

INTERPRETATION AND THE /XAM NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

There has, in the last quarter of a century, been an increased interest in the /Xam narratives that form the major part of the nineteenth century archive of materials collected by Lucy Lloyd and Wilhelm Bleek in Cape Town from /Xam informants. This has resulted in a proliferation of writing about the Bleek and Lloyd collection and its contents. The critical examination of some of this body of writing forms part of the project of this thesis. The other aim of the thesis is to provide a close reading of certain of the /Xam texts themselves. This thesis is based on the view that the first of these projects has only been attempted in a cursory and indirect fashion and that the second, namely the close reading of /Xam texts, has not yet been undertaken on a scale that parallels the range and complexity of the materials or which exhausts the interpretative possibilities they offer. This thesis aims to fill some of these gaps in the literature without claiming that a comprehensive or definitive study is possible in so wide and rich a field.

Postmodern and postcolonial theory has emphasised the discursive and ideological nature of the language of both hermeneutics and literature. In my consideration of the /Xam texts and the writing that has been produced in relation to them, I attempt to consistently foreground the historicity and textuality of my own practice and the practices of the materials with which I am working. In this regard I question, especially, two assumptions about the /Xam narratives: that they are primarily aetiological and that their chief character, /Kaggen, the Mantis, is a trickster.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Michael Wessels

' i / S £ day of September, 2006.

DEDICATION

To the Jewel in the Heart of the Lotus.

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The places of sea and forest, in which this thesis has been written, and the friends who live there have supplied the beauty, truth and distraction required for the task.

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NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY, REFERENCING OF PRIMARY SOURCES AND ORTHOGRAPHY

This thesis follows, where possible, the practice of writers who use the names that particular groups of "Bushman" or "San" people give themselves, names such as Ju/'hoan or /Xam. This signals an attempt to distance the study from the generalising tendency in the field which holds that all Bushmen (or even all Khoisan) belong to a single culture, with only minor variations.¹ It also represents an attempt to avoid choosing between the terms "Bushman" and "San", both of which have denigratory histories. Neither was invented by the people denominated by it. "San" is a Khoi-derived term that refers to people without cattle in an insulting fashion (Bennun 2005: 30) and "Bushman" (or its Afrikaans equivalent, "Boesman") is a term that was introduced by the settlers to the Cape to refer dismissively to the hunter-gatherers of the region.² It is impossible to avoid this choice altogether, however. Any discussion of the wider field in which a study of the /Xam narratives has to be conducted, by reason of inescapable intertextual histories, requires the use of one or other of the words. The terms "Bushman" and "San" are used interchangeably in the recent literature. Both have enjoyed at different times and for different reasons the status of politically correct signifier. At present the use of one or other of them seems a matter of the writer's preference.³

¹ The term "Khoisan" refers to the pre-colonial inhabitants of southern Africa whose languages formed part of the same wide linguistic family and who can be distinguished linguistically from Bantu speakers. Scholars have separated these people into Khoi pastoralists and San hunter-gatherers. This division is not clear-cut. Solomon (forthcoming 13) notes that the term 'San' more usefully "describes language, not phenotype or economic identity" (13).

- Lucy Lloyd was told by /Han#kass'o that the /Xam and the Korana referred to each other as "Saa", a term which Bank notes "was a derivation of 'San', meaning 'thief in the language of the Korana" (Bank 2006: 289).

³ Brown (1998: 30), for instance, prefers the term 'Bushman' although he notes its "inadequacies (not least its gender bias)" while Solomon (forthcoming: 5) chooses the term 'San' despite its "negative connotations." She finds the term 'Bushman' "irretrievably offensive", partly because of

My decision to use the term "Bushman" has been influenced by the fact that it is the term used in my primary source, the archive known as the Bleek and Lloyd collection. In addition, this thesis explores the ideological component of the category of person to which the words, "Bushman" and "San" refer. Both terms have the ability to carry the idealised version of the figure of the southern African hunter-gatherer that is examined in the thesis but the term "Bushman", in my view, is more appropriate a term to employ in the discussion, also conducted in the dissertation, of earlier views of the "Bushman", views which were either explicitly racist or were coloured by Darwinian evolutionary ideas.

At various points in the thesis I investigate the separation of the /Xam world into two orders, one representing the early formative times, considered as mythical or fictive, and the other representing the present or "real" order of existence. A number of terms are used by different writers to designate the first of these two orders and its inhabitants. I use these terms interchangeably in my thesis and signal their employment by capitalising them. The period is usually referred to as the First Times or the First Order and its inhabitants as the people of the Early Race, the First People or the First Bushmen.

I have followed generally accepted practice when quoting from the unpublished notebooks of the Bleek and Lloyd collection, my primary source. The letter L or B is used to indicate whether the notebook was compiled by Wilhem Bleek or Lucy Lloyd. The Roman numeral refers to the informant. //Kabbo is consistently accorded the numeral II, for example, while Dialkwain is indicated by the numeral V and /Han#kass'o by VIII. The number following the Roman numeral indicates the number of the notebook collected by Lloyd or Bleek from a single informant. The final number refers to the page of all the materials collected in a set of notebooks from a particular informant. An apostrophe or the abbreviation "rev"

"the absurdity that results from its adjectival use (for example, Bushman women)" and partly because of its "association with the 'bush' -and hence the wild and primitive"

following this number indicates that reference is being made to the reverse pages which Bleek and Lloyd used to record information or make observations that illuminated the main text.

The unusual characters in /Xam words, such as the "/" in "/Xam", represent various click, nasal and guttural sounds, as well as variations in tone. The details of this system are set out in Lucy Lloyd's preface to Bleek and Lloyd (1911: vi-x). Most commentators use the spelling and orthography developed by Bleek.⁴ Joseph Orpen (1874) employs a different set of conventions with regard to the Bushman materials he collected in the Malutis. These differences have to be borne in mind, especially when discussing the two archives of narratives together.

⁴ The system for rendering click sounds was based on Lepsius's *Universal Alphabet* of 1855 (Bank 2006:21).

**PART ONE: INTRODUCTION, REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND
THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Part 1 consists of the two chapters which provide the critical, theoretical and historical background to the study conducted in the remaining seven chapters. This study comprises both an analysis of the body of literature that has interpreted the /Xam narratives and an interpretation of certain /Xam narratives themselves.

**CHAPTER ONE: INTERPRETATION AND THE /XAM NARRATIVES:
INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

Many are concerned about the monuments of the West and the East, - to know who built them. For my part I should like to know who in those days did not build them, - who were above such trifling (Thoreau 1966: 39).

This chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first, I provide an overview of the thesis and discuss the considerations and interests that have led me to pursue the type of study I have conducted. I explain and justify the choice of materials on which I have concentrated. I discuss the implications for my study of Jacques Derrida's work on the metaphysics of presence and the play of the motif of the lost origin in western thought.

In the remainder of the chapter, I survey the relevant literature in the field of Bushman studies. This literature is very extensive. I concentrate my discussion on the particular texts that most immediately comprise the intertextual field within which this thesis is located. I begin this section by describing the Bleek and Lloyd collection and its history.⁵ I go on to detail the selections of materials that have

⁵ The archive of /Xam materials is "still officially known as the Bleek collection (Bank 2006: 400). It is generally, though, referred to as the Bleek and Lloyd collection or the Bleek-Lloyd collection, in order to acknowledge Lucy Lloyd's pivotal contribution. Anne Solomon (forthcoming: 244) calls it the /Xam collection, thereby "assigning authorship to those to whom ... it most firmly belongs."

been gleaned from the collection in the course of the past one hundred years. I then consider the literature that deals specifically with the collection itself and the work of Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd before introducing the writing that has engaged in interpretation of the materials. Later in the thesis, I devote several chapters to an in-depth analysis of this body of interpretation. I conclude the chapter with a survey of the general literature on Bushmen oral literature, history and rock art, which intersects in various ways with the concerns of my thesis.

A. Introduction to thesis

i. Overview of thesis

I begin the thesis by tracing the genesis of the Bleek and Lloyd collection and surveying the growing body of literature connected to it. This literature either describes the origins, development and history of Bleek and Lloyd's project or seeks, in some way, to understand the narratives. Much of the work of interpretation of the /Xam texts is pioneering and insightful. It is a relatively small body of work, however, considering the range of the materials in the notebooks available for interpretation and the quantity of other sorts of writing on the notebooks. In this regard, Solomon (forthcoming: 12) maintains that the stories "remain rather under-researched" Elsewhere she writes that "Work on the oral literature has always been sparse ..." (238). She notes, too, that scholarship concentrates on "issues of authenticity and presentation [of the materials] at the expense of further understanding of the narratives themselves" (244). Of the analysis that does exist, relatively little has attempted a close reading of the texts (Brown 1998: 36-37). Attention to the details of the texts is important, I believe, as much for what it reveals of the act of interpretation itself as for its ability to elucidate the /Xam texts. I attempt, therefore, a close and theoretically self-conscious reading of selected texts, mostly in the last part of the thesis. Nor has the body of work that has interpreted the /Xam narratives been subjected to the sustained, close and critical scrutiny that, to my mind, is of particular significance

in cross-cultural studies. The existing criticism consists of comments rather than sustained analysis. Solomon (forthcoming: 254) writes: "Neglected in all recent literary studies is an appreciation of the interpretation that has already gone into them. It is rather amazing" In the course of the thesis, I attempt also, therefore, to initiate an extensive critique of the ways in which the /Xam texts have been analysed. Too often broad statements and assumptions about the stories have been reproduced unquestioned in works by later authors, attaining, in the process, the status of reified truths.⁶ The reading of the stories as myths of origin and the status of /Kaggen as a trickster form, in my opinion, two of the most obvious examples of this tendency. Accordingly, I focus on these aspects of the stories and their interpretation in the thesis.

The /Xam narratives that feature /Kaggen, the Mantis, and those that concern the sun, the moon and the stars⁷ suit the purposes of this study for several other reasons besides their suitability for critiquing the figure of the trickster and the story of origin. They form a substantial corpus of materials. They have invited the attention of the few critics who have attempted to interpret the /Xam stories. A study of the writing on these particular materials readily lends itself to the theoretical considerations which have led my investigation into the writing that interprets the /Xam narratives, specifically the question of origins and universals. The other major task I have set out to accomplish in this thesis, the close reading of some of the /Xam texts, is also well served by the narrative areas on which I have chosen to focus. Since previous critics have written about them, my own interpretations can either build on or question the work of these predecessors. Most of these stories also appear in the early selections from the collection (Bleek and Lloyd 1911; Bleek, D 1923) and can, thus, easily be read as discrete texts and located as particular kinds of story, even as the editorial interventions that resulted in these textual arrangements are questioned. These materials are also more readily

⁶ Solomon (forthcoming: 189) notes, in a similar vein, that the shamanistic model of rock art interpretation "seems to have fossilised into unquestioned 'fact' over time."

⁷ The stories of the sun, moon and stars are often referred to as the sidereal materials in the literature.

available to readers of this thesis than are the unpublished materials from the notebooks. I make extensive use of these unpublished sources, too, however, in order to support my contention that the narratives should be read in the context of an intertextual /Xam discursive field rather than as myths.

My theoretical and methodological approach has been influenced by a number of writers who are not directly concerned with Bushman narratives. I will discuss the work of these writers in chapter two and explain how I use their ideas and methods in my own study. My approach to the analysis of the /Xam texts is often informed by Foucault's relatively early work on discourse, particularly in *The Order of things: an archaeology of the human sciences* (1970) and *The Archaeology of knowledge* (1976). The overarching framework for my study has, though, been inspired by the work of Derrida, particularly his reading of the writings of Rousseau and Levi-Strauss in *Of grammatology* (1976).

The conception of a pre-lapsarian world of pure presence in which unalienated man and woman walked, full-frontal and unashamed, hand in hand with Yahweh in the garden, Derrida argues in *Of grammatology*, irreversibly contaminates the categories in which modern man comprehends and fashions his inner and outer worlds. It also determines his view of history and the pre-modern. The obsession with a primordial state of unity, proclaimed or repressed, has provided the principal impetus for the study of "aboriginals" as well as a perennial source of images for successive installations of the "primitive" in the industrial and post-industrial imaginative galleries.⁹ The myth of a lost origin underlies western thought and invests it with unacknowledged metaphysical premises. Derrida contends that the evidence incriminates the materialist and empiricist discourses and practices which

This is my rendering of a complex described by Derrida that has, of course, assumed a great variety of forms.

⁹ Wilmsen (1996), Tomaselli (1990; 1995a; 1999; 2006), among others, have explored this phenomenon in relation to Bushmen.

claim to exclude a metaphysical dimension as much as it does those discursive practices which base themselves upon (or within) one.¹⁰

A great deal of intellectual capital, philosophical, literary and scientific, has been spent on the attempt to trace or compose a genealogy of man, himself, paradoxically in this context, a recent invention, and already obsolete, if we accept Foucault's conclusion to *The order of things* (1970: 383): "man has 'come to an end', and that, by reaching the summit of all possible speech, he arrives not at the very heart of himself but at the brink of that which limits him; in that region where death prowls, thought is extinguished, where the promise of the origin interminably recedes." Despite the infinite recession of this promise, the narratives which issue from its mythic compass stubbornly persist in those varied discourses which, in one way or another, contain a version of a divine birth, a fall and different stages of an ascent to contemporary man as well as in the endeavour to discern in this history the teleological design which enables a preview, even an anticipation, of man's apotheosis.¹¹

In this thesis I will attempt to show the influence that this "metaphysics of presence" and the interest in man's genealogy that has accompanied it have exerted on the way the figure of the "bushman" has been constructed and viewed. In particular, I discuss the impact of this ideological complex on the collection and interpretation of the /Xam narratives. I also attempt to indicate the complexity, the impossibility, perhaps, of discovering a hermeneutics that eludes it.

If this study is even to rehearse the impossible gesture of disavowing the ethnocentric abuses of rationalism, especially its claim to a universal knowledge in

Derrick's work is discussed in full with direct references in chapter 2 of this thesis. These remarks are intended more to introduce the approach I adopt in my thesis than to describe his work.

¹¹ Modern, scientific or materialist versions of this complex would, of course, eschew this sort of mythico-religious symbolism and imagery. Nevertheless, these varieties of western thought exhibit, maintains Derrida, a religious or metaphysical basis.

terms of which "truths" about other cultures can be revealed, then the /Xam materials, delivered by five or six informants, adventitiously selected by History in the shape of Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd, have to be located in Victorian Cape Town and the ethnographic space there constituted, a virtual hunter-gathering terrain with "genuine" Bushmen, in which the collectors had particular expectations of stories of creation and were, themselves, part of an intricate Victorian ideological milieu through which the motif of the lost origin was threaded in overt and covert ways. However faithfully the stories are reconstructed on the basis of the translations they are, at best, a construction erected on another construction whose foundations are sunk in shifting sands. These irredeemably unstable texts, their instability paradoxically linked to their fixity, an ineluctable consequence of their genesis,¹² have then to be placed in the fluid political arena of contemporary academic and theoretical factions. Bushman studies is peculiarly susceptible to intellectual controversies.¹³ Not only does the field possess an impassioned, multi-disciplinary cast of experts, but the nature of the object of their attention is itself hotly contested. The "Bushman" or "San" often seem to disappear in the interstices of the debates, slipping out of the text, somewhere between their depiction as religious icon and their interpretation as fluid sociological category.¹

ii. Breakdown of thesis

¹² By this I mean that their removal from the sphere of performance and of a local social context contributes to their radical inaccessibility and, thus, to their plurivocality.

¹³ Bushman studies, as I shall describe in the course of this chapter, has been characterised by a number of heated debates, conducted, for the most part, in journals such as the *South African Archaeological Bulletin*. These include the Kalahari debates, which involve an argument as to whether the category of the Bushman "hunter-gatherer" has chiefly a class or an ethnic correlative. Other contested areas concern rock art interpretation and the influence of Bushman ritual practices and beliefs on Xhosa and Zulu practices. See section B, iii, b and c below.

¹⁴ See Wilmsen (1989) for an extended argument, on the basis of historical evidence from the Kalahari, in favour of regarding categories such as hunter-gatherer and Bushman as fluid, ideological and sociological rather than as terms that signal a timeless and original mode of existence.

The thesis consists of three parts and ten chapters. The first part comprises this chapter and the next. In these two chapters I introduce and discuss the literature that I have used in the study. The remainder of this chapter provides a survey of the literature in the field of Bushman studies itself. From this overview, emerges a clearer delineation of the aspects of this broader field on which I will focus in the chapters that follow, namely the /Xam narratives and their interpretation. Many of the ideological themes and patterns that I will explore in the thesis also appear in the course of this review.

In chapter 2, I set out the theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis. Derrida's critique in *Of grammatology* of the work of Levi-Strauss and Rousseau forms the basis for my discussion of much of the literature on the Bushmen and of the broader field of comparative mythology, especially where it concerns the figure of the trickster or the category of the myth of origin. The strategies of discourse analysis provided by Foucault in *Archaeology of knowledge* (1976) and in *The order of things* (1970) are an important component of the way in which I read the /Xam narratives themselves. Any work of interpretation and analysis should, in my opinion, situate itself consciously in its contemporary context. I use the insights of Gayatri Spivak, in particular, to locate my study within its postmodern and post-colonial contexts. The writings of Pierre Bourdieu have helped me position my work within the academic field itself.

Part two of the thesis comprises chapters 3, 4 and 5. In these chapters I critique, especially, the notion of the trickster as applied to the /Xam figure, /Kaggen. Chapter 3 is concerned with the general writing on the trickster. Much of this writing, I will argue, has influenced the way in which /Kaggen has been read. I set out the theories regarding the trickster before considering the applicability of the term to /Kaggen. I then take a position against universal modes of thought and criticism, which, in my view, includes the designation of culturally specific figures as tricksters. This stance informs my strategy when I analyse the interpretations of

the /Xam narratives which feature /Kaggen in the work of Roger Hewitt, Matthias Guenther and Anne Solomon.

In chapter 4, I describe and examine Roger Hewitt's pioneering work on the /Xam narratives, concentrating specifically on his reading of the /Kaggen stories. I investigate the structuralist and functionalist elements in his work. I read 'the story in which the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest' with a view to both identifying shortcomings in Hewitt's approach and to exploring a different strategy of reading, one I develop in later chapters.

In chapter five I discuss Matthias Guenther and Anne Solomon's readings of the /Kaggen materials and compare them to Hewitt's. I investigate, in particular, Guenther's notion of a foraging ideology that underlies Bushman narratives and the implications of Solomon's work on the spirits of the dead for interpretation of the /Kaggen stories.

Part three of the thesis consists of chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9. In these chapters I discuss the sidereal narratives and their designation as myths of origin. Chapter 6 investigates the idea of the myth of origin in the field of comparative mythology. This investigation forms the backdrop to the readings of the /Xam sidereal materials that comprise the following three chapters.

Chapter 7 analyses 'the story of the sun's armpit' with particular attention to the story's aetiological status, its chain of speaking and its presentation of identity.

Chapter 8 provides a reading of three stories that feature the moon. I discuss the way in which discursive objects are ordered in the narratives as well as the narratives' relation to power and their multivocality or ability to elicit multiple interpretations.

Chapter 9 investigates 'the story of the girl of the Early Race who made stars', according special attention to the intertextual field in which the narrative participates.

The thesis ends with a brief overview of the conclusions reached in the course of the study.

B. Introduction to the Bleek and Lloyd collection and review of the literature related to it

i. The Bleek and Lloyd collection and the selections based on it

The source of the /Xam narratives with which this thesis is concerned is the Bleek and Lloyd collection, a corpus of materials elicited from /Xam informants in the nineteenth century that includes narratives, personal histories and detailed information about /Xam life. It also "represents the most complete record of a language that is no longer spoken" (Moran 2001: 47). Most of the narratives are set in the "mythical" times of the Early Race when animals and people had not yet been differentiated. The stories were told to the German philologist, Wilhelm Bleek, renowned in the international scientific community of the time,¹⁵ and his sister-in-law, Lucy Lloyd, by men who had been imprisoned in the Breakwater prison. The governor, William Barclay, authorised that the prisoners be released into Bleek's custody at his home in Mowbray, Cape Town, in order to facilitate Bleek's linguistic studies (Bennun 2005: 39). Bleek himself died in 1875 but the work was continued by Lucy Lloyd until her death in 1913, although the last of the /Xam informants had left by the end of 1879. Bleek's daughter, Dorothea, also pursued research into /Xam and other Bushman traditions. Just before her death in 1948 she completed the *Bushman dictionary*, begun by her father in the 1870's (336).

¹⁵ See Bank (1999a; 1999b; 2006) for details of Bleek's relationships with intellectuals such as Thomas Huxley, Charles Darwin and Ernst Haeckel.

Bleek and Lloyd's main informants were five men who had been convicted for various offences and under different pretexts at a time when the diminishing pool of /Xam speakers was being rapidly incorporated into the farm labourer population.¹⁶ Many people were murdered in the process, as the informants accounts of commando operations or settler violence in the notebooks make clear. In addition to the five men, a woman, IKweiten ta // ken, also provided materials. The first informant, a man of about twenty five years of age named /Alkungta, was released into Bleek's custody from the Breakwater prison where he had been imprisoned for receiving stolen goods (he had been apprehended participating in the eating of a stolen ox) at the end of August 1870 (42). He was joined in February 1871 by another "Flat Bushman", //Kabbo, from the same area of /Xam-ka !au (38).¹⁸ //Kabbo, a man of about fifty five, had also been imprisoned for cattle theft. //Kabbo and /Alkungta left the Bleek household in October 1873 to return to the Northern Cape. The next major informant, DialKwain, arrived with his brother-in-law, #Kasin, in November 1873 (386). They had been imprisoned for murdering a farmer who had threatened to kill them (161). Both men had already lost several family members to settler violence at the time of the incident (Bank 2006: 222). DialKwain stayed until March 1876, about six months after Bleek's death (Bennun 2005: 279). His sister, IKweiten ta // ken, joined her brother for a few months at the end of 1874 and provided the only testimony that Bleek and Lloyd were able to obtain from a woman. A few months after DialKwain's departure, //Kabbo's son-in-law, /Han#kass'o, who had been arrested and released with //Kabbo, arrived back in Mowbray from the Northern Cape. He had left the Bleek household after a short stay in 1871 to go and fetch his and //Kabbo's wives. Bleek and Lloyd were keen to interview women and the isolated informants were eager to have their families

¹⁶ Most of the informants, too, "had worked for European farmers at times" (Hewitt 1986: 17).

¹⁷ See, for example, L.V. 15: 5199-5204.

¹⁸ The /Xam were divided into Flat Bushmen, Grass Bushmen and Mountain Bushman, depending on which region of the area in the Northern Cape, south of the Orange River and in the vicinity of present day Kenhardt, they came from.

with them. /Han#kass'o set out on the journey back to Cape Town with //Kabbo's wife, his own wife and a baby. Only /Han#kass'o survived the trip. //Kabbo's wife, !Kwabba-ang, fell ill and perished on the way. Then the baby died. Suobba-//kein, /Han#kass'os wife and //Kabbo's daughter, was beaten to death by a policeman in Beaufort West (281-283). /Han#kass'o stayed in Mowbray until the beginning of 1880, when he returned to his home district to search for his son (317).

Before /Han#kasso's departure, he was joined in the Bleek household by several !Xun children (311). Lucy Lloyd studied their language, discovering that it was very different from /Xam although she also detected points of convergence¹ She recorded a number of !Xun narratives featuring the shape-shifting character, /Xue. The children also drew detailed pictures of animals and an astonishing variety of plants from memory.²⁰

1911 saw the publication of *Specimens of Bushman folklore*, a selection of extracts from the notebooks. The seventy six year old Lucy Lloyd had spent decades preparing the manuscript and trying to persuade the intellectual community of the importance of the Bushman materials it contained (334). *Specimens of Bushman folklore* reproduces the format of the notebooks with the /Xam and English translation side by side, a feature consistent with the importance Bleek and Lloyd attached to language. The emphasis is on stories, especially those of a "mythological" character. It also contains sections on legends, personal history and customs and superstitions. These divisions parallel those in Bleek's early reports on his project to parliament (Bank 2006: 383). They have been widely followed ever since, both in commentaries on the materials and in subsequent selections from them. In the words of the historian, Andrew Bank: "*Specimens of Bushman folklore*

¹⁹ See Lloyd's *Preface* to Bleek and Lloyd (1911) in which she quotes from her 1889 report to the Cape Government on this finding.

²⁰ This remark about the astonishing variety of plants depicted is based on a viewing of the pictures which were exhibited at the National Gallery in Cape Town in 2004.

is a truly remarkable book. Lloyd managed to convey in its pages a sense of the incredible diversity and richness of the /Xam folklore tradition."

In 1923 Dorothea Bleek published another, more heavily edited, selection from the notebooks that she had begun to work on years earlier with her aunt. *The Mantis and his friends* concentrates on the /Kaggen narratives and leaves out the /Xam language text. Dorothea Bleek's editorial interventions sometimes extend, as in the case of 'the story in which /Kaggen makes an eland', to constructing a single narrative from several different versions of it. In the process, events are made to occur in the same story that do not co-exist in any single account in the notebooks (Hewitt 1986: 213-214). Dorothea published further extracts from the materials in the anthropological journal *Bantu Studies* between 1931 and 1936 (Hollmann, ed. 2005: 2-3). These extracts concern beliefs and customs rather than stories.

A few more selections of Bushman stories appeared in the decades that followed. These drew on the materials published by Lucy Lloyd and Dorothea Bleek as well as on other sources such as Joseph Orpen (1874), Gideon von Wielligh (1919-1921) and materials from the Kalahari. Arthur Markowitz (1956) recounts thirty five narratives, drawn chiefly from the /Xam sidereal materials recorded by Bleek and Lloyd. He rewrites the stories in order to give them literary appeal but eschews the use of modern language in favour of preserving their "primitive" character. Alex Willcox (1963) devotes a chapter to "Bushman folklore" in which he uses Bleek and Lloyd (1911) and Orpen (1874) as his sources. He recounts several stories, concentrating, like Markowitz, on the sidereal narratives. Helfman's collection of stories, *The Bushmen and their stories*, appeared in 1971. She rewrites some of the well known published stories from the collection, including many of the sidereal ones.

The notebooks themselves disappeared from view after Dorothea Bleek's death. In the early 1970's a doctoral student named Roger Hewitt, who was conducting research in London, came across a reference to them in Otto Spohr's 1962

biography of Bleek and wrote to the University of Cape Town library enquiring after the materials. He was told they were lost. Hewitt persisted, however. Eventually some library assistants, paid by the hour by Hewitt, tracked them down in a forgotten corner of the University of Cape Town library archives (Bank 2006: 390). Today the handwritten notebooks form the core of the Bleek and Lloyd collection housed in the Manuscripts and Archives Department of the University of Cape Town. The materials are very much part of the public domain.²¹ In 1997 the collection received the UNESCO Memory of the World Program Designation (389).

In 1989 Matthias Guenther published sixteen /Xam stories from the Bleek and Lloyd collection in *Bushman folktales: oral traditions of the Nharo of Botswana and the /Xam of the Cape*. By publishing stories from two Bushman traditions together, he "sought to illustrate the extent to which they were part of a single Khoisan mythological tradition" (Bank 2006: 391). Most of the /Xam stories were previously unpublished. He notes that at the time more than half the hundred or so narratives that can be assembled from the collection remained unpublished. Further selections and extracts from the notebooks followed, notably David Lewis-Williams's *Stories that float from afar* (2000) and a collection of the materials published in the 1930's by Dorothea Bleek in *Bantu Studies*, edited by Jeremy Hollmann and entitled *Customs and beliefs of the /Xam Bushmen* (2005). Hollmann's book presents both the /Xam texts and the English translations as they appeared in *Bantu Studies* in the 1930's and also supplies notes to the text and introductions to each section.

In addition, several volumes of poetry have been published in the last fifteen years that are based on extracts from the notebooks. They were preceded in 1969 by a number of versions in poetry of /Xam materials by Jack Cope, included in *The Penguin book of South African verse*. Stephen Watson's volume, *Return of the*

²¹ They are in the process of being made available on the internet, a project initiated and supervised by Cape Town artist and art historian, Pippa Skotnes (Bank 2006: 392).

moon: versions from the /Xam, appeared in 1991. This was followed in 2001 by James's *The first Bushman's path: stories, songs and testimonies of the /Xam of the Northern Cape* and in 2004 by Antjie Krog's *The stars say 'tsau': /Xampoetry of Dialkwain, Kweiten-Ta-//Ken, /Alkunta, Han#kass'o, and//Kabbo*.

All the published selections and versions have re-ordered the original materials of the notebooks considerably. Narrative, information and autobiography run into each other in the notebooks. Stories often "lack" clear beginnings and ends. The /Xam used the term *kukummi* (plural of *kumm*) to signify things that were told. This included biography, news, history and stories of the early times (Bennun 2005: 26). They did not maintain "rigid generic distinctions between verse forms and narrative, or between sacred and profane gestures" (Brown 1998: 26). Narrative and history were "regarded as equally true or untrue ..." (Hewitt 1986: 56). The selections, on the other hand, order the materials thematically and generically. The stories are supplied with names. This process already involves a degree of interpretation and predisposes, in turn, particular readings, a phenomenon I explore at some length in later chapters, particularly with regard to the designation of certain materials as stories of origin in chapter 6. Solomon (forthcoming: 14) notes that "The ways we imagine and understand San arts are echoed in the ways they are presented and reproduced in the present." Presenting the materials in the form of poetic extracts, especially, removes them "from the larger body of narratives of which they are part.... [M]any are stories within a bigger story." Elana Bregin (1998: 87) describes the difference between reading the notebooks and the edited collections: "Encoded in their convoluted, repetitive and aesthetically untidy structure is a far better sense of the cultural 'strangeness' and perceptual and expressive 'difference' of the Bushman worldview than is offered by the more lyrically flowing versions of the later collections."

ii. Writing on the collection

a. The role and ideology of the collectors

There is a growing body of commentary, criticism and other work relating to the collection itself and to its genesis, beginning with Otto Spohr's (1962) portrait of *Wilhelm H. Bleek: a bibliographical sketch* and culminating, at the time of writing, with Andrew Bank's (2006) detailed study, *Bushmen in a Victorian world: the remarkable story of the Bleek-Lloyd collection of Bushman folklore*. The motives and attitudes of Wilhelm Bleek, Lucy Lloyd and Bleek's daughter, Dorothea, who became "the world's foremost expert on San cultures and languages" (Bennun 2005: 333) and continued the work in various ways, have been the subject of several studies. In his 1999 papers "Anthropology, race and evolution: rethinking the legacy of Wilhelm Bleek" and "Evolution and racial theory: the hidden side of Dr. Bleek", the historian Andrew Bank describes the positive way in which Bleek and Lloyd and their project have usually been considered by scholars. Bleek and Lloyd are presented in work such as the volume of essays in Deacon and Dowson's *Voices from the past: /Xam Bushmen and the Bleek and Lloyd collection* (Deacon and Dowson, eds. 1996) as far-sighted and courageous pioneers whose prescience and endurance led to the linguistic preservation of an extinct language and the transcription of one of the largest bodies of oral literature from a single culture in the world (Bank 1999a.). They transcended the narrow racial prejudices of their era in admitting the /Xam informants into their household and recognised the value of the /Xam tradition at a time when the prevailing attitude was that the primitive Bushman should be extirpated from the colony. In their editors' preface, Janette Deacon and Thomas Dowson contend that Bleek and Lloyd's work still "provides much fuel for challenging the racial stereotypes and perceptions held about the San of southern Africa" (Deacon and Dowson, eds. 1996: 3). In an essay in *Miscast* (a volume of essays concerned, for the most part, with colonial representations of

Khoisan), "A tale of two families", Deacon presents the relationship between Bleek and Lloyd and the informants as "a remarkable relationship between two families" (Deacon 1996: 93), a miraculous interracial partnership in the context of nineteenth century South Africa (Bank 1999a: 6). Bennun (2005), similarly, emphasises the fact that the informants, especially //Kabbo, understood the importance of the project and wished to contribute to the preservation of /Xam language and culture. The portraits of the informants that appear in *Specimens of Bushman folklore*, maintains Bennun, show not only "*subjects* but collaborators" (335, italics in the original). Martin Hall (1996: 143-149) concludes, after an examination of the complex nature of the relationships between the players involved in the genesis of the Bleek and Lloyd collection, that the informants and the Bleek-Lloyd family shared a mutual investment in recording /Xam history. Although Michael Godby (1996) notes the ambiguous origins of anthropology and the complicity between science and colonial domination, he nevertheless regards the relationship between Bleek and Lloyd and their informants as one of mutual respect. Lewis Williams presents Bleek as a visionary: "Bleek saw down the decades and realized that San rock art very possibly constituted the most powerful argument against those who believed the San authors of these paintings to be simple, primitive and distasteful" (Bank 1999a: 2, quoting Lewis-Williams 1996: 307-308).

Bank (1999a: 2) contends that Robert Thornton's 1983 paper, "'This dying out race': W.H.I. Bleek's approach to the languages of Southern Africa", in which Thornton appraises Bleek's intellectual contribution, both idealises the man and his work and presents an accurate description of Bleek's position in the intellectual milieu of the mid-nineteenth century. Bleek was not only the leading scholar in the Cape at the time, part of "a tight colonial intellectual network which included Bishop Colenso and Governor George Grey", but also corresponded regularly with "the leading evolutionists and scientists of his day, Charles Darwin and his

" The /Xam informants belonged to just two families (Deacon 1996).

disciples, the German zoologist, Ernst Haeckel, the British anthropologist, Thomas Huxley, and the British geologist Charles Lyell" (Bank 1999a: 2). Thornton emphasises the "liberal universalism" shared by Bleek and Grey as well as Bleek's "Carlylean romanticism" and "religiously inspired monogenism" (the idea that people had a common origin). Although Grey has subsequently been exposed by the historian Jeff Peires (1989) as a ruthless imperialist, Bleek, maintains Bank, continued to enjoy good academic press. In his essay in *Miscast* (1996; 146) Martin Hall favourably compares the enlightened philologist with his autocratic friend, Grey. Pippa Skotnes (1996: 18) contrasts the respectful relationship between European and Bushmen that prevailed in the Bleek household with the genocidal racism that generally characterised European attitudes towards Bushmen at the time. This genocidal impulse, incidentally, was not confined to colonial opinion in Southern Africa. After Charles Dickens had seen an exhibition of Bushmen in London he wrote: "I have not the least belief in the Noble Savage ... I call a savage something highly desirable to be civilised off the face of the earth ..." (Dickens, quoted by Maughan Brown 1983: 59).

Bank (1999a) himself presents a much more critical view of Bleek and his Bushman project, arguing that Bleek was "South Africa's first systematic theorist of racial difference ... a figure who marks the transition from the hardened racial stereotyping of the early mid-nineteenth century to the intellectual racism of the twentieth century" (7). Bank demonstrates his thesis by examining recurring currents in Bleek's extensive oeuvre. These include Bleek's private correspondence, his 1869 treatise, *On the origin of language*, his *Comparative grammar of Southern African languages* (1862) and his articles in the *Cape Monthly Magazine* (1858; 1873a; 1874a; 1874b). Bank describes Bleek's championing of an evolutionary philology in which languages and cultures are located within a hierarchical structure that is closely articulated with race.²⁴ Within

" Haeckel was also Bleek's cousin.

²⁴. A good example of the sort of thinking that was influenced by Bleek's position with regard to race and evolution would be George McCall Theal's introduction to Bleek and Lloyd (1911) in

this scheme, Bleek situates Bushman languages close to the "communication of primates" (9). Bleek was especially interested "in comparing the Bushman languages with sounds produced by apes" (13) since he believed that such a study might help to corroborate the evidence for the evolution of humans from apes. He saw /Xam as a language which represented an intermediate stage of "an ape-human continuum" (15). In a letter to Grey in 1871, Bleek describes the speech of //Kabbo and /Alkungta as "monkey like" (15).

