* at an improvised open-air theatre-space by the Zoo Lake.

This was in a northern suburb of Jo'burg, Parktown North.

She didn't ask the city council if it was legal to have a mixed cast. She asked me, Peter-Sipho Muthwa, to play the Prince of Morocco, whose opening line in his courtship of Portia is: "Mislike me not for my complexion..." !

Mordechai played Bassanio.

Mixed sex in the offing between Portia and a Moorish-skinned Prince of Morocco and a Jewish “Coloured” Bassanio.

The Prince of Morocco started badly by apologising for his colour. “Mislike me not for my complexion...”

It was hardly a revolutionary moment in the slow overthrow of apartheid in South Africa. The plot of *The Merchant of Venice* is utterly flawed by its racism.

In the play the Prince chooses the wrong casket: gold for Portia the jewel. Bassanio, friend of a merchant-adventurer, the depressed Antonio, chooses correctly, intuitively – lead.

Antonio has lent Bassanio money to make the trip with his friends all dressed up to Belmont to court Portia, and having won her heart can pay the debt back to Antonio but only with *borrowed* money her money possibly!

*Antonio previously borrowed money from Shylock for Bassanio* and Antonio is now bankrupt. As it happens all *Antonio's* foreign business ventures come to nothing when *all* his merchant ships are wrecked. So, *he Antonio* has not got money - to repay Shylock who has a “bond” which allows him to take a pound of Antonio’s flesh even flesh nearest Antonio’s heart if the money from Antonio’s account is not available on the very day the bond comes into force. That’s the day of the court hearing when everybody is on tenterhooks and the dosh, the moolah, the readies are not ready because everybody is in a flat spin because the Jew has got his knife and scales out.

Shylock is so vengeful that not even the offer to repay the debt *from other sources* after the due date many-fold softens his heart. And it has to be just a pound of flesh an exact pound! Of course, what bothers one is that theatre people still want to do *The Merchant of Venice* even when such a convolutedly *evil* plot, but perfectly convoluted plot prompted no doubt by anti-Semitism is offered as entertainment in what is, at the same time, largely written as a comedy. An out-of-all-proportion tragedy is inflicted on an evil man who is ultimately charged with attempted murder. This punishment is seen by the Christians as just. All Shylock’s goods are confiscated and he must become a Christian.

\*

Gwynedd Vaughan, became my wife. Her identical twin sister, Ffion married Mordechai. The Vaughans were of an aristocratic family with a stately home in Oxfordshire.

They both went to drama school in London, and then acted and directed in London, and then they were in Jo'burg studying ecology and teaching and doing landscape gardening.

It was Gwynedd who cast me, Peter-Sipho Muthwa, as Caliban in *The Tempest* in Rhodes Park. Memorably for British visitors Rhodes Park was in the white suburb of *Kensington*. An open-air stage with its beautiful willows was reflected in a pond. My friend Mordechai was Ariel running on a hardly visible board underneath the water from the lighting box to the stage.

He apparently skimmed over the surface like a dragon fly.

In a further gesture of theatrical daring Gwynedd cast her twin sister Ffion as Prospero. Ffion with great virtuosity managed a baritone speaking voice, with a grey beard, grey wig spread wildly out of her scalp, and ageing make-up.

For the spirits Gwynedd had a flock of nursery school kids, black, white and brown speaking in unison.

\*

When I stopped being a flat-boy with Minna at Observatory Mansions I started helping the Union astronomer with his sightings and mathematical calculations. I then embarked on a serious education in philosophy and theology at Witwatersrand University. At all times Mordechai my younger brother and in my charge was by my side.

University Players did *Julius Caesar*, also directed by Gwynedd Vaughan on the steps of the classical façade of the Arts block, with its Greek / Roman-style columns. I played Cassius. Ffion played Brutus in her best contralto/baritone voice.

We had Caesar say, “Yon, *black* Cassius has a lean and hungry look . Such men are dangerous.”

\*

The child is father to the man: again, going back in time: I was 15 and Mordechai was 4 when I was put in charge of him.

I was put on half-time as a flat-boy and half-time as a child-carer.

He was mischievous and endearing.

But this colour-race thing was driving me mad. Everyone was obsessed by it.

It was his father Lazarus who told me *again* that *his* mother, old Mrs Pekarsky, Mordechai’s paternal grandmother looked like a Tatar because the Lithuanian and Polish Jews lived side by side with Slavs and Tatars for 800 years. So, some of the Pekarskys looked like Coloured Jews.

This ethnic mixing happened during the eight centuries since the Jews were expelled eastwards from German cities like Speyer and Wormsafter *pogroms* instigated by Dominican friars.

There was Tatar conversion to Judaism. So, Mordechai was Jewish and, in a sense “Coloured”. Tatars weren’t Caucasoid whites.

\*

As Mordechai grew up and started behaving with greater maturity, he and I were like brothers in his mother’s flats, Observatory Mansions, in Bellevue East.

The servants' accommodation was made of unpainted brick and cement for five people in two rooms on the roof of the building. Our "flat" was half the size of the flats reserved for whites who paid a proper rent. The white tenants had two and three-bed-roomed flats, beautifully plastered and painted and had parquet flooring, and excellent electric stoves and, by our standards, huge incomes.

\*

If I was told once, I was told a hundred times about the scores of Pekarsky and Sacks relatives who must have been killed in the Holocaust in central and eastern Europe and Belarus between 1940 and 1945.

They were obsessed as much with the Holocaust as I was about the Bushpeople's, the /Xam's, genocide. Why?

Fear. Anger that it could have happened at all and could happen again. It did happen again in Rwanda-Burundi.

They, the Jews were murdered by local Nazi *Einsatzgruppen* composed of enthusiastic anti-Semitic Lithuanians, Latvians, Poles, Belarussians under the supervision of S.S. commanders; or sent straight to concentration camps – and were gassed with Zyklon-B

Genocide happened in Cambodia under Pol Pot. Hutu murdered Tutsi. Before World War One, the Germans in South West Africa actually started a genocide against the Herero and the Nama. They wanted to fill the territory with Germans.

Supposedly "everyone" knows 6 million Jews were killed in total, not so? Does that stop anti-Semitism? Never. The Jews are still envied and hated because they are good at business, powerful, use their power. Epstein. Harvey Weinstein. I don't defend the villains.

Does the average European in Europe know that about 250,000 Bushpeople were killed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Dutch – the Boers? Like the Aboriginals in Australia, in particular Tasmania, by British colonists - does the average European in Europe know that? Has the Afrikaner Nationalist Party in the post-apartheid Parliament apologised for the mass murder of the /Xam? They, Afrikaners of the moderate right, were at first in Mandela's governing coalition. Now the Irish and

the Canadians and the Americans are coming out about how they forced the indigenous into boarding schools where they had their native cultures washed and ironed out of them.

\*

The benefits of colonialism: I went to Dr and Mrs Moffatt's primary and junior high school near Greytown in Natal. Minna and Lazarus Pekarsky had already taught me to read and write.

I was small and looked like a Bushman, a *Muthwa*. My parents hired themselves out as farm workers to the Boers and the Africans. We needed money, money for food, money for hut tax, money for a school uniform, money for decent clothes when we went shopping in Greytown or when my parents and I and were invited to sit at Dr Moffat's table in the vicarage next to the Anglican church. We used our Sunday best to go to the Pekarsky's Passover meal.

Minna taught me to read music and accompany myself singing church hymns and Italian arias and Hebrew songs at her upright piano.

