

## Archie, Dear Archie

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Archie was a Renaissance man. Others have written about his outstanding intellectual abilities, which are so well known in academic and political circles that they need no repetition here. He also loved and was highly knowledgeable about classical music (I can see him now, lounging on the sofa, totally absorbed in listening to a recording). He had a formidable grasp of the English language, frequently using words that had mother-tongue English graduates reaching for their dictionaries – and always finding that he had used them correctly. He knew about wines, he knew about food, he knew about many other things too numerous to mention here. He was a demon table-tennis player. When he displayed any of his huge range of interests he was not showing off, simply stretching his knowledge and practising it.

I first met Archie at Cambridge in the Anthropology Department library, in the autumn of 1964. We had both arrived at the same time, he to do his PhD against all the odds after the torment and experience of growing up in apartheid South Africa, I as a first-year undergraduate after working briefly in a multiracial school in Swaziland between English boarding school and university. I remember our first encounter vividly. Someone told me that the man sitting hunched at a table absorbed in reading was South African. I bounced up to him, introduced myself, told him I had just come back from Swaziland and had been volunteering in

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the ANC office in London. When I had finished he looked up at me with that inimitable, quizzical look of his and said, 'So?'

He was always good at deflating people's egos when he thought it necessary to do so. He was equally good at encouraging people's confidence. Archie and I remained friends, and he taught me more than I ever took the time to thank him for. He taught me by example how vital it is to question, to study, to think independently, to stick to principles in the face of fashion, never to compromise.

Archie was always challenging, but only dismissive when he felt dismissed. At Cambridge he quickly acquired a reputation for not suffering fools gladly, and woe betide the person at the other end of his acerbic tongue. But in Dar es Salaam, where I was living when he arrived to take up his post as Professor of Sociology (and was almost deported for travelling on a South African passport), I saw a new side of Archie, endlessly patient and often tender towards his students, supporting them, encouraging them, playing with them, all the time teaching them. His commitment was total.

Then Archie introduced me to Shahida, his soulmate and intellectual equal bar none. Shahida and I became friends, then close friends, then sisters. For me, from then on, Archie was family. The intellectual challenges continued whenever there was a chance, alongside his ecstatic 'We're going to have a baby!' when they discovered that Shahida was pregnant, his pleasure at my baby son calling him 'Daddy Archie' ('He isn't confusing me with his father, he just understands that I'm in a similar role'), the delicious meals served in their Cairo apartment, his cultural explanation of why he was driving us up a one-way road the wrong way, his sudden call to go to the window after a long night of serious talk with him and Shahida, to see 'this is what I like about Cairo' – waiters at the end of their night shift, at 5.00am, joyously playing football by the canal.

To say that Archie was unconventional is an understatement. In everything he did, he ploughed his own, usually very lonely furrow. He was neither a conventional husband nor a conventional father, but he adored and was fiercely proud of both his wife Shahida and his daughter Dana. Dana brought huge joy into her parents' lives; Archie's decision to leave Cairo and go back to South Africa must have been one of the hardest he ever made. Ever a man of principle, he did what he thought he had to do, for all that he and Shahida had always believed in. It



meant he was alone when he died, isolated from the mainstream of contemporary South African scholarship and poli-

tics, but doubtless determined to the last to keep fighting for a truly transformed

South Africa. What a privilege to have known the man.