Bleek's interest lay in human origins and the history of asymmetrical linguistic and cultural evolution of different peoples. Understanding this history required a comparison of "the conditions of those peoples who have stopt [sic] short at the lowest phases of development" with those of the "most cultured nations" (Bleek 1969: 36-37, cited by Bank: 11). Long before he arrived in the region, Bleek had studied Southern African languages with a view to better understanding the development of Indo-European languages (15). He considered South Africa particularly suitable for the sort of comparative studies he wished to pursue because the region was home to two of the "distinct varieties of the human species ... the Hottentots and the tribes of the Kafir kindred. And the very primitive stages in which both nations have remained render them peculiarly fit to serve as safe bases for ample comparative ethnological and philological researches" (Bleek 1858: 23-24, cited by Bank: 17). It was important to study the Bushmen because their primitive state afforded insights into earlier phases of mankind's history. This would contribute towards an understanding of "the most primitive methods of structural arrangement and modes of thought" (Bleek, cited by Bank: 19). The

which he writes that: "The myths indicate a people in the condition of early childhood, but from the language it is evident that in the great chain of human life on this earth the pygmy savages represented a link much closer to the modern European end than to that of the first beings worthy of the name of men." Bank (2006: 382) argues that Bleek himself moved away from the view of Bushmen as simple children. Lucy Lloyd's views, he maintains as well, were diametrically opposed to those evinced by Theal in his introduction. She was forced to include Theal's piece in *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* in order to ensure publication of the manuscript. Theal was by then a well-known writer and an important patron.

study of mythology and the study of language were the keys to understanding the primitive mentality. Bleek posited a correlation between belief systems, mythological complexes and language structure. Only certain language structures permitted higher modes of thought and creativity. Bleek believed that the Bushmen possessed a greater aptitude for myth-making than did Africans. This, in his view, meant that they were more closely related than were Africans to Europeans, despite their lower degree of "civilisation", a position which explains, to a large degree, his special interest in the Bushmen (Bank 1999a: 22).²⁵

The close correspondence that Bleek believed existed between race and language also helps explain his interest in anthropometric photography. This aspect of Bleek's work has been documented and discussed by Michael Godby (1996: 115-127) and Chris Webster (2000). The photographs, Bleek hoped, might provide proof that racial type could be linked to linguistics in an evolutionary framework. Photographs enjoyed at the time "an unprecedented (and often unquestioned) credibility" as evidence due to their "apparent veracity" (Webster 2000: 1). They were critical to the colonial project of the period: "As a form of representation of external reality the photograph in its colonial context played a powerful role in helping to establish concepts of order and interpretation of an alien environment ... [I]t could provide the means to place an alien world in a comprehensible European context."

Moran (2001: 50) observes that Bleek's assertion about the relative closeness of Bushmen to Europeans occurs at a time when "'Bushmen' had been pacified to the point of extinction" and settler expansion in southern Africa was chiefly contested by Nguni speakers. "The 'Bushmen' can be safely idealised since they provide no threat to the evolving settler polity." The contemporary interest in Bushmen, he conjectures, might similarly be driven by the identification that marginalised white academics feel with "a victimised, non-Nguni minority" In a similar way, the historian, Saul Dubow, as described by Bank, links the idealisation of the Bushmen, evinced by the rock art copyist, George Stow, "to his defence of the rights of white settlers to the land of Bantu-speakers. If the Bushmen were Africa's original inhabitants, the underlying logic ran, the black tribes had no greater claim to the land than the white settlers" (Bank 2006: 312).

The anthropometric project was initiated in 1869 by the anthropologist Thomas Huxley, who prescribed exact criteria for the photographic recording of anthropological subjects, and was introduced at the Cape by Bleek. Among the subjects photographed and measured in conformance with Huxley's criteria was //Kabbo. Two of these photographs of //Kabbo are reproduced in Bennun (2005: plate 6). These are contrasted with a later portrait of //Kabbo by William Schroeder (plate 14). Bennun's text accompaniment to the portrait states: "In plate 6 he was photographed as an anthropological specimen, in circumstances that allowed him little dignity; this portrait suggests the esteem in which he was held during his time in the Bleek and Lloyd household." Bennun compares Bleek's enlightened attitudes with brutal colonial photographic practices but omits to mention the fact that the prisoners were photographed as anthropological specimens at Bleek's instigation. Ten sets of these photographs commissioned by Bleek are housed in Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum in which exhibits were "organized along typological and evolutionary lines" (Bank 1999a: 26).

Bleek emphasised the need to preserve the language and mythology of a people who were facing extinction in order to "solve some exceedingly important ethnological questions" (29, quoting a citation in Thornton 8). Bleek does not explicitly analyse the reasons for the disappearance of the Bushmen. Bank (30) argues, though, that Bleek regarded natural selection and the survival of the fittest as inevitable processes in human history. Bleek influenced and participated in "the discourse of dying races" that inspired much of the intellectual interest in the "aboriginal inhabitants" of the Cape in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The progress of "civilisation" was considered inevitable and so were its consequences for the more "primitive races."

²⁶ Bleek's view that the Bushmen were destined for extinction does not survive close scrutiny. Penn (1996: 81-91) surveys the history that led to the "perishing" of the Bushmen, including the /Xam of Bushmanland, in the nineteenth century. Penn concludes that the Bushmen "perished not because it was so fated but because of the legacy of violence inherited from the eighteenth century frontier"

Bank's book *Bushmen in a Victorian world: the remarkable story of the Bleek-Lloyd collection of Bushman folklore* (2006) retains much of this appraisal of Bleek's theoretical positions. It also qualifies, though, some of Bank's earlier views on the Bleek-Lloyd project. On the basis of an exhaustive examination of the notebooks and other sources, Bank demonstrates that Bleek revised many of his attitudes towards the Bushmen and their culture once he became better acquainted with the informants and their narratives. Initially, the speech of his informants reminded him of chattering monkeys. Soon, though, Bleek came to view the /Xam informants "as part 'of the most interesting nation in South Africa.'" He describes their stories as "wonderful" (Bank 2006: 165). Bleek refers respectfully in some of his correspondence to //Kabbo as his teacher. He hung a portrait of //Kabbo in his study, the dignity of which contrasts starkly with the anthropometric photographs of //Kabbo, the prisoner, which Bleek had earlier commissioned (185). It is above all, however, his investigation of the collaboration between the informants and Lucy Lloyd that leads Bank to characterise the project as "an extraordinary tale not only of survival and resilience, but of hope and creative possibility" (397).

Bank recreates the life history of each of the informants in considerable detail and closely articulates these histories with their stay in the Bleek-Lloyd household and the nature of the materials they delivered. He shows how Lloyd developed close relationships with the informants and became fluent in /Xam. He also shows that her role should be separated from that of Wilhelm Bleek's in many ways. She was not bound by his theoretical preconceptions (158) and, especially after his death, moved away from a narrow concern with mythology to pursue an interest in /Xam culture generally. Nor was she involved in supervising the informants' domestic

(83). They were defeated not because they were destined to perish but because of "the murderous and unchanging ideas of their foes" (91). In Szalay's (1995) view the Bushmen did not become extinct at all. For the most part, they were incorporated into the labouring population where they became part of a heterogeneous colonial rural proletariat. I shall return to this point, both in this chapter (see section B, iii, c) and later in the thesis.

work in any way (162). She also evinced anti-colonial and liberal views (341; 352-353). Bank surmises that her sympathy with the marginalised and displaced might have been influenced by her own life experiences of marginalisation of displacement (393). Bank argues that the informants invested emotionally and creatively in the project (156). They were truly collaborators, especially in their work with Lloyd (161). The result is "our only (and a remarkably rich) point of access to the cultural life and history of an entire people (397). Concludes Bank: "Without romanticising the motivations of the researchers or the life histories of the informants, we can recognise that their ability to sustain a decade of dialogue is without precedent in the history of this country and perhaps that of the world."

b. The conditions in which the narratives were collected and their place in South African literature.

The process of the collection of the materials has been described and commented on in the work of Hewitt (1986: 235), Brown (1998: 9-14; 42-43) Deacon and Dowson, eds. (1996), Skotnes, ed. (1996), Guenther (1999), Lewis-Williams (2000), Bennun (2005) and Bank (2006), among others. The unusual circumstances of their transcription and the effect this would have had on the narrative mode itself have been explored in some detail. The alien setting and absence of the usual interactive audience of fellow /Xam speakers already familiar with the stories and their references militated against narrative spontaneity and continuity. Explanatory detail, for example, had to be added, often leading to digressions so lengthy and intricate that the original narrative was forgotten or was only re-activated in truncated form (Hewitt 1986: 244). Comparisons with other bodies of Bushman oral literature, described in section iv, a below, reveal a bias of narratives of the sun, moon and stars as well as an uncharacteristic lack of scatological and sexual elements, a distortion that can be ascribed to the predilections, pre-conceived

notions and scruples of the collectors as well as to self-censorship on the part of the informants.

Hewitt (1986) discusses the features that an oral performance would have exhibited in a traditional context. He (51) notes the difficulty of discovering "much about story-telling as live performance" from the notebooks but maintains, nevertheless, that it is possible to reconstruct something of this context from materials in the notebooks and from ethnographic sources. On the basis of this approach, he asserts, for example, that /Xam powers of observation "for their natural environment" and almost "mystical" attunement to it, which included a "close identification with animals must find its way into narrative presentation" (52). The dramatic characterisation of animals that this identification invited consisted partly of the attribution of special kinds of speech to certain animals. In performance this involved the substitution of sounds and a positioning of the mouth that imitated the animal's mouth (52-53). Hewitt relates the dominance of dialogue in the narratives to performance opportunities (54-55). Songs, chants and reiterated phrases would have invited audience participation.

In an essay in *Alternation* (1994) in which she emphasises the unequal power relations that prevailed in the Bleek and Lloyd household and the role of the narrators as "study objects" (61), Helize van Vuuren observes that the /Xam materials have been subjected to "endless mediating processes and translation from

²⁷ Guenther (1989) discusses this phenomenon in relation to 'the story in which the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest.' This story, he claims, has an explicitly sexual character in other versions from the southern African region that is altogether absent from the version in the Bleek and Lloyd collection. See chapter 4, section B, iv. Bleek did elicit "the /Xam terms for sexually explicit vocabulary", but recorded them next to their Latin rather than their English equivalents, "the only Latin recorded in the notebooks" (Bank 2006: 98), evidence of the particular reticence that was attached to sexuality at the time.

²⁸ Dorothea Bleek published a selection of materials in *Bantu Studies* which exhibited the phenomenon of special speech. These materials are reproduced with notes in Hollmann, ed. (2005: 331-382).

the oral into the written mode" (57) and are, thus, "but an approximation, albeit the closest we can come, to knowledge of the original" (65). Inevitably, the /Xam and their stories "enter the written record in the phrases and sentences of others ..." (66).²⁹

Even at the time of the transcription of the materials, the tradition of /Xam orality was no longer situated in the social context that the narratives depict or much of the criticism assumes. In his introduction to *Voicing the Text* (1998), Duncan Brown notes that oral literature survives through an inescapable "process of mediation" (10). It is written down and translated. Later, it is often published, a process that involves selection and editing in accordance with "Western assumptions of 'aesthetic unity'" (11). Stories are given titles. Selected texts begin to lead reified existences as discrete stories (19). Brown wonders how such materials can be used "to suggest something of the dynamic nature of oral performance" (2) and asks how we can bridge the historical distance between us and the "original" performative context of the narratives. This question has a particular complexity with regard to the materials of the Bleek and Lloyd collection which come to us in the form of "highly mediated" and artificially stabilised print versions that were transcribed in the imperial milieu of Victorian Cape Town (2). The act of translation, as Spivak (1999: 163) reminds us, is itself "a species of violation" when "the violence of imperialism straddles a subjected language" In some ways we are not reading a /Xam text at all but the collector-translators' reading of the /Xam texts. Referring to the work of Bassnet-McGuire (1980), Brown notes that "every translation is in fact a 'reading' that involves the processes of decoding and recoding" (Brown 1998: 12). This is particularly true of the almost untranslatable aspects of language such as "cosmogonic and ethical assumptions" (13). Brown (42-43) also describes the unusual "narrating context" and discusses the way this influenced the narratives.

²⁹ Bank (2006: 157) provides something of a corrective to this view, showing that the process of translation was often a collaboration between informant and collector. He also shows, though, that much of the translation was carried out by Lloyd and Dorothea Bleek decades after the materials were recorded (386; 389).

Although the researchers treated them humanely, the narrators were in a subservient position. Brown compares this with the audience in the "non-stratified, hunter-gatherer band." He describes the painstaking and "artificial" dictating process which required frequent interruptions for clarification.

In his contribution to Deacon and Dowson's *Voices from the Past* (1996: 77-99), Matthias Guenther also discusses the influence on the materials of the context in which they were assembled. He, too, emphasises the unequal relationship between the informants and the interviewers, noting that a "master-servant" relationship prevailed in the household (96). He observes that the content of a story is influenced by aspects of the physical setting, such as the immediate surrounds, the weather and the season (79). A house in Mowbray would already predispose the selection of different content from an outdoor setting in a rural environment. Style and content are affected by the formality or informality of the social setting (80). The interview is a specific kind of formal setting (83). The style of delivery, content and selection of materials are also influenced by the participants: their number, background, temperament and cultural familiarity. In this regard, Guenther points out that the presence of researchers affects the choice of stories (80). The purpose of the storytelling session influences the rhetorical strategy and intent. In the case of the Bleek and Lloyd project, the purpose was not so much to enhance social life, for instance, as to provide information and explain customs. Guenther mentions the role of audience interaction in storytelling. In the context in which the Bleek and Lloyd materials were collected, the audience consisted of a single interviewer. Particular norms of interaction were prescribed by the context, which would also have affected both narrative style and content. The /Xam informants were not narrating their materials to what Guenther calls a "high context group" (81), with whom they could have shared a language that was more culture-specific in its use of metaphorical and connotative features. He mentions that outsiders like researchers often receive an expanded version of a narrative with added explanations. He goes so far as to suggest that in the context of the Bleek

household the informants might have deliberately elaborated narratives in order to avoid housework or even a return to prison (96).

The /Xam narratives, notes Guenther, were collected not through storytelling so much "as story-dictation" (83), a very different situation from that in which storytelling once filled in the hours of leisure time afforded by a relaxed foraging lifestyle (84). There is a misleading preponderance of materials relating to the sun, moon and stars because the interviewers attached a particular importance to them (89), a phenomenon which I explore in chapter 6 of this thesis, where I relate it to the obsession with origins that Derrida locates as the basis of the western metaphysics of presence. There is a suppression of "erotic, menstrual or scatological elements" (90) when compared to other bodies of "Bushman" oral literature, like those from the Kalahari explored by Biesele (1993). This is probably attributable to the Victorian milieu but the "decorous" bent of individual narrators could also have been a factor (Guenther 1996: 91). There is also a gender bias in the materials. Despite their efforts to interview women, Bleek and Lloyd had, for the most part, only male informants at their disposal. The fact that the narrators reported first hearing the stories they related from women in ninety percent of cases (97) shows the importance of female narrators in the general cultural context. The expectations of the interviewers may also have encouraged the narrators to relate more "old" stories and fewer stories that related to their present circumstances, such as those dealing with boers, commandos and Koranas, than they might have told in the contemporary context of the farms of the North West Cape. Another factor, conjectures Guenther, could be the possibility that the "alienation and oppressiveness of the narrators' lives in colonial Cape society evoked a sense of the integrity of their own culture" and inspired them to tell more traditional stories

" Elsewhere, Guenther describes "how the Nharo in the later twentieth century made a self-conscious, political decision to intensify their use of the trance dance. It was a deliberate strategy aimed at asserting a traditional San identity ..." (Solomon forthcoming: 144, discussing Guenther 1986). Bank (2006: 365) notes that both //Kabbo and /Han#kass'o told more traditional stories

While commending Guenther's article in *Voices from the past* and noting its influence on his own work, Bank (2006: 157) argues that Guenther's position underestimates both the dynamism of the storytelling context in Mowbray and the nuances of the relationship between the informants and the collectors. Storytelling was often not a "one on one" procedure. Gesture and other performative techniques also formed part of the process (168; 364-365). Bleek's children, Edith and Dorothea, recalled, for example, that /Han#kass'o "was 'great in storytelling', allowing them to 'feel more than know what was happening.' They remembered his 'eloquent gestures' and dramatic re-enactments, and the notebooks are filled with evidence of this" (364). While the dictation was slow and awkward initially, especially since the only language Lloyd and the informants had in common at first was Afrikaans, a language in which Lloyd had limited competency, it became more relaxed and "natural" later (179).³¹ Lloyd became fluent in /Xam and developed close relationships with several of the informants (161). Her dealings with the informants, as noted in the previous section, was less characterised by the master-servant relationship, to which Guenther alludes, than was Bleek's. Less burdened, too, by theoretical expectations than was Bleek, she increasingly allowed the narrators to lead the way in the sessions and became as interested in general /Xam culture as in "mythology" (158). Bleek, on the other hand, employed a more formal approach, often using leading questions to elicit materials of a mythological character in accordance with his emphasis on the religious importance to the Bushman of the sun, moon and stars and the figure of /Kaggen (159).³² Lloyd's approach to translation was "often highly collaborative. It was a complex

towards the end of their stay in Mowbray and conjectures that this might have been partly attributable to cultural nostalgia and homesickness.

³¹ Bleek himself did not need Afrikaans as an intermediary language. He was able to translate directly from /Xam into English from the beginning (Bank 2006: 181). He never attained the fluency in /Xam that Lloyd was to develop, however (394).

³² This thesis concentrates on precisely the materials privileged by Bleek in order to question particular assumptions about them.

negotiated interaction, the researcher 'working out' the meaning of the /Xam text with the assistance of the informants" (157-158).

While I take note of the discussions concerning the oral status of the materials in the Bleek Lloyd Collection, my own study is based on the assumption that I am working with printed texts. Despite their roots in an oral tradition, they have become part of a process of textual reproduction. They are the subject of written discussion and interpretation, part of a web of intertextuality that has, to some degree, overtaken their internal discursive economy. I am predominantly interested in the meanings and texts generated in the course of the history of the reading of the notebooks rather than in the recovery of some fresh, original meaning that existed in the purity of orality. Accordingly, I treat the texts as writing, albeit of a particular kind, and not generally as oral literature, although I often refer to the oral context in which the /Xam narrative tradition was based. I pursue this discussion further in the section on Derrida's work on speech and writing in chapters 2.

Another recurring theme in the writing that relates to the collection involves its place in the wider field of South African literature. Brown (1998) emphasises the importance of locating the /Xam materials within a revised canon of South African literature and argues against ghettoising them as oral or black literature, a tendency, he maintains, that reinforces the view of the Bushmen, and their culture, as "a fascinating evolutionary anachronism" (37). Van Vuuren (1994) argues that the "recovery" of Bushman oral literature, "contaminated as it has become by endless mediating processes", is crucial if we are "to rethink what constitutes South African literature" (57).

Shane Moran (1995) notes, in relation to van Vuuren's project of recovering the /Xam texts as oral literature en route to their inclusion in a revised South African national literature, that the "pious conclusion of such a literary historical route is usually the insertion of a representative (here the Bushman) into a place reserved for the authentic South African voice that, as the aboriginal embodiment of national

unity, can serve as a proper origin of national identity" (31). He relates the attempt to create a single South African literature "to an anxious desire to unify the new South Africa, to locate a benign non-black and non-white origin" (32). The Bushman's incorporation into the South African literary canon, he contends, is a forced "literary citizenship" in which its "victims" have no rights of refusal. Belinda Jeursen (1995) observes a similar caution with regard to the rock art. She criticises the tendency to appropriate Bushman imagery to serve the ends of South African political unity. "The rock art may be seen as an archetype for South Africans in that it represents something that is original. Created by South Africa's First People, it takes on a special significance at a time when unity is a political and social priority" (127). Solomon (forthcoming: 2) notes in this regard that the "rock art is better known than the oral narratives, partly through the energetic recycling of San images in post-apartheid commercial ventures and its use in creating new cultural identities in a desired multi-cultural, 'rainbow nation'."

c. Interpretations of the narratives

This thesis is not directly concerned with the conditions and practices that surrounded the collection and translation of the materials. This field has, I believe, been reasonably well covered in the literature I have just described. I have chosen, rather, to focus on the interpretation of the materials. In my view, neither a close reading of /Xam texts themselves nor an ideological analysis of the body of interpretation that does exist in relation to them has been adequately attempted. The theorists and critics who have investigated the /Xam texts are discussed at length in chapters 3 and 4, in which I concentrate especially on the work of Roger Hewitt (1986), Matthias Guenther (1996) and Anne Solomon (forthcoming). Their work constitutes, in my opinion, the most extensive attempt to explicate the individual stories and to locate them within the context of /Xam cultural, social and

I return to the question of the /Xam texts and their place in South African literature in my discussion of the work of Gayatri Spivak in chapter 2, section B, iii.

economic practice. Here I briefly survey the field, identifying the major strands in the work of the different critics.

Bleek and Lloyd did not only transcribe the materials, they were also the first interpreters of them (Bank 2006: 184). The translation of the texts into /Xam was itself a form of interpretation. While they did not engage in close and systematic exegesis of the texts they collected, analysis and interpretation underlay their project. This analytical aspect of their work" appears in many forms. These include asides and notes in the notebooks, correspondence, reports to parliament, magazine articles and prefaces.³⁴ Bleek's interpretations were coloured by the theoretical positions outlined earlier in the chapter.³⁵ These positions also led him to try and elicit particular kinds of materials. His theory that the Bushmen were "sidereal worshippers", for example, led him to concentrate on materials that involved the sun, moon and stars (Bank 2006: 189).³⁶ Bleek was also particularly interested in the figure of the Mantis (200). Much of Bleek's analysis was of a comparative nature. Lloyd also engaged in comparative analysis at times, pasting cuttings from newspapers and journals into the notebooks which pointed to a parallel between /Xam beliefs and those of peoples from other parts of the world such as Japan, Russia and India (Bank 2006: 352). She also identifies /Kaggen with the !Xun figure, /Xue (Bank 2006: 373). Since Bleek and Lloyd enjoyed direct access to the informants they were able to deepen their understanding of the materials by making use of an indigenous exegesis.

Roger Hewitt's 1986 book *Structure, meaning and ritual in the narratives of the Southern San* was the first systematic study of the materials to be published and

³⁴ See Bleek, W (1873a; 1873b; 1874a; 1874b; 1875a; 1875b) Lloyd (1889) and Bleek and Lloyd (1911).

³⁵ See section B, ii, a

³⁶).An example of this bias would be his commissioning of "Lloyd to compile a fuller record of /Xam stories about stars" (Bank 2006:190).

³⁷ See chapter 6, section iii.

remains to date the only work that is devoted chiefly to interpretation of the actual narratives. Hewitt's work brought the materials back into the public domain. His analysis of the materials forms the foundation of much of the work that has followed. Twenty years after his book was published, it still represents "perhaps the most detailed and insightful study" of the narratives (Solomon forthcoming: 245). His study is taxonomic, structuralist and functionalist. A feature of his work is his investigation of the "way in which a relatively restricted set of motifs and themes are configured into an abundance of individual stories" (Solomon forthcoming: 56). He also provides extensive ethnographic background to the narratives. In his own words, Hewitt sets out to "situate individual narratives within their narrative tradition and that tradition within a cultural context extending from the material world to the conceptual frameworks evinced in custom and belief (Hewitt 1986: 20). Although he discusses a number of stories in considerable detail, he generally surveys the narratives in a broad manner rather than attempting close analysis of individual stories. Hewitt's work, observes Brown (1995: 79) "tends to emphasise the creation of structural typologies over the analysis of texts in terms of their symbolic resonance within their society and beyond." I examine these structural typologies closely in chapter 4, locating them ideologically and assessing the extent to which the /Xam materials, specifically the stories of /Kaggen, can be made to fit into them. Hewitt imputes to the /Kaggen stories, in particular, the role of affirming the social order, an assertion which I also investigate at length.

The anthropologist, Matthias Guenther, has worked closely with both Nharo and /Xam narratives, as evidenced in his 1989 study *Bushmen folktales: oral traditions of the Nharo of Botswana and the Xam of the Cape*. In this work, he brings together tales he collected himself in Botswana between 1968 and 1970 with sixteen tales from the Bleek and Lloyd collection, including fourteen that were previously unpublished. The detailed notes which accompany the stories are mostly of a comparative nature. He establishes the connection between a story and others in the Khoisan cultural complex and discusses the symbolic meaning the stories have in

common. In his introduction, (13-38) he states that juxtaposing texts from the two traditions, in the way he does in the book, demonstrates the relatedness of the materials: "They force one to conclude that both narrative traditions draw from one, common mythological stock" (30). Guenther's study of the /Xam narratives in his *Tricksters and trancers: Bushman religion and society* (1999), which I discuss in detail in chapter 5, reads the /Kaggen narratives as trickster tales which reinforce a foraging ideology that encourages individualism and flexibility. His book brings together the /Xam trickster and Kalahari trance practitioner as different manifestations of a single Bushman complex. His treatment of individual texts in this work is usually quite brief although he does examine certain stories such as those of the 'moon and the hare' and 'the anteater and the lynx' in some detail.

The scope of Anne Solomon's book *San worlds* (forthcoming), which I discuss in chapter 5, also extends beyond the /Xam narratives themselves. Her central concern is the rock art of the Drakensberg. She shows that the reading of the /Xam narratives which inspired the trance theory of rock art interpretation has to be questioned on several grounds, with implications for both the interpretation of the narratives and the rock art. In order to do this she carefully considers the narratives. Her reading produces many new insights that will have to be taken into account, I believe, in any new interpretation of the stories. The place of the spirits of the dead in the materials, especially, will have to be carefully considered. Solomon in this work also provides the most complete meta-narrative of the /Xam "mythical" framework yet offered. Many of her observations concerning rock art interpretation also have important implications for the reading of the narratives. Painting, she asserts, is an act that itself generates meaning. It does not simply represent something else, such as trance experience. It is crucial, I believe, to consider the narratives, too, as practices that themselves contain value and produce meaning rather than as mirrors reflecting social reality or as mechanisms functioning to support other aspects of society. Importantly, Solomon (forthcoming: 281) also insists on the gendered nature of stories and rock art: "In hunter-gatherer societies, gender is the fundamental economic and social division, but it is a socio-cultural

division, not one biologically pre-ordained, and the appropriate roles and behaviour of men and women are reinforced - or subverted - through arts, artefacts and ritual."

Besides the work of these three writers, which I will examine in detail in chapters 4 and 5, many other writers also comment on the narratives and their interpretation in various ways. The introduction and notes to the major collections, such as Bleek and Lloyd's *Specimens of Bushman folklore* (1911), Dorothea Bleek's *The Mantis and his friends* (1923), Lewis-Williams's *Stories that float from afar* (2000) and Jeremy Hollmann's *Customs and beliefs of the /Xam Bushmen* (2005), all contain observations of an interpretative nature, even though interpretation is not their main business.

The reworking of extracts from the collection into poetry itself involves an act of interpretation. Particular meanings are generated, assumed and selected in the work of Cope (1968), Watson (1991), James (2001) and Krog (2004). Reading the materials as poetry already indicates a favouring of aesthetic qualities over social or discursive narrative functions, for instance. Solomon (forthcoming 250) gives an example of the implications that the foregrounding of aesthetic considerations can have on the reading of a story. James's re-ordering of materials concerning the night hunting of springbok, she maintains, "changes the emphasis from assessing the antelope as food to contemplating them as aesthetic(ised) objects." She (251) notes that "the impulse to create 'poetry' determines a selection for shorter texts or excerpts, forensically sliced off, but with an aesthetic scalpel." It also, observes Solomon, leads to the selection of pieces "with a more universal appeal." With regard to James's stated intention to "highlight an aspect, such as a structure or imagery, that might be passed over if it were not emphasized" (James 2001: 24, quoted by Solomon forthcoming: 251), Solomon notes that "the poetic form in this scenario may function as an 'analysis' in itself." In a similar way, the way a photograph of a rock painting is framed entails an interpretation (119).

Alan James's versions in poetry of extracts from the collection, *The first Bushman's path: stories, songs and testimonies of the /Xam of the Northern Cape* (2001), are accompanied by detailed commentaries on each poem. These commentaries include information from Hewitt and other sources that relate to the pieces under consideration. James orders his materials into themes and describes the /Xam cultural complexes and social practices that support these themes. In the stories of the creation of the celestial bodies, for instance, he identifies the existence of a powerful "First Bushman language", a potent formula that could be employed to bring about desired results (149). His treatment of /Kaggen emphasises the constitutive power of discourse. /Kaggen's ability to name places, a mode of mapping that "establishes identity, gives reality and enables a measure of knowing", reveals him as a world-transformer, one who recreates "raw, undistinguished land as imaginable space, as ownable territory, as habitable country, as an accessible resource, as home ..." (158). Although James provides many useful insights into individual texts, his approach does not consist of close textual reading. His commentaries are intended to enhance appreciation of the poetry.³⁸ He does, however, provide a detailed intertextual map by cross-referencing the materials he has chosen with others in the collection. This method enables the materials, to some degree, to begin to interpret themselves.

Duncan Brown has written in some detail on the narratives and their interpretation. His 1995 essay in *Critical Arts* 9 (2): 76-108, "The society of the text: the oral literature of the /Xam Bushmen", discusses the representation of Bushmen as "Others" (78) who precede "society, history and economic need" and live "in Edenic unity with the natural world" (96). This representation of Bushmen as "other" occurs despite the availability of their self-representation in the form of

Solomon (forthcoming: 14) argues that presenting the narratives as extracts, as James does, necessitates the use of extensive introductory and explanatory materials whereas "the stories are intelligible when seen within the larger body of narratives of which they are apart...."

³⁹I have pursued a similar approach myself with selected texts in later chapters in this thesis. See, especially, chapter 4, section C and chapter 9, section iii.

paintings and narratives (79). The /Xam texts, he emphasises, challenge our ability to listen across "social and historical distances" (79) to the perspectives of the colonised they offer. Brown argues for a reading that situates the texts "within the signifying practices of their society" (80), an injunction I attempt to follow in the analysis of texts I conduct later in this thesis. He observes that stories of the Early Race and those of recent events are indistinguishable stylistically and that no "formal distinction is made between stories which are sacred and profane" (89). "[T]here is no sense of disjuncture between the mythological and the everyday" (98). He considers the stories of the Early Race to have great relevance for daily living since they "serve the important function of mediating discursively the major social, political and economic problems facing Bushman society" (89). Although the narratives are concerned in part with origins, they also address questions of everyday life, maintains Brown.

In *Voicing the text: South African oral poetry and performance* (1998), Brown contends that the "/Xam texts represent not the primordial child-man, nor an idyllic African past but a complex imaginative response to pressing social and economic needs" (71). As shown by his title, Brown acknowledges the textual and discursive nature of oral literature. He considers several stylistic features of the narratives that are characteristic of oral texts, such as structural repetitiveness and heightened language, while acknowledging the difficulty of suggesting the "dynamic nature of oral performance" using "highly mediated and artificially stabilised print versions" (2) from which critical elements of oral delivery are absent. It is important to foreground the complex processes of mediation, which include collection, transcription, translation, selection and editing, "as a means of discouraging attempts ... to treat the texts as stable objects" (13). Brown advocates a dialectical strategy that attempts to both recover the past meanings of the texts and situate them in the context of South Africa's "human, social and political reconstruction" (2).⁴⁰ "Present needs and ideologies" impel the retrieval of history that the reading

⁴⁰ Solomon (forthcoming: 217) notes that the question of establishing a relationship between the past of the stories and the present of interpretation is complicated by the fact the /Xam past is not

and interpretation of the narratives implies. The past can become a radical agent that questions and judges the present (24-25). This, for Brown, provides a "moral purpose" for studying the /Xam texts.⁴¹ Brown also identifies several recurrent concerns in the narratives. These include the role of the trickster God, /Kaggen, and the relationship between the human and animal worlds (55-56). The narratives, asserts Brown, following Biesele (1976: 303) allow for the processing in discourse of social and political problems (54). He goes on to illustrate these points in an analysis of several narratives and other /Xam texts.

In his book, *To speak of this land: identity and belonging in South Africa and beyond*, Brown (2006) closely examines the extract that is entitled '//Kabbo's intended return home' in *Specimens of Bushman folklore*.² Brown describes //Kabbo's piece as "a text of deep spiritual imbrication with the natural world , which we might see as characteristic of pre-modernity (though also of various postmodern social movements , which have adopted aspects of the world-view and cultural insignia of hunter-gatherer or 'tribal' societies). Yet it is at the same time a text of extraordinary modernity" (15). His analysis of //Kabbo's text forms part of a wider project to "consider how people have, historically and in the present, used different textual forms to express, accomplish and enact a sense of what it means to live (in) a place ..." (1). Brown argues that //Kabbo's discourse shows a sophisticated ability to traverse the epistemological binaries of western thought, such as modernity/pre-modernity and orality/writing, in order to assert a claim to

monolithic: "/Xam narratives ... belong not only to the nineteenth century past of the narrators and recorders, but also to a tradition that may be of great antiquity - perhaps even millennia old - as well as to the present in which we read them." With regard to rock paintings she cautions that scenes of conflict between Bushmen and colonists do "not provide us with any new historical information." Nor do they "give the other side of the story told in official colonial papers and other historical literature" (225).

⁴¹ Cf. Bourdieu's contention, discussed in chapter 2, section B, ii, that a "detour through an exotic tradition is indispensable in order to break the relationship of deceptive familiarity that binds us to our tradition" (Webb, Schirato, Danaher. et al. 2001 72, quoting Bourdieu 2001:3).

⁴² See chapter 6, section iii for my discussion of aspects of this text.

his land and to a particular identity (19). Brown links this ability to //Kabbo's textual skills, arguing that the textual extends well beyond the realm of actual writing. It encompasses a variety of "forms of cultural coding" (12) such as rock art, tracking and other activities that involve the interpretation and manipulation of signs.

The title of Elana Bregin's 1998 MA thesis, 'The identity of difference: A critical study of representations of the Bushmen', is deliberately ambiguous for she examines in her study not only the process of "othering" involved in the representation of the Bushmen by others but the processes by which the Bushmen themselves represented the world. She considers the /Xam narratives and the rock art of the Drakensberg from the perspective of representation by the Bushmen rather than of the Bushmen, an attempt to develop a strategy that avoids "epistemic violence" (20, citing Spivak). This project involves the retrieval of "a more authentic and 'human' Bushmen identity from the welter of myths - both derogatory and idealised - which have contributed to their long history of 'othering'" (29). As far as possible, the Bushmen should be allowed to speak for themselves, a process that necessitates allowing them their place as contemporary humans for, as Bregin, following Spivak, points out: "when the identity is difference, the other cannot speak for themselves" (30). This necessitates an acknowledgement by the critic that alterity is a function of the critic's project of the self rather than a characteristic of the people being "othered" (28). It also requires a recognition of the complexity of the "mythological systems and psychic spaces" being considered (26).⁴³ The project of trying to understand the tales entails the critic's undergoing a considerable "paradigm shift" (25).

" Bregin emphasises the challenge of interpreting complex Bushman representational arts. Solomon (forthcoming: 215), too, notes that Bushman art and stories must be understood on their own terms. "San arts are imaginings of past, present and future worlds, not documentary records left behind" She insists on the point that "Stories and images were made *as* stories and images, not as information repositories, and their status as artworks inevitably shapes the kind of 'data' they may comprise or evoke" (216, italics in the original).

Bregin's reading of the stories is mostly wide and general. She follows Hewitt (1986) in asserting that the chief theme of the tales is the maintenance of "a stable social order" (91) and Brown (1998), Guenther (1996) and Biesele (1993) in emphasising the role of narrative in the mediation of the recurrent concerns of a foraging way of life. These include "food-sharing, uncontrollable weather, interpersonal relationships and social protocol" (Bregin: 91). Stories, she believes, serve a didactic function that goes far beyond their entertainment value. Bregin considers the stories of the sun, moon and stars, for instance, as hunter-gatherer attempts to account philosophically for "the great imponderables of their existence", such as mortality and "the origin of the heavenly bodies" (102). She agrees with Lewis-Williams's (1996) linking of the /Kaggen stories and the trance symbolism of the rock art. They are tales of "regeneration and restoration" involving, for the most part, the "medium of water" (105). /Kaggen, for Bregin, is the embodiment of the Bushman spirit, "a small being, large in importance, combining within himself very ordinary human traits and quirks, with access to the magical and supernatural" (106).

Belinda Jeursen's MA thesis (1994), 'Gender in /Xam narratives: towards an unidealised reading of community', focuses on the stories that concern !Khwa and menstruating girls. Her article in the journal *Alternation* (1995: 40-54) covers some of the same ground. Jeursen pays special attention to the texts gleaned from IKweiten ta // ken, the main female informant. Her study is unusual in that it discovers asymmetrical relations of power in a culture usually presented as egalitarian. She reads the stories related to female initiation rites, in particular, as a conflict between individual freedom and gender-biased traditions (1995: 40). She notes that, in the context of ritual, conflict occurs between individuals and power structures rather than between two individuals. She maintains that punishment in the narratives for the breaking of taboos is reserved for women (41). She emphasises the masculinity of both !Khwa and /Kaggen. '!Khwa's power takes a predominantly destructive form (42). She provides a fairly detailed analysis of 'the

story of the girl of the Early Race who made stars.' Jeursen reads this story in terms of power and sexuality rather than as a story of the origin of the stars, as most other interpreters have done.⁴⁵ She locates the story within the context of /Xam menstruation rites and investigates other stories that share a similar context such as Kweiten-ta-ken's 'the girl's story; the frog's story' (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 198-205). Jeursen also discovers a sexual subtext in 'the story of the leopard tortoise' (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 38-31). Although Jeursen claims that the rites and traditions are generally gender-biased and weighted against the female, she does find an assertion of female forms of power in certain narratives. Another notable feature of Jeursen's work is the strong emphasis she places on the didactic and ideological function of stories. "All the /Xam stories", she asserts, "share the function of education in belief and survival" (Jeursen 1995: 40). In relation to 'the story of the girl and the stars', for example, she contends, that the "narrative is an account aimed at instructing people, especially young girls, about puberty rites and the corresponding observances" (52).⁶

Harold Scheub's *Story* (1998) brings together three South African storytellers from different written and oral traditions. //Kabbo is included along with Nongenile Masithathu Zenani, a Xhosa storyteller, and the novelist, Pauline Smith. Scheub provides details of the /Xam informant's biography and examines his storytelling techniques. Scheub relates and discusses several of //Kabbo's stories. His commentaries on the stories of 'the All-devourer' and 'the Mantis and the ticks' are particularly detailed (213-217). Stories function, in Scheub's view, as mechanisms

⁴⁴ See chapter 9.

⁴⁵ Hewitt (1986: 93), for example, asserts that stories concerning the sun, moon or stars are nearly always stories of origin. Solomon (forthcoming: 26) emphasises both the aetiological and gendered aspects of the stellar creation tales. In relation to gender politics, she notes that the new maiden initiation ceremony can be interpreted as suggesting "a certain asymmetrical regulation of female rather than male sexuality" (202). This would qualify the commonly held view that /Xam bands were egalitarian. Equally, though, she asserts, it would be possible to interpret the ceremonies as celebrating "the role of women."

⁴⁶ Cf. Hewitt (1986: 75-80).

for the production of emotions. This is their meaning and the 'essence of storytelling' (8). Misinterpretation often results from critics placing too much attention on the ethical or formal aspects of a story and ignoring the fact that stories are always emotionally interpreted by their auditors. The emotional life of the teller is layered in the story. Each telling is resonant with the affective life of the narrator and the audience as well as the echoes of all its previous tellings. Although "story is a major means of communication" in which "a message is conveyed from one generation to another" and "is the vehicle whereby essential historical and social values ... are retained," it accomplishes this task "not in didactic ways and not on the literal level of the sequence of events but in the form of emotions ..." (22). The very "building blocks of storytelling," images, are "felt actions or sets of actions ..." (23).

Neil Bennun's *The broken string: the last words of an extinct people* (2005), "a popular history of the Bleek-Lloyd collection and the stories associated with it" (Bank 2006: 392), does not provide explicit interpretations of narratives. Instead it interweaves the narratives with accounts of the lives of the Bleek family and the informants in a highly readable and ingenious way. Nevertheless, the extended accounts of the narratives presented in the book involve a great deal of interpretation. Bennun rewrites the texts considerably, going so far as to supply the characters with new dialogues. Some of the roots of this implicit interpretation can be traced to commentators such as Hewitt and David Lewis-Williams⁴⁷ but much of it is provided by Bennun himself.

Although Bennun refers to /Kaggen as a trickster and sometimes represents him in these terms (91-94), he more consistently presents him as a creator, powerful shaman and sorcerer (169). He considers the stories of the Early Race a useful means of passing on knowledge about animals from one generation of hunters to the next (143). Bennun does not discuss the work of other critics. Nevertheless his

⁴⁷ Lewis-Williams appears to exert a strong influence on Bennun's account, especially shaping, it seems to me, his focus on shamanism.

contentions often qualify theirs. Where, for instance, Belinda Jeursen (1994: 42), reads !Khwa as a destructive male force, Bennun (2005: 197) maintains that !Khwa was responsible not only for the violent male rain but also for the gentle "female" rain.⁴⁸ His treatment of the narratives, literary rather than academic, will need to be taken into account in future interpretations of them.

Andrew Bank's *Bushmen in a Victorian world: the remarkable story of the Bleek-Lloyd collection of Bushman folklore* (2006) is predominantly history and biography but also contains interpretation of materials from the notebooks. Bank provides a historical context for the narratives, showing in considerable detail how individual narratives reflect the interests of the collectors, the life experiences of the informants and the relationship between an informant and a collector. /Han#kass'o, for example, gives richer "descriptions of groups on the boundaries of his world" than the other informants, a phenomenon which Bank attributes partly to "Lloyd's increasing knowledge of his language and her warm and easy relationship with him, which can be read between the lines of her notebooks" (286) and partly to the proximity of his childhood home to the Korana. He is the only informant to relate detailed stories about the Korana. He heard these stories from his maternal grandfather, Tsatsi, and from his mother /Xabbi-an (287-288). In addition, the recounting of these stories to Lloyd coincided with a British campaign to subdue the Korana (287). Events in the Bleek-Lloyd household often influenced the narratives, maintains Bank. Dia!kwain's discourses on death were delivered around the time of Bleek's death, for example (258). Bank's historical approach to interpretation forms a valuable antidote to analytical strategies which tend to view the materials as timeless myths. He does not engage in close textual analysis himself but reconstructs the historical context of the individual narratives in a way that can only enrich such analysis.

Jeursen's reading of !Khwa is supported by Solomon (forthcoming: 46) who identifies !Khwa with the storm and a rain cow with gentle rain.

Hi. General writing on Bushman history and culture

Besides the body of literature that directly pertains to the Bleek and Lloyd collection, there is a vast corpus of work on Bushmen that is relevant to a study of this nature in a variety of ways. This body of work is too extensive to describe in its entirety, ranging, as it does, from early travelogues, to fiction and ethnographic studies. I shall survey here only the work that relates directly to the concerns of this thesis and to which I will refer in the course of the chapters that follow.

A discussion of work in the general field of Bushman studies, I should indicate here, necessarily reproduces a questionable category distinction. The work of Wilmsen (1989; 1996), in particular, historicises the category "Bushman" (or San). This category, he argues is more the reflection of a European need than a "real" group of people. Solomon (forthcoming: 9) similarly maintains that: "In several ways the 'San' are an imaginary people, a product equally of the scientific imagination and European historical and political myth." She argues that, despite the differences between the people designated as 'San', the term can, nevertheless, still be used to refer to "people who share a distinctive cosmology and who understand the world in broadly similar ways."⁴⁹

a. Bushman oral literature

Although the materials in the Bleek and Lloyd collection comprise the most important and extensive body of "Bushman" oral literature, there exists also a body of other "Bushman" narratives, collected from areas that fall within the borders of present day South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. In 1873 Joseph Orpen, a magistrate who formed part of the military force pursuing Langalibalele and his followers through the Malutis (Bennun 2005:170) recorded a number of narratives

⁴⁹ See section B, iv, b below for a more detailed discussion of the constructed nature of the category "bushman."

involving Cagn (Orpen's spelling) that were told to him by his interpreter, Qing. These materials were published in the *Cape Monthly Magazine* (1874 9: 1-13) with a commentary by Wilhelm Bleek. It is notable that Orpen did not present the materials in the order given to him by Qing but constructed a sequence from them (Solomon forthcoming: 124), a procedure which has been widely followed. Qing's materials have usually been considered in the context of either the Bleek and Lloyd materials or the rock art of the Drakensberg, most notably by David Lewis-Williams (1981), Lewis-Williams and Thomas Dowson (1989) and Anne Solomon (forthcoming).

After the Bleek and Lloyd collection, the largest corpus of Bushman narratives from the area falling within the boundaries of present day South Africa was collected by Gideon von Wielligh. His informants included some /Xam speakers near Calvinia. Von Wielligh published his narratives in Afrikaans between 1919 and 1921. Hewitt (1986: 18) remarks of this body of materials that they represent "an often illuminating supplement to the Bleek and Lloyd collection. However, von Wielligh was a popular writer who sought to encourage poor Afrikaners to read. His simplified stories, published in Afrikaans, were re-modelled by him to these didactic ends and, unfortunately, cannot be taken as reliable versions of /Xam narratives." Van Vuuren (1995) notes that Hewitt relies quite heavily at times on von Wielligh's materials despite his qualified dismissal of them. The fact that von Wielligh's narratives are in Afrikaans accounts, in van Vuuren's opinion, for the relative lack of recognition they have been accorded.

Matthias Guenther's (1989) selection of /Xam stories from the Bleek and Lloyd collection, referred to in the last section, is accompanied by a selection of Nharo narratives he collected in the field in Botswana. As indicated by the title, *Bushmen folktales: oral traditions of the Nharo of Botswana and the Xam of the Cape* (1989), he treats the two traditions as closely related. His 1986 study, *The Nharo Bushmen of Botswana: tradition and change*, offer fascinating insights into the adaptability of

an oral narrative tradition. Older stories persist but are accompanied by newer stories, suited to present circumstances.

Megan Biesele has followed her classic study, *Women like meat: the folklore and foraging ideology of the Kalahari Ju/'hoan* (1993), a reworking of her doctoral thesis of 1976, with a large body of other writing on .Bushman oral narratives (1997; 1999; 2002). An anthropologist, she has worked in the field with Ju/'hoan and !Xun informants in Botswana and Namibia for more than thirty years. More recently she has initiated a wide-ranging oral literature and history project controlled and run by San communities.⁵⁰ This project promises to change the power relations that attend the collection and recording of oral literature and also to provide a kind of indigenous exegesis that will offer altogether new readings of oral texts.

Women Like Meat (1993) includes a selection of narratives that concern hunting and gender relations, collected in the field from a range of male and female informants. Biesele, fluent in the Ju/'hoansi language, is able to offer interpretations of these stories that are informed by the explanations of the storytellers themselves. These interpretations are figured in the deliberately ambiguous title. Not only do women like meat and favour men who are skilled at providing it but they are identified with meat in a symbolic field that conflates sex and gender relationships with hunting. "[M]en's hunting is often symbolically opposed not to the complementary female activity of gathering but rather to a woman's reproductive capacity" (41). The stories are also notable for their vivid scatological and sexual elements. The content and perspective of a story varies, depending on whether the story is told by a man or by a woman.

Biesele (1993) provides a materialist description of the role of the oral narratives that she writes about. The stories, she maintains, are social technologies that structure a particular kind of survival by emphasising values such as sharing. The

I obtained this information from her in an interview in June 2003 in Cape Town.

symbolic systems of hunter-gatherers" are not "superfluous aesthetic activity" but "enabling features of their adaptation" (42). She does emphasise, however, that narrative traditions are multivocal and exhibit a range of sometimes contradictory attitudes and values as well as a high degree of individual influence. Essentialised versions of complex cultures have often been used to support various interpretative hypotheses whereas the co-existence of multiple viewpoints, debate and tolerance of ambiguity are features of the small-scale societies she works with. This flexibility is conducive to modes of social agreement that she associates particularly with oral communication. Nevertheless, although there are many versions of stories and stories are told in different ways by different narrators, Biesele maintains that all the Ju/'hoan stories contain the same underlying social lessons. These relate to the attitudes and values necessary for the sustaining of the economic arrangements through which people co-operate and make resources available. Stories engage and direct social energies in particular ways (Biesele 2002).

b. Constructions and representations of "Bushmen"

Another area of work that directly relates to the concerns of this thesis involves studies of the ideology that drives the interest in "Bushmen". Among the writers who have addressed this aspect of Bushman studies are Edwin Wilmsen (1989), Robert Gordon (1992), and Keyan Tomaselli (1990; 1995; 1999; 2006). Edwin Wilmsen's controversial historical investigation, *The land filled with flies: a political economy of the Kalahari* (1989), maintains that the delineation of the Bushman anthropological subject of earlier studies in the Kalahari, such as the Marshall family's film documentaries of the 1950's and 60's or Lee and De Vore's (1968) *Man the hunter*, involved the erasure of the complex web of wider economic and political relationships in which "Bushmen" were incorporated in both pre-colonial and colonial times. "Bushmen", asserts Wilmsen, had long been cattle herders and traders, resorting to foraging only as a response to dispossession and unfavourable circumstances. Wilmsen's book provoked a heated debate. Lee and Guenther (1993), for instance, have questioned Wilmsen's historical evidence in

order to argue that the region of the Kalahari in which Lee and DeVore had conducted their research was indeed home to people who had always lived as hunter-gatherers. They maintain that the skills and ideologies of a foraging way of life are not easily transposed to herding. In relation to the Bleek and Lloyd collection, Parkington (1991: 20) similarly insists that //Kabbo "was not a fossilized reflection of an unchanging past, for such people do not exist. Nor was he an aspirant pastoralist encountered by literate observers at a time when his luck and fortunes were down. Rather he and his family were hunter-gatherers struggling to maintain their links to land and other people, using a system of values not shared by their competition." Wilmsen has consistently defended his thesis, contending that the construction of the general category "Bushman" feeds the obsession with the origins of man but represents little more than an "ethnographic reification drawn from one of several subsistence strategies engaged in by all Botswana's rural poor" (Wilmsen and Denbow 1990: 489).

In his essay in Skotnes, ed. (1996: 185-189), "Decolonising the mind: steps towards cleansing the Bushman stain from Southern African history", Wilmsen traces the genesis of the "Bushman" from one who stands outside civilization and so deserves extermination to the archetypal representative of an age of innocence from which Europeans were ejected into "the sorrows of self-awareness" (186). The "Bushmen" inhabit a perpetual mythical time while the rest of us are condemned to historical time. "Bushmen" or something similar had to be invented to satisfy the "idealist search for human authenticity" (187).⁵ A great many people from Southern Africa who pursued a range of economic strategies from agropastoralism to hunter-gathering have been lumped together as "Bushmen" in the course of the realisation of this ideological project (188). Wilmsen argues that these people should be addressed as themselves and not "as missing parts of ourselves" (189).

This assertion is closely linked to Derrick's (1976) critique of Rousseau and Levi-Strauss which I discuss in chapter 2, section A, i.

Robert Gordon's, *The Bushman myth: the making of a Namibian underclass* (1992), employs a similar argument to Wilmsen's. He notes the history of western discursive power in regard to the "Bushmen", a history in which the stereotypes have been switched at will so that the Bushmen have moved from savage vermin to "harmless people."⁵² The "Bushmen", he maintains are one of the "most heavily scientifically commoditized human groups in the annals of science" (216-217). Whether they are depicted as living in "primitive affluence" or as an underclass struggling to survive, they are always "other." He describes the network of relationships in Namibia of which the people designated as "Bushmen" were part. They interacted in a variety of ways, for instance, with Owambo and Herero and played a role in mining and big game hunting in the colonial economy. The representation of Bushmen as hunter-gatherers with little contact with the outside world rests, he argues, not on historical fact but on an ideological distinction between "wild" and "tame" Bushmen, a distinction which disregards the great majority of Bushmen "who continued to battle for survival as workers on settler farms" (169).

From Wilmsen and Gordon's work emerges a strong sense that many of the significations of the term, "Bushman" are western constructs. Generalising categories such as Bushman, San and Khoisan have been used to classify people who did not situate themselves in these ways. This phenomenon has taken intellectual, literary and popular forms. I have already referred to its manifestation in the racial science of Bleek's era. The generalising approach has also informed the interpretations of rock art, a process I shall describe later in this section, and has led to the classification of materials such as the /Xam narratives as "Bushman." Guenther's (1989) placing of Nharo and /Xam materials together in one volume is an example of this tendency.

"Bushman" is a term which refers to the "other" of "South African historiography" (Bregin 2000: 37) more than to a sociological category of people. For most of

* Elizabeth Marshall's 1959 book on the Bushmen of the Kalahari is entitled, *The harmless people*.

South Africa's colonial past this "other" was "sub-human". Much of the obsession with racial difference was driven by Social Darwinism which "postulated a linear or teleological model of human development, from degenerate native child to adult white man" (39). This scheme allowed for "a slide backwards through 'racial decline.'" The Bushman represented this possibility. They were a "degraded species" while the Zulus occupied the ideological position of the noble savage. Later the Bushmen came to signify differently in the European imaginary, in the writing of Laurens van der Post (1958; 1961; 1984), in particular. They were now not only part of common humanity but quintessential human beings (Brown 1998: 63-64). They were closest to the origin, the pure embodiments of natural man. Bank (2002) has shown how this more recent stereotype of the Bushman has been strengthened by writing on the collection. Writers such as Lewis-Williams (2000) insist on locating the informants in huts in Bleek's garden whereas they lived in the house, at first under armed guard. In this way "the world of the house, site of the colonial culture of Bleek and Lloyd" is separated conceptually from "the natural world, site of huts and traditional stories" (Bank 2002: 71). "[A]ddressor and addressee are overdetermined as civilized Western man and natural savage" (Moran 1995:31).

The constructed category "Bushman" or "San" has been used, then, to both vilify and idealise the people it purports to describe. The occurrence of this history in South African and metropolitan literature is described in some detail by several writers including David Maughan Brown (1983), Tony Voss (1987), Ian Glenn (1996), Annie Gagiano (1999) and Elana Bregin (2000). The studies of Maughan Brown and Voss focus, especially, on the way in which literary texts "provided ideological legitimation for the acts of genocide" against the Bushmen (Brown 1998: 40). Keyan Tomaselli (1990; 1999) has pursued the representation of the Bushman in popular culture, the tourist industry and in the medium of film. He shows, for example, how the Marshalls' movie of Bushman families in the 1950's edited out contemporary elements in their subjects' lives in order to reinforce a particular construction of "Bushmen" as timeless hunter-gatherers.

Pippa Skotnes's exhibition, *Miscast*, and the book of the same name she edited (1996) explored a variety of representations of Khoisan people, including, centrally, those in museums and other sites of exhibition.⁵ In the book, Skotnes places the scholarly texts of her contributors next to parallel texts and photographs that depict exhibited body parts, chained convicts or naked men with measuring rods alongside them, the anthropometric photographs with which Bleek has been associated (Webster 2000). In her introduction (1996: 15-23), Skotnes discusses the role of galleries and museums in creating and disseminating the knowledge that is involved in the formation of particular kinds of relations of power and the constructions of identity that these relations produce. Science and colonial domination were often complicit. Some of the essays, notably Godby's (115-127), focus on the exhibition of living people such as Saartje Baartman in the nineteenth century. The objectification of indigenous peoples was perhaps most grimly exemplified in the collection of body parts for the purposes of identifying racial characteristics. It was also strongly evident in the European obsession with Khoikhoi women's genitalia. Carmel Schrire (343-353) concludes her account of this obsession with the observation that the "mixture of legitimate anthropology and covert pornography" is a "combination" not as "dissonant as it sounds." The exercise of power underlies both activities.

c. History and the "Bushman"

Andrew Bank (2006) articulates the lives of each of the individual informants with the wider history of the Cape frontier in great detail. The informants' lives spanned the period in which the frontier of the colony was extended. This extension engulfed the areas in which they lived. All the informants experienced "traditional" hunter-gathering lives, as well as persecution, commando raids, dispossession and

The aim of *Miscast* was to challenge stereotypes and evoke respect for the /Xam and other Khoisan groups. The exhibition itself, however, provoked controversy. People objected to the public display of sensitive images of their ancestors.

the harsh labour conditions of the farms. The length of time for which the individual informants pursued the way of life detailed in the materials depended on his age and the area from which he came. The informants who lived furthest south were affected by contact with the frontier farmers first. Settlers began to move into the area north of the Sak River even before the governor, Sir Harry Smith, extended the frontier to the Orange River, in 1847. //Kabbo describes how /Xam children who were related to him began to work on the farms in the 1840's (147). //Kabbo himself worked for a white farmer in the late 1850's, the "time when the government was giving official approval to the land claims of white settlers" (149). He later returned to a hunter-gathering way of life for a time and then became the leader of a gang of cattle-thieves (150-152). By the mid 1850's settlers were actively laying claim to the area and were often met by fierce /Xam resistance (77). The "bloodshed was substantial." In 1863 the government official, Louis Anthing, "estimated that there were only about 500 /Xam survivors after the first waves of white settlement..." (78). //Kabbo would have been in his mid forties during this catastrophic period while Dia!kwain and /Han#kass'o would have been teenagers and /Akunta still a boy (129; 234; 282; 74). //Kabbo's testimony suggests that relations between the farmers and the /Xam were not always violent but did include "moments of communication and interaction ... and mutual co-operation" (151). Dialkwain, who was imprisoned for killing a white farmer, emphasises only settler brutality, however (222-223). He personally knew of several people who had been killed by farmers. These included his cousin (267). Bank comments that "The settler presence is more prominent and certainly far more sinister in Dialkwain's narratives than //Kabbo's. Both his parents told him about the devastating effects of commando raids, 'menfolk murdered', and 'blood pouring or smoking.' Where //Kabbo's attitude towards the settlers was ambiguous and surprisingly unjudgemental, Dialkwain's conveyed a sense of fear, distance, dislike, even

⁵⁴ //Kabbo's family was, however, badly affected by settler violence. //Kabbo actually seems to have entered the service of the same farmer who had killed "his aunt, her daughter and son-in-law and their four children", a decision which Bank suggests provides an indication of the extent of the desperation of the situation faced by the /Xam survivors in the area (Bank 2006: 149).

hatred" (270-271). /Han#kass'o also describes settler violence in detail, especially that displayed by masters towards their servants (299-301).

Nigel Perm's historical treatment of the Cape Bushmen in his essay, "'Fated to perish': the destruction of the Cape San" (1996: 81-91) provides another important context for discussions of the /Xam and their narratives. Unlike Bank's book, Perm's essay does not directly relate to Bleek and Lloyd's narrators and their narratives. Nevertheless, Perm supplies the historical setting for the circumstances in which the stories were collected and also explores the representation of "Bushmen" in "history". Perm's essay, as I mentioned earlier in a footnote, questions the inevitability of the extinction of the Cape San. Perm describes the contingent historical factors that led to this "disappearance", notably the "shift from a state of continuous hostility to that of ambiguous peace" (82), which lowered the guard of the San. The Cape Bushmen were defeated by an uneven process of betrayal and violence. Perm maintains that the murderous attitudes of the frontier farmers, inherited from the eighteenth century, prevailed in circumstances in which the Bushmen had dropped their defences. The Khoikhoi with their pastoral skills were considered useful to the farmers' needs whereas the San were deemed irreclaimable by "civilisation" (84) and were thus peculiarly susceptible to genocidal treatment.

Mklos Szalay's study *The San and the colonization of the Cape 1770-1879: conflict, incorporation, acculturation* (1995) sets out to explode two myths about the Cape Bushman: that they were completely eradicated by colonial violence and that they retreated into the Kalahari. Although extermination was at times official policy in the eighteenth century, the farmers, argues Szalay, had a greater need for labour than they did for dead Bushmen. Until about 1830, the Bushmen were the only source of labour in much of the region and "were compelled, primarily by armed force, to enter the service of farmers" (79). Bushmen had a reputation as reliable workers. There were also clientship relations in which a group of Bushmen "voluntarily" entered the temporary service of a farmer (90). With the

consolidation of colonisation these relationships hardened into fixed master-servant relationships. Force of circumstance also sometimes compelled parents to leave their children with farmers (91). The farmers preferred children since they could more easily "train" them. In the eighteenth century, they had taken the children by force; in the nineteenth century, they often bought them from desperate parents. The Bushmen who were incorporated in this fashion came to be designated "Hottentot." Szalay maintains that the men who formed part of Bushman resistance groups had mostly worked on farms where they had had experience of the colonists. He estimates that in total between three and four thousand Cape Bushmen were killed by commandos and between nine and twelve thousand incorporated forcefully or voluntarily into the labouring population of the colony (108). From Szalay's work we can conclude that the Bushman were not only not fated to perish, they did not perish. It is only the Bushman as pristine hunter-gatherer and denizen of the western imaginary who vanished. Most of the Bushmen became part of the population of the colony.

All the Bleek and Lloyd informants were part of this history. All had Afrikaans names and worked on farms (Bleek, D. 1923: vi). They were not the last remnants of a vanishing race although they indisputably were part of a rapidly diminishing pool of people who spoke /Xam, who knew the oral traditions and who had direct personal experience of foraging (Brown 1998: 48). As their personal histories attest, they formed part of a brutal colonial history of economic and social subjugation. They also spoke a language that was soon to disappear. Anthony Traill's essay in *Miscast* (1996: 161-183) points out that the destruction of language follows from the "wholesale destruction of the social conditions necessary for language maintenance" (163).⁵⁶

A derogatory colonial term for Khoi, the pastoralists of the Cape in pre-colonial times.

⁵⁶ The last known trace of /Xam was spoken by the elderly Hendrik Goud in the mid-1980s (Deacon 1996: 113).

The Bushmen of Natal, too, were supposed to have vanished, leaving their paintings for others to puzzle over. John Wright's *Bushman raiders of the Drakensberg* (1970) demonstrates that very few Bushmen in the Drakensberg were actually killed by the colonists, even though the colony committed a lot of resources to achieving this. Rather they became part of groups which were regarded as Basotho, Zulu or Xhosa. Wright shows how the Drakensberg Bushmen built up close alliances with chiefdoms to whom they brought cattle rustled from the colony.

The research of anthropologist Frans Prins in KwaZulu Natal, the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga has also shown that the vanished status of the Bushmen in South Africa has to be revisited. The descendants of these "extinct" people continue to play important roles in the communities in which they reside. Their culture forms a part of the cultures of the peoples whom they joined. This process began in pre-colonial times but was greatly accelerated by the conditions prevailing towards the end of the nineteenth century (Jolly 1994). Nor was the Bushman position simply one of weakness in which they were sheltered by more powerful neighbours from murderous colonists. In the Eastern Cape for instance, Bushmen obtained guns and horses from Xhosa neighbours in exchange for rainmaking and curing services and prospered in the wider economy. The traces of these complex sets of relationships persist to this day (Prins 1996: 138-152).

Peter Jolly's MA thesis (1994), 'Strangers to brothers: interaction between South-Eastern San and Southern Nguni/Sotho communities' deals with the long history of contact between "Bushman" and African communities. Like Wilmsen (1989) and Gordon (1992), Jolly also contests the view of Bushmen as pure hunter-gatherers whose way of life was completely incompatible with pastoralism and agriculture and who were, as a consequence, fated to disappear. He describes complex reciprocal relationships between foraging people and more sedentary neighbours in other parts of the world, in which each group relies on the other for the provision of certain goods. He argues for similar relationships in southern Africa. He describes a history of interaction between foragers and pastoralists in the Cape over a period

of eighteen hundred years (23), a history that overlapped so much that the two groups were often indistinguishable. Traces of this history can be seen in various ways in the /Xam materials. Jolly discerns a pattern in the Cape of people switching between pastoralism and foraging, similar to the pattern that Wilmsen finds in the Kalahari. He repeats Wilmsen's assertion that the perennial image of the foraging Bushmen is an ethnographic reification "derived from a number of subsistence strategies" (31). He acknowledges that conflict often characterised relations between Bantu⁵⁷ and Bushmen (38) but notes that this history has to be balanced with one of trade, intermarriage and ritual cooperation (79). He observes that both Bushman and Nguni/Sotho societies were open to outsiders, a factor that facilitated incorporation and admixture. Zulu and Xhosa contain a high incidence of Bushman words. Many rock paintings, he contends, make more sense when the symbiotic relationship between Bushman and black communities is taken into account (106). He quotes Parkington et al (1986: 327) that it "is tempting to conclude that, prior to the appearance of herding, painting did not form part of ritual activity" (25).⁵⁸

d. The general and the particular in Bushman studies

The view that the Bushmen are an uncontaminated or irreclaimable remnant of the Stone Age has been reproduced in one form or another in much of the literature. In this regard, I have already noted the ways in which ethnography has screened out aspects of Bushman history and life which does not accord with this view. It is a view that has led to the erasure from written histories of whole groups of people who do not conform to the hunter-gather stereotype. It also encourages, in my opinion, the application of general terms like Khoi, Khoisan, Hottentot and

Interestingly, the widely used anthropological and linguistic term "Bantu", notorious for its use as an Apartheid racial category, was coined by Wilhelm Bleek (Bank 2006: 27).

³⁸ Solomon (forthcoming: 188) describes a painting depicting spirit-people with "abundant herds of cattle." Even if Drakensberg Bushman retained the purity of a hunter-gathering way of life on earth, it seems that they might have been pastoralists in their afterlives!

Bushman to a great range of people with different languages and histories, who all become representatives of a reified archetype, and underlies the assumption that a few informants can speak for all Bushmen everywhere, for all time.

While I emphasise the importance of difference, varied histories and the particular for the reasons just outlined, it is also useful to consider the extent to which a pan-Bushman or Khoisan culture can be discerned and the part this should play in analysis. Guenther's (1989) study of Nharo and /Xam relates stories from the two traditions to each other and to a wider Bushman cultural complex. Solomon (forthcoming: 18-57) links /Xam and Maluti Bushman narratives.⁶⁰ Sigrid Schmidt's *Catalogue* (1989) provides the materials for a comparative study of Khoisan stories. Much of the rock art interpretation has also relied on the assumption of the existence of a pan-Bushman bedrock culture in terms of which information from the Kalahari or the Bleek and Lloyd collection, for example, can be used to understand Drakensberg paintings.

One of the most fluent and theoretically explicit attempts to offer such a broad perspective is Alan Barnard's, *Hunters and herders of Southern Africa* (1992). Barnard provides an account of an overarching Khoisan cosmology and culture, arguing for an emphasis on deep structural elements. He acknowledges the findings of Wilmsen (1989) and Gordon (1992) but maintains that by focussing on trade and production, they have chosen the cultural elements most susceptible to outside influence. Underlying cultural patterns persist despite economic changes (297). He argues that Bushmen are a cultural entity and not merely a "category of class

For a wider discussion of this phenomenon see the section on the work of Gayatri Spivak in chapter 2, section B, iii.

⁶⁰ Solomon adopts a comparative approach to the narratives which she eschews when it comes to considering the rock art. Her overall emphasis, however, is on the specific and local rather than on the general and universal. See chapter 5, section B.

⁶¹ In Marxist terms, Barnard seems to be suggesting that the superstructure is more enduring and reliable than the base.

relations" (238). Even though economic practices varied, as with foraging San and herding Khoi, Barnard argues that it is still possible to speak of a single Khoisan cultural complex. He discerns common kinship structures, pertaining especially to the mechanisms for clarifying relations, which, he maintains, indicate common linguistic origins, social environments and historical connections between cultures (294).⁶³ He also discovers common religious motifs. The idea of dual creation is shared, he contends, by all Khoisan belief systems. The /Xam stories, he asserts, describe the condition of things after the first creation, in which animals and humans had yet to be separated into distinguishable species (83). In the course of this second creation period the different species acquired their salient characteristics. All Khoisan people, he maintains, believe in a high God. Some groups maintain that this God has good and bad characteristics whereas others hold that there are two beings, one good and one bad (252). Barnard identifies /Kaggen as the /Xam version of this God who has "the power to bring the dead back to life and to change himself and other animals into different forms" (84).

I argue in this thesis for the location of the /Xam narratives in the particular intertextual field of /Xam discursive practice. This position is advocated also by Brown (1998: 17) who notes how "anthropological-classificatory or literary-formalist" approaches "treat oral poetry as a universal genre characterized by common techniques of composition and delivery, rather than as emerging in distinct forms in disparate social circumstances." It is necessary, he maintains, to develop "models that acknowledge simultaneously the textuality and historicity of oral texts" Barnard, by contrast, emphasises the primacy of deep structures that extend beyond individual cultures: "The key for Anthropology as much as for linguistics, is to see the system and not merely its elements ..." (301). The various Khoisan cultures are "dialects" of a broad Khoisan "language" (302). Barnard, accordingly,

⁶² This is a succinct description of Wilmsen's position.

Such a mechanism is apparent in the /Xam narratives. An avoidance relationship exists between /Kaggen and his son-in-law, /Kwammang-a, in terms of which they do not directly address each other.

stresses the elements in narratives that link them to other narratives in this broad tradition. He discerns a deeper meaning in folklore (including the /Xam narratives) "than that which appears on the surface" (82).⁶ In his view, the stories are more than stories, they are expressions of thoughts about "the nature of the universe" (82), a position, I believe, that perfectly exemplifies Derrida's assertion that the logocentric position privileges a signified which is internal and close to presence and dismisses the signifier as surface and outside.

Despite crucial theoretical reservations, I would, nevertheless, concede that Barnard's work provides a broad context which cannot be ignored in an interpretation of the stories, even when the analysis concentrates on their specific, apparently contingent, surface aspects. As I will show in chapters 4 and 8, Mathias Guenther's readings (1989; 1999) of the narratives which are conducted in this broad "anthropological-classificatory" (Brown 1998:17) manner offer several illuminating insights into certain /Xam narratives. Anne Solomon (forthcoming: 12, italics in original) attempts to span the divide between the general and the specific. She links individual narratives with others of their kind from the southern African region and derives a San meta-narrative from them while also insisting that "Attention to diversity ... is an essential counterbalance to the flawed notion that San peoples, because they *did* imagine a universe with strikingly similar broad contours, were all much the same in the ways they lived their lives."

⁶⁴ I critique many of Barnard's ideas in the chapters that follow. In chapter 3, 4 and 5, I discuss the identification of /Kaggen as a trickster. In chapter 6, I discuss Barnard's dual creation scheme. My analysis of stories in chapters 4, 7, 8 and 9 adopts a contrary approach to that advocated by Barnard when he contends that the meaning of the stories is to be sought below their surfaces.

⁶³ See chapter 2, section A, i.

e. Bushman rock art

"Wilhelm Bleek", writes Bennun (2005 345), "had expected that the words he and his sister-in-law took down would be consulted by philologists looking to answer questions concerning the history of our species and the origins of language. A hundred years after his death, however, it was archaeologists, anthropologists and art historians who turned to the nearly forgotten words of //Kabbo, /Han#kass'o and Dialkwain - and they were not necessarily looking to answer the problems he had anticipated". The question arises as to the nature of the problems that they were attempting to solve by studying the texts. Bennun himself provides the answer by turning immediately to a consideration of the meaning of Bushman paintings. Although they often assume contrary positions, Lewis-Williams and Thomas Dowson (1989), John Parkington (1996), Elana Bregin (1998) and Anne Solomon (forthcoming), are among the writers who have used the narratives to shed light on the rock art. The /Xam narratives have played a critical role in the hypotheses and counter-hypotheses that have been constructed in order to explain the meaning of rock paintings.

Central to all the debates surrounding the rock art has been the figure of David Lewis-Williams. Bank (2006: 390) notes that "the first South African scholar to visit the notebooks was David Lewis-Williams.... He used the notebooks ... to support the theory that the Drakensberg rock paintings were symbolic rather than literal in meaning." In a series of books and journal articles published in the 1980s he contested the view that the rock paintings of the Drakensberg were simple representations of mythology or of everyday life (Lewis-Williams 1980; 1981; 1982; 1983; 1984a; 1984b; 1986; 1988; Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1989). Wilcox (1956, 1963), for instance, had interpreted them as illustrations of myth and records of events that were significant in the life of the group. A consideration of the paintings, Wilcox argued, would reveal much of the life of the painters. Lewis-Williams reversed this methodology. What was known of Bushman life from

anthropological and mythological sources (especially the materials in the Bleek and Lloyd collection and in Orpen's record of Qing's account) could illuminate the meanings of the paintings. He argued that a pan-Bushman world view that centrally included shamanism and trance could be adduced from the sources. Most of the paintings referred to trancing and trance experience, he contended. His model was widely applied in the interpretation of rock art across the sub-continent and beyond. Solomon (forthcoming: 12-13) notes that the result has been that "essentially the same explanation (that prehistoric art derives from the hallucinatory visions of shamans) has been offered not only for San art all over southern Africa but also for the origins of art in the European Palaeolithic many millennia earlier."

In the 1990s Lewis-Williams thesis began to be contested, particularly in the work of Anne Solomon (1989, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1997a, 1997 b). More attention should be paid to a consideration of mythology, of gender relations and of the relationship between form and content in the interpretation of rock paintings, she argued. Her most recent work (forthcoming) especially emphasises the role of relations with spirits of the dead. She contends that much of the shamanistic hypothesis has resulted from a misreading of passages in the Bleek and Lloyd collection in which reference to spirits of the dead was understood as referring always to living shamans. She also strongly asserts the point that painting is itself a meaningful activity which does not merely illustrate other aspects of life such as trance experience.⁶⁶ Reading the art solely in terms of trance visions "marginalises the creative element of rock art, masks its wealth and variety, and underestimates historical change" (14). I will return to Solomon's views frequently in this thesis. They have, I believe, important consequences for the ways in which the narratives are read.

I shall discuss Solomon's contentions more fully in chapter 5 section B and in chapter 8, section i.. In chapters 3 and 6 I argue for a similar view of narrative based on readings of Henry Louis Gates (1988) and Karin Barber (1991; 1999).

Bank (2006: 305-339) devotes a chapter to the responses of Dialkwain and /Han#kass'o to the copies of rock art they were shown, first by Bleek and later by Lloyd. He argues that these materials have been used selectively. Proponents of Lewis-William's shamanistic theory "have tended to ignore the more ordinary mundane readings of images at the expense of the more exotic and symbolic ..." (314). Most of Dia!kwain and /Han#kass'o's commentary "has been left to languish unpublished in the notebooks" due to the "desire to fit the ethnography to a pre-existing theory about the meaning of rock art...." While interpreters of the narratives cannot be accused of ignoring the commentaries on the stories delivered by the informants in the same way, their theories, too, as I hope to demonstrate in subsequent chapters, especially those influenced by structuralism and functionalism and by universal and comparative modes of thinking, have been hermeneutically overdetermining.

In the next chapter I will explore the theoretical foundations of many of the views that I have expressed in this chapter. I will consider particular theoretical writing and discuss how it relates to the field of Bushman studies and to the interpretation of the /Xam narratives.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I begin this chapter with a consideration of Jacques Derrida's *Of grammatology* (1976) in which he argues that the western intellectual tradition is positioned within a particular myth of origin, one that turns on a fall from presence and a teleology. The gravitational pull of this myth, I contend, has largely determined the manner in which the category "Bushman" has been constructed. It has also led to the pre-selection of particular ways of reading the narratives in the Bleek and Lloyd Collection. I discuss, especially, Derrida's analysis of speech and writing in relation to the idea of the "primitive" in the work of Rousseau and Levi-Strauss and argue that the division between nature and culture that follows from this separation is a recurring motif in interpretations of the /Xam narratives, particularly in the seminal work of Roger Hewitt (1986). I indicate the manner in which the implications of Derrida's critique of western reason form a central theoretical component of my thesis. I also discuss the possibility of discovering in the /Xam texts themselves, a discourse not predicated on ideas of origin and presence

The next section discusses the aspects of Michel Foucault's work that have influenced my critical practice. *The archaeology of knowledge* (1976), in particular, has provided much of the technical inspiration for the manner in which I have attempted to read the /Xam narratives, as discourse with their own modes of intertextuality. I consider the links between discourse, knowledge and power that Foucault's work has made apparent, in relation to both the /Xam texts and to the texts in which they have been interpreted

My characterisation and treatment of Bushman Studies as a field with its own practices and modes of legitimation owes much to the conceptual groundwork laid

See chapter 6 for a discussion of the term "myth of origin" and its applicability to the /Xam materials.

See chapter 1, section B, iii, b.

by Pierre Bourdieu. Accordingly, I briefly discuss some of Bourdieu's concepts and their usefulness to my project.

Finally, I reflect on Gayatri Spivak's figure of the native informant in relation to the process of the collection and preservation of the materials and discuss the insights into the construction of an essentialised Bushman identity that emerge from a reading of her work.

A. Derrida

i. Derrida's critique of the primacy of speech

Jacques Derrida's *Of grammatology* (1976) provides the chief impetus for the perspective from which I read the writings on the /Xam narratives. This work, particularly the sections on Levi-Strauss and Rousseau, offers crucial insights into the different forms of western interest in people such as the /Xam. Crucially, too, *Of grammatology*, contains an enquiry into the distinction between nature and culture that has framed the way in which critics such as Roger Hewitt have read the /Xam narratives. Derrida's work, as I will show, suggests reasons as to why there should be a bias towards the interpretation of the /Xam stories as stories of origin. It links the phenomenon of othering to an ethnocentrism that plays itself out in apparently divergent colonial and post-colonial discourses, discourses which include writing about the /Xam and other "bushmen." This line of enquiry has been pursued in the works of thinkers like Gayatri Spivak, which show how the discourses of the enlightenment and humanism have inscribed within them a rationale of European difference from and superiority to colonial "others."⁶⁹

The separation of speech from writing and the privileging of the former over the latter is, as Derrida shows, an overt theme in the works of writers like Rousseau and

⁶⁹ Spivak (1976) translates *Of Grammatology* into English and contributes a long preface to it.

Levi-Strauss. The assumption, however, that speech is closer to "reality", "presence" or "truth" and that writing is supplementary and derivative underlies much of the western intellectual tradition, maintains Derrida, and has invested this tradition since its beginning with a metaphysical predilection, which he terms "logocentrism." This "metaphysics of phonetic writing", Derrida states at the outset (1976: 3), constitutes "the most original and powerful ethnocentrism", one that is central to the intellectual history of the west. I will investigate the presence of the sort of ethnocentrism identified here by Derrida in later chapters when I discuss the writing on the /Xam narratives that concerns creation tales and the trickster, with whom the /Xam Mantis figure, /Kaggen, is regularly identified.

Logocentrism sets up a hierarchical Platonic or Gnostic structure in which absolute presence is progressively diluted as it assumes the form of concepts, words and, finally, the images of words that constitute writing. In terms of Saussurean linguistics, maintains Derrida, the signified is interior while the signifier, which is derived from the signified, is exterior. This system of linguistics relies on a transcendental signified in order for "the difference between signifier and signified to be somewhere absolute and irreducible" (20). The voice is proximate to the signified. Writing, the preserve of the signifier, merely represents speech. It is alienated from presence, to which its signs can only gesture. Logocentric thinking is characterised by a nostalgia for the fullness of presence and a desire for a "transcendental signified", a signified that contains a meaning that is beyond signs. Language itself gains its self-assurance and its guarantee from "the infinite signified" which seems "to exceed it" (6). God, nature, truth and the self have all assumed the role of the transcendental signified in different western epochs and in different philosophical discourses. With seventeenth century rationality and nationalism, for example, "absolute presence is constituted as self-presence, as subjectivity" (16). I will argue that the /Xam and other "aboriginals", conflated

This transcendental signified is not always made explicit. It often forms the unspoken premise of this type of thinking.

with nature and pure presence, function as transcendental signifieds in certain
discourses.⁷¹

Derrida shows how the nature of language renders the quest for absolute origin or for fullness of being and presence impossible. By Saussure's own logic, meaning does not reside in an ideal, presence-filled, pre-existing realm but is generated

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through the relations between signs. This means that no sign is pure; it always carries the traces of all the other signs. This entails not only a spatial relationship of difference and relationship, as Saussure describes, but also a temporal one of deferral. Meaning is never absolutely present, fixed or univocal, as it was understood to be in the theological "age of the sign" (14); it is always postponed, always unstable. Speech and writing both participate in this motion of difference and deferral, which Derrida terms "differance." Both speech and writing rely on an interplay of presence and absence rather than their opposition. All signification arises from this interaction between the properties traditionally imputed to speech and writing.⁷³ Speech and writing participate together in the semiological order. All language "is writing as the disappearance of natural presence" (159). There is

⁷¹ Cf. Wilmsen (1989): "Bushmen" or something similar had to be invented to satisfy the "idealist search for human authenticity" (187)

⁷² Much of the analysis of the narratives, in my view, is premised on the supposition that meaning does indeed reside in an ideal, presence-filled, pre-existing realm. This is particularly apposite to the reading of /Kaggen as the /Xam representative of a universal type and to the designation of the stories as mythology.

⁷³ This insight is contained in the title of Brown's study of South African oral literature, *Voicing the text* (1998), which contains an important section on the /Xam materials. Brown (2006: 22) argues that the separation of orality and writing is a false division which obscures the fact that a form of signification such as rock art "uses an 'alphabet' of symbols, signs, colours, shapes and images in making its meaning, and which demands intelligent 'reading.'" The activity of tracking "requires decoding, involving the analysis of signs in context, the creation of hypotheses, and so on: the same cognitive processes as reading printed texts."

no "thing in itself that is not already a representation (49); there is no unmediated knowledge. From this it follows that "We think only in signs" (50).

Writing, in terms of the move by which Derrida extends the term to societies without writing in the conventional sense, is the name of the gesture which effaces "the presence of a thing" and yet keeps it "legible" (Spivak 1976: xli, preface to *Of grammatology*). Derrida uses the term arche-writing to refer to a semiotics that embodies this understanding. Speech is then considered as much a play of signs as is writing and is seen to precede the speaker in the same way. It is not, as in the logocentric view, a revelatory expression of an inner substance "The text belongs to language, not to the sovereign and generating author" (lxxiv). A writer (and a speaker) participate "in a language and in a logic whose proper system, laws and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely" (158). This is a view whose implications have important consequences for the reading of "oral" narratives, as I show in the chapters that follow. While critics who read the narratives as timeless myths miss the role of the narrators and the way in which stories participate in specific processes of cultural production, a contrary approach that overemphasises individual creativity misses, in my view, several important characteristics of the narratives, namely their textual and discursive properties and their ability to deliver meta-commentary.

Significantly, in terms of the parameters of this study, Derrida turns to anthropology, in particular the work of Levi-Strauss, to demonstrate the consequences of separating writing from speech and investing the latter with presence. In *Tristes tropiques* (1961), Levi-Strauss expresses the belief that his introduction of the idea of writing to the Nambikwara has corrupted the immediacy

The very process of perception is itself a kind of inscription since "the workings of the psychic apparatus" which receives "stimuli from the outside world" are "themselves not accessible to the psyche" (Spivak 1976: xl).

⁷³ See chapter 6, section iii, for an elaboration of this point.

of their existence and the purity of their ways. Where before they knew only speech, that almost unmediated secretion of the soul, they have now been introduced to the artificial order of writing. Levi-Strauss believes that he has initiated the Nambikwara's fall from presence and innocence. Not only does he enter the mode of Christian confession and guilt, he also reiterates the terms of "Christian creationism" and its appropriation "of the resources of Greek conceptually" (13), in which the sign is linked to an alienation from presence.

Derrida argues that the terms nature and culture, so central to Levi-Strauss's readings of myth, are separated in terms of a metaphysical system of opposing binaries that flows from the division of speech and writing. ⁷⁷ Speech is equated with nature and writing with culture. This obscures the fact that the "natural" is also a realm mediated for humans by codes. In Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology, the order of nature, to which "everything universal in man relates" and which is "characterised by spontaneity", is aligned against the order of culture, to which belongs "everything subject to a norm" (104). Nature, operating as a transcendental signified, is complete; it can only be substituted by something outside it (215). Evil is exterior to nature (144). Derrida claims that Levi-Strauss's following of Rousseau's attack on writing leads to his inability to see that there is "no society without writing", whereas all "societies capable of producing, that is to say obliterating, their proper names, and of bringing classificatory difference into play, practice writing in general" (109). All culture and language is reliant on systems of signs in which relations of power are encoded. Levi-Strauss's failure to see this and his scorn of writing lead to an ethnocentrism in which the absence of writing is equated with innocence and non-violence and the primitive "other" is

The Nambikwara are an indigenous Amazonian tribe with whom Levi-Strauss stayed for nearly a year. *Tristes tropiques* itself is part travelogue, part ethnography and part philosophy. It covers Levi-Strauss's experiences of Brazil, where he taught at the University of Sao Paulo and went on field trips in the Amazon.

⁷⁷ As I will show in chapter 4, Hewitt's influential study of the /Xam narratives (1986) is also framed in terms of a nature/culture binary.

constituted as the "model of original and natural goodness ..." (114). Rousseau himself applies this model especially to foraging people for he considers that writing "is born with agriculture." "The furrow of agriculture", as Derrida puts it, "... opens nature to culture (cultivation)" (287).

Orality, in Rousseau's scheme, is linked to community and writing to a lack of authentic relationships (135). The consequence of this way of thinking is that people such as the Nambikwara are divested of the order of culture, which is associated with writing and dependent on the absence of genuine and direct social relations. A particular view of these societies is presupposed, at once pure and peculiarly susceptible to outside corruption: "Only a micro-society of non-violence and freedom, all the members of which can by rights remain within range of an immediate and transparent... address, fully self-present in its living speech, only such a community can suffer, as the surprise of an aggression coming from without, the insinuation of writing, the infiltration of its 'riise' and of its 'perfidy'. Only such a community can import from abroad 'the exploitation of man by man' " (119). Such a society is pre-political for politics presupposes that liberty has already been lost; politics is "always the supplement of a natural order somewhere deficient ..." (298). Writing and political enslavement, in this scheme, necessarily accompany each other. Writing is an instrument of power, commanding "by written laws, decrees and literature" (302). Levi-Strauss follows Rousseau, whom he hails as his antecedent and the founding father of anthropology (105), in claiming that exploitation of man by man is peculiar to literate societies. The species of ethnocentrism that attend such views, claims Derrida, constitutes itself as "anti-ethnocentrism, an ethnocentrism in the consciousness of a liberating progressivism" (120). It is able to do this since the ethnocentric move is apparently avoided after it has already been made in the false distinction between written and unwritten cultures (121).

Elizabeth Marshall Thomas's "harmless people" come to mind. See Thomas, E.M. 1989. *The harmless people*.

Much of the ethnological project, maintains Derrida, is impelled by a nostalgia for origins and "an ethic of archaic and natural innocence, of a purity of presence and self-presence in speech" to be found in exemplary societies, such as the Nambikwara (Spivak 1976: xix). Frustratingly, the zero point of origin always proves unattainable for there is always another "prehistoric, presocial, and also prelinguistic stratum" to be laid bare (Derrida 1976: 252). Rousseau, however, points in the direction in which this point will be approached, in the warm, passionate South (251) and in the time before time inhabited by the primitive who, although already partially wrenched from nature, is not yet in society (253). The savage life of hunters is lived at "the ungraspable limit of the almost. Neither nature nor society, but almost society" (253). The family group in which he lives is a natural, pre-institutional phenomenon; it does not yet constitute a society. The /Xam, "illiterate" foragers and inhabitants, literally and metaphorically, of the South, almost perfectly fulfil the conditions for the "natural man" that Derrida finds in Rousseau and in the ethnological literature he has inspired.

Derrida observes that the nostalgia for the origin and the association of the primitive with it occurs within a wider grand narrative:

Non-European peoples were not only studied ... [as the] ... index to a hidden good Nature, as native soil recovered, of a 'zero degree' with reference to which one could outline the structure, the growth and above all the degradation of our society and our culture. As always, this archaeology is also a teleology and an eschatology; the dream of a full and immediate present closing history ... (1976: 114-115)

As Derrida points out, the North and South are not so much territories as "abstract places that appear only to relate to each other [L]ocal difference is nothing but the difference between desire and pleasure" (267-268). Those in the South remain closer to nature and presence, those of the North have had to pay the price of greater distance from the origin for their more developed faculties and their greater capacity for progress.

This structure creates its own paradoxes. "On several levels, nature is the ground, the inferior step: it must be crossed, exceeded, but also rejoined. We must return to it, but without annulling the difference" (197). The difference must be maintained for it is the alienation from nature represented by societies and language which "permitted the actualisation of the potential faculties that slept inside man" (257). This marks the limits of the compassion for the other that Levi-Strauss admires in Rousseau's writing. Sympathy with the "non-European" follows from the attraction his closeness to the origin exerts and the pathos-ridden knowledge that contact with civilisation must inevitably precipitate a fall away from the origin. We must not let ourselves be destroyed by becoming too close to the other, however. The economy of pity and of morality must "always let itself be contained within the limits of the love of self..." (190). Our interest in the other is our interest in a part of ourselves that is no longer present; the other can never become a reciprocating, self-representing, contemporary subject. The difference between the savage and the civilised must be maintained, for it is precisely his distance from the origin that has resulted in the development of the modern man. Modern man might be further from presence than the primitive but he is also closer to the endpoint of the teleological trajectory in which full presence will be reclaimed on the higher level that has been put in play through the fall from innocence. When the point of total alienation is approached, the "total reappropriation of presence" becomes possible (295). A consequence is that the approach to the other at the limits where he is excluded "from the play of supplementarity" (242), is "at once feared as a threat of death, and desired as access to a life without difference. The history of man calling himself man is the articulation of these limits" (244). Separation from the origin is both

⁸⁰ Bregin (1998: 42) describes the manner in which the Bushmen have been regarded as "paleolithic remnants." Solomon (forthcoming: 9-10) observes that " 'San' peoples remain known not so much for their own achievements, but as figures of what we once were and can never be again.... [They have] served as icons of universal humanity, their consciousness untarnished by industrial modernity. As 'original ecologists', uniquely attuned to nature, they have been a figure of our own nostalgia."

¹ In relation to the /Xam narratives, Brown (1998: 27) maintains that this structure can be weakened if "the songs and stories of the /Xam" are allowed to "'talk back' back to modern understanding."

necessary to the process of group identity formation in which man calls himself man only by drawing limits "excluding his other from the play of supplementarity: 'the purity of nature, of animality, primitivism, childhood, madness, divinity'" (244) and intolerable in so far as it invites the realisation "that what has the name origin should be no more than a point situated within the system of supplementarity" (243). This complex goes some way towards explaining the paradoxical ways in which people such as the /Xam have been regarded and treated. It is a structure that can encourage both idealisation and persecution.

To sum up: in the western intellectual tradition, contends Derrida, the very notion of history is defined by the possibility of writing. According to this logic, people who, like the /Xam, possess no system of writing have no history (83). Their proximity with presence means they have not yet fallen into history. This withholding of history from particular people means that of necessity they are understood in essentialist and exclusionary terms (35). Nor are they able to participate in the progressive, teleological movement of history, which, according to Derrida, starts "with an origin or centre that divides itself and leaves itself, an historical circle is described, which is degenerative in direction but progressive and compensatory in effect" (202). It is the lack in western man, his separation from the origin, that opens him "to the horizon and diversity of universal culture" and, therefore, to the possibility of achieving full human growth (223). This movement began at the "catastrophic origin of societies and languages" which "at the same time permitted the actualisation of the potential faculties that slept inside man" (257).

⁸ Wilmsen (1996: 186) writes in relation to the Bushman that "a mythic time is reserved for them, while real time ticks on impartially for us all." Watson (1991: 10) consigns /Xam culture to such a time when he describes it as "a culture in continuous existence for something like five thousand years"

ii. The implications of Derrida's work for this study

Applying Derrida's way of approaching texts is not a simple matter of deriving a methodology from his work and transferring it to the field with which this thesis is concerned. Derrida himself argues that his strategy, deconstruction, is not properly a method. It does not comprise a set of rules and practices that can be repeated and used in different contexts. Deconstruction "does not settle for methodological procedures, it opens up a passageway, it marches ahead and marks a trail" (Derrida 1991: 337). It does not replace metaphysical philosophy with a new kind of philosophical framework within whose terms the unified themes in texts can be discovered and explicated. Whereas analysis seeks to attain a resolution, deconstruction continues to disassemble the elements it exposes, moving towards greater multivocality and ambiguity. It must be stressed that this is not the same as attempting to break a structure down into simple elements, as a structuralist approach seeks to do. That would be a regression "toward an indissoluble origin", whereas in Derrida's view the apparently basic elements that structuralism isolates are themselves "philosophemes subject to deconstruction" (Derrida, in Wood and Bernasconi, eds.1985: 2).

For Derrida, it is not only that deconstruction cannot be reduced to "a set of rules and transposable procedures" or that each "deconstructive 'event' remains singular or, in any case, as close as possible to something like an idiom or a signature" (3), but that deconstruction does not "await the deliberation, consciousness, or organization of a subject.... [The text] deconstructs itself. It can be deconstructed" (3). Deconstruction is something inherent in texts, not something imposed on them from the outside. It is also a symptom of a particular history, a feature of a period in which economic and political structures become unstable and traditional hierarchies are overturned. It is, therefore, a phenomenon, Derrida emphasises, that is independent of his own philosophical work. Furthermore, all definitions of the

⁸³ An apt description of Hewitt's approach to the /Kaggen materials. See chapter 4.

term "deconstruction" and understandings of its practice are themselves deconstructible. What, for Derrida, is at stake "is precisely the delimiting of ontology and above all of the third person present indicative: S is P" (4). All statements of this kind have to be interrogated.⁸⁴

The type of reading a deconstructive approach generates is always provisional. Deconstruction, Derrida asserts, cannot operate outside the logocentric structure. It depends on the old structure's "strategic and economic resources of subversion" with the result that "the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work" (Derrida 1976: 24) since there is an "incapability to sustain ... the coherence of one's own discourse, for being produced as truth at the moment when the value of truth is shattered" Of necessity, a language is employed whose premises are not subscribed to. We are so tied, Derrida points out, to the categories of logocentrism that "nothing is conceivable for us without them" (13).⁸⁵ The consequence of this realisation is that the authority of the reading is fleeting: "we must learn to use and erase our language at the same time" (Spivak 1976: xviii). A concept like "experience", for instance, must be used "sous rature" for it "has always designated the relationship with a presence" and thus belongs in the realm of metaphysical thought (60).

⁸⁴ In the writing pertaining to the Bleek and Lloyd materials such statements come to be accepted as true through the sheer weight of their repetition in the literature. This has led, for instance, to the reification of some of Hewitt's statements which, in his original work are often exploratory and hypothetical. A similar process attends the statements about /Kaggen that are inherited from the general writing on the trickster (see chapter 3). I try, where possible, to test such statements in my discussion of the materials and to offer my own analysis in a spirit of radical uncertainty. This thesis particularly seeks to examine two statements of the kind Derrida identifies: "the /Xam narratives of the First Times are myths of origin" and "/Kaggen is a trickster."

⁸⁵ Cf. Tom Beidelman's difficulty in critiquing the use of the trickster concept described in chapter 3, section iv. Beidelman notes the paradox that in "presenting material in order to criticize a global definition, one is drawn into using the very terms and references which one is subjecting to question" (1993: 176).

⁸⁶ The technique of erasure employs a term and then crosses it out, permitting it to operate as a sign but denying it the signification which has, however, already been put into circulation. The word is

Although Derrida's work does not embody replicable methodological procedures in the conventional sense, methodological consequences do arise from his work, as my discussion of its usefulness for my project already indicates. I shall briefly reiterate some of them. Since deconstruction is a way of reading without recourse to a "natural" hierarchy of signifiers (44) and one that is not founded on an idea of language as guaranteed by a transcendental signified, it is a mode of reading in which attention to the play of signifiers becomes possible (50). Where functionalist and structuralist readings of the /Xam narratives have suppressed the particular in the interests of submitting the texts to an overarching analytical paradigm, Derrida's work, invites the sort of reading which celebrates their singularity and undecidability. His work encourages a way of reading the narratives that keeps to their surfaces and celebrates the excess of meaning produced by their textuality and intertextuality. This excess can be given free rein if the critic foregoes the rationalist impulse to establish a hierarchy of meaning in regard to the stories that limits their capacity to over-signify. A reading produced in a deconstructive spirit does not, as analyses influenced by the logic of logocentrism tend to do, claim to be able to represent the "real" world of the texts. It disassociates itself from the essentialist notion that a "true" meaning exists beneath the surfaces of the stories that can be deciphered.⁸⁷ It does not suppress the elements in the stories that do not fit a particular interpretative scheme or dismiss them as marginal. A reading that takes into account Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence also foregrounds the fact that the reader is implicated in his reading; the detached objective observer is a logocentric fiction. Derrida draws attention to the highly

shown to be both necessary and inaccurate (Spivak 1976: xiv). This is just one of the strategies Derrida employs in his attempt to surmount the limitations he identifies in discourse. Others include the invention of neologisms, the exhumation of archaisms and the release into his texts of terms from technical discourses such as medicine. His neologisms are often based on puns and double entendres. They exist in a liminal space and accentuate the arbitrary nature of the distinction between signifier and signified.

Cf. Barnard's insistence on finding a deeper meaning in folklore (including the /Xam narratives) "than that which appears on the surface" (1992: 82).

mediated nature of texts. This is particularly true of our reception of the /Xam texts which, as I described in the last chapter, is filtered by a complex series of events that includes transmission, translation and a history of interpretation situated within certain traditions of reading and of ethnology.

The ideology of presence in the western intellectual tradition, identified by Derrida, can lead to major misunderstandings of other signifying systems, as Henry Louis Gates (1988) has demonstrated in relation to Afro-American literature (see chapter 3). Something similar has occurred, I will argue, with regard to the reading of the /Xam materials. Significantly, in terms of the parameters of this thesis, Anne Douehi (1993) has used Derrida's critique to deconstruct the idea of the universal trickster figure that is regularly applied to the /Xam figure of/Kaggen (see chapter 3). She maintains that the trickster is a product of the metaphysics of presence whose dominance in the interpretation of narratives has obscured their discursive properties. In a similar way, I shall track the influence of the metaphysics of presence in the interpretation of the /Xam narratives in the chapters which follow, particularly with regard to the treatment of/Kaggen as a trickster and of the sun, moon and star stories as aetiological narratives.

la Dissemination (1981), Derrida discusses Plato's assertion that speech is superior to writing. Oral discourse "is written in the soul of the listener", whereas writing is only an external representation. Plato's dependence on the figure of writing, claims Derrida shows the impossibility of separating speech and writing. There is no linguistic sign before writing (Derrida 1976: 14). This has important consequences for the way in which the /Xam materials are considered. Even if we had access to the spoken performance of/Xam narrative rather than to the translated texts, we would still, according to Derrida's logic, have to read these performances as texts, in spite of the fact that the context of the performance would mobilise a range of meanings, in the form of gestures and other non-verbal codes of performance that are excluded from written texts. In Rousseau's thinking, the gesture is closer to presence, more natural even than voice (Derrida 1976: 233). Derrida maintains,

though, that gestures, too, should be interpreted primarily as text or "arche-writing", the play of speech and writing from which signification emerges. Derrida's work suggests to me that the /Xam narratives should be read as a play of signifiers rather than as a body of oral literature that is purportedly closer to the origin of things than are written texts.⁸⁸ Meaning, I will try to show, is generated from the multiplicity of signs within the texts, and their circulation within a discursive order, rather than from their proximity to presence, a position, I contend, that forms the underlying assumption of the functionalist and structural hermeneutics in terms of which the narratives have frequently been read.

Derrida's linking of logocentrism and ethnocentrism has obvious implications for a critic working with texts from outside the western tradition. The ethnocentrism in overtly racist discourse is obvious. It is less obvious in the different sorts of literature that have grown up around materials like the Bleek and Lloyd materials. Bleek's own ethnocentrism, as we have seen in chapter 1, has eluded commentators who have not studied the linguistic and racial evolutionary framework within which he was thinking. I hope to show later in the thesis how the metaphysical foundations of much of the analysis of the narratives links it to the forms of ethnocentrism Derrida uncovers in the work of thinkers such as Rousseau and Levi-Strauss. Ethnocentrism, in this context, is not easily eluded: "each time that ethnocentrism is precipitatedly and ostentatiously reversed, some effort silently hides behind all the spectacular effects to consolidate an inside and to draw from it some domestic benefit" (80).

Much of the discourse that characterises writing on the Bushmen and the /Xam narratives relies on a system of opposites such as modern/ pre-modern, nature/culture, oral/written, raw/cooked and naked/clothed. This mode of thinking

⁸⁸ Karin Barber (1991; 1999) argues, though, that a reading of oral texts is required that takes into account both Derrida's insistence on their textuality and also emphasises their performative and dialogical qualities. She asserts, for instance, that "for an on'fa'-text to be apprehended as a text, it must be heard and seen in action" (Barber 1991: 7).

typifies the wider intellectual tradition in which the discourse can be positioned. Derrida, as I described earlier, has shown how one of the results of the influence of the theme of the loss of presence on western thinking has been the development of an intricate philosophical apparatus that rests on binary concepts, only one of whose poles is invested with presence. In the process of recuperating this second term, the pole from which presence is absent, it often emerges that the suppressed term comprises the concealed foundations on which the discourse and argument have been built. A logocentric text can be unravelled by pulling on a tiny thread in a place where it transgresses its own codes (Spivak 1976: xlvi). It is often then possible to demonstrate that a false relationship of opposition has been established between two concepts for rhetorical and political purposes: "One of the two terms controls the other ... [T]o deconstruct the opposition is first... to overthrow (renverser) the hierarchy" (Derrida, quoted by Spivak 1976: lxxv). As with Derrida's example of Plato's metaphor of the writing on the soul, mentioned above, the first term can be shown to be conditional on the second, and the value-laden hierarchy of the text questioned. This approach to reading yields results when applied to the texts that engage in analysis of the /Xam narratives. In chapter 4, for example, I show that the ideological premises of Hewitt's analysis of the materials is often revealed by single words or marginal sentences rather than by explicit statements.

B. Other theoretical debts

Although the work of Derrida supplies the chief theoretical impetus for this thesis, I have also relied heavily on the work of other writers. I shall now describe the aspects of these writers' work on which I have frequently drawn. In the chapters that follow, I refer to many different thinkers and critics, but the three whose work I shall discuss in the rest of this chapter have been particularly central to the way in which I have approached my project. Their work, with Derrida's, forms the

backdrop to the thesis and informs its thinking, whereas I employ the work of other writers in specific contexts for particular purposes.

i. Foucault

Power, for Foucault, is enmeshed with knowledge. Knowledge always appears within the context of socially legitimated and institutional systems of thought (Appignanesi and Garratt 1995: 82). These systems of thought or epistemes consist of the possible discourses that dominate an era. Epistemes are demarcated by what they exclude as much as by what they include. The creation of categories of the abnormal such as the insane, sick or criminal served to delineate the European episteme that was dominant for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1973; 1975; 1977). As the work of Edward Said (1991; 1993), Gayatri Spivak (1988; 1999) and others have shown, the ideological support for the enterprise of imperialism relied on a similar mechanisms of exclusion and demarcation. Spivak (1999) goes so far as to suggest that Foucault's "clinic, the asylum, the prison, the university - all seem to be screen-allegories that foreclose a reading of the broader narratives of imperialism" (278). The notion of the primitive, in particular, has been central to the construction of reason (as was a specific formulation of madness) and to the idea of civilisation.

Foucault investigates how specific individuals such as doctors gain the authority to produce particular kinds of discourse. Similar questions need to be asked concerning the processes of academic legitimation whereby individuals become the source of truths and authoritative statements about the /Xam and their narratives. Who is qualified to make such pronouncements? "[F]rom whom ... does he receive the presumption that what he says is true? What is the status of the individuals who ... have the right, sanctioned by law or tradition, juridically defined or

⁸⁹ .The anthropometric photographic method mentioned in chapter 1, involving Bleek and /Xam prisoners, was used also, as Foucault describes, in studies of the criminal and the insane, for similar reasons.

spontaneously accepted, to proffer such a discourse?" (Foucault 1976: 50). Besides the institutional factors, which I will discuss in a consideration of Bourdieu's work in the next section of this chapter, part of the answer lies, Foucault's work suggests, within the operation of discourse itself.

Statements organised in particular ways gain their legitimation from their location within the discursive formation and from their adherence to particular relations. They belong always to a series and play a role among other statements. There are established "*procedures of intervention* that may be legitimately applied to statements" (58, emphasis in the original). These "rules of formation operate ... on all individuals who undertake to speak in this discursive field" (63). The individual's adherence to these rules sanctions his discourse and consecrates the "knowledge" it produces. This does not mean that a discourse is a static and rigid system. Although it possesses "its own rules of appearance", it has "also its own conditions of appropriation and operation" and these are "the object of a struggle, a political struggle" (120). Contradiction is not an anomaly in discourse but its necessary condition since it is in order "to overcome contradiction that discourse begins to speak" (151). A discursive formation is "a space of multiple dissensions" (155) whose "purpose is to maintain discourse in all its many irregularities" (156). The field of Bushman studies with its debates and tendencies displays, as would be expected, the qualities that characterise a discursive formation. All the work in the field, including this thesis, gains its legitimation from its place within this formation, which also circumscribes what it may and may not do.

The /Xam narratives, too, I will argue, belong to a discursive field. They are not, timeless, archetypal artefacts, as their designation as folklore or myth suggests (see chapter 6), but discourse and thus, sites of ideological production and contestation.

⁹⁰ Although the stories are retold by different narrators in different ways, there are,

⁹⁰ In this regard, Barber (1991) observes that "literary texts" are inherently discursive" (3). Oral texts are no exception. She notes the presence of struggle in the *oriki* texts she studies (5). Not much attention has been given to this aspect of the /Xam stories. Jeursen's study (1994) is a notable

I would argue, following Foucault, implicit rules which govern the "*procedures of intervention* that may be legitimately applied to (their) statements" (58, emphasis in original). The individuality of the narrators has been emphasised by some commentators as an antidote, no doubt, to the generic, anonymous, archetypal figure of the Bushman informant.^x //Kabbo, Bleek and Lloyd's most celebrated narrator, has been assumed into the South African literary canon and accorded the autobiography denied Spivak's ethnographic native informant. Nevertheless, the limits that apply to the enunciating subject in all discourse applies to the /Xam storyteller (but not to him alone as the designation of "traditional" narratives as myths often implies) who "brings into existence outside himself an object that belongs to a previously defined domain, whose laws of possibility have already been articulated, and whose characteristics precede the enunciation that posits it. ... the subject of the statement ... is not in fact the cause, origin, or starting-point of the written or spoken articulation" (Foucault 1976: 95). Could //Kabbo have been enunciating something similar when he talks about "stories that float from afar?" This is a question I shall explore in a later chapter.

The attributes Foucault accords to discursive practices are applicable, then, to both the interpretation of the narratives and to the narratives themselves. Discourse "is characterised not by privileged objects, but by the way in which it forms objects that are in fact highly dispersed" (Foucault 1976: 44). "These relations are established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of

exception. As indicated in chapter 1, section B, ii, c, Jeursen reads the stories related to female initiation rites, in particular, as a conflict between individual freedom and gender-biased traditions (1995: 40).

⁹¹ See Spivak's description of this figure in section c below. The Bleek and Lloyd informants have always been named, a consequence perhaps of the unusual ethnographic circumstances in which they delivered their stories. They were residents in the Bleek and Lloyd household for extended periods rather than anonymous informants encountered fleetingly on a Victorian field trip.

⁹² //Kabbo receives autobiographical treatment, for instance, in Scheub (1990).

⁹³ See chapter 6, section iii.

characterisation; and these relations are not present in the object" (45) but are formalised in discourse itself. The rules of discursive practice "define not the dumb existence of a reality... but the ordering of objects" (49). I attempt to show in the following chapters how the practice of hermeneutics itself brings together objects in accordance with the rules of particular analytical discourses rather than discovers meanings inherent in the interpreted materials. The narratives, too, arrange and bring together a great many dispersed objects. Women and meat, for instance, are often juxtaposed in the /Xam narratives, as they are in the Ju/'hoansi stories in which Biesele (1993) tracks this congruence.⁴ A correspondence between certain stars and animals provides another example, as does the sympathetic complex surrounding the relationship between a hunter and a large game animal he has shot.⁹ Accordingly, I attempt to pursue a line of enquiry in relation to the /Xam narratives that considers the ways in which the narratives form and order objects within the limits of their discursive spaces. Instead of trying to decode the narratives in order to discover the silences they rend (Foucault 1976:112), the traces of the deeper meanings they carry from a world beyond themselves, I attempt to keep their surfaces in view and describe the field of their statements. Discourse, asserts Foucault, appears not as "a providence which has always spoken in advance" but as "an asset - finite, limited, desirable, useful - that has its own rules of appearance ..." (120). Foucault's archaeology, therefore, "tries to define not the thoughts, representations, images, themes, preoccupations that are concealed or revealed in discourses; but those discourses themselves, those discourses as practices obeying certain rules" (138).

Foucault claims that conventional histories of ideas ignore the qualities of discourse. Instead they follow a linear narrative in which periods follow each other in necessary succession. Temporal dislocation and discontinuity disappear when

⁹⁴ See chapter 1, section B, iii, a.

⁹⁵ Many of the stars were animals. The pointers of the Milky Way were lions, for example, while the stars in Orion's belt were tortoises (Solomon forthcoming: 25-26).

⁹⁶ See chapter 4, A, iv.

viewed against the vast unified backdrop of a "civilisation." Each generation of ideas is understood as giving birth inevitably to its successor. Foucault maintains, however, that abrupt interruptions of, and peremptory ruptures with, what has gone before are the characteristic properties of epistemes (8). The sort of history of ideas, he charges, which charts a gradual, seemingly inevitable progression of thought through the ages is an example of the proclivity to distinguish the unifying categories of a field of study as the prelude to their apparent discovery in the analysis which follows (25). The grand narrative of ideas, Foucault asserts, fabricates unities and relationships through time whereas the sort of archaeological excavation he offers exposes ruptures within seemingly homogeneous fields of study at the same time as it reveals synchronic relationships between apparently quite different contemporaneous discourses. Seemingly similar epistemological complexes from different periods can belong to very different structures of meaning. Only a retrospective assembly of dispersed elements unites these diverse phenomena into a history.

The work that has been produced within the field of Bushman studies over the past century and a half possesses an appearance of continuity. Ideas and theories seem to have been revised and displaced according to the internal dynamics of the field. Foucault would argue, though, that this kind of unity is a fabrication that has resulted from the quest for a single origin. The recourse to a continuous tradition of thought "allows a reduction of the difference proper to every beginning, in order to pursue without discontinuity the endless search for the origin ..." (21). The "theme of the origin, that promise of the return," is the mechanism "by which we avoid the difference of our present ..." (204).^{no}

⁹⁷ An example of this contention would be his assertion that the ascetic philosophy of stoics like Seneca and that of the early Christian desert fathers entailed variant views of sexuality, the body and the self, although they employed an apparently related discourse and elaborated a similar technology of the self (Foucault, 1986).

⁹ To a considerable degree, the ideas of Derrida and Foucault converge with regards to the complex of the origin in western thought. Their well-publicised differences (Miller 1993: 118-121) do not affect the use I have made of their work in this study.

Both the /Xam narratives and the analytical approaches which seek to apprehend them occur within particular epistemes, creating a state of affairs in which several different modalities and bodies of knowledge from each of two traditions are juxtaposed through the practice of the researcher's hermeneutics, a situation that demands, I would contend, a great deal of self-reflexivity on the part of the researcher. The epistemic contexts in which the interpretations have occurred determine, or strongly influence, what appears within the field and which claims can be made, validated and invalidated in relation to it. Conscious of the pull and the relativity of the episteme, this thesis does not attempt to replace the interpretations that have emerged in the course of the history of engagement with the Bleek and Lloyd collection with other, "truer" ones so much as to explore how different regimes of truth have produced particular kinds of knowledge about the /Xam narratives and to describe the contours of that knowledge." It also seeks to explore the types of knowledge about the /Xam narratives that beckon the contemporary researcher. An episteme functions, maintains Foucault, not to distinguish the true from the false so much as to demarcate what can or cannot be authorised as knowledge. Inevitably, in the era of the globalisation of capital and postmodern and post-colonial thought, present-day scholars view the narratives from a different vantage point from the one offered by the Victorian milieu in which they were collected or the modern one in which much of their interpretation has been framed.¹ Foucault's work suggests that the "knowledge" concerning the /Xam should be seen not as having resulted from an ever closer and more accurate understanding of the field so much as from the different epistemes that have produced intellectual knowledge over the course of the last hundred and twenty five

I do, nevertheless, argue for a particular approach to the /Xam texts and illustrate it in my own interpretative practice. I attempt, though, at all times to foreground the limitations of the tools at my disposal (the result of their cultural, linguistic and historical specificity) and the temporary status of the statements I can make about the narratives.

¹⁰⁰1 would locate the functionalism and structuralism that I detect in Hewitt as a product of the modern period while my own analysis is, to a large degree, a product of the postmodern.

years. It becomes important to locate ideas, interpretations and theories within these broader regimes of truth and relations of power rather than simply within the history of ideas and theories that seems to constitute Bushman Studies itself.

Foucault's writing on epistemes has consequences, too, for the way the narratives themselves are considered. It cannot be presumed that the materials in the Bleek and Lloyd collection all belong to a single /Xam episteme.¹ Even if it could be shown that the narratives had remained the same over long periods of time, it could not be assumed that they produced the same kinds of meaning at different times in /Xam history. It is probable that the narratives would have contained different

⁰¹ Foucault does not discuss the operation of epistemes in cultures outside Europe. It is notable that almost all European thinkers, including Derrida and Bourdieu, discussed in this chapter, and Baudrillard, discussed in a later chapter, largely confine their investigations to Europe and her intellectual and political history, even when the scope of their statements, as is the case with Foucault's statements about the episteme, claim a wider applicability. The pan-cultural discourse that is applied to cultures like the /Xam, examined particularly in chapter 3 and 6, largely excludes the European cultural sphere while the sorts of discourse explored here includes only it. Admittedly these thinkers are engaged in a critique of western thought but, as Gayatri Spivak has suggested, it is Eurocentric to claim a western monopoly of particular forms of political and philosophical chauvinism (Spivak, 1999: 37). Her own work, drawing, as it does, partly on Indian examples such as the text of the Bhagavad Gita, goes some way towards countering this tendency. I attempt to simultaneously reject the discourse that is generally reserved for the colonised and anthropologised in my discussions of the narratives and to test the effect of applying to them concepts like the episteme that are usually applied chiefly to the western cultural sphere. To suggest that the /Xam are exempt from the operation of epistemes would, in my view, be to locate their systems of thought outside history and outside power. The effect of this is to fix the /Xam as just the sort of idealised community of presence discussed earlier in the chapter, in the section on Derrida. In chapter 7, I apply some of Bourdieu's concepts to 'the story of the sun's armpit' and in chapter 8 I invoke Bauman in my discussion of the moon and hare story. My reasons for doing so are closely related to an attempt to problematise the operation of the dual discourse identified in this footnote.

¹⁰² In relation to rock art, Solomon (forthcoming: 114) writes that "Hunter-gatherers looking at the paintings made by their own forebears may have assigned them a different significance to their predecessors." She also conjectures that "some of the late art of the Drakensberg may belong to a very different political, economic and social world- even if some of its time-honoured concerned persisted" (191).

discursive possibilities for the recently released prisoners who narrated the stories in the alien setting of Mowbray, with the dispossession of the /Xam already far advanced, than those they would have borne for members of an intact /Xam band (if such a thing ever existed) following a way of life close to that described in the stories. It is difficult to discern epistemic ruptures in a corpus of narratives like those collected by Bleek and Lloyd although some of the readings of the narratives which detect the influence of history in them might point in such a direction. A comprehensive knowledge of /Xam history and culture over a significant length of time would be necessary in order to detect breaks of the kind Foucault (1970) discovers between the Renaissance concern with taxonomy and the birth of humanism, for example. Such an exercise might be conducted with materials from a linguistic group with an extant oral literary tradition which has also been recorded over the necessary period of time. It is difficult to see how Foucault's method could work without these kinds of records.

The relationship of the /Xam narratives with knowledge has been discussed at some length in the literature. The stories do not seem to me to offer knowledge in the sense of information. Although the /Xam had an intricate empirical knowledge of plants and animals,¹⁰⁴ this knowledge, for the most part, is not directly transmitted through the narratives. Nor is the information the narratives provide about the origin of things regarded as absolute. There are multiple explanations for the same phenomenon and multiple versions of the same story, sometimes told, at different times, by the same storyteller. Nor, in my view, are the stories didactic fables with an overt moral purpose. Although some of the characters express value judgements

¹⁰³ See, for example, Guenther (1989: 150), Hewitt (1986: 225-227; 231-232) and, especially, Bank (2006: 154-177; 228-301; 354-371). See chapter 6, section iii for more discussion of this approach to analysis.

¹⁰⁴ Bank (2006: 347-351) describes the visits of Lloyd and /Han#kass'o to the South African Museum. /Han#kass'o was able to identify and provide detailed information about a range of animals, birds, insects and plants. //Kabbo invokes his knowledge of the plants and animals of his place in order to argue his claim to the land around his ancestral waterhole at Bitterpits. "The land is his because he knows it as no-one else does" (Brown 2006: 17).

and offer normative pronouncements, these, I would argue, form part of the discursive fabric, characterisation and plot of the narratives rather than constitute a moral pivot around which the action revolves or from which a wisdom discourse could be extracted.

Despite this apparent lack of direct instrumentality or moral instruction, most commentators have argued for the narratives' educative or explanatory utility in one way or another. Jeursen (1995: 1), for example, emphasises the didactic function of stories, asserting that "all the /Xam stories... share the function of education in belief and survival." Hewitt (1986) highlights the role of the stories in reinforcing social values. Stories intended for the instruction of the young were very important, he maintains. He points out that many stories "conclude with the assertion that the characters who acted foolishly ... had not received proper instruction from their parents" (49). Nevertheless, he concedes, it is "rare that a moral is overtly drawn from a narrative" and morals never comprise "a formal mode of conclusion" (55). Biesele (1993) notes the role of narrative in the mediation of the recurrent concerns of a foraging adaptation such as "food-sharing, uncontrollable weather, interpersonal relationships and social protocol" (91). Solomon asserts the importance of the imagination, and thus of the arts of "storytelling and the making of visual art on rock" in the production of knowledge. "[N]o store of knowledge is useful unless it is lived imaginatively" (forthcoming: 9). Bank (2006) detects a moral dimension in the stories which he sometimes describes as "morality tales" (290). Many of the animal stories, for example, reinforce the sharing ethos (181). Dia'.kwain, in particular, maintains Bank, emphasises the importance of parental advice by telling "moral tales about those who had transgressed cultural norms or flagrantly disobeyed the teaching of parents" (270). Some writers, however, insist that it is a mistake to discover ethical concerns, covert didacticism, organic philosophical treatises and social commentary in the stories. Guenther, for instance, maintains that one should not overemphasise "the normative influence of folklore on the behaviour of people" or underestimate "the ludic, recreational" aspects of myth (1999: 161). Solomon (forthcoming: 1) states that the San arts "belong to the

terrain of the imagination, of the thought world, rather than to management of and survival in a tangible, physical environment." The terms of this discussion largely fall away when knowledge is understood in the broader sense in which Foucault considers it. It does not matter whether or not the narratives are directly didactic. They form part of the /Xam archive of possible statements that together constitute a discursive formation, the pre-condition for the production and authorisation of knowledge. It is not the discourse's capacity to hold knowledge and information that needs to be considered so much as the ways in which its statements make meaning possible and produce and legitimate truth.

Another potentially productive approach to the /Xam materials lies in examining them in terms of Foucault's analysis of power. If it is indeed true, and this condition immediately discloses itself in a hall of mirrors according to the logic of the statement it introduces, that "each society has its regime of truth" (Foucault, 1980: 131) and that, "moreover, "specific effects of power are attached to the true," then an enquiry into the narratives should reveal the effects of truth through which /Xam society distributed power and employed power's creative potential, a fascinating line of enquiry in the context of a society which, in its most common form contained no formal social stratification and was predicated on the absence of asymmetrical relations of power (Hewitt: 1986: 156; Brown 1998: 27).¹⁰⁵

Belinda Jeursen (1994), as mentioned in the previous chapter, identifies power differentials relating to gender in the narratives. Her investigation of power could be extended to other areas of /Xam social life beside gender, such as age, hunting prowess and healing skill.¹ Power, I would argue, could also be located in the

Guenther has gone so far as to question the description of /Xam social configurations as societies because of their lack of hierarchical organisation (Guenther 1999: 229). He maintains, though, that the /Xam were capable of major social transformation when threatened (19). They became more hierarchically organised and centralised in order to counter commando operations, for instance.

¹ The fact, for example, that success in activities such as hunting or healing is subject to the mechanism of "reverse-domination", which takes the form of deflation and ridicule of anyone who

insidious guises Foucault identifies, within the conscience of individuals, for example, rather than in asymmetrical social formations. Power is inevitably present in relationships, especially those in which there are gender and age differences. It always involves "a more-or-less organised, hierarchical co-ordinated cluster of relations" (1980: 198). "[Power]", writes Foucault, "is co-extensive with the social body; there are no spaces of primal liberty ..." (Foucault 1980: 142). Power is ubiquitous. It pervades all social relations and is interiorised by individuals.

"Between every point of a social body, between a man and a woman, between the members of a family ... there exist relations of power ..." (187).¹⁰⁷ The normative regulatory mechanisms which give Bushman bands and their relations with other bands the loose cohesion they possess could be understood in terms of power in this sense. Foucault relates modern modalities of power to methods of surveillance, most famously figured in Bentham's panopticon, a structure which enables a "mode of operation through which power will be exercised by virtue of the mere fact of things being known and people seen in a sort of immediate, collective... gaze" (154). In Bushman bands everyone sees everyone. Although no-one gazes down from the panopticon's tower, it could be argued that, a certain kind of power is manifested by means of this constant scrutiny, which the individual's interiorises "to the point that he is his own overseer" (155) and superintends his own behaviour. Foucault maintains, moreover, that power is always present in the medium of discourse itself and within the processes of subjectivisation and objectivisation. Storytelling itself opens up spaces in which particular modes of subject formation are hailed and reinforced. Relations of signification can never be separated from relations of power.

appears to be getting above themselves, is indicative, it seems to me, of the tensions of power within these areas of /Xam life. See Guenther (1999: 34; 42-43).

¹⁰⁷ The /Xam informants' personal histories reveal a great deal of marital instability and domestic violence (Bank 2006: 138).

ii. Bourdieu

The writing of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, offers, in my opinion, several important concepts with which to contextualise an intellectual engagement with the world of the /Xam texts. Of particular significance to this study have been his notions of habitus, fields, capital and doxa, which I will discuss below. While Derrida's writing points the way to a reading of both the /Xam texts themselves and the texts which have been produced in relation to them, Bourdieu's work has enabled me to consider the questions that pertain to the location of this thesis within the field of Bushman studies and within the wider intellectual fields that enfold it, a necessary consideration, in my view, in a study that aims to be critical of its own practice. Bourdieu's concepts also offer insights into the way that the stories themselves work. The /Xam narratives, too, form a field with particular practices and legitimating strategies. Within this field certain forms of social and symbolic capital are accumulated and circulated.

A particular theoretical and ethical unease attends the project of this thesis. Interpretation of the narratives involves a re-representation of not only the narratives but also of the /Xam worlds from which they emerged and of their /Xam narrators and audiences. This undertaking is conducted on terms and for purposes which are beyond the control of the /Xam. What is the significance of this activity and what sorts of power relations attend it? Andrew Bank's work (1999a; 1999b; 2006), discussed in the previous chapter, shows that Bleek and his generation of scholars were partly motivated to study materials like the /Xam narratives by their fascination with human evolution, an interest which fed an ideology of scientific racism. Even though Derrida, as we have seen, links the

¹⁰⁸ This dynamic forms a central concern of Bregin's 1998 MA thesis, "The identity of difference: a critical study of representing the Bushmen." See section B, ii, c. Solomon (forthcoming: 237) notes that "Irrespective of the intentions of the writer, studies of the San have always been vehicles for notions of what it is to be human, as well as to ideas about the differences and similarities between the San and "Western" selves and lives."

ongoing interest in the "primitive other" with a nostalgia for the lost origin and with the desire to recover some part of the earlier history of man, and classes this as a form of ethnocentrism, the sort of motivation that impelled Bleek could no longer be ascribed in the same way to contemporary critics. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1991) links the systematic study of "others", which began with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt (80-88), with hegemony. Knowledge of the people one wishes to dominate is an essential component of power.¹⁰⁹ The interest displayed by Cape governors, Sir George Grey and Sir Bartle Frere, in ethnography was certainly related in part to their desire to "tame" African cultures (Bank 2006: 352). The anthropological and colonial enterprises were inextricably interwoven.¹¹⁰ Knowledge of people and culture is still critical in the era of the globalisation of capital. It would, however, be an over-simplification to situate the contemporary study of /Xam texts in this way. For a start, even if the living descendants of the /Xam could be identified, they would now form part of a wider post-colonial population whose life practices bore little resemblance to those described in the nineteenth century /Xam narratives. Knowledge of the /Xam texts would be unlikely to facilitate present-day /Xam subordination. Anthropological information of the sort required by the earlier phase of colonialism with its direct deployment of power is, in any case, not relevant to the project of contemporary capital.¹¹¹

Bourdieu's work offers a different approach to the question of the relation between a study such as that undertaken in this thesis and power. It is necessary, maintains

¹⁰⁹ It is important to bear in mind in this study of the texts translated by Bleek and Lloyd that translation was an essential part of the constitution of the knowledge to which Said refers (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 3).

¹¹⁰ See Webster, C. 2000. The portrait cabinet of Dr Bleek: anthropometric photographs by early Cape photographers. *Critical Arts* 14 (1): 1-15, for a discussion of the role that Bleek's anthropometric photographic project played in the relationship at the Cape between the anthropological and the colonial enterprises.

¹¹¹ It could still be argued, though, as De Certeau (1986) has done, that any assertion of western rationality's hegemonic sway over the other is relevant to the unequal relations of power that characterise the phase of global capitalism.

Bourdieu, to analyse modern societies and the way power is distributed in them in terms not only of class but of fields, the social spaces in which agents manoeuvre for position and compete for resources. A cultural field is a "series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy" (Webb, Schirato and Danaher. 2002: 21) and which produces and authorises "certain discourses and activities" (44). A field, such as academia, possesses a certain autonomy; it has its own ways of accumulating and legitimating power. Within this field, individuals accrue the prestige that comprises symbolic capital, enjoy access to the forms of social capital that come from membership of the networks that characterise the field and accumulate the cultural capital, the forms of knowledge, taste and sensibility, that give agents in the field access to particular forms of power and prestige in the broader society. Although the agents within the intellectual field usually understand themselves to be engaged in a quest for objective and disinterested truth they are, in fact, maintains Bourdieu, primarily engaged in competing for intellectual capital, the resources, contacts, publications and so on that constitutes the currency of the field.

Bourdieu's work provides, then, a distinct angle of approach from which to consider the context in which a work of this kind can be located and the social relations that support it. Quite apart from the object of study or its content, scholarly work occurs within the particular setting of the intellectual field. Bourdieu's work brings this broader picture into focus. Bourdieu situates anthropology, and the other disciplines of the humanities relevant to the concerns of this thesis, within the context of the academic field and explores the ways in which this field competes for space in the wider power structures of contemporary society. The field of education "is overdetermined by the political field" (Webb, Schirato, Danaher. et al. 2001: 132). Disciplines such as medicine, law and medicine are "centrally located in terms of this relationship." The humanities or the "pure" sciences, on the other hand, serve the essential role of masking the political nature of the university and its role in the reproduction of social stratification. The

existence of disciplines like philosophy confer the aura of a disinterested sanctuary on the academy.¹¹² These disciplines and their practitioners have an "interest in their disinterestedness" (76, quoting Bourdieu 1993b: 19). This encourages "objectifying and universalising" theoretical perspectives that appear to be independent of the political struggles of the day (138), a phenomenon that I discuss in detail in relation to the /Xam materials in the chapters that follow.

Although agents compete to impose their authority on the discourses and practices of a particular academic field, ' their specific intellectual concerns are, for Bourdieu, secondary to the need to compete for power, resources and positions within the field. When the activity of studying /Xam texts is understood primarily in terms of the accumulation of cultural, social and symbolic capital within a field, it becomes less important to consider the details of the object of study than to show how certain choices of content and methodology affect the acquisition of this capital.¹¹⁴

Within the academy, particular knowledge fields are constituted whose discourses determine "what questions can be asked, and what ideas can be thought" (12). To a considerable degree, Bourdieu maintains, the field delimits what can be seen from it: "a field more or less 'speaks us' " (50). This relates to habitus, a term which refers to the way in which social practices and values are embodied in individuals.¹¹⁵ Individual practices are for the most part historically and culturally

¹¹² This is embodied, maintains Bourdieu, in the "otherworldly habitus" of some science or humanity professors" who "misrecognise" their relationship with the political (134).

¹¹³ A phenomenon, as I have already observed, that is very apparent in the contested field of Bushman Studies with its acrimonious debates.

¹¹⁴ Studying Bushman stories, for instance, in a climate of "Africanisation" of the South African university and the current importance attached to indigenous knowledge systems would probably accrue more intellectual capital within the field of literary studies than would a study of Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*.

¹¹⁵ For Bourdieu, social practices and structures do not exist, other than as intellectual abstractions, unless they are "embodied, absorbed into the sense making apparatus of the individual in order to constitute the practical reason of the habitus" (116).

determined. Since individuals are largely unaware of this process, it results in social agendas, norms and values appearing as natural and given. In the context of the intellectual field, the habitus refers to the ways in which the intellectual scholarly world "insinuates itself, along with its values and dispositions into a practitioner's being" (17). This has the effect of naturalising academic practices and ways of seeing in the individual: "It is because the world has produced me, because it produces the categories of thought that I apply to it, that it appears to me as self-evident" (18, quoting Bourdieu 1992: 127-128). An agent "feels at home in the world because the world is also in him, in the form of the habitus" (25, quoting Bourdieu 2000: 142-3). This produces what Bourdieu terms "illusio", the "more or less unthinking commitment to the logic, values and capital of a field" (26). "Doxa" refers to the naturalisation of particular truth regimes, which make certain thinking about the world possible while screening out the 'unthinkable'. In order, for example, "for an anthropologist to objectify another culture as primitive, that anthropologist must naturalise the values that characterise one culture as civilised or advanced, and another culture as its opposite" (35).¹¹⁶ Doxa also contributes to the tendency for anthropologists to write their books "before they arrive" (35). An inability to think the unthinkable leads to a predilection to accommodate data within pre-conceived intellectual frameworks.¹¹⁷

Importantly, Bourdieu also describes another, more hopeful, aspect of intellectual practice, one that is particularly apposite to a contemporary study of the products of "other" cultures such as the /Xam narratives. Generally, in the era of globalisation, people encounter experiences and images that clash "with the received ideas of their

¹¹⁶ Since the field delimits what can be seen from it, anthropologists enter the field with an array of pre-conceived expectations and theories about the people they are about to study. As a result, structural-functionalists emerge from the field with structural-functionalist explanations and functionalists with functionalist studies, and so on.

¹¹⁷ See chapter 3, 4, 5 and 6 for my critique of this phenomenon in the interpretation of the /Xam texts. I criticise the tendency to fit /Kaggen into the mould of the trickster and to read the sidereal stories as aetiological while also examining the structuralist and functionalist explanations critics have applied to the materials.

habitus" (43). This invites a degree of reflexivity which is especially reinforced in fields that allow for or dispose "its agents towards, 'the systematic exploration of the unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought' " (52, quoting Bourdieu 2001: 3). A notion of "radical doubt", the existence of "an ethical imperative" and the ability to historically contextualise "social issues and objects of knowledge" within a field all contribute towards a high degree of reflexivity (52). The fields of cultural studies and Bushman studies, the fields most relevant to this thesis, both display high levels of reflexivity. One of the first consequences of the sort of self-critical approach invited by these factors is the realisation that the field itself creates research problems. They are not waiting to be discovered in the world but are produced by agents deploying historically situated forms of rationality.¹¹⁸

Bourdieu maintains, in addition, that it is especially through an acquaintance with other societies that intellectual reflexivity is stimulated. A "detour through an exotic tradition is indispensable in order to break the relationship of deceptive familiarity that binds us to our tradition" (72, quoting Bourdieu) and to the

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perspectives on the world it produces. This provides one rationale for the project with which I am engaged in this thesis. Its primary aim is not so much to elucidate /Xam texts as to allow them to interrogate the truth claims and authority of the

¹¹⁸ Thus, I will maintain, for instance, that a form of thinking predicated on the complex of the lost origin, identified by Derrida (1976), invites a reading of narratives as myths of origin which is not inherent in the narratives themselves.

¹¹⁹ The effectiveness of studying other cultures in breaking the patterns of familiarity Bourdieu describes is, I believe, contingent upon the deployment of an interpretative strategy that is based on an awareness of its own ideological and historical foundations. While the encouragement to use such a strategy itself results partly, in Bourdieu's view, from the study of other cultures, I would maintain that the study of other cultures has as often served to reinforce the doxic acceptance of western forms of rationality. My reading of the literature linked to Bushman studies in this thesis lead me to conclude that the study of other cultures can stimulate or retard intellectual reflexivity. Hopefully, in the context of globalisation, the other factor Bourdieu identifies as stimulating intellectual self-examination, the study of "exotic" traditions is more likely to have the consequences Bourdieu imputes to it.

tradition which seeks to comprehend them. Accordingly, I devote much of the space of the thesis to the critique of the body of interpretation that has grown up around the Bleek and Lloyd collection. More unusually, perhaps, I often subject my own interpretation of /Xam texts to a process of deconstruction in which I try to show how each interpretative move I make can be shown to emerge from a tradition of hermeneutics rather than from the narratives themselves. In some sense, often quixotic, no doubt, given the nature of power Bourdieu describes, this methodology attempts to question the authority of the tradition of western rationalism to construct and provide knowledge about the "other."

My study is also indebted to Bourdieu in another way. At certain points in my analysis of /Xam narratives, those pertaining to the celestial bodies, in particular, I apply some of his concepts to the stories. In doing so, I seek to appropriate a wider language for the interpretation of such materials and show, in the process, that the discourses considered "natural" to the interpretation of myths and folktales, especially the functionalist and structuralist approaches that I discuss later in the thesis, have been produced through the accidents of an intellectual history that have little to do with the intrinsic nature of the materials themselves.

Hi. Spivak

The writing of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has influenced my analysis in a variety of ways. My reading of her work has enabled me to situate Derrida's critique of western reason in its colonial and post-colonial contexts, the eras, respectively, in which the /Xam narratives were recorded and from which they are now viewed. Her discussion of the native informant (1999), especially, has proved invaluable in considering the relationship between the /Xam texts and their narrators. Spivak traces the genesis of this figure from the earlier ethnographic native informant who

¹²⁰ Cf. Brown (1998: 24-25) in which he discusses how reading oral texts can "call into question the social practices of our present-day society."

¹⁻¹ See, especially, chapter 7.

was a "blank, though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West (or Western-model discipline) could inscribe" to "the self-marginalising or self-consolidating migrant or postcolonial masquerading as 'native informant'" (6). The migrant "third world" intellectual who delivers inside "knowledge" about his own people is an example of this recent incarnation of the native informant. The position of native informant is not always sought by the migrant intellectual, though. It is often conferred by the academic establishment on a person without his complicity by virtue of his national origin. It forms part of the wider mechanism by which the "centre" masks the exclusion of the margin by admitting selected representatives of it. The /Xam informants of the colonial heyday were not admitted to the centre, other than in a narrowly geographical and temporary sense. As convicts their presence in Cape Town did not include the high degree of volition and agency the migrant intellectual enjoys. Nevertheless, they, too, were delivering information outside their native realm for the benefit of a western audience on terms over which they had, at best, only partial control.

Spivak asserts that two untenable assumptions underlie the expectation that the migrant intellectual can deliver inside knowledge about the nation in which she originates: the assumption that the heterogeneous mass of people who exist in the section of the "third world" under consideration can be spoken of by a single voice and the assumption that individuals are qualified to represent this voice because they belong to the same ethnic or national group. This presumption about essentialised subaltern collectivities on whose behalf third world intellectuals can speak parallels, I believe, the assumption that an essentialised Bushman identity and culture can be represented by five or six informants and the texts that emerged from their collaboration with Bleek and Lloyd.¹²² An individual is set up as "an authentic ethnic fully representative of his or her tradition" (60), a move that ignores the fact that "an ethnicity untroubled by the vicissitudes of history and neatly accessible as

" As Solomon (forthcoming: 2) points out, the Bushmen were at least as diverse as Europeans. The relatively greater isolation and economic independence of Bushman groups would, one could argue, have contributed to even greater variety than was to be found in Europe.

an object of investigation is a confection ..." (60). It is evident from Bank's (2006) work that Bleek and Lloyd's informants did not speak with a single voice. Bank shows how individual histories and contemporary events influenced the content of the materials delivered by each informant. Individual informants also interpreted the copies of rock art they were shown very differently (338-339).

Spivak cautions that a view of the "Third World as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact literary heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted and curricularized in English/French/German/Dutch translation; delivering the emergence of a 'South' that provides proof of transnational exchange" fosters the emergence of 'the Third World' as a signifier that encourages the forgetting of the formative processes of 'worlding, even as it expands the hegemonic reach of the literary discipline (114). A process such as the canonical incorporation of the /Xam texts is a way in which the epistemic violence of western dominance becomes naturalized and hidden.¹²³ It enables the misrecognition of the fact that "liberal multiculturalism is determined by the demands of contemporary transnational capitalisms" (397). In addition, maintains Spivak, the "worlding" process of imperialism is obscured by the use of terms such as "the third world" and "native" since these terms become essentialised categories that can be spoken of apart from the history of imperialism. I will argue, in a similar way, that terms like myth, trickster and others which recur in relation to the /Xam materials serve the same purpose.¹²⁵ They imply a universal order of cultural reality that exists apart from colonial and neo-colonial contexts of epistemic domination.

Spivak demonstrates at length how the categories of enlightenment thought and its notions of pure, disinterested reason were conditional upon the relationships of imperialism. Thinkers were involved in "the 'scientific' fabrication of new

¹²³ A term Spivak uses to refer to the way in which people find themselves included in global networks of economic and political domination through processes over which they have no control.

¹²⁴ I describe something of this process in chapter 1, section B, ii, b.

" See, in particular, chapters 3 and 6.

representations of self and world that would provide alibis for the domination, exploitation and epistemic violation entailed by the establishment of colony and empire" (7). I discussed Bleek's relationship to this project in chapter 1. Spivak examines the cases of Immanuel Kant and Karl Marx among others. Kantian ethics, the consequence of Kant's attempt to "resolve practically the contradiction between what *can* be known and what *must* be thought" (30, italics in original) relies on the reception of the "abyss of the infinite" as sublime rather than fearful. This capacity can only be actualized by culture (12). The "raw man", lacking culture, does not "possess a subject whose *Anlage* or programming includes the structure of feeling for the moral" (14). At one point only, according to Spivak, does Kant actually name the raw man. This occurs in a fleeting and passing reference to the inhabitants of Tiera del Fuego. While Kant employs argument to place women outside philosophy, the "ruses against the racial other are different", maintains Spivak. He/she is "foreclosed as a casual rhetorical gesture" (30). Despite the paucity of direct references to him, the difference of the native other is central to Kant's delineation of reason and morality. At the same time, Kant's discourse, relying as it does on a universal concept of man for its teleology in which the "(auto)biography of the West... masquerades" (208) as history and promotes itself as humanism, needs to give the "other" partial access to the "being-human." "This limited access" of the non-European to culture and, consequently, to "the being-human", becomes "the itinerary of the native informant into the post-colonial" (30). And, I would argue, of the /Xam narrators and their legacy into the mainstream of the South African national imaginary.

Brown (1995, 1998) and Bregin (1998) have pointed out that materials like the rock art and the texts in the Bleek and Lloyd collection comprise a complex corpus of

¹²⁶ Spivak's identification of this moment and the mileage she extracts from it exemplifies the deconstructive approach described earlier in this chapter.

¹²⁷ Spivak maintains that the European "ethico-political selfpresentation" with its Kantian, Hegelian and Marxist source texts is still "complicitous with what today is a self-styled postcolonial discourse" (199: 9).

Bushman self-representation. The existence of this body of self-representation has not prevented the western representation of an essentialised "Bushman that is more influenced by the metaphysics of presence than by the available "Bushman" modes of representation. This western representation of Bushmen often dominates the way that Bushman acts of representation like the /Xam narratives are interpreted.

Spivak insists that the recognition that a claim to truth is a trope is the necessary first step in reversing the sort of misrepresentation involved in this process. When a critique is not constantly aware of the processes by which it is producing "truths", in this case about the Bushmen, and of the ways in which these "truths" are institutionally consecrated, the analysis must, of necessity, "act out a lie" (19).

Spivak's work has many implications, besides those already mentioned, for the field of study with which this thesis is concerned. I should like to conclude this section by briefly mentioning some of them. As indicated by her use in her title of the phrase, "Toward a history of the vanishing Present", Spivak (1999) is interested in the vantage point from which the past is surveyed in the conditions of post-colonialism. This makes many of her insights and concepts valuable in relation to a contemporary consideration of the /Xam texts. She offers, in addition, a reading strategy that is political. Every reading she suggests, could become "an upheaval parasitic to the text" (153). Instead of merely celebrating "global hybridity", it is possible, she insists, "to anthropologize the heritage of the Euro-United States" (157). Finally, she suggests "that a different standard of literary evaluation, necessarily provisional, can emerge if we work at the (im)possible perspective of the native informant as a reminder of alterity ..." (351-352). The mobilisation of this perspective necessarily offers a critique of imperialism in its past and present forms. Brown (1998: 27), similarly, proposes the employment of a type of criticism that lets "the /Xam songs and stories 'talkback' to modern understanding...." "My intention", he writes (36, brackets in the original) "is to create conditions of interpretation and reception (in the study of literature) in which the texts of the Bushmen may speak to us today, both of an intricate and developed mythology, and the harsh intrusions of colonialism." In the context of this thesis, the mobilisation

of the native informant's perspective called for by Spivak consists of the deployment of a strategy of reading that allows the /Xam texts to interrogate and judge the forms of rationality which have traditionally been used to interpret them.

The analysis of the role of notions of the trickster (part 2) and the myth of origin (part 3) that follows in this thesis is constantly informed by the writings of the four thinkers described in this chapter, even though continuous direct reference to them would be repetitive and stylistically unsustainable. The way of approaching the /Xam texts which I offer in later chapters is also based on my reading of these writers, with their emphasis on textuality, discourse and historicity.

PART TWO: READING /KAGGEN

In the three chapters that comprise the second part of this thesis, I examine the figure of /Kaggen, the Mantis, in the /Xam materials with special attention to his identification as a trickster in the writing of Roger Hewitt (1986), Matthias Guenther (1999) and Anne Solomon (forthcoming).

CHAPTER THREE : THE UNIVERSAL AND THE LOCAL : THE TRICKSTER AND THE /XAM NARRATIVES

This chapter explores the idea of a universal trickster in the context of the repeated designation of the /Xam figure, /Kaggen, as a trickster and within the framework of the theoretical considerations explored in the previous chapter. I begin by exploring some of the recurring features of writing on the trickster. I consider the location of the trickster in the folk-tale with special attention to the influential work of Carl Jung (1956; 1968; 1978) whose position regarding the trickster archetype represents, to my mind, the tendency to posit the trickster as an ahistorical, transcultural universal in its most explicit form. I go on to discuss other important work on the trickster such as the writing of Paul Radin (1956), Robert Pelton (1980; 1993), Mac Linscott Ricketts (1993) and Henry Louis Gates (1988). The chapter concludes with a discussion of Jean Baudrillard's (2001) critique of the universal in western thought. The trickster concept, I argue, needs to be located within this species of thought. The chapter as a whole serves as an introduction to chapters 4 and 5, which deal with the work of Roger Hewitt (1976; 1985; 1986), Matthias Guenther (1989; 1999) and Anne Solomon (forthcoming), three writers who have explored the /Kaggen figure in some detail.

i. Overview

Although writers differ about his role in the stories and in /Xam culture in general, the characterisation of /Kaggen as the /Xam trickster pervades the literature on the /Xam texts (Hewitt 1986; Brown 1998: 55; Guenther 1999; James 2001: 157; Bennun 2004: 91-94; Bank 2006: 182-183; 240).¹²⁸ David Lewis-Williams (2000: 8), for example, maintains that "the /Xam god was a trickster-deity. Although he created all things, he was capricious and often stupid." In identifying /Kaggen as a trickster, these writers enter, usually inadvertently, the wider debates that revolve around the nature and role of the figure of the trickster. By not questioning the deployment of this universal category and its applicability to the specific /Xam cultural context they place themselves against those writers who maintain that the cross-cultural figure, the trickster, is little more than a logocentric fabrication. The debate about the universality or cultural specificity of the trickster is, to my mind, the most important one in the field of trickster studies. It is a debate that is of critical importance to studies of the /Xam materials. Accordingly, it is a debate in which I will engage in the course of this chapter and in the two that follow. Before entering this debate, though, or considering the suitability of the trickster category in relation to /Kaggen, I will provide an overview of the trickster's appearance in anthropological and critical literature. When examining the work of Hewitt, Guenther and Solomon in the following two chapters, I will attempt to indicate the influence of this literature on their work. Implicit or explicit in all the discussions of the trickster are different positions regarding the figure's function and meaning, questions which preoccupy both Hewitt (1986) and Guenther (1999).

¹²⁸ Brown (1998: 58) and Guenther (1999: 131) maintain that there are a number of other figures in the narratives who perform the role of trickster. These include the jackal.

¹²⁹ I consider the work of some of these writers in section iv of this chapter. No-one, to my knowledge, has questioned the use of the term "trickster" or its suitability as a description of /Kaggen in the literature related to the /Xam narratives. Hewitt (1986: 210) does, however, distance his interpretation of /Kaggen from Radin's universal claims about the trickster. /Kaggen, insists Hewitt, should be located within a specifically /Xam cultural context.

The writers who have written about the trickster, and that includes, as I have indicated, all those who have produced substantial work on the /Kaggen narratives, display a variety of attitudes towards the figure. Some, following Jung, regard the trickster as the manifestation of universal psychological material. Other commentators abjure the notion of a trickster with "archetypal roots in a transcendental human psyche" (Hynes and Doty 1993: 2) but still consider the term a useful descriptive designation for a figure who, they maintain, displays enough common characteristics across cultures to justify its use. Another, smaller, group of writers argue against the "generalizing, comparative view" of culture the deployment of the category "trickster" presupposes.

In the introductory chapter to the book they edit, *Trickster figures: contours, contexts and criticisms*, Hynes and Doty (1993) characterise the history of trickster studies as dominated by the difficulty of comprehending his nature. They quote Mac Linscott Ricketts to the effect that understanding the trickster is "one of [our] most perplexing problems" (13) and Kroeber who states that the trickster figure is "perhaps the most bewildering to a modern reader" of all the aspects of Native American literature. This difficulty has not, however, prevented the proliferation of writing about the trickster in the twentieth century. The word "trickster" has moved from its use in the eighteenth century when it designated "one who deceives or cheats" (14) to become a common term that occurs in a range of literary, scholarly and popular contexts to refer to a wide variety of cultural and religious figures. It has been applied not only to characters from myth and folklore but to a range of figures from sources as far apart as the gospels and contemporary film. Tricksters in Hynes and Doty's book include the Winnebago figure, Wakdjunkaga,

This statement would apply most accurately to the writing of Laurens Van der Post (1961a; 1961b).

¹³¹ "More has probably been written about 'tricksters' than about any single category of character that appears in the myths and folktales of the world" (Carroll 1984: 105).

the Yoruba character, Eshu, Hermes and Saint Peter. I shall now describe some of this literature on the trickster, concentrating on aspects of this body of writing that relate to the concerns of this thesis, especially those that pertain to origins and universals, or which are linked to the ways in which Hewitt, Guenther and Solomon have read the /Xam figure of /Kaggen, the Mantis.

ii. Radin, Jung and Kerenyi: the trickster and his habitats in the primitive, the popular and the repressed

Paul Radin's *The trickster: a study in American Indian mythology* (1956) is a book which has been of seminal significance in the treatment of the 'trickster' figure ever since it appeared. Guenther, whose work on the /Xam figure, /Kaggen, I shall examine in chapter 5, describes Radin's book as the "key work that conceptualised this figure in the study of world mythology and comparative religion ..." (1999: 254). Radin's work, maintain Hynes and Doty, offers the "first comprehensive portrait of the trickster" (Hynes and Doty 1993: 2). They contend that all the ensuing work on the trickster follows from Radin's book. They locate themselves within this tradition: "In the editors' perspective as well as that of many of the contributors we seek to build upon Radin in a critical manner" (2). Carl Jung and the classicist, Karl Kerenyi, contributed influential essays to Radin's volume.

In Jungian psychological evolutionism, the framework for Jung's essay on the trickster in Radin's book, the trickster is an archetype that appears at certain stages of the development of the individual psyche and also inhabits the collective consciousness of a group at particular stages of social development.¹⁻⁷⁵ The

¹³² It is interesting to note that the trickster is always figured as male. Although /Kaggen is male, he displays certain female characteristics. Hewitt conjectures that an element of sexual ambivalence is often associated with trickster figures. "Kaggen's creative powers may be supported by this feminine association as well as by his freedom from constraints" (Hewitt 1986; 153-154).

¹³³ In this way, Jung conflates a certain period of childhood ego formation with a particular state of societal, pre-technological evolution (Pelton 1980: 233).

trickster, thus, forms part of the shadow of every individual and also has a social and cultural manifestation. Jung maintains that "all mythical figures correspond to inner psychic experiences and originally sprang from them ..." (Jung 1956:195).¹³⁴ Mythical characters such as the trickster feature prominently in primitive societies since their members still directly experience the sorts of psychic experiences that more "advanced" societies repress.^{1 5} Trickster tales are told by societies whose collective consciousness has evolved relatively recently out of the animal phase of "an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level" (Jung 1956: 200).¹³⁶

Although the trickster, maintains Jung, appears in unalloyed form in the tales of cultures whose members possess a "primitive or barbarous consciousness [that] forms a picture of itself on a much earlier level of development and continues to do so for hundreds or even thousands of years, undeterred by the contamination of its archaic qualities with differentiated, highly developed mental products ..." (200), he is not the sole preserve of the "uncivilized."¹³⁷ He might be culturally suppressed in advanced societies, but the trickster survives in the individual psyche of its members. Among those "spoiled by civilization", the possessors, presumably,

¹³⁴ Jung regards this view of the trickster as unassailable: "He (the trickster) is obviously a 'psycholegem', an archetypal psychic structure of extreme antiquity.... That this is how the trickster figure originated can hardly be contested if we look at it from the causal and historical angle" (200). This sort of certainty is, in my opinion, an identifying feature of logocentric thought, with its belief in a realm of truth waiting to be definitively revealed.

¹³⁵ Jung employs the term "primitive" without irony. He admires the primitive for having consigned less to the unconscious than has modern man. He has no doubt, however, that the primitive is lower on the rung of evolution. The higher archetypes appear in only rudimentary form in primitive cultures.

¹³⁶ This contention echoes some of Wilhelm Bleek's notions of linguistic and cultural evolution (see chapter 1, section B, ii, a).

¹³⁷ Somewhat patronisingly, in my view, Jung qualifies this position by asserting that for people like the Winnebago the myth of the trickster is more than a stubbornly persistent "remnant". Trickster stories function as a source of amusement and "undivided enjoyment" (200), but only if a people have not been "spoiled by civilization" (201).

of "differentiated, highly developed mental products", the trickster persists, albeit in a modified, less enjoyable and more purely psychological form. Whenever "the unsuspecting modern man ... feels himself at the mercy of annoying 'accidents' which thwart his will and his actions with apparently malicious intent, he speaks of 'hoodoos' and 'ginxes'_____Here the trickster is represented by countertendencies in the unconscious, and in certain cases by a sort of second personality, of a puerile and inferior character ... the *shadow*" (202, italics in original). The trickster becomes largely a matter of personal responsibility. The repressed shadow often expresses itself in pathological ways. This is the price of civilisation and mental progress, the Jungian version of the myth of the lost origin. As a collective figure, the trickster is shattered by the "impact of civilization" although he is preserved, in vestigial and reduced form, in popular culture. Jung mentions, in this regard, the circus clown, the carnival figure of Pulcinella, the puppets, Punch and Judy, and jokes that contain racial stereotyping.

Jung (1956; 1968) identifies typical qualities of the universal trickster, an endeavour, as we shall see, that has been pursued in the trickster literature generally. He notes the trickster's "fondness for sly jokes and malicious pranks, his powers as a shape-shifter, his dual nature, half animal, half divine, his exposure to all kinds of tortures ..." (195). He emphasises the trickster's blend of the supernatural and the natural: "[t]he trickster is a primitive 'cosmic' being of *divine-animal* nature, on the one hand superior to man because of his superhuman qualities, and on the other hand inferior to him because of his unreason and unconsciousness. He is no match for the animals either, because of his extraordinary clumsiness and lack of instinct. These defects are the marks of his *human* nature ..." (204, italics in original). Jung's view of the properties of the

Popular culture, for Jung, seems to exist as a lower strata of civilisation in which mental elements that are exorcised from higher consciousness continue to receive attention. It is a kind of sediment, the detritus of human evolution.

trickster has been widely followed. Lewis-Williams (2000: 8), for example, also emphasises the blend of the divine and the animal in the /Xam trickster, /Kaggen.

Another influential result of Jung's thinking on the trickster is his identification of a wide range of figures from different cultures and "levels" of culture as tricksters. In his essay, Jung identifies Mercury, shamans and medicine men as tricksters (196). Even Yahweh displays trickster traits'. "If we consider, for example, the daemonic features exhibited by Yahweh in the Old Testament we shall find in them not a few reminders of the unpredictable behaviour of the trickster" (196).¹⁴⁰

In his essay in Radin's book, the classicist, Karl Kerényi, also posits a universal and ahistorical trickster. This figure is an essential part of man's own story, which in mythology he tells himself (Kerényi, in Radin 1956:175), and is the "timeless root of all the picaresque creations of world literature ..." (176). Kerényi identifies Hermes as the quintessential classical trickster. He is also centrally concerned with the function of the trickster. Since his views on this matter have influenced subsequent writers, they are worth quoting at some length.

Archaic social hierarchies are exceedingly strict . . . nothing demonstrates the meaning of the all-controlling social order more impressively than the religious

Unlike Jung, Lewis-Williams attributes /Kaggen's dual nature not so much to the difference between humans and animals (the lower and higher aspects of the human psyche) as to the /Xam propensity to inhabit a unified symbolic field in which the spiritual is not divorced from the everyday: "This blending of the spirit world with the events of what many westerners see as ordinary, daily life is particularly clear in /Xam and other Southern groups' concept of god. Known as the Mantis, the /Xam god was a trickster-deity. Although he created all things, he was capricious and often stupid."

¹⁴⁰ Pelton (1980), writing about West African tricksters, and Guenther (1996), writing about /Kaggen and other Bushman tricksters, might disagree on this last point. Both, for different reasons, seek to distance the religious view that includes the trickster from the monotheistic, humourless Judeo-Christian religious heritage. Guenther (1999) does, however, consider the shaman or trancer as the same type of figure as the trickster.

recognition of that which evades this order, in a figure who is the exponent and personification of the life of the body: never wholly subdued, ruled by lust and hunger, for ever running into pain and injury, cunning and stupid in action. Disorder belongs to the totality of life.... His function in an archaic society or rather the function of his mythology, of the tales told about him, is to add disorder to order and so make a whole, to render possible, within the fixed bounds of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted. (185)

Paul Radin (1956) shares Jung's view that the trickster is a universal archetype that can be sighted in the individual psyche and in the myths of all cultures, even as he applies these notions to the particular figure of Wakdjunkaga, the Native American Winnebago trickster at the centre of his study. Accordingly, Radin locates the origins of the trickster in the early phases of man's development. He is a sort of proto-man: "an inchoate being of undetermined proportions, a figure foreshadowing the shape of man" (xxiv). He belongs to a time in which consciousness is still a complicated unity and good and evil have a single source. Dualism is an aspect of civilization. Here we have all the familiar elements of the metaphysics of presence and the lost origin which this thesis explores. Primitive cultures are closer to the origin but are also underdeveloped. Although Radin maintains that the trickster is a universal figure, he contends that North American cultures possess the "earliest and most archaic form" of the trickster (xiii). These tricksters are closest to the origin and can, thus, provide special insights into man's "struggle with himself and with a world into which he had been thrust without his volition and consent" (xxiv).

Most of the writers who have written more recently about the trickster (see section iii below) have distanced themselves from Radin, Kerenyi and Jung's scheme of cultural evolution and its implication that certain cultures are at a "childhood" stage of development. Nor do they regard the trickster as a metaphysical or transcendental phenomenon. Nevertheless they follow Radin, Jung and Kerenyi in proclaiming the universality of the figure. These writers also share their predecessors' preoccupation with the nature and function of the trickster, often repeating Jung, Kerenyi and Radin's descriptions of his basic qualities. Hewitt

(1986: 131, citing Radin 1924: 22f), for instance, follows Radin in describing the trickster as the "Transformer" responsible for the present ordering of things. He is amoral and only "incidentally and inconsistently beneficent." He is approachable and intervenes "in a very human way in the affairs of the world."

iii. Other writing on the trickster

William Hynes and William Doty contribute several chapters, both individually and collaboratively, to the book they edit. In the process of summarising other people's positions on the trickster, their own views about the figure and the critical treatment appropriate to him emerge. They argue for the species of universalism that allows for comparative cultural and mythological studies (Hynes and Doty 1993: 2). This leads them to consider the general questions that pertain to the broad cross-cultural figure of the trickster. These include his social function and his relationship to religion (2). The object of working with an individual story, they maintain, is to explore its meaning, the product of two contexts: "the specific, local, tribal, historically bounded context" and "the wider phenomena of general human cultural expression" (3). In the process of arguing for this dual approach, they distance themselves from what they consider to be the extreme positions represented, on the one hand, by those who "see the trickster as so universal a figure that all tricksters speak with essentially the same voice and those who counsel that the tricksters belonging to different societies are so culture-specific that no two of them articulate similar messages" (2). Hynes and Doty attempt to bridge this divide, whose roots they trace to the traditional epistemological debate regarding "universals and particulars" (5).¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ This debate, they maintain, has taken several forms over the centuries, including the medieval battle between nominalists and scholastics and the "nineteenth century controversy about idealism and realism" (5). Historically, they argue, the natural sciences have been associated with the particular and the humanities with the general approach to knowledge. I locate the premises of the debate differently. As I will explain later in this chapter, I believe that the difference emerges from the contrast between an approach embedded in a metaphysics of presence and one that concedes to narrative its textuality and to language its materiality.

Hynes and Doty follow Radin and Kerenyi in attributing a conservative and educational function to trickster stories. Although the trickster himself operates within the realm of contingency and potentiality, trickster stories "provide a fertile source of cultural reflection and critical reflexivity that leaves one thoughtful yet laughing" (4). They hold that this aspect of the stories is easily misunderstood since western thinking does not readily reconcile the comic with the serious (4). Although trickster stories are entertaining and elicit laughter, they are also "*instructive*" (7, italics in original). They map for members of the societies in which they occur how they "ought" to behave (7). In this context, Hynes and Doty refer to Brian Street's (1972) volume of essays dedicated to Edward Evans-Pritchard's study, *The Zande trickster* (1967) in which Street maintains that in modern cultural contexts trickster-like characters are seen as individually motivated deviants whereas in traditional contexts they are "socially sanctioned" figures (Hynes and Doty 1993: 7). Even as the trickster violates social codes, he re-affirms them. The Zande tales of the trickster, Ture, "serve as a model for these rules, demonstrating what happens if the prescriptions laid down by society are not observed" (1972:85). The way in which the trickster serves this function is complex since the stories have to preserve a balance between "creativity and destructiveness", between the chaos that ensues from questioning all the social codes and the stagnation that attends rigid conformity to them (Hynes and Doty 1993: 19). The trickster, accordingly, operates at the boundaries. He confirms these boundaries by demonstrating the consequences of going beyond them: "By acting at the boundaries of order the trickster gives definition to that order" (Street 1972: 101).

As suggested by its title: 'The exception who proves the rule: Ananse the Akan Trickster', Christopher Vecsey's essay in Doty and Hynes's book is close to Street's line of thinking about trickster tales. In violating codes, maintains Vecsey, the trickster reaffirms them (Vecsey 1993: 106). The stories lead to an affirmation of the status quo through questioning it. Ananse is not a cultural hero who brings

direct benefits to the Akan. The socially beneficial aspect of the tales lies in the process whereby the Akan draw "ethical conclusions" from Ananse's failures and shortcomings" (118).¹⁴²

Despite their support for the didactic and socially conservative function of trickster tales, Hynes and Doty realise that the trickster figure is so protean and ambiguous that he cannot categorically be reduced to a single function across all cultures (Hynes and Doty 1993: 9). In order to create a broader picture of the trickster and his cultural function, they set out to survey the field of writing about him. Claude Levi-Strauss, they maintain, for instance, considers the trickster as "the embodiment of all complementary opposites, but in particular of that between immediate sexual gratification and the demands of civilization" (20) while Victor Turner (1974) regards the trickster as a liminal operative who makes possible the introduction of new perceptions and metaphors while the usual social restrictions are in a state of ritual abeyance (Hynes and Doty: 20).

Robert Pelton in his influential study of the West African tricksters, Ananse, Legba, Eshu and Ogo-Yurugu, pursues a thesis that is close to the one Hynes and Doty ascribe to Turner, contending that "the trickster is a symbol of the liminal state itself and of its permanent accessibility as a source of recreative power" (Pelton 1980: 35). Pelton considers the trickster integral to the process whereby West African societies create a non-dualistic religious sensibility and culture, which includes the "contradictory and anomalous aspects of life" (21). The trickster demonstrates "the holiness of ordinary life" (265). Pelton also comments on the way that the trickster delivers and invites "metasocial commentary" (266), a view shared by Mary Douglas (1984) who considers the chief function of the trickster to reside in the emphasis trickster tales place on the relativity of the social order (Hynes and Doty 1993: 21). Guenther, as we shall see in chapter 5, reads /Kaggen in a similar way to Pelton and Douglas. Pelton and Douglas's position is not easily reconciled with the school of analysis that regards trickster tales as essentially conservative although, as

¹⁴² This is also Hewitt's position with regard to the /Xam narratives that feature /Kaggen.

we shall see in chapter 4, Hewitt (1986), in the course consideration of the /Kaggen narratives, offers both points of view without attempting to resolve the contradiction.

Like Pelton, Guenther and Turner, Laura Makarius (1993) regards trickster tales as a dynamic rather than a conservative social force. She maintains that the "transgressing and profaning character" of the trickster hero "constitutes his essence and his sole reason for existence in the mythic universe" (73). The "magical violation of taboos" (68) allows for the transformation of the environment in ways that provide for the improvement of the human condition. Tricksters are Promethean characters who oppose the dictates of gods in order to achieve these favourable adjustments.³ In order to work their magic, the result of heroic transgressions, they must violate social codes. Their social goals can only be attained through asocial strategies. Makarius believes that she solves the problem of the trickster's duality in this way. "The asocial character of the taboo violation explains how the trickster represented as the friend of humans, he who struggles with gods in order to ameliorate the human lot, may also be represented as an asocial being, he who ends up being banished from the community" (83).

Mac Linscott Ricketts contends that trickster tales enact a tension between two spiritual poles. The shaman represents the impulse to transcend "the weakness of the human condition" while the trickster helps people endure "the absurdity of human existence" (Ricketts 1993: 105). The trickster refuses to serve gods or spirits. Instead he ignores and mocks them. This does not mean, though, that the trickster is not a religious figure: "He belongs to the sacred time of origins and ... provides a model by which humankind is enabled to transcend existence and

³ This becomes confusing when the trickster is himself considered as a god, a position several writers adopt with respect to /Kaggen. See, for example, Lewis-Williams (2000: 8).

conquer for itself a unique place in the cosmos" (87). In contrast to Ricketts, Guenther (1999), as we shall see, links the trickster and the trancer (shaman) in his book, *Tricksters and trancers - Bushman religion and society*.

Lewis Hyde (1998) presents the trickster as a universal cultural response to basic appetites. Chief among these responses is hunting. "Trickster stories, even when they clearly have much more complicated cultural meanings, preserve a set of images from the days when what mattered above all else was hunting" (2). The stratagems that the trickster devises in order to feed himself through hunting and the situations in which he gets entangled, lead to the development of creative intelligence and art. "Trickster starts out hungry, but before long he is master of the kind of creative deception that, according to a long tradition, is a prerequisite of art" (1). Where Jung relates the trickster to a stage in the evolution of consciousness, Hyde links him to the evolution by natural selection of the human intellect. The intelligence of the hunter develops faster than does the intelligence of his prey. This story, argues Hyde, underlies individual trickster stories. Trickster tales are so widespread because they concern the common narrative of how humans learnt to outwit both their prey and the animals that wished to eat them.¹⁴⁵ Hyde identifies a range of figures from a diversity of cultures as tricksters, even though hunting has become only a symbolic motif in many of the cultures in which they are situated. These figures include Coyote (North America), Hermes (Greece), Eshu (West Africa), Krishna (India), Thlokunyana (Zulu), Allen Ginsberg and Frederick Douglas. All of these figures, for Hyde, embody the important trickster attribute of initiating change, often through accidents and mistakes.

In the next chapter I will show the difficulty of consigning /Kaggen to the "sacred time of origins", when one considers both his place in the Bleek and Lloyd archive as a whole and in /Xam discourse generally.

¹⁴⁵ /Kaggen would not altogether suit Hyde's hypothesis. He is not entirely proficient at hunting in the stories and in the observances sets out to impede it. See chapter 4.

William Bascom (1992) also treats the trickster as a cross-cultural figure. He finds common characteristics in trickster tales across West Africa and North America. Unlike Henry Louis Gates (see below) who links West African and North American tricksters historically by examining the way that specific figures from West Africa appeared in altered form in African American literature, Bascom's correspondences in the examples given here are thematic. The trickster tales he examines from North America are Native American and have no historical link with West Africa.¹⁴⁶ The trickster, in both broad cultural zones, according to Bascom seeks wisdom, cunning and power. He cites examples of stories with common plots to prove the correspondence: "In Africa the trickster also obtains the milk of the wild African buffalo or bush-cow ... in the United States the milk of a deer" (41).

An ongoing project in trickster studies has been that of constructing typologies of the figure broad enough to encompass all his local manifestations. I have already alluded to the lists of trickster characteristics produced by Jung and Radin. Hynes presents such a typology in his and Doty's volume, advancing "six characteristics common to many trickster myths" (Hynes and Doty 1993:32). He proposes that this scheme forms a "modest map, a heuristic guide, and common language for the more complex individual studies of particular tricksters within specific belief systems that follow" (32). Laura Makarius suggests that such a scheme could help form "a matrix by which to survey all known examples of tricksters and to judge their degree of "tricksterness" (34).

Hynes identifies six major trickster traits and elaborates each of them in turn. The trickster personality is "fundamentally ambiguous and anomalous" (34). He

¹⁴⁶ Elsewhere in this book and in some of his previous writing (1972), Bascom does track the entry of African mythological figures into the Americas. His point here, though, is that trickster stories share common motifs even when there is no historical contact between the cultures from which they emanate.

¹⁴⁷ A similar procedure has been followed with regard to the term "myth" (Dundes 1984). Definitions of myth are sought that are broad enough to encompass a great variety of local forms of narrative. See chapter 6 for my discussion of the use of the term "myth."

combines polar extremes although Hynes cautions that "he is not fully delimited by one side or other of a binary distinction, nor by both sides at once, nor by a series of oppositions" (34). He appears on the edges of culture or "just beyond existing borders, classifications, and categories." The second major characteristic identified by Hynes is the trickster propensity to deceive and play tricks. The trickster initiates disorder through his tricks, deliberately or by accident, and is often himself a victim of his own tricks which gain a momentum beyond his control (35). Hynes's third trickster characteristic is shape-shifting. He might transform himself through simple disguise or completely change his form (37). A fourth characteristic of the trickster is his "ability to overturn any person, place, or belief, no matter how prestigious" (37). He is a situation-invertor. He can turn a safe place into a dangerous one, for instance, or vice versa. This is related to his sanctioned role in some societies as "profaner of beliefs" (37). A fifth property of the trickster is that he "can be both a messenger and an imitator of the gods" (39). In this capacity he acts as a psychopomp, travelling between the worlds of the living and the dead. He brings back gifts for humans from the gods, often stealing them or breaking ritual taboos in the process. This characteristic "allows him to function as a cultural transformer" (40) even though, just as often, he parodies this role. The sixth and last characteristic Hynes imputes to the trickster involves "his role as a sacred and lewd bricoleur" (42). Here Hynes borrows Levi-Strauss's use of the term bricoleur which signifies a "fix-it person, noted for his ingenuity in transforming anything at hand in order to form a creative solution" (42). Typically, the trickster uses scatological or lewd elements to transform situations creatively.

In the two chapters that follow, I shall return to this question of trickster typology. I describe how /Kaggen has been ascribed certain characteristics that have been drawn from such typologies and discuss their applicability to him in the context of his place in /Xam discourse.

iv. Writing against the trickster

Several scholars criticise the general and comparative approach that characterises the writers whose notions of the trickster I have outlined in the previous two sections. They consider typologies such as Hynes's reductive and unhelpful. More seriously, such typologies can predispose the way in which culturally-specific characters are understood. In his 1967 study, *The Zande trickster*, Evans-Pritchard emphasises the need to understand trickster tales "in terms of specific cultural information" (Doty and Hynes 1993: 18). He goes on to argue that in the Zande materials "there is nothing buried. All is on the surface and there are no repressed

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symbols to interpret" (Evans-Pritchard 1967: 175). This position undermines the generalised approach, one of whose symptoms is the universal figure of the trickster, which relies on going beneath the surface of the particular story to discover the universal pattern and motifs that underlie it.

In his chapter in Doty and Hynes (1993), "The moral imagination of the Kaguru: some thoughts on tricksters, translation and comparative analysis", T.O. Beidelman (1993: 174) questions the use of "the comparative method to understand the meaning of collective representations in other societies." He briefly surveys some of the contributions to the discussion of the trickster figure and concludes that no fresh insights are to be gained from the "general, global approach" (175). He proposes that instead of beginning with an analytical grouping into which disparate characters are fitted, it would be more helpful to study "particular tricksters and their contexts well" (175). He mentions Kirk's (1974) criticism of the propensity to locate a disparate body of texts as myth and argues that the use of the global term

This assertion contrasts with Barnard's contention that there is a deeper meaning in folklore (including the /Xam narratives) "than that which appears on the surface" (1992: 82).

"trickster" is an equally reductive hermeneutic strategy.¹ The category "trickster" itself "may be merely the product of a series of false translations, much as terms such as family and witchcraft seem incomparable cross-culturally when taken out of context" (175). He proceeds to demonstrate his point by providing a local and particular reading of certain Kaguru figures, noting the paradox that in "presenting material in order to criticize a global definition, one is drawn into using the very terms and references which one is subjecting to question" (176).

In her chapter in Doty and Hynes (1993), "Inhabiting the space between discourse and story in trickster narratives", Anne Douehi (1993) delivers a deeper critique of trickster analysis, one which corresponds in key areas with the concerns of this thesis.¹ She locates the core of the problem in the tendency to confuse story and discourse. She employs Jonathan Culler's distinction between them: a story is "a sequence of actions or events, independent of their manifestation in discourse" whereas discourse is "the discursive presentation or narration of events" (1981: 169-170). The confusion of categories which results from the failure to distinguish between story and discourse has led in trickster studies to narratives being taken "at their referential (face) value" (Douehi 1993: 193). The assumption that the language of the stories is a "transparent medium for the communication of some meaning or another, consequently leads to the search for some univocal meaning to which the trickster and his stories might be reduced" (194). This has resulted in trickster stories being seen as meaningful to the degree they "figure in the great

¹⁴⁹ I critique this tendency regarding myth in chapter 6. Jane Atkinson (1992: 308, cited by Guenther 1999: 7) and Anne Solomon (forthcoming: 93) deliver a similar criticism of the use of the term "shaman" as a universal category.

¹⁵ Cf. Derrida's contention that we are so tied to the categories of logocentrism that "nothing is conceivable for us without them" (1976: 13).

¹⁵¹ Douehi uses Derrida's critique of the complex of the origin in western thought in a way that is close to the use I make of his work in this thesis.

^{15"} In chapter 5, section B, i, I note how Ann Solomon (forthcoming) identifies certain tendencies in Bushman rock art interpretation that parallel the approach to the interpretation of stories that Douehi is criticising here.

story of human civilization ..." (194). The trickster is located in a history which is either a fall away from presence or an "increasing revelation" of it. In either case the point of reference is "a moment of presence that lies outside history, a moment that is conceived as the ultimate origin of the world" (194).

Douehi maintains that most trickster analysis remains tied to this ideology of presence. Consequently, the trickster's meaning is sought in his origin (195) and this structure is imposed on the narratives. This results in a discourse of domination in which "Western conceptions of the sacred and profane, of myth and literature, and of origin, evolution, and degeneration, are used to frame the trickster ..." (195). The "terms set by the narratives themselves" are ignored. The beginning is either privileged as proximate to the origin or is seen as "a fall away into history, and is represented as a primitive, chaotic, and underdeveloped period, which gradually leads to order and civilization" (196). This, as we shall see, is an accurate description of the way in which the /Xam stories have been read, particularly in the work of Roger Hewitt and the writers he has influenced.

Douehi proposes that close attention be paid to individual narratives rather than turning the trickster into "a hypothetical figure invented to fit a theory ..." (196).¹⁵³ Such a strategy, she suggests, will show that the stories undermine the single meaning commentators discover in the course of imposing their discourse of domination. Instead it will be found that "texts open into a plurality of meanings, none of which is exclusively 'correct'" (199). Language generates multiple meanings through complex sets of relationships. It is not a transparent medium reflecting a single reality outside itself. "It is in the reversals and discontinuities in language, in the narrative, that meaning is produced - not one meaning, but the possibility of meaningfulness" (201). I attempt in part of chapter 4 and in chapters 7, 8 and 9 to pursue the sort of reading of individual narratives that Douehi proposes and for the same reasons.

¹⁵³ Cf. Bourdieu's criticism of anthropologists for writing their books "before they arrive" (Webb, Schirato and Danaher. 2002: 35).

Henry Louis Gates's *The signifying monkey: a theory of Afro-American literary criticism* (1988) exemplifies the sort of critical approach that Doueïhi advocates when she suggests that a text be approached not as a story but as "a play of discourse with its own possibilities of being meaningful" (Doueïhi 1993: 201). Gates identifies the Afro-American figure, the signifying monkey, as a trickster, the "functional equivalent" in Afro-American profane discourse of the divine Yoruba Esu figure of West Africa who assumes various but linked figurations across the new world (Gates 1988: 52). Nowhere, though, does he attempt to situate this figure within a universal narrative of the trickster or attempt to compare him with other tricksters from different cultures. Instead of imposing a logocentric hermeneutics on the materials that turns on the myth of the lost origin, Gates shows that the Afro-American materials he deals with themselves embody a sophisticated hermeneutical system, one that revels in the materiality of language.

According to Gates, the difference between this tradition of interpretation and the western critical one is illustrated in the meanings the term "signify" mobilises in the two discourses. "Signification," in standard English, denotes the meaning that a term conveys, or is intended to convey" (46). This "fundamental term in the English linguistic order" whose conventions have been established "at least officially, by middle-class white people" (47) is contrasted with the use of the term by blacks who use it to refer to a range of rhetorical tactics. In using the term in this way, blacks mark their "difference from the rest of the English community of speakers." Gates employs a similar strategy to Derrida's use of "difference" and *^differance^* in order to both refer to the white sign and to distance the black usage from it when he uses the lower case for the white signs, "signification and "signify", and the upper case for the black signs. He also brackets the "g" whose absent presence becomes "a figure for the Signifyin(g) black difference" (46), a tactic reminiscent of Derrida's use of erasure. Black Signification undermines white signification in a profound linguistic way for it denotes "the rhetorical

¹⁵⁴ See chapter 2, section A, i in which I discuss Derrida's employment of these terms.

structures of the black vernacular" and, therefore, replaces a semantic relationship with a rhetorical one (48). It belongs to a way of using language that calls attention to itself "as an extended linguistic sign" (53), the antithesis of the conventional view in the west of the relationship between signifier and signified which is predicated on a view of language as a transparent medium, a bridge between the world and the realm of signification.

Whereas the Yoruba figure, Esu, in West Africa is a god "who functions in sacred myth", his equivalent in "Afro-American profane discourse, the Signifying Monkey, exists not as a character in stories, "but rather as a vehicle for narration itself (52).¹⁵⁵ If misunderstood, this aspect of the Signifying Monkey, contends Gates, can lead to serious hermeneutical errors when interpreting the poems and tales in which this figure appears. A reading which seeks to uncover their allegorical meaning misses their "repeated stress on the sheer materiality, and the wilful play, of the signified itself (59). These materials have no underlying meaning to which they can be reduced for they exist purely "as a play of differences" (61). A similar misunderstanding occurs when criticism seeks to find "determinate meaning" in myths when those myths fundamentally "privilege both the figurative and the ambiguous" (22).

The meta-linguistic role of the Signifying Monkey has its roots in the Yoruba topos of the divine trickster figure, Esu-Elegbara (5) who "interprets the will of the gods to man" and conveys "the desires of man to the gods" (6). Gates compares Esu's role to that of Hermes from whom the term "hermeneutics" is derived (8). Esu is "the figure of the critic" (13) and a "metaphor for the uncertainty of explication" (21).¹⁵⁶

¹³⁵ Hewitt (1986) sometimes approaches this position when he regards /Kaggen as the operational principle in certain categories of /Xam narrative. See chapter 4.

¹³⁶ /Kaggen, too, it could be argued, possesses a meta-linguistic role. See chapter 6, section iii.

Gates emphasises the intertextuality of the materials he discusses. Texts refer to others of the same genre. "[I]ntertextuality represents a process of revision" (60), a process which devalues meaning and valorises the signifier (61). Value resides in the foregrounding of the signifier "rather than in the invention of a novel signified" (61). Gates proceeds to demonstrate in the rest of his study the extent to which black American writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Ismael Reed and Alice Walker build on the vernacular tradition of Signifyin (g). This tradition, which includes its own methods and values of interpretation and criticism, does not draw in a derivative way on the white literary tradition. As a result, interpretative tools that have been developed in order to read the texts of the white tradition are poorly adapted to apprehend black American literature.

Although Gates uses the trickster term and does not attempt to institute a discussion as to the legitimacy of the linking of the concept of the trickster with the figures he explores from the African and Afro-American traditions, the whole thrust of his work is away from the universalising western mode of thought to which the idea of the trickster owes its existence. His labelling the western tradition "white" indicates the regional scope of this tradition, despite its pretensions to universality. His explication of the black tradition illustrates the existence of a realm of literature and interpretation which is not readily amenable to the traditional categories of western criticism. The two traditions, he maintains, are predicated on fundamental linguistic differences at the level of the sign itself. Afro-American literature operates happily within the play of difference of signifiers whereas, as Derrida's work shows, the western critical tradition which seeks to understand it depends on a metaphysics of presence in which the sign points to a truth beyond itself. The Jungian trickster illustrates this point clearly since it is explicitly linked to a transcendental signified, the universal archetype, trickster. The more modest signification of the term in the work of writers such as Doty, Hynes, Pelton, Ricketts, Hewitt and Guenther still falls, I would argue, within this metaphysics of presence since it is rooted in the idea of a general human culture in which the figure

of the trickster makes repeated appearances, albeit in different guises and roles, as a signified.

Gates's work, in my view, has profound implications for the way in which the /Xam stories are read. If the critical tools developed in the west are inadequate to the task of interpreting Black American texts for the reasons so carefully explicated by Gates, is it not reasonable to question their applicability to the /Xam materials? Gates's work also reminds us of the importance of foregrounding the intertextuality of the /Xam narratives and of treating /Kaggen as a signifier that works in the material sphere of discourse rather than as a universal type. Douehi's essay, too, has far-reaching consequences, I believe, for the reading of /Kaggen as a trickster. In the following two chapters I will investigate the implications of the work of Gates and Douehi for both my critique of the existing literature on /Kaggen and for my investigation of the /Xam materials themselves.

v. The trickster: universal type or local delusion?

I will contend in the course of my analysis of Hewitt, Guenther and Solomon's readings of the /Xam texts featuring /Kaggen that the concept of the trickster leads to interpretations in which meanings are discovered that are intrinsic to particular interpretative frameworks but extrinsic to the narratives. The significance of the stories does not reside, I believe, in the presence within them of a universal trickster but in their intertextual relationships and their position within an indigenously discursive formation that is not based on a metaphysics of presence. The stories, I maintain, signify directly from their surfaces, in accordance with an internal economy of difference, a difficulty for a critical tradition which instinctively delves beneath the surface, seeking universals and general patterns. In the process of examining the ways in which other commentators have written about /Kaggen and in the course of my own analysis of some of the narratives, I try to read /Kaggen as a figure unique to /Xam signifying practice, a figure of the singularity of that culture and not as a type, common to many cultures. But first, in the remainder of

this chapter, I shall discuss the claim to universal applicability of western rationalism, for the notion of the trickster is, I believe, one of its products, as is the obsession with origins which I investigate in relation to interpretation and the /Xam narratives in the final four chapters of the thesis. This discussion relies on Jean Baudrillard's critique of the place of the universal in western thought.

Western rationalism, argues Baudrillard, is a way of thinking that does not perceive its own relativity. It also fails to discern its quasi-religious nature, characterised not only by faith in the intellect's ability to disclose the truths behind appearances but also in its abject devotion to the "real". As Baudrillard puts it: "Belief in reality is one of the elementary forms of religious life. It is a failing of the understanding, a failing of common sense as well as the last refuge of moral zealots and the apostles of rationality " (Baudrillard 2001: 266). Rationalism believes there is a truth with which, inevitably, it will converge, a reality waiting to be comprehended. I have already noted Jung's absolute conviction of the truth of his analysis of the trickster. This species of thought is indissolubly "bound to the real. It starts out from the hypothesis that ideas have referents and that there is a possible ideation of reality" (267). This conviction encourages the construction of elaborate interpretative apparatuses, supported by seemingly irrefutable evidence, which purport to achieve a true understanding of their reified objects.

Modern rationalism, and the humanism that accompanies it, operates within a universal grand narrative that regards all cultures as representative of stages of one universal culture. This narrative, as we saw in chapter 2, also lies behind the interest in origins. It provides a structure that predisposes researchers to classify elements within the materials they study in wide categories. Divergences are played down and correspondences exaggerated in order to build an overarching science, in this case comparative mythology. The researchers investigating particular cultural products then resort to this general study to illuminate the specific materials with which they are working instead of concentrating on the operation of distinctive discursive practices.

Ironically, given its truth claims, rationalism's universal pretensions often obscure "the truth". Anne Solomon's recent book (forthcoming) has thrown the shamanistic interpretation of Bushman rock art into question, an interpretation that confidently claims to have discovered the key to the deciphering of all rock art, and one which depends on the idea of the universal contents of the human mind. The whole theory, she claims, is built on an incorrect interpretation of a term in the Bleek and Lloyd collection. Similarly, Indian historians have shown, with the backing of recent archaeological evidence, that the Aryan invasion theory, which still distorts both Indian history and the history of the rise of "civilizations" generally, is untenable, a fiction of Europeans obsessed with universalism and origins (Klostermaier, 2000: 34-37).¹⁵⁷

BaudriUard notes the peculiarity of the notion of the universal. No other culture has a term for it:

Interestingly, in terms of the concerns of this study, it was, argues Klostermaier in the same section, the nineteenth century "science" of comparative mythology that first led western historians to force the evidence of the Rg Veda into the Aryan invasion thesis. This has had many consequences, some of which echo tendencies in the study of the /Xam texts. Dandekar, for instance, argues that one of the products of the tradition of comparative mythology in Indian studies has been the suppression of the role of the writers of the Rg Veda. These writers, he maintains, created the Rg Vedic gods "for the myths and not the myths for the gods" (cited by Klostermaier: 51). Dandekar is asserting that textuality, the ways in which meaning is generated within a particular signifying practice, is of greater significance than the location of a story within some greater idealist, universal scheme of things. Similarly, I will argue that /Kaggen does not appear before the text, as much of the interpretation of the /Xam figure implies he does. Nor is the narrator outside the story. Interpretations in the tradition of comparative mythology, on the other hand, regard the storyteller as a medium and the particular story as only an instance of the universal. The type precedes the example. Traditions and cultures are interesting chiefly in so far as they illustrate the different stages that man has travelled on his way to the realisation of universal "values, human rights, freedoms, culture, democracy" (BaudriUard 2001: 280). See chapter 6 for an expanded discussion of these questions.

thought' "may assume violent, anomalous, irrational aspects" (281). "Everything which constitutes an event today is done against the universal ..." (281-282). The thinker who fails to comprehend this will "be caught up in an endless and pointless wrestling match between a universal thought assured of its power and good conscience and an even greater number of implacable singularities" (281).

Globalisation, Baudrillard maintains, is not assured of victory over "the heterogeneous forces" that have emerged in "the void left by the universal" (283). The critic faces, then, a political choice about whether or not to contribute to the unintelligibility of the heterogeneous space out of which cultural singularity emerges. Baudrillard's analysis suggests the strategic possibility of a type of poetics that weakens the claims of the universalising intellect and accepts singularity, a type of criticism that focuses on its inability to know and that does not seek to render the other "intelligible." "The absolute rule of thought is to give back the world as it was given to us to us - unintelligible. And, if possible, to render it a little more unintelligible" (275).

I will argue in the two chapters that follow that /Kaggen should be located within /Xam discursive practice and not situated within an idealist architectonics of universal types. None of the other elements in the narratives involving /Kaggen is merely fortuitous. All these elements derive their power to generate meaning from the relationships formed within /Xam signifying practice itself (Brown: 1995: 80). These relationships, which include the conjunction of the sign "Kaggen" with a multitude of other signs, and the meanings they generate, I will also argue, ultimately remain elusive to the critic, even though they reside in the open, on the outside of the stories. My strategy is to foreground these elements and their unintelligibility, in Baudrillard's sense, rather than to regard them as subordinate to a narrative of the trickster.

CHAPTER FOUR: /KAGGEN, THE HARTEBEEST AND THE WORK OF HEWITT

This chapter deals with the figure of /Kaggen. I discuss several aspects of /Kaggen (often referred to as the Mantis) as he appears in the Bleek and Lloyd materials and in the work of Roger Hewitt whose 1986 work, *Structure, meaning and ritual in the narratives of the southern San*, remains the most detailed exposition of the /Xam materials to date. The chapter is divided into three parts. In the first I examine Hewitt's reading of the /Kaggen materials and question his threefold division of them. I investigate the structuralist and functionalist tendencies in his analysis and relate these to the notions of the universal trickster discussed in the last chapter. I also explore the relationship between /Kaggen and other signifying elements that occur in the field of the hunting observances. In the second part, I re-examine Hewitt's analytical approach in the context of a particular story that features /Kaggen, namely the story entitled 'the Mantis assumes the form of a Hartebeest' by Bleek and Lloyd (1911). This serves to question some of Hewitt's contentions about the structure and function of the stories and to propose different strategies for reading the /Kaggen materials. In the last part, I turn away from Hewitt's work in order to consider the place of the sign "hartebeest" in the /Xam discursive system. In so doing, I hope to illustrate my contention that a narrative's capacity to signify depends on the relationships between all the elements contained within it and on the interaction of these elements with the wider discursive field.

Hewitt's 1986 book is based on his 1976 PhD thesis, 'An examination of the Bleek and Lloyd Collection of /Xam narratives with special reference to the trickster /Kaggen.' This thesis resulted from his reading of the original manuscripts. The notebooks had been presumed lost for several decades after Dorothea Bleek's death until Hewitt tracked them down (Bennun 2005: 345). Subsequent critics have not only Hewitt's persistence to be grateful for but also his groundbreaking and often

ingenious analysis of the texts. His work has been seminal in the field of the study of/Xam narratives.¹⁵⁸ My detailed criticisms of his work should not detract from my acknowledgement of its inestimable value. I should certainly have been unable to embark on a study of this nature without it.

A. The work of Roger Hewitt on the /Xam narratives

i. Structuralism and functionalism in Hewitt's work

In his study of the Bleek and Lloyd collection, Roger Hewitt pursues the meaning of the stories with a pioneering ingenuity appropriate to the first systematic investigation of the materials. His approach is primarily structuralist, taxonomic and functionalist. He surveys the field. As he does so, he sorts the diverse materials into categories and delineates the structural principles that underlie the various narrative types he identifies. He provides an intricate breakdown of the /Kaggen materials in which he articulates the different types of narrative with different categories of trick, adversary and social message (145-233). The /Kaggen stories, he maintains, are particularly suited to this enterprise since they are the "only large group of narratives which show a structural uniformity at the level of plot" among the /Xam materials (120). Hewitt's mapping procedure is accompanied by a detailed investigation of the relationship between the narratives and /Xam culture in general and a consideration of the function of the /Kaggen stories, to which he accords a special social role, one which corresponds, I will show in the next section, in many respects with the role given the trickster in some of the writing on the trickster examined in the previous chapter. He briefly discusses a great number of the "approximately one hundred narratives" he finds in

Solomon (forthcoming: 245) laments the paucity of "literary attention to San texts - in the sense of how they work(ed), then and now, as verbal art The most notable exception to this is Hewitt's structural study of/Xam narratives ... perhaps the most detailed and insightful study of them from a literary (albeit structural) perspective."

the notebooks in the course of his study and analyses a few of them in considerable detail (16).¹⁵⁹

Hewitt's study is wide-ranging, complex and sometimes speculative. Almost every statement made in a critique of an aspect of his work has to be qualified when other aspects of his work are taken into account. I will argue below that much of this is attributable to unintended contradictions in Hewitt's work which flow from the deployment of incompatible theoretical approaches. His functionalist and structuralist approaches are not always mutually consistent. Nor does Hewitt's close and admirable attention to the specificity of /Xam life easily accord with some of his general and comparative observations regarding the trickster, which he derives from some of the wider anthropological literature that I described in the previous chapter.

More contradictions result from the sheer scope of Hewitt's work. He produces, for instance, an extensive structural breakdown of groups of narratives, a procedure which overrides the details of individual stories. Several of his statements, accordingly, betray a bias towards plot at the expense of textual elements. Most of the sidereal narratives he claims, for example, were not "told with sufficient expansiveness or care to warrant much attention as verbal art" (91). He calls the details of texts "the verbal surface" and leaves a consideration of it to the end of his book (235). Nevertheless, he does, despite this position, examine certain stories closely. His detailed analysis of 'the story of the Dawn's Heart and his wife' is a case in point (94-103). He uses this story to demonstrate his contention that an

¹⁵⁹ Many of these hundred or so narratives are presented in several versions. Hewitt (1986: 213-234) devotes a chapter to discussing the phenomenon of different variations of a story. He emphasises the role of individual narrators in producing different versions of stories. I refer to the existence of multiple accounts of a narrative in several places in this thesis, especially in my discussion of aetiology in chapter 6 and 'the story of the moon and the hare' in chapter 8. I focus on the production of discursive plurivocity, however, rather than on the predilections of the narrators.

¹⁶⁰ In my view these narratives do warrant attention as verbal art. I devote three chapters to them later in the thesis.

analysis must "deal with texts at several levels, if a plausible reconstruction of the meaning and resonance which those narratives may have had for their original audiences is to be made." In addition to the formal level, presumably the level his structuralist analysis delineates, he identifies also the "level of ethnographic detail" as well as the level of "the social function and weight of whole motifs or whole narratives" and the level of "basic ways of conceiving of the world which declare themselves in narrative form" (94).

Another area of contradiction in his book concerns the role of the narrators. In the course of mapping the stories structurally, he reduces the contribution that the narrators make to the narrative structure to "entertainment" (183). Later in the book, however, Hewitt devotes a whole chapter to a description of how the narrators produced not only particular styles of narrative but even arranged dispersed narrative units in such a way as to form their own narratives (235-247). Some of the apparent contradictions in Hewitt's work are consciously produced, for he offers many of his insights in an exploratory spirit, noting that there are limits to the extent of the knowledge we can claim of the /Xam and their narratives. These limits, for Hewitt, are attributable not to the unintelligibility of the world (Baudrillard 2001: 275) or to the self-referentiality of logocentric thought but to the absence of a lived context for the narratives and limited ethnographic data (Hewitt 1986: 19).

Hewitt concentrates on structural typologies rather than on textual analysis (Brown 1995: 79). These "context free structural typologies", according to Brown (1998: 36), omit considerations of the "symbolic resonance of the communication." Brown's statement is accurate with regard to Hewitt's mapping of the typologies of the narratives. Elsewhere in his book, though, Hewitt does offer detailed ethnographic contexts for the narratives. Hewitt (19) himself describes his project as follows: "The collection is described in groups distinguished by content; plots, themes and motifs being related to their ethnographic context and situated as deeply with /Xam culture as the data allows."

Hewitt consistently locates storytelling within the realm of the social. Storytelling, he maintains, is a type of speech. Among the /Xam, speech "was almost a continual social activity" (47). At first reading, this phrase does not invite further inspection. It is self-evident and unsurprising. But what does it, in fact, signify? Is Hewitt simply asserting the point that a great deal of the surplus time that attends a foraging economy is devoted to conversation and storytelling? He quotes Dorothea Bleek to this effect: "Half or more than half of each day was spent lounging about watching bird and beast, and talking - always talking" (47, quoting Bleek, D. and Stow, G 1930: xxxiiiif). Closer investigation of the statement, I would argue, reveals its relationship with the myth of the lost origin and the idea of the fullness of presence. /Xam speech, Hewitt stresses, is a constant, timeless medium without beginning or end. Storytelling occurs within this kind of speech. It belongs to a continual speaking that retains a purity that more self-conscious speech has lost. It has qualities of spontaneity and naturalness. It is continual (like breathing and as artless), social (not the private mutterings of the divided self of modern man) and retains a particular unity and presence that precedes the division of experience and the fracturing of speech into truth and fiction, the ordinary and extraordinary. Hewitt points out that the /Xam used the term "kukummi" for all kinds of speech: stories, conversation and news (47).¹⁶¹ In the seamless movement from conversation and news to story, the textual is held in abeyance. As Derrida (1976) emphasises, the suppressed binary that gives speech its power in logocentric thought is writing. Writing, in this framework, is more than a technique of inscribing words. It describes the process of the production of meaning through artifice. It always occurs at a remove. Speech, on the other hand, is the direct manifestation of consciousness and truth. Hewitt, I would argue, is referring to this pure kind of speech, untainted by writing. The "voice is the centre"; "writing is derivative" (Collins and Mayblin 2000: 41). Hewitt himself separates speech from writing when he notes that narrative formed "part of daily living to an extent

¹⁶¹ He does qualify this observation, though, by noting that narratives "constituted a distinct mode of expression" (48).

unknown in literate societies where leisure time is limited" (Hewitt 1986: 47). By bringing this opposition into play, the opposition essential to the metaphysics of presence, Hewitt signals his approach to the materials he will examine. This approach relies heavily on the nature/culture binary that follows from the division between speech and writing.

I would argue also that the use of the term "social" in this context refers to a pre-institutional community of presence that transcends the sum of its individual parts (55). This is consistent with Hewitt's functionalist interpretation of stories. Functionalist explanations, in the context of anthropology, are based on the view that societies are healthy organisms whose parts all contribute to the satisfactory working of the whole. They are actually nearer to natural than to social configurations. Such societies remain close to the wholeness of the origin. Storytelling functions to preserve the wholesome cohesiveness of these pristine social formations.

The overall thrust of Hewitt's work and the ideological basis of much of the work in Bushman studies, outlined in chapter 1, justifies, I feel, this reading of Hewitt's statement regarding speech and /Xam society. Nevertheless, as I pointed out earlier, my critique of Hewitt's thinking often has to be qualified. While Hewitt's work inevitably contains logocentric foundations, which Derrida, as we saw, finds unavoidable in western thought, including his own, and Hewitt refers favourably,

Functionalism depends on the objective nature of a social world which can be described with particular methods. The investigator is seen as a neutral, unbiased observer. Societies are considered as organic wholes comparable to biological organisms. Social practices and institutions serve to maintain the equilibrium of the society in the same way that different parts of the body maintain the body's overall health, even if the way they do this is not immediately obvious. Individual socialisation into the norms and values of the society and ensuing conformance with them is critical to the preservation of social stability. In the course of this chapter, I will show how Hewitt's analysis of the narrative fits these broad features of functionalism.

but not uncritically, to the ideas of writers like Levi-Strauss and Radin who exemplify such thinking, there are several characteristics of Hewitt's work that mitigate the presence of the complex of the lost origin in his work. His writing is restrained and exploratory. He is not given, for instance, to overtly idealistic pronouncements about the purity of hunter-gatherer societies and their proximity to the origin. Statements such as "some /Xam at least also felt an attunement to their environment which almost reached mystical proportions" (51) are exceptions in his generally sober text. He notes the presence of power and social tensions in /Xam society (115). His structuralist and functionalist tendencies are balanced by a historical and ethnographic grounding of the /Xam materials that runs counter to the universalising tendencies of logocentric thought that I described in the last chapter. Although he identifies /Kaggen as a trickster who shares attributes with other figures from around the world as they appear in the work of writers like Paul Radin (131) and Ruth Finnegan (160), Hewitt always insists that /Kaggen's "role *qua* trickster [be] elucidated within a very specific ethnographic context" (19-20). Hewitt accepts the universal category but insists on its local contextualization: "The trickster may be found throughout the world but the way in which a trickster is integrated with the ideas and world-view of any society is likely to be specific to that society" (Hewitt 1986: 210).

Hewitt's hermeneutic strategy, as I have noted, contains structuralist and functionalist elements. Functionalism, as I have already argued, participates in the metaphysical ideology of the origin. Structuralism, too, can be linked with this complex. Structuralist schemes, of the kind Hewitt employs in his classifications of the narratives, presuppose the existence of a "perfectly rational language that perfectly represents the real world. Such a language of reason would absolutely guarantee that the **presence** of the world - the essence of **everything** in the world - would be transparently (re)present(ed) to an observing subject who could speak of it with complete certainty" (Appignanesi and Garratt 1995: 78, emphases in the original). While retaining the central structuralist insight that meaning is produced from the relationships between signs, Derrida, according to Appignanesi and

Garratt, would claim that observers are always implicated in the production of meaning: "To observe is to interact, so the 'scientific' detachment of structuralists or of any other rationalist position is untenable" (79). The sort of framework within which Hewitt positions the various narratives masks the subjective and historical nature of his critique and lends credence to the view that structuralism is based on the supposition "that anything reasoned is ... universal, timeless and stable" (79).

Hewitt's use of structuralism is signalled in his title and in his references. His equal reliance on functionalism, though, is never overtly stated although he several times refers to the function of narratives. In relation, for example, to stories dealing with menarcheal girls he states that "there is no doubt that these narratives primarily functioned to support the practices" connected to the puberty rites (Hewitt 1986: 76). Elsewhere he writes that the recurring motifs in legends "generally function to recommend types of behaviour" (71). Regarding the /Kaggen narratives, he argues that "the family functions ... mainly in the contrast between the approved morality and social norms of /Kaggen's world and his ignorance and violation of them ..." (149). But Hewitt never clearly sets out the theoretical foundations of his functionalist analysis or defends them. By concealing his own ideology and the political principles related to it, the historically situated critic disappears. Instead of a complicit fashioner of text, he becomes a neutral scientist of the "real." The relativity and historicity of the interpreter's analysis is obscured. It is assumed that reason is a timeless, neutral investigative instrument rather than a particular cultural product whose attempt to tell the truth about other cultures is more illuminating of its own tradition and practices than it is of the cultures it scrutinises. The /Xam narratives, I maintain, have an uncanny ability to unravel this certainty when investigated with attention to their detail rather than with the purpose of reducing

The closest he comes perhaps is when he states that his "book examines the narratives at several levels, analysing the ways in which the organisation of narrative materials (plots, themes, motifs, etc.) together with the values and norms expressed through them, was frequently influenced by conceptual templates traceable in other aspects of culture, including belief and ritual" (Hewitt 1986: 19).

them to simple social functions or forcing them to conform to a structure that supposedly underlies them, but that is actually extrinsic to them.

Hewitt's simultaneous deployment of functionalist and structuralist approaches, as I noted earlier, sometimes produces inconsistencies in his work as a whole.¹⁶⁴ But even his structuralist and functionalist readings themselves contain contradictions. In his attempts to locate both the patterns behind the individual stories and the formal principles by which they are generated, Hewitt sometimes appeals to a grammar of the story that reaches beyond the /Xam⁵ and sometimes to the relationship between elements within the /Xam stories themselves. This results in an uneasy relationship in his critique between the universal and the particular. Similarly, his functionalist explanations, as I have indicated, imply that the meanings conveyed in the stories reflect the need for social cohesion. He seeks to expose the social imperatives and values in the stories that are peculiar to /Xam society and asserts that the reinforcement of these values is critical to the maintenance of the social order. A recurrent example would be the norms surrounding food-sharing (114). While the values being reinforced might be characteristic /Xam ones, their reinforcement is always in the interest of social cohesion, that functionalist universal. At times, too, the actual values that are being strengthened seem to belong to a timeless prototypical hunter-gathering society rather than to a peculiarly /Xam social patterning. The value of the importance of a "consistent relationship with nature", for instance, which Hewitt identifies as being reproduced in the /Kaggen narratives, is of so general a character that it belongs, in my opinion, to a universal discourse about the importance of nature for the hunter-gatherer rather than to the singularity of /Xam praxis (134). In both his functionalist and structuralist keys, Hewitt goes beyond or behind the contingency of the text and emerges with a higher truth, in one case the ideal patterning to which the individual stories conform, in the other, the "real" reason for the stories, their

¹⁴ This is partly the result, in my view, of the fact that structuralism is related to rationalist philosophical tendencies and functionalism to empirical ones (Palmer: 27-29).

¹⁶⁵ An example of this occurs when he cites Propp (1986: 179-180).

function. Even though structuralism and functionalism are often combined, they imply, in my opinion, different views of society and knowledge. They provide different kinds of analysis. They participate equally, though, in the "metaphysics of presence" discussed in the section on Derrida in chapter 2.

Hewitt's structural and functionalist analyses both rely on a nature/culture binary. He reads the stories as the assertion of the socio-cultural over nature and distinguishes a "basic opposition between elemental nature and /Xam culture" (Hewitt 1986: 88). "Many of the magico-religious ideas of the /Xam," he argues, related to the "broader opposition, nature/culture ..." (136). Hewitt sometimes equates nature with disorder and chaos and sometimes with an order that is different from but linked to the human order. He frequently qualifies the dichotomy between nature and culture by including "the order of the /Xam's daily interaction with amenable nature" along with the "order of social life itself as part of culture (134). The "orderliness of nature was essentially bound up with the orderliness of society" (113). In this way part of nature is claimed for the human sphere and is separated from "malevolent wildness" (101).

Culture is linked to stability and order but is also susceptible to lapsing back into the natural, as in the many stories in which artefacts return to the raw materials from which they originated.¹⁶⁷ The stories flirt with chaos but always end with the re-establishment of conservative social values. The threat of danger and disorganisation provide the incentive to preserve the social order: "The social aspect of order was, to some extent, shaped by its own dangerous elements" (134). This dynamic, he claims, is reproduced in the stories. Although Hewitt concedes

¹⁶⁶ Levi-Strauss seems to have strongly influenced this aspect of Hewitt's work. Hewitt does not use Levi-Strauss uncritically, however. In his discussion of a story concerning the Dawn's Heart Star and the Lynx, for example, he claims that the binaries in the narrative are mediated differently from the way Levi-Strauss claims they are in myth (1986: 102). Hewitt's bibliography cites five of Levi-Strauss's works.

¹⁶⁷ An example would be the reversion of the belongings of the family members of a girl who violates the puberty observances "into their natural constituents" (79).

that the stories are not explicitly didactic, he holds, nevertheless, that they function primarily as vehicles for the confirmation of the social order. "By violating social norms within the narratives, he (/Kaggen) re-enforced (sic) the 'idea of society' ..." (137). Hewitt claims that his nature/culture binary is not a universal category projected onto the narratives but part of "a conceptual apparatus with strong meaning for the /Xam" (103). The particular manipulation of the binaries is peculiar to /Xam culture and "would be unlikely to survive were they to be transposed to another culture."

ii. Hewitt's reading of the role of /Kaggen in the narratives

Hewitt (123) introduces /Kaggen as the /Xam trickster. He draws on the wider trickster literature in order to comprehend the nature of /Kaggen and to compare /Kaggen with other tricksters.¹⁶⁸ He never refers to the debates that attend the use of the term "trickster." He does, however, implicitly take issue with Radin's ahistorical universalism. In an important statement he says that the trickster is "not necessarily 'all things to all men' as Radin (1956: 169) suggests." Instead he has attempted "to show some of the ways in which the trickster, /Kaggen, was embedded in and integrated with the ideas and attitudes found in one San group, the /Xam, in one period of their history is so far as those ideas and attitudes are preserved in the collection of /Xam texts made by Bleek and Lloyd" (Hewitt 1986: 210). /Kaggen, the Mantis, he informs us, lives with his family in the time when animals were still people.⁹ His wife, the Dassie, appears only intermittently in the narratives. She appears as a devoted but critical wife (148). Their adopted daughter, Porcupine, her husband, Kwammang-a (associated with the rainbow, in

In a book not overburdened with quotes and references, Hewitt refers in relation to the trickster to the writing of Radin (131), Evans-Pritchard (163 -164), Biesele (160) and Finnegan. He compares /Kaggen with the Winnebago trickster (150), the Dakota Indian trickster, the Zu/wa trickster (160), the Zande trickster (163) and the West African figure, Anansi (156).

¹⁹ This period, as I stated at the beginning of this thesis, is usually referred to in the literature as the First Times or the First Order and its inhabitants as the people of the Early Race.

which he can be seen), and their son, the Mantis's grandson, Ichneumon (a type of mongoose), feature prominently. The Ichneumon is fond of the Mantis but is also able to criticise him. Between the Ichneumon and /Kaggen, as between all children and their maternal grandparents, there exists a joking relationship (147). The Ichneumon often voices his father's concerns. As /Kaggen's son-in-law, Kwammang-a has an avoidance relationship with him and may not address him directly.¹⁷⁰ /Kaggen, Hewitt maintains, sets himself apart from his family by his anti-social behaviour. It is not that he is aloof or unfriendly, however. He is especially affectionate and protective towards his children and towards his sister, the Blue Crane (148). He is anti-social because he engages in activities that bring trouble to the group, often by unnecessarily confronting outsiders. He almost always ignores warnings to desist from a particular course of action. His ignorance of appropriate social behaviour "is not anti-social as such" but it does result, argues Hewitt, from /Kaggen's "lack of involvement with his society, for knowledge is largely socially owned ..." (161).

The world that /Kaggen and his family inhabit is shared by other animal-people who have human form but who also display "some of the attributes of the animals they will in time become" (105). A wide range of species (nearly 50) is represented from insects, birds and small mammals to "larger animals such as the elephant and the rhinoceros." Hewitt maintains that the narratives generated by the interactions between these characters are especially concerned with the themes of food-sharing, marriage and inter-family relationships (106).

The figure !Khwa appears at various places in the materials, often, as we shall see in chapter 9, in relation to menstruation. He represents the unambiguously destructive force of nature, particularly that of "male" rain, the violent force of the

This avoidance relationship was culturally sanctioned. "Certain avoidances were practiced between the wife's parents and their son-in-law" (29).

storm. /Kaggen operates within a more playful, less threatening sphere. Nevertheless, according to Hewitt, /Kaggen, like !Khwa, works primarily against the interests of the human community. Since he is on the side of nature, he is aligned with the disorder that culture and society keep at bay. His activities disrupt the social order. Although /Kaggen actually lives in a quasi-human community and !Kwha exists beyond a social group, Hewitt maintains that "!Khwa operated exclusively at a point of transition within society," specifically the rites of passage of a new maiden (79), while /Kaggen "did not relate directly to the social structure in any respect" (135). He related instead predominantly to "the order of the /Xam's inter-action with nature" (135). This contention seems to contradict his repeated assertions about the importance of the figure of /Kaggen in reinforcing the social structure. Hewitt, however, is emphasising the structural difference in the way the two figures operate. !Kwha's intervention is direct. If particular social observances are breached, the menarcheal ones, in particular, dire consequences will follow. /Kaggen's role is indirect. His violation of the norms and codes relating to relationships in the wider natural world creates an opportunity for members of his family to articulate social norms and codes.

Even if it is accepted that /Kaggen's activities occur primarily in the sphere of nature rather than within the social order, I would argue that nature in the world of the stories is a thoroughly socialised space in which animals are people or proto-people and proto-animals. The human sphere is not properly distinguishable from the world of animals. The human social order has not been fixed and positioned outside nature. When the separation of the animal from the human does occur, as in the narrative of the anteater and the lynx (L.II.2.323-356; L.II.3.383-475), it involves the location of the different species, including humans, within their own social orders and within the wider social sphere of the interactions between species rather than the establishment of a clear boundary between humans and culture on the one hand and animals and nature on the other.

¹⁷¹ The rain, Solomon (forthcoming: 46) asserts, appears as a "deeply sinister figure" in southern San narratives and can be equated with "death itself."

Hewitt himself observes that the borders between nature and culture were blurred during the period of the First Times when animals were people and roles and identity were not yet fixed: "the raw materials of life - both cosmological and social - were constantly interacting, rearranging themselves, revealing social truths and the natural order of things" (48).¹⁷² /Kaggen exploits these conditions of uncertainty and of possibility. He is *the* figure of the liminal spaces between nature and culture, the first citizen of the unstable, chaotic landscapes of the First Times. "[I]t is his very marginality which provides the conditions for the transformations which he performs" (176). Hewitt here links social truths and the natural order of things. Elsewhere, though, as we have seen, he opposes the natural and the social orders. The stories themselves encourage this contradiction if they are read in terms of a nature/culture binary. 'The story of the sun's armpit' that I will analyse in a later chapter suggests that a natural order of things does indeed exist; there is a particular path to be followed by the sun. The story in which the anteater sets out separate ways of life for the different species also supports the idea of a natural order, conformance with which will preclude the confusion resulting from deviation from its template. Many of the other stories, though, deal with contingencies. In these stories things possess particular characteristics because of accidents or mistakes and not as a result of the emergence of their innate natures. Most of the aetiological details in the animal stories would fit this second category.⁷³ The social order, as I have indicated, is so inextricably interrelated with the natural order that it is often indistinguishable from it. And yet there are forces of the

¹⁷² Hewitt, as we have seen, stresses the role of the stories in affirming social truths. Here he states that the stories of the First Order refer to a formative period when social truths were being revealed. There is, it seems to me, some tension inherent in the suggestion that the stories affirm what is only coming into being. How can the stories simultaneously describe a fluid state of becoming and confirm static social codes?

¹⁷³ The hare's lip, for example, originates from the moon's striking the baby hare when he cries for his mother after the hare refuses to trust the moon's assurances that his mother is not dead and will return. See chapter 8. In another story, the hyena acquires his small back after the jackal deceives him and he falls in the fire (L.V 4. 4231-4263).

natural order, such as !Khwa, which constantly threaten the human order. These apparent paradoxes disappear when the binary nature/culture is lifted from the analysis. The relationship between nature and culture in the /Xam materials should, in my view, be seen as much more complex and fluid than that of a simple opposition. Hewitt's kind of structuralist critique, however, depends on such oppositions.

Hewitt generally employs the word "function" to refer to the role of the plot components in a narrative (73-93). It might be best to avoid employing the term in another sense here in order to prevent confusion with this meaning of the term. On occasion, however, Hewitt, as we have seen, does use the word in its more common anthropological sense. His explanations of the role of the /Kaggen stories in /Xam society are, moreover, clearly functionalist in kind and are best, in my view, located within the anthropological context of functionalism. As I argued earlier in this chapter, this is a model of society based on ideas of fullness and plenitude that are linked to the myth of the lost origin. Like structuralist schemata, functionalist explanations override the apparent meanings of cultural products such as stories even though functionalism has an empiricist rather than a rationalist philosophical provenance and, accordingly, should pay more attention to cultural singularity and specifics. Each part of a culture contributes uniquely to the maintenance of the overall cultural eco-system. The significance that actual actors within a culture might ascribe to particular cultural activities plays little part in functionalist explanations. The analysis focuses on demonstrating how cultural phenomena function to establish and maintain social cohesion. Stories bring people together, release tension and so on. In the context of the /Xam stories, maintains Hewitt, the telling of stories of the First Times, with its disorder and social dysfunctionality, is a contrasting mechanism that strengthens the order of the present. The stories transmit a message that either directly articulates the tightness of the present order or which does so indirectly by showing the untenability of disorder.

In accordance with a synchronic bias, shared by structuralists and functionalists alike, Hewitt largely ignores the fact that, at the actual time of the telling of the stories collected by Bleek and Lloyd, the narratives already told of an order that had passed.¹⁷⁴ The stories could no longer reinforce a "timeless" /Xam social order (assuming that such a thing ever existed) since this order itself had all but disappeared by the late nineteenth century and had been severely eroded much earlier. If the stories were to be read in terms of their functions at the time of their narration in Mowbray then these functions would more likely involve the satisfaction of scientific interest and the preservation of materials for future consideration than the reinforcement of the /Xam social order. For the narrators themselves the telling of the stories might at best have functioned as a means of identity conservation or re-appropriation, one that in the light of their subsequent histories proved tragically insufficient.

Hewitt attributes different functions to the stories at different points in his text. As I have said, he never explicitly sets these out in the systematic fashion he does with the stories' structures. Nevertheless, his statements in this regard are unambiguous. The primary function that he accords the group A narratives (see below) is the reinforcement of the idea of society. Paradoxically, this occurs as a result of /Kaggen's violating social norms, which in the /Xam context, according to Hewitt,

I do not mean that Hewitt disregards /Xam history in his book in general but only that his functionalist explanations do not take it sufficiently into account. Not only does he provide historical and ethnographic background, he even in places admits a historical component into his analysis of stories, positing, for example a Bantu origin for 'the story of /Kaggen and //Khwai-hem', the all-devouring monster (Bleek, D. 1923: 34-40) and suggesting that /Xam changes to it resulted from their different social organisation (Hewitt 1986: 225). He also proposes a historical reading for 'the story of /Kaggen and the ticks' (Bleek, D. 1923: 30-33), in which the ticks represent the IKorana, a neighbouring group of Khoi pastoralists with whom the /Xam were sometimes in conflict (Hewitt 1986: 230).

are primarily domestic. The sphere of the domestic is strengthened through /Kaggen's family's members needing to articulate and re-affirm norms and values after the chaos caused by /Kaggen's violation of them has subsided (137). This usually occurs in the form of a lecture. Often /Kaggen's grandson, the Ichneumon, is the spokesperson, frequently for his father who, as the Mantis's son-in-law, may not address him directly. The following extract contains a concluding lecture of the type which, according to Hewitt, affords an opportunity for re-affirming the social status quo.

Then Kwammang-a spoke: "Child tell Grandfather that I wanted him to come quietly. For he seems to think, we are used to go back again to the Proteles; but when the Proteles has already given us a little one, we do not turn back. For the Proteles generally acts like this." Then the young Ichneumon said: "O my Grandfather the Mantis, Father wants me to say that he told you to come quietly, for the Proteles¹⁷⁶ generally acts like this to us." (Bleek, D 1923: 23)

It accords with the template of the separation of nature and culture that Hewitt superimposes on the materials that he sees the affirmation contained in this type of speech act as pertaining specifically to the social order. This particular concluding lecture, and the many others similar to it, seems to me, on the contrary, yet another example of the inextricable interweaving of the social and natural orders. It is true, as I pointed out earlier, that Hewitt does extend the sphere of the social to encompass proper relations with the natural world (159). /Kaggen's actions infringe the delicate etiquette governing these relations. The Proteles' mother, the Mantis's aunt, was happy to surrender one of her offspring to /Kaggen's family to eat, but not more than one. Hewitt, though, preserves the nature/culture polarity by including human relations with nature within the sphere of the social. This leads him to regard an infraction such as taking too many young proteles as an

¹⁷⁵ As we saw in chapter 3, Hewitt is not alone in reading of the role of trickster narratives as the re-affirmation of the social order through their infraction of the codes that constitute it. Radin (1956) and Street (1972) are among the writers who have adopted this position.

¹⁷⁶ *Proteles cristatus* is the scientific name for the aardwolf.

infringement of the social order rather than of the ecological one, which relies on an altogether different set of relationships than those that follow from the separating of culture from nature. In this story, in my view, /Kaggen does not only disobey prescribed codes of behaviour. He also violates the ecological balance by taking too many young proteles to eat. Functionalism, as I have said, figures societies as self-contained organisms. This model finds it difficult to include not only history and ambiguity but also the idea that the social world is part of a larger, non-human world with its own imperatives. The nature/culture binary places humans apart and above other species. These stories with their multi-species cast seem to suggest another way of ordering things. The separation that occurs in them, in which the species are differentiated, reads, in my view, more easily as an affirmation of ecological difference than as an account of the final separation of culture from nature.¹⁷⁷

"By violating social norms within the narratives", Hewitt maintains, /Kaggen reinforces "'the idea of society'" (Hewitt 1986: 137). /Kaggen's "response to the world ... makes it necessary for the family ideologues to articulate those norms" (149). Transgression becomes a conservative opportunity. Other commentators, as we shall see, read /Kaggen's "transgressive" role differently. So too, and rather inconsistently, does Hewitt. In Kaggen's "freedom from the practical, mundane world of adults ... [he] finds a realm of possibility for re-arranging the order of things through a spontaneity unrestrained by social and economic obligations, or rational and realistic thought" (153). Here the function of the /Kaggen narratives becomes creative and aetiological. The chaos that attends /Kaggen's actions leads now not so much to an affirmation of the existing order as to the accomplishment of

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Solomon (forthcoming: 286) who argues that the rock images are not "culture stamped upon nature, but rather a product of the mutual relationship of and interaction between human and landscape." James (2001: 197) notes with regard to //Kabbo's description of collecting ostrich eggs that //Kabbo saw "a beauty of the natural order, and of individual phenomena and processes within that order" Bank (2006: 272) observes in the context of Dialkwain's comparison of death and the shedding of their skins by lizards and snakes that "human life and death are seen as part of the natural world rather than divorced from it."

a new order. /Kaggen changes things for the better, albeit unintentionally. This reading accords with Hewitt's view that the First Times were fluid and that identity had yet to be fixed but less so with his view that there were prevailing social norms that had to be upheld and that the assertion of these values is the narratives' chief function. These two functions, which Hewitt finds inhabiting the same stories, seem ill-matched: one affirms conservative values while the other glamorises change.

This disjunction is even more apparent when, several pages later (164), Hewitt ascribes yet another function to the narratives. They fulfil, he claims, a role as a safety valve. Through identification with /Kaggen, people vicariously enact the behaviours in which they would engage were it not for the pressures of social conformity. /Kaggen's behaviour represents what people "in their hearts would like to do themselves" (164, quoting Evans-Pritchard 1967: 29). If /Kaggen does indeed invite this sort of identification, it is difficult to see how the values of social conformity that are articulated in response to his actions could be sufficiently powerful to outweigh the attractive gravitational field exerted by this transference mechanism. Hewitt regards the identification with /Kaggen as psychologically healthy. The narratives provide a virtual realm in which anti-social fantasies may be played out. Elsewhere, Hewitt stresses that /Kaggen's behaviour isn't merely "a playful disrespect of conventions, but an erosion of the bonds which ensured survival" (162). This function, then, would have to be read as working by displacing the impulses that erode the bonds that enable survival from the "real" to the imaginary. It remains to be asked how these destructive individual impulses arise in the first place in an organic society in which everything supposedly functions to maintain the cohesion and vitality of the whole. Hewitt considers the function of humour in the narratives in a similar way. Perhaps, he conjectures, humour helped to hold "socially dangerous impulses at a distance, at a level unconnected with the real, everyday world" (208). Once again, it seems difficult to square the way in which this function invites identification with anti-social behaviour in order to prevent its occurrence in "real" life with a function that

simultaneously seeks to achieve the same aim through an incompatible method, the direct didactic admonition at the end of a story. How do two functions accomplish their aims when their methods cancel each other out? How, in other words, does a function that employs a circuitous, indirect and contrary strategy coexist with a function that works through the explicit didacticism of the direct articulation of social norms? Hewitt seems to be suggesting that two strategies, each relying to some extent on the abrogation of the other, can operate in a single narrative to accomplish the same aim.

Hewitt maintains that /Kaggen's anti-social role in the narratives parallels his extra-narrative role as protector of the game (see section iv, below). He unites these roles through placing /Kaggen within a realm of nature that stands outside the socio-cultural even though, paradoxically, /Kaggen's role in the narratives is to make possible the assertion of the social. His anti-social behaviour serves the interests of the social. In Hewitt's view, the hunting observance discourses, which I will discuss later in the chapter, work differently to accomplish the same aim as the narratives. /Kaggen's explicit role as protector of game in the observances does not function as an indirect mechanism for the articulation of social values as it does in the narratives, but involves rather the direct expression of the importance of following the socially sanctioned procedures and practices surrounding hunting.

The observances comprise the social management of hunting and everything connected to it. Particular behaviours are sanctioned or excluded on the basis of how they affect hunting. The management of behaviours that impact on hunting comprises a set of practices that includes all the members of the community. A member of a particular age and gender group might imperil the hunting capabilities of the whole group by eating a piece of meat from a part of an animal's body that his/her category of person is precluded from eating,⁷⁸ All the members of the group are bound together by a web of consequences in which the actions of one person can have a disastrous fallout for the group as a whole. No

⁸ See section iii, below.

doubt, this set of cause and effect relationships strengthens social cohesion and imposes the authority of the group and precedent on the individual. In my view, it is another matter, though, to suggest that the primary function of the observances is the reinforcement of social cohesion. This would seem to claim that direct effects can follow from indirect causation. It also displaces the relationships of tangible and empirical experience that attend a viable economic practice completely to the sphere of ideology.

Hi. Hewitt's breakdown of the /Kaggen stories into group A and group B narratives

Hewitt divides the narratives into several kinds according to their content. He distinguishes between historical legends, the stories of !Khwa, the animal narratives, the sidereal narratives and the /Kaggen narratives, devoting separate sections of his book to each of them. By far the most extensive treatment is accorded the /Kaggen narratives. He identifies 21 separate stories concerning /Kaggen. Many of these appear in several versions. He divides the stories into two broad groups, A and B, since "so radical is the difference between the character of /Kaggen in each group, and so different is his role within the narratives, that it is necessary to treat them separately" (145). He also distinguishes between the individual stories according to the type of trick /Kaggen employs in them (154-158) and the type of opponent he meets (158-159). The narratives are articulated with topography: "home (standing for safety, norms etc.); not-home (where a range of disordered events might occur); and an intermediary place, usually containing water (standing between home and not-home and importantly functioning as a condition for /Kaggen's return home" (182). Most significantly, perhaps, Hewitt (180) breaks down the story plots into structural units which he calls functions.¹⁷⁹ The

This term should not, as I indicate above, be confused with my use of the term which refers to Hewitt's explanations of what the stories do. Hewitt (179-180; 193n) borrows the term and his method of identifying the structural units in the stories from the Russian, Vladimir Propp (1968: 21),

sequence of the units can change and some might be absent from particular stories but the following broad outline remains the same for all the stories in group A in which he discerns this structure:

- A. Protagonist departs from his house.
- B. Protagonist incurs the hostility of another person or other people whom he meets, usually after playing a trick.
- C. Protagonist becomes involved in either actual or imminently threatening physical conflict with the person(s) he meets.
- D. Protagonist triumphs over his adversaries.
- E. Protagonist extricates himself by magical flight.
- F. Protagonist soothes his wounds in the water near his house.
- G. Protagonist returns home.
- H. Protagonist is lectured by members of his family.

In the stories that follow this pattern, observes Hewitt, the negation of social rules occurs away from home and the medium of water is involved in the renewal of life. This structure supplies the "formal principles" for the generation of the narratives (181). It is the vehicle for "dealing with the relationship between social order and its negation ..." (183). /Kaggen, himself, is the "operational principle" which enables this fundamental theme to take the form of narrative. The stories, and their events and characters, are ultimately variations on this single theme. The individual narrators are bound to these forms and, by extension, to the articulation of this ideology of social cohesion. They are unable to generate meaning independently of this structure but can only elaborate it, "at a 'purely' entertainment level ..." (183).

Only a few pages later (187) Hewitt allows narrators a lot more scope than he concedes here, maintaining that plot structure was only the "basic score with which individual narrators worked" and that meaning was not circumscribed by formal features because symbols or "extra mythic elements" structure narratives as much

who advocates a reading of folktales that reduces them to "fundamental components, shared by other tales of the same type, and which disregards "extraneous" detail.

as events do (citing Segal 1972: 217). Hewitt does not attempt to explain why symbols remain the province of narrators while the events they narrate are formally fixed but his reference to "extra-mythic elements" suggests that he is, to some extent, influenced by the view that the essential aspects of traditional stories, including plot structure, belong to the timeless realm of the universal myth, a notion I critique in chapter 6. Hewitt insists that "such semantic significance as can be attached to the formal features observed in these narratives in no way limits the range of possible meanings which any given narrative may have possessed" (187). These other meanings, though, exist in culturally specific symbols, "knowledge of which may or may not be available to the researcher." Despite Hewitt's assertions about the specificity of /Xam narrative (210), they consist, the thrust of his analysis implies, of both universal formal features that are directly accessible to the researcher and of more local, "extra-mythic" elements which depend on the availability of ethnographic evidence for their elucidation. Hewitt's earlier (55) stress on the centrality of dialogue, discussion and the presence of contending and multiple points of view in the narratives, and the /Kaggen narratives in particular, does not seem consistent with the position of formal structural determinism that his reduction of the stories to their functions in the manner of Propp entails. It is difficult to see how narrative can be both a dialogical medium, with the thematic flexibility required by such communication, and an endless variation on the same submerged theme.

Hewitt also reduces another set of stories, the group B narratives, to their "functions" (183):

- I. Non-member of central social group repeatedly kills members of that group.
- J. /Kaggen discovers this in a dream.
- K. /Kaggen informs members of the social group of his dream.
- L. Member of the group, on the basis of /Kaggen's information, defeats threatening non-member.
- M. Rebirth of the dead group members and/or survival of the instrumental group member.

N. Social endorsement of success by the group.

He identifies several differences between the two kinds of story. Although both sets follow a similar movement, from conflict to information (often gained by way of supernatural knowledge) and renewed conflict and both include a phase of transformation before ultimately affirming social cohesion (185), the group B narratives deal primarily with life and death while the chief focus of the plot A narratives is the social order and its negation. Another difference is that /Kaggen is not necessarily the main protagonist of group B stories. Home is also differently located. In group B narratives the household or one of its members is threatened by an outsider while in group A narratives home is the unassailable site of order and social rules. Breakdown occurs away from home. In group B narratives, /Kaggen's "family is rarely mentioned and never has any bearing on the plots ..." (147). The chief disparity, however, is that the /Kaggen of group B stories exchanges his anti-social characteristics for socially responsible ones. Accordingly, /Kaggen in group B stories consistently acts with benign intent whereas the results of his actions in group A stories are unintended consequences of actions bereft of benevolent motivation, even when these have benign outcomes. In group B narratives the anti-social trickster of the group A narratives becomes a saviour and protector.¹⁸⁰

/Kaggen, thus, displays very different characteristics in the two types of story. Hewitt's scheme invests him with two personae which scarcely intersect. Hewitt does remark, however, that certain narratives display both plot structures (185). Presumably, /Kaggen would then combine the characteristics he displays in the two sets of narrative. Hewitt, as we have seen, attributes the structural difference between the two types of narrative to the exploration of different themes. According to this logic, we might have been able to expect a wider variety of

As seen in the last chapter, many writers, including Guenther whose views I examine in the next chapter, would not associate particular attributes of the trickster with certain types of narrative in this way. Instead they regard the coexistence of incompatible characteristics as one of the defining properties of the trickster.

/Kaggen personae and a greater range of plot structures if the /Xam had been concerned with more themes.

Jung and his followers, as I described in the previous chapter, present the trickster as an archetype, the embodiment of a particular phase of consciousness. Hewitt, by contrast, situates the trickster as a structural device within the materiality of language. /Kaggen is an enabling mechanism that allows core cultural themes to be translated into story. He offers a structuralist trickster in contradistinction to Jung and Radin's idealist trickster. Insofar as he is not a product of universal consciousness but the product of the sphere of /Xam social relationships, Hewitt's trickster could even be described as materialist. Hewitt again, however, indulges in the philosophical equivalent of mixing metaphors for he links his reading of the trickster to Radin (131; 138; 145; 211 n), whom he quotes extensively, and usually approvingly, establishing, thereby, an intertextual link with a particular tradition of writing on the trickster. Within the idealist context of the notion of a universal trickster, /Kaggen becomes the local manifestation of an ideal type. The trickster is then more than a device to articulate social messages. He is "the Transformer, the establisher of the present order of things, utterly non-ethical, only incidentally and inconsistently beneficent; approachable and directly intervening in a very human way in the affairs of the world" (131, quoting Radin 1924: 22f). The trickster is one of "the two classes of deity of primitive society." This Jungian-style trickster clearly precedes the story. Hewitt, to a significant extent, takes on this idea of the trickster. It underlies many of his statements about the nature of /Kaggen.

Hewitt's reading of /Kaggen as a trickster fits relatively easily, in terms of the qualities attributed to the trickster in the literature, with the group A narratives but seems deficient in dealing with the /Kaggen of group B narratives. Even in group A stories, however, /Kaggen's nature does not always readily fit Radin's description, which Hewitt transfers to the figure of /Kaggen. In accordance with his trickster nature, for instance, /Kaggen is supposed to be "utterly non-ethical" (131). In many of the stories, as Hewitt asserts, /Kaggen takes the side of the game. In the story in

which he makes the Eland, for example, his tricks and "anti-social" behaviour are in the interest of nurturing and protecting the Eland, whom his heart loves especially. It is only, it seems to me, when ethics and beneficent action are considered as pertaining exclusively to humans that a characterisation of the Mantis of these stories as non-ethical is possible. Of course, western ethics, with some of its roots in the crudely anthropocentric notions of Genesis in which man is placed at the pinnacle of creation, made in the image of God and appointed as a sort of bailiff in relation to nature and other animals, has a long history of this. Hewitt himself places the /Xam in an altogether different relationship with nature when discussing /Kaggen's protection of the game. He (124) approvingly quotes Dorothea Bleek's assertion that: "the borderline between the powers of nature and animals is vague; that between animals and men more so" (1929a: 309).

As I have suggested, Hewitt's attribution of a dual nature to /Kaggen follows logically from the narrative function he ascribes /Kaggen. He operates as a literary device which allows fundamental themes to assume narrative form. Since Hewitt discerns two fundamental themes, and each of these requires a core structure in order to be articulated, we might expect /Kaggen to have to assume two fundamental forms in order to fulfil his tasks in the two different kinds of narrative. Hewitt does not explain why the treatment of the theme of social order and disorder depends on a trickster sort of /Kaggen while the theme of life and death requires a priestly, saviour kind of Mantis. He does, however, pose the question as to how far the two aspects of /Kaggen's personality "can be seen to be unified" (138). He claims that "no absolute answer to this question can be given with regard to /Kaggen on the basis of the evidence available." He notes that this problem presented itself also to Radin with respect to the Winnebago trickster. Radin (1956: 25, cited by Hewitt 1986: 138) wonders whether the Winnebago figure represents a merging of two distinct figures, a deity and a trickster, or whether he was originally "a deity with two sides to his nature, one constructive, one destructive, one spiritual, one material?" Hewitt decides that the existence of two deities in other Khoisan cultures suggests that Radin's first conjecture about the Winnebago trickster might

be applicable to /Kaggen. He notes that Marshall posits a syncretic origin in order to explain the dual nature of the Zu/wasi trickster deity, Gao!na (Hewitt 1986: 139).

Once again Hewitt betrays the power of the influence of the idea of a universal trickster on him. Even though he has just found an explanation of /Kaggen's dual nature impossible due to the lack of specifically /Xam ethnographic evidence, he is tempted by Radin's reading of the trickster into immediately offering one. It is, moreover, an explanation which runs counter to statements elsewhere in his book. Earlier he strongly, and correctly in my view, rejects the notion that /Kaggen is a deity. He asserts that the /Xam did not possess the two deities that other Khoisan groups did (40). He also explicitly rejects Radin's universal view of the trickster (210) and insists that /Kaggen was "embedded in and integrated with the ideas and attitudes found in one San group, the /Xam ..." (210). Only a few pages after implying that Radin's statements apply to /Kaggen he actually distances the /Kaggen narratives from the Winnebago ones precisely with regard to the hybridism of the central character. Radin argues that the Winnebago trickster cycles exhibit "the intrusion of one distinct group of culture-hero narratives upon another purely trickster-centred cycle" (145). Hewitt decides that "there are more grounds for assuming that the /Xam narratives reveal genuine ambiguity concerning /Kaggen's character than that they represent a welding together of disparate groups" of stories.

In my view, Hewitt has himself created the problem of /Kaggen's dual personality through the restrictive functionalist and structuralist analytical positions he has adopted.¹⁸¹ Neither ethnographic evidence nor comparative trickster studies will unite what his interpretative strategy has sundered. His contention, inherited from an influential strain of the anthropological literature on the trickster surveyed in chapter 3, that /Kaggen's role consists mainly in reinforcing the social order precludes him, for instance, from adopting Guenther's position that the multifaceted figure of /Kaggen is related to the fluidity of the /Xam social order. His bias

¹⁸¹ This is an apposite example of the predilection to accommodate data within pre-conceived intellectual frameworks that I discussed in the section on Bourdieu in chapter 2, section B, ii.

towards underlying structural patterns prevents his relating /Kaggen's ambiguity to the play of difference in discourse. Instead he is forced to turn to Radin and Marshall's quasi-historical explanations even though he rejects them elsewhere.

As we have just seen, Hewitt states that questions about the origin or nature of /Kaggen's hybrid personality, as evinced in the two types of story that Hewitt detects in the materials, cannot be definitively answered. He offers a few leads on the basis of his reading of Radin and Marshall which, elsewhere in his text, he dismisses. He does, however, indirectly provide possible answers to the question in other places in his book. /Kaggen's anti-social actions in group A stories, he argues (168), involve events that are not life-threatening. When confronted with the "antagonists of group B" who "represent unambiguous threats", /Kaggen always acts responsibly. Concludes Hewitt: "His personality in group B is not, therefore, a reversal of his personality in group A, it is, rather, an indication of the limits of his anti-socialness. Where real threats to life are involved he is firmly on the side of life and against destructiveness."

In a consideration of the role of the narrators Hewitt offers what could be construed as yet another explanation for the dual personality of /Kaggen. As we have seen, in Hewitt's view, group A narratives illustrate the theme of social order while group B narratives relate to life and death. The structure, and the theme it carries, precedes the story. The storyteller is left with only an instrumental role. The individual narrator's attitude towards /Kaggen did, however, Hewitt maintains, affect his choice of narrative type. Storytellers who displayed a more reverential attitude towards /Kaggen told group B stories more frequently and played down certain of the elements in the group A narratives which were emphasised by narrators with a more irreverent attitude towards /Kaggen (Hewitt 1986: 192). /Han#kass'o, for instance, always tried to show /Kaggen in a favourable light. The two types of story and the different sides of /Kaggen found in them, then, may reflect different attitudes towards /Kaggen in /Xam society.

I would argue that Hewitt's discussion of /Kaggen's hybrid personality in various places in his text underestimates the discursive nature of the stories. /Kaggen can be regarded as a sign rather than as a character about whom opinion is divided or whose nature is determined by different sorts of narrative a sign which, like Gates's Signifying Monkey, points "to the sheer materiality and wilful play of the signified itself (Gates 1988: 59). The uncertainty regarding /Kaggen, which Hewitt seeks in vain to reduce through particular sorts of interpretation, is an inevitable consequence of the multivocal sign /Kaggen who exists in /Xam discourse "as a play of differences" (61).

iv. /Kaggen, the hunting observances and the field of /Xam intertextuality

Besides the /Kaggen who appears in these two kinds of narratives, both set in the world of the First Times when animals were still people, Hewitt describes the existence of another /Kaggen, the protector of game who appears in the contemporary world of the /Xam, the world that succeeded that of the First Times and a world in which everything is mostly in its place. Although Hewitt designates /Kaggen as a trickster in the First Order and as a supernatural being in the present order, he argues that an understanding of the supernatural being of the hunting observances is critical to an understanding of the /Kaggen of the narratives (40). In this section, I will discuss /Kaggen's role in the observances in relation to Hewitt's work. I will then go on to examine the place of both /Kaggen and the hunting observances in the broader /Xam discursive field. I will argue that neither /Kaggen nor hunting should be allowed to eclipse the attention given to the other signifying elements in /Xam discourse.

¹⁸~ This is the world of that familiar pre-colonial, ahistorical, pristine hunter-gathering space of anthropological and popular discourse.

¹⁸³ The mass of information about hunting and hunting observances in the materials might reflect the importance of hunting in /Xam life. Apart from its economic importance, hunting "offered a way of thinking about other things" such as sexual relationships and marriage (Solomon forthcoming: 210). The prevalence of hunting information might also, though, reflect the evolutionary interests of the

Hewitt presents the /Kaggen of the narratives, especially the group A ones, as a trickster and the /Kaggen of the observances as a supernatural being. It is actually, though, the /Kaggen of the "present" order, in which he is "situated within the complex of beliefs concerning hunting and the relationship between hunters and game animals", who displays many of the shape-shifting qualities usually associated with the trickster. /Kaggen's shape-shifting powers in the narratives of the First Times generally enable him to disassemble and reassemble himself in response to tight situations rather than to change into something else altogether whereas the /Kaggen of the hunting observances regularly turns himself into different creatures. Even the /Kaggen of the observances, however, has limited capability in this regard, if we compare him to the !Xun character, Xue,¹⁸⁵ whose ability to shift shape far surpasses that of /Kaggen. Although /Kaggen and Xue are both designated as Bushman tricksters they are quite different.¹⁸⁷ Xue's character does not, for a start, possess any of the ambiguity associated with /Kaggen. He never acts as protector or saviour. No-one bothers to lecture him. He is irredeemable and so allows no opportunity for the articulation of social norms by other family members, as Hewitt's /Kaggen does. Nothing has a purchase on his affections. Unlike /Kaggen, he does not love the animals. He delights in violence and murder as much as in practical tricks and jokes. His close family members, collectors. Since hunting was one of the chief markers of archaic man, they might have especially tried to elicit information about it.

¹⁸⁴ Hynes's third trickster characteristic is shape-shifting. The trickster transforms himself through simple disguise or completely change his form (Hynes 1993: 37).

¹⁸⁵ Besides the /Xam materials she collected, Lucy Lloyd also collected !Xun materials from several !Xun children who stayed in the household from late 1879 (Bennun 2005: 311).

¹⁸⁶ In the course of a single narrative, Xue changes with bewildering rapidity into an ant, a little snake, a little bird, an Herero, a fly, a fruit, a lizard, grass, an elephant, a little ostrich, a little child, a grown-up Bushman (he is said, in his "everyday" form, to be a man but not a Bushman), a mouse, a locust, himself, a butterfly, a grasshopper, a tree, a plant, water, a buffalo, a bee and a Bergdamara, to compile just a short list (L. XL and L. XII. 9319-9403).

¹⁸⁷ Lloyd herself, in accordance with the comparative theoretical proclivities of the time, maintained that Xue resembled /Kaggen (Bank 2006: 373).

especially his wife and father, are his chief targets. The differences between Xue and /Kaggen appear to me more striking than the parallels, calling into question once again the usefulness and universality of the category of the trickster, even when applied only to southern African figures from linguistically related storytelling traditions.¹⁸⁹

The shape-shifting propensities of the /Kaggen of the hunting observances are relatively modest. He adopts a limited range of forms and does so specifically to interfere with the success of hunting. Unlike Xue, or indeed the /Kaggen of the plot A narratives, he is not concerned with tricks other than with the specific purpose of preventing the killing of particular animals. Nor does he seek to prevent hunting in general. His interest is in protecting his special creatures, chiefly the eland, the hartebeest, the gemsbok, the quagga and the springbok. He is said not to love people when they kill these animals. /Kaggen is also closely associated with these animals in the stories of the First Times. He creates the eland. He gives the antelope their different colours by feeding them different kinds of honey (Bleek, D 1923: 10). /Kaggen's actions as the protector of certain big game animals in the present order are consistent with his actions in the stories of the First Times that concern these particular animals¹⁸⁹, one of the indications, I shall argue, that the divide between the First Times and the present is not absolute and that the division is discursive rather than temporal. The two orders intersect in different and complex ways. /Kaggen is one of these crossing points.

/Kaggen is said to have made the game wild in order to complicate hunting. All animals were once as tame as oxen and easy prey (Hewitt 1986: 130). This act is

Guenther (1999: 97), as we shall see in the next chapter, regards all Khoisan "tricksters" as interchangeable.

¹⁸⁹ See, particularly, 'The Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest' in Bleek and Lloyd (1911: 3-17) or 'The Mantis makes an eland' in Bleek, D. (1923: 1-9). His disrespectful attitude towards other animals in the stories provides a strong contrast with his solicitude for these particular animals.

strongly emphasised in Qing's account of Cagn (Orpen: 1874). Solomon (forthcoming: 39-40) goes so far as to place the going wild of the game alongside the introduction of death and the concomitant presence of the spirits of the dead as the defining events that marked the separation of the First Times from the present order of things. This aetiological act of /Kaggen's does not, however, feature directly in the Bleek and Lloyd materials. The story in the collection about how the game went wild does not mention /Kaggen at all. Hewitt, in my view, employs a certain degree of license by suggesting that /Kaggen and a man named !Komm-Ta-Hi, whom Dialkwain blames for making the game wild, may be the same figure (130). This man first called a quagga to him, pretended to stroke it and then beat it so badly that it grew afraid of people and would not approach them (L.V.I9. 5458). Despite his violent tactics, his motives were to protect the animals: "Therefore he beat the things for he felt that he did not want men to be killing things" (L.V.I9. 5467). While /Kaggen also protects game, his concern, in contrast to !Komm-Ta-Hi's, is restricted to specific animals and does not extend to game in general. Many stories of the First Times portray /Kaggen as a hunter and killer of animals. To assert that "he stood for the world of animals and against the world of men" disregards this fact and fails to take into account the symbolic and discursive nature of the animals, operating as signs, that /Kaggen does protect. It seems to me that Hewitt hastens to associate /Kaggen with !Komm-T-Hi in order to prove his nature/culture thesis.¹⁹¹ I would argue that /Kaggen's role is more complex and ambiguous than this thesis allows. This is not to deny, though, that part of /Kaggen's power is the capacity to make the game wilder than usual, especially when this would contribute to the protection of his special animals.

/Kaggen, in his role as protector of particular animals, was ever present in /Xam everyday life. Rituals had to be performed to ensure success in the hunt in the face

See chapter 1, section B, iii, a.

¹⁹¹ ie. that the world of nature stands outside the social and is hostile to it in certain ways. /Kaggen, in this view, is aligned with nature and against culture. The stories of the First Times are then interpreted in terms of the story of the genesis of culture out of the chaos of nature.

of/Kaggen's opposition (Hewitt 1986: 125). /Kaggen would do his best to protect certain antelope. He might, for instance, assume the form of a snake in order to startle hunters and alert the prey animals to their presence. He might also take the form of a hare so that the hunters would concentrate on shooting him and miss the presence of other animals nearby. His most telling interventions occurred after an eland, a hartebeest or gemsbok had been shot, in the period between the time the arrow struck and the animal's death from the effects of the arrow poison. During this time, a sympathetic bond was established between the hunter and the animal. The condition of the hunter paralleled that of the dying animal. /Kaggen exploited this relationship in order to enable the animal to fight off the effects of the poison and recover. He might, for example, become a louse and bite the hunter. As the hunter fidgeted and scratched, the eland would become more active and regain its life-force. Or he might startle the hunter by becoming a puff adder. The shot animal would feel the infusion of energy as the hunter reacted to the snake's presence (127). If a hunter shot a gemsbok, /Kaggen became a hare and placed himself in the way of the hunter. If the hunter shot the hare, the gemsbok would recover (125). The man who had shot an eland had to return home as if wounded himself. He was then confined to a special hut where he lay in agony while the old man who looked after him made a fire to drive /Kaggen away. The other men would track the dying eland and bring the meat home (126-127). To a considerable degree, the hunter and his wounded prey became a single organism:

Our parents used to say that the Mantis sits between the Eland's horns. When a man has shot an Eland with an arrow, he does not come home. He walks about as if he were ill: people carry him away as if he were ill, for he wants the Eland to act as he does. Therefore, he does not come home, lest he come to a place where the children are screaming. He goes to a place windward, so that he may not smell the food the people are cooking at home. For if the Eland were to smell the scent of the food, it would arise and go away; and it would smell the food if the man who shot it also smelt it.

The Mantis is accustomed to examine the Eland which is writhing in pain, and to follow the spoor of the man who shot it, for he wishes to see what man it is. He goes

to the man's home, he looks through the quivers, he examines the arrow tips which seem to be bloody, he finds the arrow tip in a quiver, he says: "This man shot the Eland." Then he does not let the man sleep, but keeps pinching him to make him move, for he thinks the man will try to catch him. At another time he sounds like a puff adder, because he wants the man to feel frightened and jump up, so that the Eland may also get up. If he sees that the man is walking about, he goes to tell the Eland about it, that the man who shot him is not lying ill, but is jumping about (Bleek, D 1923: 11).

This discussion has examined Hewitt's positioning of /Kaggen, the supernatural being, in the hunting observances. In the final part of this section, I should like to examine the extent to which the complex of hunting observances in general is dependent on /Kaggen. Hewitt, for the most part, discusses the hunting observances in relation solely to /Kaggen, especially in chapters 6 and 9 of his book (1986: 123-143: 195-211). /Kaggen is of undeniable importance in /Xam culture. He appears in too many places in the narratives and in too dominant a role to deny this. He is central to a whole cycle and genre of stories. Nor can his significance in the observances surrounding hunting be doubted. Yet it is also true, as I shall now demonstrate, that the beliefs, practices and experiences surrounding him exist in a wider episteme, of which he is but an element, albeit a complex and recurrent one. /Kaggen is often central, sometimes peripheral and sometimes absent, even from the signifying field that includes the hunting observances. /Kaggen is, I would argue, a signifier which operates through its juxtaposition with other signifiers, rather than a transcendental signified. By locating him as the central principle in the narratives in which he appears, as Hewitt does, or as a trickster, to whom the other elements of a narrative are entirely subordinate, a common tendency in the analysis of the stories, it is easy to miss the simultaneous independence and interrelatedness of these elements. They are not, I would argue, embellishments of an underlying structure or simply the subordinate appurtenances of the representation of a trickster figure. Rather meaning is generated and practice enabled through the relationships between all the elements in the texts. Hewitt's categorisation of /Kaggen as the supernatural being of the hunting observances encourages, in my opinion, the suppression of the

other relationships that are at play in the discourse. I should like to explore some of these relationships before conducting, in the second and third parts of this chapter, a close analysis of one of the stories in which /Kaggen is featured, in which I will extend this exploration and also consider the hermeneutic efficacy of the plot structures that Hewitt enunciates in regard to the /Kaggen narratives.

/Kaggen attempts to produce a reaction in a hunter's body after an antelope, such as an eland or hartebeest, has been shot that will reproduce itself in the dying animal's body and lead to its rejuvenation. In so doing, /Kaggen makes use, I would argue, of a network of signifying relationships that have a wider reach than hunting or the figure of /Kaggen himself. The relationship between a person's body and the environment, in general, is a wide field in /Xam discourse. It can be described as intertextual, denoting, as it does the "transposition" of one system of signs into another, those linked with the internal system of the body and those linked with the external world outside the body (Kristeva 1986: 111). It includes, is included in and intersects with the field that constitutes the experiences and stories surrounding /Kaggen and hunting but is, I would contend, far from confined to it. Broadly speaking, the materials present the body as a discursive space in its own right, one which is continuous with the world rather than separate from it. We have just seen how the body of the hunter and that of the shot eland are intimately linked, even when they are physically apart. This link, too, can be described as intertextual: "the emphasis was always on the hunter as a medium through which messages might be transmitted to the game" (Hewitt 1986: 125). People are purported to receive information through their bodies. //Kabbo interpreted this means of acquiring information as the Bushman equivalent of books or letters since they "take a message" or convey an account of what happens in another place (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 331'). These letters "speak, they move, they make their (the Bushmen's)

¹⁹² Solomon (forthcoming: 34) notes that "the motif of the body is central to the working of the narrative The all-important themes of regeneration and revival, of prosperity and of appropriate social roles, draw on and play with the imagery of the body."

bodies move (331). The knowledge or information gained from tappings in the body is said to be reliable, unlike dream material "which deceives."¹⁹³

A great variety of information is gained from tappings in the body. People know when other people are coming (L.II.28. 2533). They know about the presence in a particular place of springbok (L.II.28. 2537). Like books and letters, this information is borne in signs that require a certain literacy in their deciphering. A man knows his father is arriving for he feels a tapping in a place on his body that corresponds to an old wound on the old man's body (L.II.28. 2535). A tapping in the ribs signals the presence of springbok since it correlates with the black hair on the side of the antelope. A man knows he will kill a springbok when he feels a sensation in his calves that corresponds to the feeling of blood dripping down his legs when he carries a slain springbok (L.II.28. 2540). A reaction is felt in the feet when the springbok come and another in the head when absent hunters are severing springbok horns. When an ostrich scratches its neck, a Bushman might feel a tapping in his neck (L.II.28. 2533'). A man knows his wife is returning home when he feels a sensation on his shoulder, at the very place where the "riem" in which she carries her child rubs against her shoulder (L.II.28. 2534').

This type of knowledge is of a similar order to that which follows from the correct interpretation of the gestures of boys watching out for game from a nearby hilltop. It is included in the same disquisition in the notebooks (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 331-339). The way of ordering things that is peculiar to the tradition of rationalism would separate these two kinds of knowledge, attributing one to a belief in sympathetic magic or, at the very least, to an advanced degree of intuition and the other to the simple interpretation of familiar gestures. The /Xam informant, however, situates them both within a unified field of the interpretation of signs.

Only /Kaggen regularly enjoys reliable access to information through dreams, a feature of Hewitt's group B narratives.

The individual's body is the site of a "writing" which can be transcribed onto another person's or animal's body. This somatic field of signs belongs to a social domain that crosses species. /Kaggen exploits it in order to rescue certain game animals by eliciting a reaction in the man's body which, in turn, elicits a reaction in the animal's poisoned body. But this discourse of the body can exist without him. It does not originate with him, unless we accept the often repeated contention that "Cagn made all things ..." (Orpen 1874:2).¹⁹⁴ The link between the body and absent events (absent, that is, from the immediate locale of the body), is central to the hunting observances involving /Kaggen but is not limited to them. