

Stranger in Paradise

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Abstract

This paper explores the figure of intermarried couples against the ground of the cultural and societal background of the country of birth of both partners. Focusing on the issues of identity, belonging, discrimination and acceptance, the paper is illustrated by quotations from Shakespeare's tragedy, *Othello*, probably the greatest study of the worst that can happen to a mixed race couple. Subtitled "The Moor of Venice", it is an agonising portrait of an African soldier who marries the young, white Venetian daughter of a nobleman and runs the gauntlet of various forms of racial attack until the effects on the marriage become devastating. Other illustrations of the key issues will be drawn from case material and my own experience as the child of a mixed marriage.

Waitara

He wherawheranga i te āhua o ngā tokorua moetahi tautahi iwi kē i runga i te papa o te wheako ahurea me te hāpori o ō rāua tahi whenua tūturu. Arotake kau ana ki ngā kaupapa tuakiri, tūrangawaewae, aukati, me te whakaratahanga, ka whakatauriahia ngā kōrero mai i ngā kianga o te pūrākau aituā rā a Huritao a *Othello*, tērā pea te arohaehaenga whānui o tētahi āhuatanga kino ka tau ki runga i tētahi tokorua moetahi tautahi iwikē. Kupu rarohia "Te Tangata o Wēneti", he tauira mō te moetanga o tētahi tangata toa o Āwherika i tētahi kōtiro kirimā, he tamāhine nā tētahi rangatira o Wēneti, ā, ka whāia haeretia te tokorua nei e ngā tūmomo pēhitanga kino katoa kia ngāro rānō te moetahitanga. Ka taurahia anō ētahi atu take matua mai i ōku whēako waiaro; he tamaiti o tēnei tūmomo moetahitanga.

Keywords: mixed marriage; intercultural; Othello; marrying out; racism; Freud; uncanny

The Cultural Ground of Marriage

In this paper, I examine and explore how the cultural ground in which we are planted, at conception, affects all our relationships, and particularly the figure of the marital relationship. Marital partners, though considered next of kin, in terms of closeness, are

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not kin at all — we share no DNA. Indeed if we marry a person from a different cultural ground, they are not just strangers, but strange to us in many complex ways.

My first experience of conducting a couple therapy session was in 1989. I was working for the British Law Society at the time, seeing staff and students at their post graduate Law School in the UK. The young Indian man and woman who sat before me were from the same region of India, from the same kind of religious and cultural background, with similar aspirations to become lawyers. They were full of almost tangible bitterness and rage towards each other. It had been an arranged marriage that neither of them had wanted. They were trapped by cultural expectations and saw no way out. I do not for a minute want to suggest that culturally diverse marriages are doomed to unhappiness or that culturally similar couples have any advantage in the happiness stakes. Indeed I believe that each family has its own very specific culture, and, if any union is to survive and grow, each partner has a lifelong mission to develop and learn understanding, tolerance of the other's preferences, needs and values. Successful cultural intermarriages depend particularly on mutual understanding and a general liking and respect for each other's cultures and families.

On the other hand, there can be immense problems in intermarriage if the differences between partners is blurred or denied. As Joan Massel Soncini (1997) wrote in her doctoral dissertation on *Intercultural Couples*:

One way adjustment is a solution in which, basically, one partner gives up his/her culture in favour of the other's so as to avoid conflict, but the denial of one's own cultural identity, or of any cultural difference at all, is not a stable solution and deprives the couple and their children of their heritage.

In 1953, a famous Broadway show "Kismet" was staged, later to become a movie. Kismet is an Arabic word for fate or destiny — the musical was a story of intermarriage set in the time of The Arabian Nights. The song that became a hit from the musical went like this:

Take my hand — I'm a stranger in paradise —
 Won't you answer the fervent prayer
 Of a stranger in paradise
 Don't send me in dark despair
 From all that I hunger for
 But open your angel's arms
 To the stranger in paradise
 And tell him he needs to be
 A stranger no more.
 (Lederer & Davis)

It seems to me that this old song contains some ideas that could describe many mixed marriages: the erotic idealisation of the exotic "other"; the hunger for an elevated love that has more intensity and romance than most relationships could ever have; the dark despair of possible rejection; and the sudden reliance on just one perfect partner who

will compensate for the loss of culture, family, safety and identity that can often be a part of intermarriage.