She introduced me to the Bishop of Johannesburg and I was taken on in the Cathedral choir and paid for it. I sent most of the small remuneration home to the lower Drakensberg in money orders so my family could eat.

Dr Moffat gave me the book *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* written by Dr W.H.I. Bleek and Lucy Lloyd based on research into the last of the South African Bushpeople before the language became nearly extinct.

I polished up on the folktales I already knew and hired myself out as a story-teller for children's parties in English versions of: "How Mantis Transformed Himself into A Hartebeest Who Couldn't Be Butchered", "The Girl And the Rainbull", "How The Girl Made Stars".

Alexandra Taylor my drama teacher promoted my story-telling sessions and saw to it that the hosts paid me £20 per performance. I put the money in two bank accounts: one for my parents and siblings so they could survive locusts, droughts and floods, and other half of the fees for me if and when Mordechai and I went to Witwatersrand University and then to Oxford. We were both good

cricketers and rugby players and were elected to the S.R.C. and won Rhodes Scholarships to Oxford.

Our language /Xam wasn't extinct, just very rarely spoken. I spoke it with my parents and grandparents and great-grandparents, the ones who were called *batwa* ("bushpeople").

Bleek and Lloyd had invented a special alphabet for the Bushpeople's language with its 5 clicks, special consonants and intonations. This research helped us revive the nearly-extinct /Xam language.

Researchers from the white English-speaking universities sent linguists to interview me and learn the language which was spoken by the small number of /Xam descended from refugees and who went to live in Bechuanaland before the lower Drakensberg /Xam died out, except the antecedents of the Muthwa family.

They paid me for teaching them and again I sent the money home so my own family could eat. £20 a session.

Dr and Mrs Moffat and Minna and Lazarus Pekarsky were happy for me to teach them Zulu and Khoi San. They paid me, so my family could eat.

I couldn't wait to leave South Africa to get away from division, segregation, degradation.

\*

When I was 14, because my parents were short of money, Dr Moffatt, who wanted me to "get on in the world", adapted intelligence tests to take account of our culture and assessed me on them. To make sure I was "genetically" capable of getting on it the world. Such as:

"Put these animals in their correct species group:"

'Chimpanzee', 'Human Being', 'Lemur', 'Lion', 'Gorilla', 'Cat', 'Leopard' 'Orangutan,'

'Rat', 'Squirrel', 'Mouse'. I knew enough biology to know the answer

Or: "What are the names for the scientific or academic study of the following groups of topics:

"God, the Holy Trinity, samadhi,"<sup>2</sup>

"prejudice, stereotyping, roles"<sup>3</sup>

"encopresis, enuresis"<sup>4</sup>

You can tell Dr Moffatt taught me at a high academic level. The last three questions were university stuff

The Pekarskys, the Sacks and the Moffatts had met quite by chance on the beach at Margate on the Natal South Coast during the summer holidays.

\*

Lazarus Pekarsky, although a Jew, was very interested in the Christian religion and read a lot of the Christian Bible and devotional works about Jesus Christ, on whom he meditated. He would give all the "flat-boys" generous Christmas presents on top of higher than average wages.

Lazarus had to keep quiet about Jesus in front of Minna who was a South African Liberal but an ordinary Jew.

Mordechai's father, old Mr Moshe Joseph Pekarsky, called Jesus "Joske Pandera" as if a Roman legionnaire called Pandera was the one at the crucifixion and was Jesus' father. The old man liked me taking him for walks and he paid me. I sent the money home so they could eat. By now they could actually save and get interest from the building society in Greytown.

Mr Pekarsky Senior knew that speaking about "Joske Pandera" was Christian blasphemy. After what they suffered from Christians in Europe they felt they had a right to their feelings.

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<sup>2</sup> [theology]

<sup>3</sup> [psychology or sociology]

<sup>4</sup> [psychiatry or clinical psychology]

Back in the 1920s he carried a revolver when he ran an eating-house for black miners on a gold-mine. He threatened to use it against Lazarus if he talked about Jesus in their house.

Jesus helped Lazarus as much as the Psalms and the story of Job. Minna was an Orthodox Jew who “repaid” God for giving her a son, Mordechai, after a stillbirth in 1935. She repaid God by educating Mordechai in a formal study of Hebrew and Judaism long before his *bar-mitzvah*.

She repaid God by educating Mordechai in a formal study of Hebrew and Judaism long before his *bar-mitzvah*.

Her liberalism expressed itself by uplifting the Ngubanes and now me, Peter-Sipho Muthwa as a special friend for her son. The wages were better at Observatory Mansions and there was payment in kind – mealie meal and meat – so at least we were nourished and my parents did not starve as I had these other sources of funding: story-telling at children’s parties and imparting my knowledge of /Xam to researchers.

The Torah obliged Minna to help the stranger.

I was baptised “Peter” in Dr Moffatt’s Anglican church near Greytown and my name in Zulu was Sipho which means “gift” but my father and I adopted the surname Muthwa – “Bushperson”. I and Mordechai were both like a gift to my mother and to Mrs Pekarsky, Minna. Mordechai is a Jewish name but derives from the Babylonian god Marduk who cut Tiamet in two to make the earth and the sky. To the Zulu *uNkulunkulu* is God: the great-greatest.

The child that Minna lost was a child who was still-born the year before Mordechai was born, 1935. Mordechai was a 7 months premature baby born in 1936.

My mother also had difficulty with conception, pregnancy and childbirth. They lived in beehive type huts like the Zulus for whom they often worked as labourers when they were short of money. Or for white farmers. Sometimes they received no wages. Just accommodation and food. They had to call the white man “*baas*” – “boss”.

\*

On Minna's insistence, after the war, she and Lazarus went to visit the Jewish dead to pay homage to Great Uncle Yaffsitch and Great Aunt Jaff. And Great Uncle Pincus Pekarsky. They were the ones turned into ash in pits grassed over in concentration camps in mass-cemeteries, actually Auschwitz, Sobibor, Treblinka, Dachau.

Or they were bodies, coffin-less, shot and rotting in grassy pits in sylvan woodland in which birds sang in Latvia, Poland, Lithuania and Belarus. And all this because the Jews were shopkeepers and made a profit and cared desperately for their families – and were supposed to have killed Christ??

They showed Mordechai and me photographs of these weird places of violent death. I asked my parents where *our* ancestors, the /Xam, were buried.

When I was home on holiday they took me further along in the lower Drakensberg Mountains and showed me mounds of earth and stones, which we dug up.

You could tell the skeletons were Bushpeople because they were short, on average about five foot two inches or less. Their skulls were often smashed open by bullets or clubs.

Not just the Boers but their Bastard commandos killed our ancestors.

The Bastards were a mixture of Boer genetic heritage and "Hottentots" (Khoi-Khoi) and San (Bushpeople). The Boer farmers used Khoi-San women slaves to increase their "stock" of bastard slaves who lost their Khoi-Khoi culture and spoke Afrikaans and were organised into regiments loyal to the Boers. Some of them called themselves Griquas. No harm in illegitimacy. We were all illegitimate once before we invented marriage, dowry, bride-price, bridegroom's dowry, the laws against incest with relatives. Except the Hebrew patriarchs sometimes married their cousins, and Lot's daughter's had intercourse with him thinking there was no mankind left after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Freud's theory of the primal horde and the castration of the omnisexual father to stop him monopolising all the women became a serious topic when we taught and studied Freud's *Totem and Taboo* at Oxford, Witwatersrand and Botswana University.

\*

I liked the sound of Hebrew.

Lazarus taught me and Mordechai some of the language of the Hebrew Bible and I wore a suit and tie and a *yamulka* or *kippa* skullcap and sat at their Passover table when they had their *Pesach* meal.

On the anniversary of their parents' deaths they said the *Kaddish* for those who had passed away, praising the all-hallowed God and they lit candles.

They told me extraordinary facts about the Jews. They said some Hasidic, ultra-Orthodox Jews believed that the six million Jews killed in what they called the Holocaust, *were martyrs in God's cause, which was to honour His promises to Abraham and Moses that He would be their one and only God and Palestine would be their Promised Land.*

And in return that Jews would be His people obeying Biblical or at least modern rabbinical law.

This self-sacrifice of the passive six million few of whom fought back based in the forests of Belarus with Tuvye Bielski and in the Warsaw Ghetto? Was it a continuation of the primitive religion of the Jews in sacrificing hundreds, thousands maybe, millions of animals at the Temple altar in Jerusalem? To placate a hungry and jealous God, and ruin themselves? Until, according to Isaiah, God was sickened by the slaughter of innocent creatures? The fanatical theology of the right wing Orthodox some of them Zionists, others waiting for the Day of Judgement.

As for the Germans, what does one expect of the unemployed and the vanquished after their total surrender in the First World War? They rehearsed for the Holocaust by attempting to totally annihilate the Herero and the Nama in German West Africa before World War One. I hear the German government is paying compensation to the Herero and the Nama descendants of the murdered ones.

God changed from a vengeful, jealous God, into a God of mercy. Then Jesus became part of the Trinity to mediate between man and God because of his redemptive suffering. Through the medium of the Holy Spirit His sacrifice somehow relieved us of sin. Gratuitous redemption. *If you want to believe, then believe.* But don't say that it comes from reason. Faith comes from the *emotional* truth of faith. Kierkegaard. The speechless mystical truth of a world suddenly making sense *after* one has studied the world where everything is the case, a fact, a state of affairs supported by facts (which left Wittgenstein speechless).

Lazarus Pekarsky was the first person I met who thought God was the transcendence and immanence of Being.

They were liberals and got me and Mordechai to join Alan Paton's Liberal Party. He had awakened the world to the injustice of white-ruled South Africa with his novel *Cry the Beloved Country*.

The religious Liberals' belief was that the Palestinians were also Allah's chosen, descending spiritually from Mohamed and observing the word of the angel Gabriel who was God's messenger.

No doubt theologians and worshippers are at this very moment working out the nature of God's promises to all Her and His children, descended metaphorically from Adam Kadmon and Chavva (Eve) Kadmona, the prototypes for *one homo sapiens*. In her youth, middle and old age Mordechai's grandmother returned to the *kabbalah* of Rabbi Moses De Leon's medieval *The Zohar*.

\*

"In the image of God he created them, male and female he created them" (Genesis).

\*

This was written by the Elohist who called God El or Elohim. As Mordechai and I dug deeper into Judaism, we came to this conclusion: Judaism was the religious ideology of the

Hebrews who came from Mesopotamia and were originally city dwellers like Abraham, allied to some nomadic herders, but then some of them became farmers and merchants as well as mercenary soldiers and literate scholars who were led by prophets, judges and later kings, then rabbis when the first and second Jewish Commonwealths of Palestine were defeated. They were known as *Habiru*, Hebrews.

For nearly 4,000 years Jews have been inspired by visions when they danced to music or fasted and prayed in the wilderness.

Their prophets went up the mountains or into the desert to obtain visions of El who was not married to Astarte (who was a Philistine goddess - Aphrodite in Greece). God, Elohim was the

father and husband of the whole of the Judean and Israelite people who were therefore a Holy Nation, Chosen to rule Palestine on His behalf.

But YHVH Elohim, the LORD God of the unspeakable name YHVH was written about by *another* writer of Genesis who called God by this, his real name YHVH. This name was too sacred to speak aloud. You had to say “Adonai”- “The Lord” instead. He was the Yahvist.

\*

The Yahvist created Adam Kadmon the Original Adam differently: with the breath of life into his nostrils and Chavva Kadmona (Eve) out of Adam’s side, by contrast with “male and female made he them” both in the book of Genesis.

\*

Why the two nomenclatures and two theosophies for God in the same book of Genesis?

Not that it mattered compared with Darwin.

\*

The documents making up Genesis were written by two scholars: the Elohist and the Yahvist.

As well there was the Priestly Commentator on details of genealogy, ritual and law. Then the Deuteronomist who re-wrote the whole narrative as if in the first person by Moses quoting God speaking in the first person, and the Redactor who bridged the narratives.

\*

Lazarus Pekarsky had the whole of the latest Encyclopaedia Britannica on his bookshelves, plus new editions when they came out - the relevant bits of which I and Mordechai read. Mordechai and I

gave each other summaries of the relevant harder bits – as much as we could understand. Since his parents were liberals and Liberals they were pleased with my tutelage of Mordechai and his influence on me.

\*

DOES S/HE EVEN EXIST?

When he was still in his prime whilst Minna was alive, during the week Lazarus drove off in one of their two Austen cars to whatever white boys' primary or high school he was currently teaching English and mathematics, first in Joeys<sup>5</sup> then in Kwa Zulu Natal then in Joeys again . Because he was godly and sensitive his pupils got under his skin and made him desperate. So, he sought help for his tortured soul from Christian Science practitioners. He revered Jesus and Job and had great faith. He admired not only Mozart and Kant but Berkeley, Locke, Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, Burke and Mill. He read Wittgenstein, the *Tractatus* and Freud and Lacan.

He wept when he read the songs of innocence and experience of his special spiritual friend William Blake.

Blake laid the seeds which grew into formidable poetic texts which we read at length during our B.A. Honours degrees.

And later Marx and Hegel. And the African Marxists and existentialists.

\*

Lazarus was only really most happy in his paid work at the Johannesburg Asian High School where his attraction to the transcendental in Eastern religions helped him understand Hindus, Muslims, Confucians and Buddhists and the pupils began to understand him.

Apartheid later stopped white teachers working with “non-European” pupils.

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<sup>5</sup> Joeys = slang for Johannesburg.

\*

Ethnicity became God under Dr. Verwoerd.

It was he who said apartheid was a policy of good neighbourliness.

\*

Dr. Verwoerd finally died in the Legislature of Parliament, the House of Assembly, in Cape Town, with a long sharp carving knife in his heart wielded by a parliamentary messenger called Dimitri Tsefendas acting under orders from a schizophrenically induced tapeworm.

\*

The Boer government didn't hang Tsefendas - because of course, he was not fit to plead. He was insane. Instead they put him in a cell next to the gallows in Pretoria Central Prison where every Friday at dawn he would hear the prisoners singing "Abide With Me" before the final clatter of the trap-door and the drop. And then the sun rose.

\*

We – all the Ngubanes and me Muthwa before I got the job of helping Dr Rousseau the Union Astronomer - earned about £10 a month each as cleaners at Observatory Mansions, which was considered very good wages for migrant workers since we also received payment in kind -mealie-meal and meat. Feudalism and capitalism combined.

In those days we had no trade union to protect us.

*Ubamkhulu* (Grandfather) Bob, the oldest and most honoured senior worker, was the night-watchman. He sat in the boiler-room in the basement all through the night in his khaki uniform listening for burglars rehearsing the praise-songs of the King Shaka and slept during the day. He must have been a great-grandfather.

Dressed up as an *umbongi* – a praise poet - he wore leopard and jackal skins -

he chanted Zulu praise-poetry. Only for Christmas.

His performance was a great occasion at our Christmas/Chanukah/New Year concert on the roof of the building when all the African maids and the Ngubane family of brothers and cousins gathered to celebrate. I was asked to translate the praises of King Shaka into English as Bob sang them in Zulu.

For the December concert on the roof I sang Christian hymns and Italian arias with Mordechai's uncle Jeremiah Adelstein accompanying me on his viola, the music on a stand in front of us.

Nobody believed it was possible to learn to read music and sing Italian arias if you came from the wilds of Zululand in the Lower Drakensberg. Especially not if you were a Bushperson. Were there any left? Yes my great-grandparents in the Lower Drakensberg and near Greytown, Natal.

Lazarus praised me for my ability to grasp the connection and correlation of things. He taught me in number 2 Observatory Mansions in their dining room for two hours a day, first thing in the morning or when he got home from work even when himself was exhausted by his job.

By the time I was 20, I had passed my matriculation exams, my Transvaal Senior School Certificate at Britzius College a commercial college without a colour bar in central Johannesburg. Mordechai was 9.

Lazarus had even managed to smuggle me into an all-white boys' private school in Lower Houghton after hours so that a friendly master there could help me use the science laboratories because I was doing physics and chemistry for my matric, as well as English, Zulu, History, Afrikaans, Latin, Maths.

I taught Lazarus and Mordechai Zulu grammar.

They were able to have a conversation with me including using the three click sounds Zulu had absorbed from the five clicks of the nearly extinct Bushman (Khoi San) language spoken by the

*Bathwa* hunter-gatherers before they were exterminated by the Dutch farmers, the Boers, in retaliation for cattle theft.

\*

I repeat the farmers called the Cape Bushpeople *ongedierte* – vermin. I cannot get that obsessive thought out of my mind.

Being purely foragers, the Khoi San had no kraals in which to keep stolen cattle so they killed and ate some and mutilated the rest, leaving them just able to get about and feed intending to return to the wounded beasts who, they hoped would survive, when they needed to kill for more meat.

They were desperate, many Bushpeople dying like wounded animals themselves. Muskets with an accurate 50 yards range with instant effect, blowing your head off, or an arm or a leg or penetrating the guts or lungs or heart so you were instantly incapacitated or killed or died slowly.

All this technology against bows and poisoned arrows with a 30 yards range and the poison taking hours or days to work.

Bushpeople hiding behind rocks in the hills, but driven down like dangerous animals, not seen as human.

The Boers and the British hunters had swept the veld clean of wild animals so there was little or no meat for us to hunt and not even veld-vegetables for us to gather - veld-food and water-roots which the Boer women used for their stewing and soup. So, we were weak anyway, starving.

I and Mordechai, concurrently, eventually got into Witwatersrand University and we both majored in philosophy to learn how to be wise. Then there was Oxford. Jericho.

\*

So, what was our essential Identity or Being-In-The-World as Heidegger put it?

I had to keep affirming it in case the memory faded and I became a next-to-nothing: I was descended from Khoi San great-grandparents *whom I knew* on both my parents' sides, who could speak of *time immemorial*.

I had to repeat it: we were very rare survivors who had taken refuge in the Lower Drakensberg mountains and secretly kept alive the stigmatised language which would bely our attempt at Zulu identity.

We hired ourselves out to powerful Zulu chiefs as labourers if we were short of cash, of seeds of crops, of cattle.

Sometimes they merely enslaved us.

To me there was ultimately a God of necessity. Like Kierkegaard. If you didn't believe you would go mad. There was no reason in the sense of a divine intention behind the universe. So you had to *leap* into faith from the ground of reason and ethics which supposed there *ought* to be a God.

That's why I was driven into ethics, ontology, the study of beings as beings, studying even the non-active Nazi party member Heidegger who took beings and Being seriously, despite his terrible political mistake.

We also read Nietzsche besides Wittgenstein: Proposition 6.45 of the *Tractatus*: "To view the world *sub specie aeterni* is to view it as a whole – a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole – it is this that is mystical." It's also empirical if you know some psychology and sociology and anthropology.

\*

When Mordechai was still a small child, the wife of the Union Astronomer Mrs Rousseau ran a pre-school playgroup in her garden. Her own children Gawie (Gerhardus) and Hetty (Henrietta) joined Mordechai, and his cousin Esther Jacobson, who lived at the other end of Innes Road, and there were two other friends from Urania Street, Jeffrey and Solly.

Mrs Rousseau was a real lady. She asked me to help her run the playgroup and teach the children a little bit of Zulu and our Khoi San language and tell our folk-stories. The children played below the *kopje* in the one-acre garden of the Observatory whilst Dr Rousseau slept till noon after being up from midnight to dawn working.

His work-time began when the street-lights went out from about 1 a.m. He worked under the night sky going to bed after breakfast.

He took photographs of the night-sky through his telescope which was so large that it had to be moved by machinery, as did the dome.

He opened the weather-proofed terracotta painted dome and scanned the sky depending on what was his current research project.

Sometimes we would have our lunch in the Rousseau's kitchen whilst he had his breakfast with us at the same time - me, Mrs Rousseau, Gawie and Hetty, Esther, Solly and Jeffrey. Their gardener at the time Johannes, had his meals in his corrugated iron servants' quarters in the back garden. He was a man of the old school with strong views about the dangers of mixing masters and servants.

Dr. Rousseau would explain to the children that there were supernovae and showed us photographs of exploding stars at the end of their lives.

He showed us red giants and white or blue dwarf stars. He pointed to black holes where large stars had collapsed completely and consumed every bit of matter in their region. There was dark matter which made up a quarter of the universe. It exerted gravity and strung some of the galaxies together. It put Einstein's equation  $\text{Energy} = \text{Mass} \times C^2$  (the speed of light) squared into doubt. There was too much dark matter holding the universe together to explain the exponential expansion of our galaxy unless space-time was bunched up together in the singularity before the big bang defying the laws of physics which only came into play when the universe lit up perhaps and the warping of space-time *could be accommodated* by  $E=MC^2$  (squared).

There were comets and asteroids under the control of Jupiter, which allowed some asteroids to get through to fall on earth. 4 billion years ago and later after Earth was formed Jupiter allowed asteroids carrying water/ice to get through to Earth, and then the formation of air, the oceans, the

land masses, volcanoes, the animals including the dinosaurs until the asteroid strike of about 60 millions ago leading to the two year winter skies blocking out the sun, the death of the dinosaurs, the evolution of the mammals which survived on underground and undersea food. Each planet had a history and a trajectory. Einstein still worked within limits of the already curved and bent fabric of space-time, except for the problem of dark energy and dark matter.

Because he knew that I was intensely interested in education (Mordechai was still a child) the astronomer explained the phenomenon of space-time which was curved or warped. So you could look through a telescope or take a photograph during a total eclipse by the full moon of the sun and see a star that ought to be invisible behind the sun. But it was exposed because light curved around the sun following the warping of space-time. It was as if the sun's gravity pulled the distant light-waves inwards. The mass of the sun acted like the fulcrum of a lever pushing the original starlight out from invisibility to visibility.

This was the effect of Einstein's formula -  $E= MC^2$  – energy equals mass multiplied by the speed of light squared. Space-time was curved, or warped, causing gravity to bend light. Then, at the beginning of time. But possibly Einstein was wrong. Did dark matter link the galaxies in a denser more linear form, less warped than space-time should be?

\*

I was 35 in 1960 and Mordechai was 24. We had finished our undergraduate honours degrees and then a master's degree in philosophy at Witwatersrand University on Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Nietzsche as contrasts in language use and ethics. Mordechai concentrated on Heidegger and I on the early and late Wittgenstein. Nietzsche was in the background for both of us.

We were both interested in Nietzsche whom the Nazis pillaged for their ideology of race supremacy, doing him a great injustice.

The world was everything that was the case: that was Wittgenstein's first proposition in the *Tractatus*.

But the world contained the Other and his or her world(s). That could be the case, differently, but how would you know? You wouldn't, but you make that as a reasonable assumption.

The correct answer for Wittgenstein was that even a socially differentiated world is part of everything that is the case. For Heidegger Being contains individually differentiated beings and objects. Existence changed objects so you could never know how and why the world was everything that was the case. That was a matter of *essentia* on which you performed the phenomenological reduction. The essence of things changed into the existence of things and people which could never be known like the propositions of natural science, so Wittgenstein's first book *The Tractatus* was right to stress the mystical wonder of things that mysteriously came into being of which words were signs not reducible to the laws of natural science. A thought was a picture of an intentional action or a reaction in relation to thing in logical space.

So, the social worlds of human beings were overlapping and relative. We each had a personal space-time according to Einstein but even he overestimated this. Wittgenstein saw the faults of the *Tractatus* and even in the *Tractatus* acknowledged:

“There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical”. (Proposition 6.522)

He was playing a language game (as he put it in his lectures and notes in the 1930s at Trinity College, Cambridge).

Imaginative fiction, aesthetics (*poetics*) the psychology of perception – these are not only mystical in that they exist at all. Their hypotheses are part of language games, or language strategies, involving ideology and different philosophies of empirical science or pseudo-rational or rational metaphysics.

\*

I had moved into the “Native Quarters” behind the Observatory and shared the corrugated-iron outhouse with Johannes. In reality I had become Dr Rousseau's Observatory assistant. I used to visit Mordechai, Minna and Lazarus for their Friday night and festival meals. I wasn't a flat-boy any longer.

As well as at the Observatory, Mordechai and I used to meet on the sports-fields of the university at Milner Park, near Braamfontein, mainly at the cricket nets where I practiced spin bowling and cracking the ball for what would be boundary runs in the real match.

We met at the university during the long holidays. We still planned to get to Oxford for us to go on with philosophy. Once we won Rhodes' scholarships we knew we were launched.

Meanwhile we played cricket in the still multi-racial Witwatersrand University Second X1.

We even played rugby quite seriously with me as scrumhalf and Mordechai at fly-half and managed to survive with injuries in a Third XV.

We played leading roles in the Students' Liberal Association and University Players.

If someone from an Afrikaans university team called me a "focking *Boesman*" or Mordechai a "focking *Jood*" we would try to involve the racist in a loose maul or a ruck and swear at him.

It was very ugly.

The referee might stop the game.

We would explain the provocation to the referee and sometimes both provocateur and retaliator were sent off, put in the "sin bin" with a yellow card.

So racial hate and apartheid were everywhere.

Witwatersrand University was fighting a losing battle against the Separate Universities legislation.

Theoretically I was employed in terms of what my "pass" (my identity document) would allow which was as a migrant domestic worker, then a gardener, but in reality, I worked for Dr Rousseau as an assistant astronomer, thus by-passing the apartheid legislation.

And I was a University student of philosophy, history, sociology, theology.

But still, as I said, I now had a room in the “natives” quarters with Johannes at the back of the Observatory where he, the existing gardener lived.

Johannes condemned modern scientific learning as the enemy of African culture.

The annual audit was somehow cooked by a friendly accountant and Peter-Sipho Muthwa was named as “Peter Smith B.Sc.” who was supposed to be on study leave but was non-existent.

And I was paid four times more than the gardener, Johannes, the large sum in those days of £40 per month.

Sympathetic white lady gardeners would come in a few times a week and help old Johannes and Mrs Rousseau with the beds of flowers and lawns. I often stayed up all night from midnight helping Dr Rousseau with observations, calculations, photographs.

When a government inspection was to take place, the fictitious Peter Smith was on holiday, or study leave, but Peter-Sipho Muthwa’s contributions to the Observatory’s research programme were on display as those of the non-existent Peter Smith.

Then I had to be seen helping Johannes do his gardening.

\*

This was how apartheid was avoided: black people sometimes didn’t fully exist in specialised jobs in professional/technological settings. Sometimes they were hidden, they were smuggled in.

Making life hard for clever and competent black people was a way for the Boers to get their revenge on the English and Afrikaner “liberalists”.

*They, the hard Boers, were the ruling class, they, the hard Boers, were the state, they the hard Boers were the boss. They made policy in a secret society they called the *Broederbond*.*

\*

## THE DRAMA UNDER THE AFRICAN MOON: SHARPEVILLE

Sharpeville was a good metaphorical name to commemorate a previous almost unknown African township about 30 miles south of Johannesburg where terrible, untoward events occurred on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March 1960.

“Sharp” entered the jargon of the townships as meaning “actual” “real” “on the ball”.

Sharpeville was and is a real and tragic place where no one was really on the ball. 69 people were killed and 180 injured by rifle fire from the township’s police station.

A crowd of 7000 protestors had assembled or milled about under the aegis of the Pan African Congress whose leader was Robert Sobukwe a lecturer in Bantu languages at the Witwatersrand University.

The news was in the evening paper, *The Star*, on the same day Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March 1960.

There were pictures of swollen dead bodies, strewn on the unpaved road next to the police station in *The Star* and in the *Rand Daily Mail* the following day.

The PAC and its followers were protesting against the pass-laws. People had left their passes at home or were carrying their passes and intended no violence or illegal acts like burning their passes.

They were not even required to show their passes, let alone surrender them.

The suffering caused by giving up, or burning your pass might be starvation because you could lose your job if you could not produce your pass which was the document giving you your right to stay in an urban area.

Sharpeville was a small place on the road between Johannesburg and Vereeniging. And yet anti-pass protests spread because public opinion was inflamed by the unnecessary cruelty of the shooting, which was not ordered by senior police, but occurred because of sheer panic when stones were thrown and hit the police station and the fence round it began to give way.

There had been similar protests in Durban and policemen panicked.

Police were, reportedly, disembowelled by infuriated crowds in Durban.

Perhaps this was rumour rather than fact.

Sharpeville precipitated a state of emergency in which mass-arrests took place and for all we knew thousands of activists may have lost their jobs because they were detained in prisons around the country some for months on end.

Further, the ANC implicitly advocated pass-burning by printing leaflets announcing that the leader of the ANC, Chief Albert Luthuli had burned his pass.

Mordechai and I wanted to show solidarity.

I was reached by a phone call to the Observatory and Mordechai in his parents' flat in Observatory Mansions.

We were lent a car rigged up as belonging to a travelling salesman selling women's dresses.

We were given boxes of pamphlets announcing a meeting in Alberton Township on the Witwatersrand and telling of Chief Luthuli burning his pass.

We were given an address in the township which was impossible to find because we were given no map.

There were no visible street names.

Mordechai decided that we had to confront the police. We had to avoid more possible bloodshed. We had to show the police that further confrontation might involve more livelihoods or lives lost if the people really started burning their passes like Chief Luthuli.

Mordechai was prepared to sacrifice himself rather than involve the people in more demonstrations when 69 people had already been killed at Sharpeville and 180 wounded some with life-long injuries reducing them to abject poverty.

Before I could stop him, he drove up to the Alberton Township police-station and went inside asking where such and such a street was.

The police immediately smelt a rat and rushed towards the car and retrieved the pamphlets and ordered me and Mordechai into the police station.

One cop said of Mordechai: "*Hy is a Jood*" – "He is a Jew".

What was the significance of that? That nothing he said or did could be trusted?

Mordechai asked for a cup of water. Water in a jug and a cup were brought. Mordechai had a drink and offered the cup to me and poured me a drink. I drank.

With unmitigated fury a cop smashed the cup against the wall. Muthwa, a brown man had polluted their white cup.

The sergeant in charge took our names and addresses made some phone calls and told us to go. We drove back to Observatory Mansions and the Observatory.

\*

Unless we could leave the country, we would surely be picked up and detained under the state of emergency.

We were told by the radio - the SABC - and by the newspapers, that the state of emergency had been declared in Cape Town by Dr Verwoerd or perhaps it was Mr Swart the minister for justice.

We had driven back from Alberton to Johannesburg.

We decided it would be best if Mordechai and I slept in a tent on the *kopje* above the Observatory.

The Rousseau couple were sympathetic towards us, but didn't know what else to suggest as our next move other than that we should leave the country for one of the British Protectorates.

At about 2.00 a.m. police invaded the Observatory's house and demanded to know where we were.

If the Rousseau family refused to tell them, they would have to search the house and grounds.

They began to do just this and upset Hetty and Gawie, now young adults just visiting their parents with young children.

Dr Rousseau came into the house from the Observatory.

Some bright policeman thought of looking outside and saw our lantern shining inside our tent on the *kopje*. We heard them approach with Alsatian dogs.

Fully dressed with our passports in our pockets and kitbags we slipped out and made our way along the ridge of the hill.

By this time the police were in full pursuit along Gill Street and some following the ridge of the hill. They had Alsatian dogs following our scent obtained from the tent.

We tried to hide, and fell in the near darkness and were surrounded by barking Alsatians on leashes.

\*

Mordechai was taken to Marshall Square Prison and me to The Fort or “Number Four” a prison on the crest of the hill which gave Hillbrow its name, in Special Branch Volkswagen cars.

I spent the few remaining hours till dawn in a cell with a Coloured doctor from Coronationville Hospital who predicted that we were in the early weeks of a revolution.

The next stage would be an invasion by a United Nations task force since apartheid had been declared a violation of human rights, analogous to Nazism.

This UN task force would bomb the South African military and air-force in their various camps and airfields.

Then the UN would set up arrangements for a democratic election under a new constitution, banning and arresting all members of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party and other right-wing organisations by a newly empowered United Nations administrator.

The then young Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Robert Sobukwe would set up a government of national unity.

Thus spake the psychiatrist Dr Jan Van Der Velde, my cell-mate in the Fort, who was good on mental illness but over-optimistic about likely possibilities in political reality.

The UN was nothing without the security council and Britain and the USA as permanent members would veto a UN invasion of South Africa whose uranium, gold, other precious metals, raw materials, agriculture and investment were vital to the British and US economies.

The USA was afraid the Soviet Union had infiltrated the ANC via the South African Communist Party so was cautious about helping the anti-apartheid cause.

As well there was already massive investment by the U.S. in South African stocks and shares which just slumped.

\*

I had a kind and very brilliant friend also doing philosophy called Margery Weissman whose uncle was a liberal advocate, a barrister, John Freund.

Whilst I sat in the cell with the optimistic psychiatrist from Coronationville Hospital, Dr Van der Velde, Mordechai was in Marshall Square prison all night.

Early the next morning Mordechai's mother's middle sister Anne Adelstein contacted a friend in the SABC Orchestra called Zipporah ("Zippy") Yonah a harpist and wife of Max Yonah, the senior prosecuting counsel for the Transvaal.

John Freund's briefing attorney applied to the Witwatersrand Supreme Court for a writ of *habeas corpus* ("that you have the body of a detainee brought to court.")

This is a recourse in law through which a person can report an unlawful detention or imprisonment to a court and request that the court order the custodian of the person to bring the prisoner to court, to determine whether the detention is lawful.

Dolefully, fearing the worst, Mordechai and I were taken, separately, by Special Branch policemen to the Supreme Court near Eloff Street, Mordechai by car from Marshall Square and me Sipho from the Fort to face a judge in black robes sitting on the elevated bench.

\*

What happened next was for years a mystery to me. But it happened.

Mr Justice Van Rooyen was told by Max Yonah, also in a black robe in the well of the Rand Supreme Court near Eloff Street, that there was a state of emergency.

Max Yonah looked daggers as if Mordechai, a Jew like him, had ruined the name of Jews. I too had ruined the good name of Coloureds and Bushpeople by being ungrateful.

We had fallen in politically with the Liberal Party of his opposite number John Freund, and with Communist Party members – like Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo.

Nelson was a staunch Methodist but the only way the anti-apartheid left could meet was under the clandestine aegis of the S.A.C.P. which *was* later funded secretly by the Soviet Union in aid of its liberation army *Umkhonto We Sizwe*.

I had as a matter of fact joined the Liberal Party and the ANC and Mordechai was a member of the Liberal Party and the Congress of Democrats allied to the ANC.

We were being held under the State of Emergency proclaimed in the current issue of the government gazette. Max Yonah handed a copy of the government gazette up to the judge.

He looked through the gazette and said he could find no copy of the state of emergency in the document and we were free to go.

What had happened? The document had been especially flown up from Cape Town! Had someone torn out the crucial page?

Shocked and relieved Sipho and I slipped out of the courtroom and left by a side door of the building in case we were going to be re-arrested.

John Freund our advocate gave us a lift to the Observatory where the Rousseaus hid us in the loft of their house which friends of Gawie and Hettie used when they slept over. In case the police wanted to re-arrest us in defiance of the writ of *habeas corpus*.

Everyone they knew and my family were sworn to silence in person, not using the telephone.

Effectively we had disappeared. We had to make plans.

\*

GOODBYE SOUTH AFRICA, GREETINGS BECHUANALAND.

Both Mordechai and I had finished our South African Honours degrees. We had applied and won scholarships and bursaries to go to Oxford to do higher degrees. We were going to be attached to a college and to supervisors at various departments depending on how our theses were developing. The new academic year started in October 1960.

We were also trying to get over the emotional impact of the Sharpeville shooting and our own imprisonment and sudden, lucky, release. We had to say emotional goodbyes to friends, relatives and comrades.

Would Dr Rousseau give me a job on my return? What would happen to Minna and Lazarus Pekarsky with no son around in a wicked world?

Luckily, they had their brother and sisters in the professional and business worlds of South Africa which would have to change after Sharpeville.

We got our money out of a Yeoville bank near Bellevue East and put it in travellers' cheques and hitchhiked to Bechuanaland with our kitbags, passing through customs and immigration with our passports.

\*

We spent the winter of 1960 both grieving and celebrating in Gaborone which was still a village in 1960, but was, so we already knew, going to be the capital of the new independent Botswana as soon as it could resolve its own constitutional problems.

The British government of Clement Atlee had exiled Seretse Khama, and Ruth Khama, his white English wife from London, because a high-profile mixed marriage on the borders of apartheid South Africa was a scandal to Dr Malan, the Afrikaner Nationalist prime minister in 1948, and his successors, Strydom, etc.

It might poison the minds of black and white in South Africa, - the "nauseating" prospect of inter-racial sex. I quote from Afrikaner Nationalist reports.

The fact has to be repeated: the British needed South African uranium for its nuclear weapons: it couldn't afford to restore Seretse and Ruth Khama to the chieftainship of Bamangwato society (the Bamangwato were the ruling tribe) and risk being starved of uranium for its atomic weapons by an Afrikaner nationalist government which mined the substance in South West Africa, still under South African control.

Machiavellian politics.

\*

In a village near the border post between the Transvaal and Bechuanaland we were met by our German friend Krawolski who ran workcamps for liberal students in the British Protectorates funded by NGOs and friendly Nordic countries.

There were Israelis there, helping to install irrigation systems on the edge of the Kalahari Desert to reclaim the land for agriculture. There were Israeli scientists, desperately wanting friends for the Jewish state

There were ANC activists in the group of work-campers who were building a clinic for a G.P. and Health Visitors' practice – also refugees from the apartheid regime.

We joined in for a few weeks work. We phoned our theatre friends now in London, Gwynedd and her identical twin Ffion Vaughan who directed us in Johannesburg and Cape Town who was doing yet another production of *The Tempest* at Regent's Park Open-Air Theatre. She would give us accommodation in her house in Hampstead.

Then we hitchhiked eastward to the railway line bordering Bechuanaland and South Africa and caught a train to the capital of Rhodesia, Salisbury, now Harare in Zimbabwe. We bought tickets for a British flight to London.

\*

As soon as we landed at Heathrow we phoned Minna and Lazarus and they promised to phone the Rousseau family and Dr Moffat in Greytown who would send a message to my parents to say I was OK.

Gwynedd and Ffion Vaughan met us at the airport and we caught the Underground to Hampstead and she let us into their flat in a Georgian house in Frognal, London N.W.3. They both had long finished drama school and was trying for directorships and parts in the West End and in Fringe theatres in the capital.

Mordechai and I would share a bedroom facing Frognal. It was all new to us. We had thought we would go straight to Oxford so that city was the one we found out about.

Now London.

Mordechai and I had a long and serious discussion and decided that the theatre was too competitive and stressful as life-long careers. Besides we had places at an Oxford college to research modern philosophy.

Gwynedd and Ffion persuaded us to at least stay in London till the term began in October. We had our Oxford University library cards sent to us and we studied in the British Museum Reading Room - everything we could lay our hands on by and about Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and Heidegger, some of it in German.

We had an array of German grammars and dictionaries to help us through that language. Our Oxford supervisors suggested German teachers in London, many of them refugees from Nazi Germany. We went to lessons.

\*

Ffion and Gwynedd coincidentally got contracts at the Oxford Playhouse and the Burton-Taylor Studio to act and direct in a forthcoming season of South African, Nigerian and Australian plays.

Their parents were wealthy aristocratic landowners, originally Welsh, Earl and Lady Vaughan.

They had a great mansion of gold Cotswold stone in the Oxfordshire countryside. The Earl and his wife had both been in the R.A.F. during the war, he flying Spitfires in the Battle of Britain, she delivering R.A.F. planes from factories to airfields.

They had land in Kenya and Rhodesia which they let out to white farmers in the 1950s and 1960s.

They were much preoccupied with confrontations with the colonial police forces and atrocities committed against Kikuyu and Shona and Ndebele farm workers and militants by white supremacists, British police and African nationalists.

They knew Robert Mugabe, Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela, Trevor Huddleston.

Earl and Lady Vaughan spoke up in the House of Lords for post-colonial liberation which would guarantee a continuation of trade and commerce with the newly independent countries previously

under the Colonial Office. Some Labour lords pointed out that they were “colonialist” investors in the old Empire and the new Commonwealth. It was true they were rich, but not reactionary.

They travelled to India where they owned commercial cottonfields, and met Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah. They urged their managers to link wages to a rising cost of living.

They had vineyards and wineries in the Western Cape and when violence erupted in the 1980s they conversed with liberal intellectuals allied to the United Democratic Front. They gave money to leaders and avoided leaders who might be siphoning off funds corruptly.

They listened patiently when I put the case for the Bushpeople of what would become Botswana and Namibia. They visited Seretse and Ruth Khama in Serowe and London and raised their case in the House of Lords. Backbench Labourites were supportive. Other Labour Party members called them out as “colonialist” investors but listened to papers they tabled for the Lords and Commons parliamentary committees on Commonwealth countries’ British-sourced investments, and especially linked to the Vaughan family and reported on wages and costs of living amongst “their” workers and managers.

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After much toing and froing between the Vaughan mansion where the parents showed us great kindness and hospitality and a college house in Jericho near Worcester College we settled on a supervisor, a Dr Douglas Livingstone, a university and college lecturer in modern European philosophy interested in our subject.

Ffion and Gwynedd occupied two floors and Mordechai and I the other two and we shared a bathroom and basement kitchen.

Douglas drew on later Wittgenstein and Heidegger to address the early Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*. He started with the *Tractatus*’ conclusion and then traced back to the beginning of the book (English edition 1922).

These were in lecture-seminars in his college rooms attended by about 20 students. So he – and Mordechai and I and others – followed something like this train of thought:

Douglas quoting proposition 6.53 of the *Tractatus*: “The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science – i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy – and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions...” Siphon Muthwa?

Siphon Muthwa: “Wittgenstein in his own words in *Philosophical Investigations* is playing a language game in the *Tractatus*. More dangerously, he is using a language strategy as if nothing metaphysical, nothing beyond natural science can be said. To us, as the original hunter-gatherers close to the first *homo sapiens*, we would think that Heidegger puts it better when he writes at the end of *Being and Time*: “Something like ‘Being’ has been disclosed in the understanding-of-Being which belongs to existent Dasein – [to the existent human being] as a way in which it understands.”

“To us, all cultures have the transformative power of consciousness and the unconscious and for the San, traditionally, Mantis is the creator-god, but our god-Mantis unlike the praying mantis is not eaten alive by the female grub mantis during intercourse, because he is a Creator-God and in a folktale transforms himself into a hartebeest so as to illustrate a metaphysical parable for children.”

“He lies down as an apparently dead hartebeest in the pathway of children who skin him with stone knives. But, because Mantis is the essence of Being and because, as a whole being, his existence transcends his essence as a whole being, even temporarily without his skin, even as a severed leg or even as a severed head, he can come together again to resume his identity as a whole hartebeest, as God in the animal, with the power of will.”

“To us this myth signifies the wholeness and totality and autonomy and transformative power of Being.”

Douglas: “Mordechai...?”

Mordechai: “In Jewish religion the totality of Being expresses itself in this way:

It is quite unlike natural science, contra Wittgenstein. “

“Being grasps an entity in being - *part of actual human being* - which endows *significance* on *creative unconscious forces* projected out as *en-visions*, and *visions* even if God does not exist.”

“So in Genesis 32:1 and following:”

“Jacob, Ya’akov in Hebrew is explicated through his name: the name comes from “*ekev*” meaning heel because he was born holding on to Esau’s his first-born twin’s heel and he behaves like the slang meaning of “heel” by cheating his brother of his birth-right and of his father’s last blessing”.

“To return home to Canaan and his kindred in accordance with YHVH’s advice, Jacob has to pass from Mesopotamia through the land of Seir and the field of Edom, which are connected with Esau’s home ground. They are Edomites”

“*Because he is fearful that Esau will revenge himself on him* Jacob collects his two wives Rachel and Leah and the two hand-maids, Bilhah and Zilpah, Jacob’s “concubines” and his 11 sons (the text “forgets” to mention Jacob’s 12<sup>th</sup> child Dinah in case his forthcoming meeting with Esau leads to his brother falling in love with his daughter, Esau’s niece, and abducting her so he, her father Jacob hides her in a chest according to rabbinical commentary.)”

“This is the interpretation of the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century rabbinical commentator, Rashi, (influenced by the commentaries collected in the Midrash and in the Aggadah in the Talmud dating back to ancient Roman times ).”

“Jacob places his livestock and 11 sons and presumably the chest containing Dinah (the imaginatively absent Dinah - repressed in the text) in two camps beyond the Jabbok River.”

“Jacob is retreating from his exploitative father-in-law Laban. He does not know if Esau wants to take revenge on him, his younger twin brother, a usurper.”

“So, the younger Jacob puts his people and animals and other goods in two places, in two hopefully defensible camps, wanting to cut his losses by half if Esau attacks him.”

“He places his family and flocks across the river Jabbok.”

“There they will be safer in these two camps in case his meeting with Esau goes wrong.”

“Jacob hopes that at least one camp will survive an attack by a vengeful Esau.”

“Esau is on his way reportedly with 400 men although this meeting is one in which the messenger implies that Esau intends to honour Jacob, according to Rashbam, the grandson of Rashi (late 11<sup>th</sup> early 12<sup>th</sup> century commentator)”

“Jacob sends a large flock of animals as a gift to Esau in the hope of placating him”.

“On the night before Esau arrives Jacob has a visionary experience of wrestling with a man who, it is implied, is a divine being.”

“The Other cannot prevail against Jacob but touches Jacob’s thigh which causes Jacob to strain a sinew during the struggle and the unknown wrestler asks Jacob to let him go because the dawn is breaking.”

“Jacob asks for the stranger to bless him. The stranger asks for Jacob’s name.”

“The Other who must now be seen as quasi-divine re-names him Israel – defender of God or he whom God defends.”

“When Esau arrives with his 400 men, he and Jacob /Israel are reconciled to each other. Touchingly they weep in each other’s arms.”

“Esau is persuaded to accept the gift of a large flock of animals, and they part and Jacob/Israel makes his way to Canaan to Succoth and then to the city of Shechem where further travails await him.”

“The rape of Dinah by the leading prince of Shechem – the man is also *called* Shechem - and the revenge inflicted by Dinah’s brothers consists of the slaughter of *all* the men of Shechem by Shimon and Levi whilst the Shechem-city dwellers are still recovering from the circumcisions required before Shechem and his kin can be accepted as quasi-Israelites and their leader can fulfil his desire to marry Dinah with whom he has fallen in love. Incidentally, Jacob’s wife Rachel dies at about this time giving birth to Benjamin to add to the sense of tragedy. Thus, savage tribal history requires that rape be punished by the murder not only of the rapist but the immediate tribal relatives of the rapist.”

“If Wittgenstein includes the study of folklore, psychology and history *as part of everything in the world (implicitly the social world) that is the case* – which he must do - then we have to ask what language-game or language-strategy would one be playing out as advocated in *Philosophical Investigations*”.

“Nietzsche provides one answer in his analysis of religion. Paul when he was still the Jewish fanatic called Saul, persecuted back-sliding Jews and had an epileptic seizure on the road to Damascus and saw a vision of Jesus”.

“Paul realised that *some* ritualistic constraints could be transcended by abandoning some of the 613 laws, ordinances, observances of the Torah including circumcision if the new quasi- Jewish sect Judaeo-Christianity, were to become a popular religion of redemption. Much of Christianity is so to speak *ready-to-hand*, through immediate church ritual like baptism at the font and the communion wafer and wine which at once brings about the divine incorporation of Jesus as vehicle of the Holy Spirit redemptive love as compared to Judaism, which not so ready-to-hand, but only *present-at-hand* through much study of the Hebrew bible text and rabbinical commentary to back up the liturgy and conversion to Judaism can take years”

“Heidegger sees *Being* of the human-being (*Dasein*) as *inhibited* by the present-at-hand but *facilitated* by the ready-to-hand. The ready-to-hand allows consciousness to be integral rather than reified. The ready-to-hand is ready-to-hand because life and death issues are entailed: working to earn and living and eat, rather than taking *sole account of the procedures entailed in pre- planning the actual practical procedures required by the industrialised state and economy which are only present-at-hand after much interconnected ritual and procedural processes.*”

“Time is the key to ready-to-hand Being. Jacob the grandson and Shimon and Levi the great-grandsons of Abraham are still constrained by “primitive” visions and vendettas in the patriarchal period – about 1900 BCE.

Warfare changes. By the time of the First World War what is ready-to-hand are weapons of destruction so that after war has burned itself out and one side surrenders we have to retreat to diplomacy and replace the ready-to-hand with the negotiation of the present-at-hand. Instead of the much greater horrors of the First (and Second) World Wars what are ready-to-hand are unimaginably horrific weapons of destruction. These have, to be averted if possible, after a surrender or prevented by diplomacy - the present-at-hand .”

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Gwynedd and Ffion Vaughan persuaded OUDS, the Oxford University Dramatic Society to allow them to draw up plans, after auditions, to offer an English version of *Oedipus Tyrannus* to be presented at the Oxford Playhouse.

Gwynedd and Ffion were not going to modernise the setting but would use a modern English translation of the ancient Greek of Sophocles.

We were too busy writing dissertations to be involved directly, but of course we offered moral support, since we lived in the same house in Jericho.

Every other day there would be a kind of feed-back about how rehearsals were going. Gwynedd and Ffion were intrigued by the idea of an epidemic spread by the cursing Sphinx being directed again sinners. Mordechai said all traditional and ancient cultures probably harboured the idea linking sin with divine punishment.

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Probably because *Oedipus Tyrannus* was a huge success and we could for the time being forget the horrors of Sharpeville we – that is Gwynedd, Ffion, Mordechai and I – decided on a serious step. Gwynedd and I, Mordechai and Ffion had, because we knew each other so well and had been through the displaced agony of Sharpeville, were by now very close to each other. It was the

beginning of the 60s, inhibitions were beginning to unravel although none of the four of us felt we could just abandon our quite traditional if different upbringings. Inevitably, sharing the Jericho house, wrapped up in Oxford's extraordinary mystery, wisdom and ancient verities we thought about making our lives together. Even the damage the cruel viciousness of South Africa had inflicted on Mordechai and me, was being healed.

In Johannesburg, Cape Town, in the Oxfordshire Vaughan mansion, in the Jericho house (which was owned by our college) all four of us were "just friends". There was plenty of sex around but it was always discreet and with other people. These were affairs which lasted a short time and then were over.

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We had a kind of confessional. All this took place after Sharpeville, after Mordechai and I finished our B.Litt. degrees at Oxford, after Gwynedd and Ffion had got jobs at the drama schools in London. Our college wanted to us to teach philosophy to social work and probation officer students at Montague House which was the University Department of Social Policy in Wellington Square. And write a book about it based on the two Wittgenstein books.

Why not marry? Gwynedd saw becoming a Christian wife a great challenge, or at least a welcome discipline. It would give another *foundation* for our relationship and give any children we might have the possibility of finding happiness in non-dogmatic religious values. They would be mixed-race children but didn't Jesus appeal to humanity as such, although *through* the Jewish people, indeed through children? Ffion found Mordechai's Judaism intriguing , magnificent in its biblical roots. She was amazed that, eventually, like his father Lazarus, he found Jesus a great Jewish teacher. She could relate to Zionism after the Holocaust but felt passionate about the Palestinian cause. If Mordechai could contain these tensions, so could she.

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