I remember a couple who came for therapy in great distress. He was a small, red-haired rather depressed Englishman and she was a vigorous, large, ebullient native Fijian woman. They had met in New Zealand shortly after he emigrated from the UK. He had been immediately attracted by her vitality and strangeness. At the same time, she had fallen in love with the difference in their physical appearance. She told me she was entranced by the bright gold hairs on his arms — she had never seen such a colour and thought it was magical — she was amazed he wanted to be with her. In the course of the relationship, she found he wanted nothing to do with her culture, her family, her language and traditions — but stayed resolutely English and expected her to somehow become English too.

Many of the themes which re-occur in mixed race relationships are eloquently explored in Freud's (1919/1953) paper on "The Uncanny". In it he wrote of the various meaning of the words "Heimlich", the known, the familiar, the expected, and "Unheimlich", all that is the opposite, the strange, the unexpected, those things that provoke in us a sudden sense of dread. Accompanying this is a fascination with the Unheimlich, especially when it seems to be Heimlich. He gives as examples the waxwork, the doll, the automated toy; we have, he wrote: "doubts that an animate being is really alive, or, conversely, that a lifeless being is not so" (Freud, 1919/1953, p. 232).

We are often drawn to a being who appears the same as us, looks similar and is yet deeply unheimlich — unfamiliar — in crucial ways.

In the spirit of whakapapa and of the figure and ground theme of the conference — and this special issue of the journal, I would like to share my personal story, as a child of a mixed marriage.

My Ground

I was born in 1950 in a small Welsh town. My father was a forensic pathologist, and my mother a desperate housewife with a sharp tongue. Unknown to me at that time was the fact that my father's family were Orthodox Jews, originating in Russian Poland — that hinterland where borders constantly changed.

I always knew my mother's family was Irish Catholic. We had frequent contact with my mother's parents and extended family, and often went to Ireland for holidays. Crucifixes, rosary beads, statues of the Virgin Mary and a keen sense of guilt were very familiar to me. When my father's parents both died within a year of each other, I remember my father having to be away for a week or so, and I remember hearing something about clothes being torn and feeling very confused. My mother, sister and I were not allowed to attend the funeral.

There are 160,000 orthodox Jews in the UK; 30,000 of them live in Manchester. This is where my father and mother grew up, in different parts of the same city. Where my mother lived, it was generally believed that Jews practiced witchcraft and spat in the food they sold to Gentiles. My mother and father met at Manchester University. As one of four Jewish boys at Manchester Grammar School, where he was called "a four eyed yid", my father had won a scholarship to the University Medical School — which was fortunate as

his family, textile traders, would never have been able to afford the fees.

When my father saw my mother in the corridor — a pretty auburn-haired blue-eyed Irish Catholic girl — it was love at first sight. He worshipped her throughout their marriage. She was less enthusiastic. When once I asked her why she had married him, she sighed and said, “He had me persecuted.” She meant that he wouldn’t leave her alone and followed her everywhere, asking her for dates, and, later, to marry him. He was a very determined person. At the time, his family were, as many generations before them had been, orthodox Jews. They kept a strict kosher house and observed Shabat. That meant that a non Jewish girl (a maid) came on Shabat to operate any machinery, turn light switches off and on. The Yiddish word for this girl was “shiksa”.

In *The Quest for the Ultimate Shiksa*, Professor Frederic Cople Jaher (1983) wrote:

The *shiksa* obsesses many Jews: Rabbis see her as an intermarital threat to the survival of Judaism; parents fear that she will lure their sons away from family and faith; and Jewish men fantasize about her sexual and social desirability. She figures prominently — even compulsively — in popular movies and bestsellers by Jewish directors and writers. (p. 518)

That is how my father’s family saw my mother, and when he married her four years down the track, just before the Second World War, it was a simple Registry Office ceremony — she dressed in black — and no family attended other than one of my mother’s sisters. He was cast out and disinherited from his family, who said Kaddish (prayers for the dead) for him. He had done the unforgivable thing — married out.

There is still tremendous hostility, particularly in Israel, towards marrying out. Many Israeli Jews oppose mixed relationships, particularly relationships between Jewish women and non Jewish Arab men. A 2010 opinion survey found that more than half of Israeli Jews believed intermarriage is equivalent to “national treason”.

Outside Israel, much has been written about the subject of “marrying out”. In 1996, Jon Ronson, a prominent Jewish author who married a non Jewish woman wrote in UK’s *The Independent* newspaper:

Have Jews any right to treat my children with suspicion, refuse them bar mitzvah and entry into synagogue, to consider them gentiles? This is a question without an answer. In a way, I have let down my people. I have done my religion a disservice. A member of my family once warned me, with genuine concern: “If you marry a non-Jew, she will turn to you some time in the future, mark my words, and she will say: ‘You’re nothing but a dirty Jew.’” (Ronson, 1996, p.1)

Matrilineal descent is a law so strictly applied in the Jewish community that many of us who have longed to belong have experienced discrimination and even cruelty — ironically at the hands of those who have experienced discrimination and cruelty perhaps more than any other racial group. This writer, for example, would not recognise a child of a Jewish father as anything but an outcast:

Without any doubt, marrying out weakens the bonds with one's religion and community. We Jews are so few and our history so fraught, our support so limited, losing millions through murder or forced assimilation, that we cannot look dispassionately on those who leave our ranks. Yes it may sometimes work, but more often than not it doesn't, or it leads inevitably to the loss of the Jewish component. (Rosen, 2013, p. 1)

Rosen's point about the weakening of bonds with community is very relevant to me. As the child of the "married out" I can recognise that I had nowhere to belong. Because my racial identity was from a Jewish sperm and not a Jewish egg, I searched in vain, later in my life, for a way to claim my Jewish ancestry, travelling to Israel several times and living on a kibbutz. When I asked for contact with relatives a few years ago on Jewish Gen Family Finder (<http://www.jewishgen.org/jgff/>), I received a grudging letter from a double second cousin — his grandfather and my grandfather were brothers and his grandmother and my grandmother were sisters. He gave me some family history with this stern proviso:

Whilst I can give you details about your paternal ancestry I cannot solve the problem of your dual identity. According to normative Jewish law transmitted through the prophets, kings, judges and rabbis of Israel throughout >3,300 years, Jewish ethnicity is transmitted through matrilineal descent, i.e. Jews are Jews because their mothers were Jews. A non-Jewish mother produces a non-Jew irrespective of who the father was. Therefore, you are a non-Jew with a Jewish father — the fact that your father married a non-Jewish woman ended a line of Jews who are directly descended from Aaron the brother of Moses (that is what the designation Cohen means). (personal communication, 2009)

My mother and father, having suffered long lasting hostility to their union, eventually abandoned all religion and forbade me and my sister to attend any religious instruction classes. Brought up in a Welsh market town, I was treated badly by several of the Welsh Baptist primary school teachers, one of whom threw me out of her class, as she refused to "have a child in her class who didn't go to chapel"! I had no contact with any extended family members on my father's side and he refused to talk about them.

As the only forensic pathologist in the area, my father had a strong position in the local community. He was frequently called on to give evidence in murder trials and was one of the main consultants who traced the source of the tragic foot and mouth epidemic of the 1960s in Wales. He was a haematologist and a specialist in lung diseases, giving evidence for many of the Welsh miners in their claims for compensation. He retained his fierce political defense of the underdog. However, in 1967, my father suffered the first of three strokes. This one resulted in permanent damage to his vocal cords, his word finding and the strength in the left side of his body. After this, it was clear that he was obviously moved by anything with a Jewish theme on the radio or TV. Songs, commentary, and/or anecdotes would reduce him to tears. I often asked him to talk to me about his feelings, but he would always blame his tears on the effects of the stroke and refuse to share his grief with me or with anyone else. He had no friends to whom he would open

up. My mother was his only confidante and his only intimate companion — the last person who he would have told about his loss of family and cultural heritage.

As he got older, my father became haunted. Everything that once was heimlich became unheimlich to him. His lifetime of dealing with murdered corpses haunted him. He had terrible nightmares and often my mother would have to look in wardrobes and cupboards and under the bed to reassure him there was nothing in the room. From the exceptional, charismatic confident, and highly intelligent man he had been, he declined into an isolated, vulnerable and desolate person who died of a third stroke in 1984. There were no members of his family of origin at his funeral. No Jewish prayers were said. According to his express wishes, his ashes were scattered on the crematorium gardens. He wanted no stone, no memorial. Nothing of him was to remain. This is my own personal ground; the figure of my father and his ground formed me, although no literal ground ever held his bones.

In 1887, the English poet, Francis Thompson wrote an “Arab Lovesong”; it goes like this:

Now while the dark about our loves is strewn,
 Light of my dark, blood of my heart, O come!
 And night will catch her breath up, and be dumb.
 Leave thy father, leave thy mother
 And thy brother;
 Leave the black tents of thy tribe apart!
 Am I not thy father and thy brother,
 And thy mother?
 And thou — what needest with thy tribe’s black tents
 Who hast the red pavilion of my heart?
 (Thompson, 1920/1887, p. 35)

The words capture the promise of eternal romantic love that will heal all wounds. The black tents of home, of the tribe fade in comparison with the alluring, luxurious and sensual red pavilion of the exotic other’s heart. These lines have always made me think not just of my father but also of Othello — the Moor of Venice — the ultimate example of the disastrous effects of intermarriage.

The Ground of Venice

The Venice of the 1580s was a subject of intense interest in England in Shakespeare’s time. The glamorous city was the commercial cross-point between East and West and, as the city recorder wrote: “the most precious merchandise” of every “city famous for merchandising in the Levant” passed through Venice (Rutter, 2013).

This economic power was a magnet for foreign traders, making Venice a visibly cosmopolitan city where, wrote a traveller, “if you are curious to see men from all parts of the world, each dressed in his different mode, go to the Piazza di San Marco or to the Rialto” (ibid). There you would see Greeks, Spaniards, Florentines, and Turks. The ghetto (the Italian for casting; also *geto* meaning “foundry”) was an island of Venice, Il Ghetto

Nuovo, where Jews were forced to live. Every evening the gates of Ghetto were locked and the Jews were unable to leave until the following morning. Jewish men were compelled to wear a yellow circle stitched to their shoulders and Jewish women had to wear yellow hats. Most professions were banned for them — they were allowed to practice medicine, textile trading, money-lending and to own pawn shops. Shakespeare's other famous play set in Venice, *The Merchant of Venice*, is of course about one such Jew, Shylock.

Venice was also a city famed for a flourishing sex industry — the women of honourable birth were chaperoned and protected — the young men were expressly diverted by the elders to professional women capable of handling their sexual energy rather than risking the honour of their young ladies. Racial, sexual and commercial tensions were rife. Against this background, Shakespeare set the tale of his noble Moor: the proud African general, Othello.

The Moors

Early 17th-century English attitudes toward non Europeans were largely shaped by the government's diplomatic policies and, to a lesser extent, by exotic stories brought back by travellers overseas. The term "moor" was derived from the name of the country Mauritania but was used to refer to North Africans, West Africans or, even more loosely, for non whites or Muslims of any origin. North and West Africans living in Elizabethan England were frequently singled out for their unusual dress, behaviour and customs and were commonly referred to as "devils" or "villains." Moors were commonly stereotyped as sexually overactive, prone to jealousy and generally wicked. The public associated "blackness" with moral corruption, citing examples from Christian theology to support the view that whiteness was the sign of purity, just as blackness indicated sin.

Although Queen Elizabeth granted the Moors "full diplomatic recognition" out of gratitude for their help in conquering Spain, in 1601 she deported them, citing concerns about their irregular behaviour and a fear that allowing them to stay in England would lead to overpopulation. The Elizabethan portrait of the dark-skinned "other" clearly established him as a bestial force, dangerous because of his sexuality, temper and magical powers.

Othello

When the great tragic story opens, Othello, the Moor of Venice, is a much admired and respected general. Eloquent, strong and highly experienced, he is the lynchpin of the Venetian battle with the Ottoman Empire, (at that time threatening to take over Europe). The pathway of the Ottoman Forces was through the Island of Cyprus, under Venetian rule since 1489, and Othello is to be quickly despatched there to hold off the threat of the Ottomans.

However, in the first scene of the first Act of the play, we see clearly the ugliness of the racism that informs the background of the play. Knowing that Othello and Desdemona are newly and secretly married, the two Venetians Iago and Roderigo, call on her father to alert him to the fact. In the course of two minutes, Othello is referred to as a thick lips, an old black ram, a devil, and a lascivious beast. Here is what Iago calls up to Desdemona's father in the middle of the night about his daughter and son-in-law's union:

'Zounds sir, you're robbed; for shame, put on your gown;
 Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul.
 Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
 Is tugging your white ewe! Arise, arise;
 Awake the snorting citizens with a bell,
 Or else the devil will make a grandsire out of you!
 (Shakespeare (1603/1951), *Othello*, Act 1, Scene 1, ll. 91-96)

At this point in the tragedy, Othello is highly valued by the Venetian state. He is dignified, heroic and undeniably exotic — his confidence glows. He has no doubt of his status and power within Venetian society. The Duke admires him and depends on him. Desdemona is his wife. Although racism lurks like a snake in the long grass, it does not threaten him. Desdemona's father attempts to shame him, accuses him of bewitching his daughter and using evil magic to win her — to no avail.. Othello is at the height of his power, his masculinity and his self-esteem, deeply in love, deeply loved and triumphant. The word "exotic" literally means "from another place" — the synonyms are listed as follows: bizarre, fantastic, glamorous, marvellous, romantic and strange. It sounds like the word "erotic" meaning sexual love. The sexual love between them is evident to all. Yet he is deeply unheimlich (unknown) to them all. They have only heard glamorous stories that serve as a glossy token of his racial and cultural origins. And it is this exotic glamour with which Desdemona falls in love. She knows nothing of his real experience, memories or personal history. In Act 1 Scene 3 of the play, Othello speaks of their mutual attraction, on the occasions when her father would invite him to the house, and beg him to tell the stories of his life:

Her father loved me; oft invited me;
 Still question'd me the story of my life,
 From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes,
 That I have passed.
 I ran it through, even from my boyish days,
 To the very moment that he bade me tell it;
 Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
 Of moving accidents by flood and field
 Of hair-breadth scapes in the imminent deadly breach,
 Of being taken by the insolent foe
 And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence
 And portance in my travels' history:
 And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
 The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
 Do grow beneath their shoulders.
 (ibid., ll. 473-490)

He describes how Desdemona began falling in love with his descriptions of his exotic life in other places, and then seemed in love with him — his masculinity and strength:

She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:
She swore, in faith, twas strange, 'twas passing strange,
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd
That heaven had made her such a man: she thank'd me,
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story.
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake:
She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd,
And I loved her that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have used
(ibid., ll 504-514)

From the zenith of love and power, Othello's descent into a personal hell is alarming and shocking. We see him as the play proceeds, becoming prey to the power, verbal acuity, non verbal mastery and demonic intent of Iago, his henchman, a native Venetian, who has insinuated to Othello on many occasions that Venetian women are not to be trusted.

Othello, as a foreign immigrant, has no way of knowing the details and protocols of Venetian society. He is dependent on those around him to keep him informed, and unlike many men in mixed marriages, Othello, as a soldier, relies on his men to guide him rather than his partner. He has seen Desdemona on friendly and affectionate terms with male friends, particularly Michael Cassio, and it offends his own cultural protocols. Iago knows exactly how to pull up the fragile roots of Othello's identity — it is after all, completely unsupported by any family or people of his own race.

In 2012, the Human Rights Watch conducted a major study of the rampant sexual abuse, rape and harassment of immigrant workers in the USA. It was called *Cultivating Fear* (Meng & Coursen-Neff, 2012). The title seems to me to exactly describe what Iago does to Othello. He abuses his mind, he cultivates Othello's worst fear — that Desdemona is unfaithful to him with a white man. Inserting his insinuations deep within Othello's psyche, he lets chaos in — as Othello says: "And when I love thee not, | Chaos is come again" (op. cit, ll. 103-104). In the third Scene of the third Act, we see Iago's subtle and psychopathic manipulation of Othello's mind, as he pretends to be an honest simple man with Othello's best interests at heart. Desdemona has been pleading for the reinstatement of Cassio, her friend, deposed from his position as Lieutenant through his behavior in a drunken brawl that had been deliberately engineered by Iago. Desdemona begs for Othello's mercy, speaks of Cassio's virtue and honesty and how much esteem she has for him. When Iago and Othello are alone, Iago suggests, at first in the vaguest way, that Desdemona is in love with Cassio, that they are having an affair, that it is only natural that Desdemona would prefer a man of her own kind and class, and that all Venetian women deceive their husbands:

Look to your wife; observe her well with Cassio;
Wear your eyes thus, not jealous, nor secure:
I would not have your free and noble nature,
Out of self-bounty, be abused; look to't:

I know our country disposition well;
 In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks
 They dare not show their husbands
 (ibid., ll 223-229)

Thus chaos does come, changing Othello from the “Noble Moor” to a desperate, obsessed and irrational man whose integrity and morals seem to have left him. Through his racial hatred, Iago has murdered the spirit of the man Othello used to be. From the urbane, eloquent and polished General we see in the first Act of the play, Othello becomes a possessed and unfamiliar presence amid the Venetians, behaving in a way that is deeply unfamiliar and uncanny.

The fourth Act of the play shows us Othello completely believing in Desdemona’s guilt through “proof” given to him by more of Iago’s malignant tricks. To the Venetian senators who arrive in Cyprus to congratulate him on his victory in battle, Othello appears deluded and insane. He mutters and curses and slaps Desdemona across the face in front of them all. They are left horrified, and yet confirmed in their belief that this is truly an outsider who has infiltrated their society — as Lodovico, a Venetian nobleman, says (in Scene 1):

Is this the noble Moor, whom our full senate
 Call all in all sufficient? Is this the nature
 Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue
 The shot of accident, nor dart of chance,
 Could neither graze nor pierce?
 ...
 Are his wits safe? Is he not light of brain?
 (ibid., ll 303-307, 309)

The play concludes in the most tragic possible way — Othello murders the innocent Desdemona in her sleep, and when the extent of Iago’s evil lies are fully revealed, Othello cuts his own throat.

The effects of racism, discrimination and alienation can be seen as highly erosive elements in many mixed marriages. Depression, fear, jealousy and repression of individual origins all contribute to the difficulties often faced by intermarried couples. Clay Routledge (2010) has outlined the psychological motives for racism. Positive distinctiveness is the need to identify with a group of people like ourselves and to believe that group is superior to others. This is shown clearly in the beginning of *Othello*, when Roderigo and Iago demonstrate the absolute contempt they have for the black general, and even for Cassio who is Florentine rather than Venetian. Both become targets of Iago’s malevolence. Strong and sometimes obsessional positive distinctiveness can lead to hatred, violence and war as we have seen many times in the world’s history. Allied to that is the sense of individual self-esteem — racism can become what I would refer to as a “stick-on” for shaky self-esteem. The wished for feeling of superiority grows in power and entitlement when the other can be regarded as inferior and worthy of nothing but contempt.

The Ground That Gives Rise to Racism

Much research has been done on the need for certainty and structure. This can play a large part in racist attitudes. People with this proclivity feel intensely threatened by uncertainty and change and react with hostility to the different and unknown other. For these people, prejudice appears to be a means to restore a very rigid belief system about the world. As Routledge (2010) stated:

To have a hierarchy, there must be status differences between people. Racism helps preserve status differences because it oppresses minority groups. In support of this assertion, research has found that people who are high in dominance motivation tend to be in professions that promote hierarchy. These high dominance individuals are also more inclined to hold prejudicial attitudes towards members of minority groups. This is perhaps where laws and social policy are critical. If some people are motivated to oppress certain groups, we must remain vigilant in our efforts to promote equality and social justice. (p. 1)

I'd like to conclude by returning to Freud's essay on "The Uncanny". As I have already mentioned, the word uncanny (*Unheimlich*) — literally meaning not being at home — evokes a sense of eeriness and dread. Freud suggested in this essay that the opposite, "*Heimlich*", being at home, means not only the familiar and comfortable but also that which is concealed and hidden from the outside world and also from ourselves. For Othello, for my father, and for many partners in mixed marriages, much has to be repressed. Racial identity, culture, celebration, ritual and magic that belong specifically to early experience are often denied and become outcast or "abject."

In his essay, Freud refers to one of the most uncanny ideas in literature — that of being buried alive while appearing dead. The fantasy of intra-uterine existence is perhaps the prime example of *Heimlich* and *Unheimlich*: the familiar, the longed for, and the strange. All audiences struggle to make sense of Othello's sudden plunge into nightmare, and Iago's malevolent simulation of friendship and loyalty, culminating in poor Desdemona waking in her bed to find her husband is about to murder her. It seems to me to be about the danger of overlooking difference and pretending it is not there. We search for kinship, love and acceptance and often find it just an empty mirage as no real effort has been made on either part to acknowledge and respect difference.

Familiar to all of us is the experience of being misunderstood and unacknowledged by our loved parent, being suddenly alone in the middle of the night, when we thought the loved person was with us, finding ourselves abandoned and vulnerable, cast off and shunned in an unfamiliar landscape — the black tents of our tribe no longer on any horizon and the red pavilion of the loved one's heart forever unattainable. As Freud (1919/1953) put it: "Concerning the factors of silence, solitude and darkness, we can only say they are actually elements in the production of that infantile morbid anxiety from which the majority of human beings have never become quite free" (p. 246).

We struggle to find a hand to hold in that darkness — the darkness that once seemed a sunlit paradise. Much work needs to be done by the partners, relatives and friends of intermarried couples if the safety and reliability of ordinary daylight is to prevail.

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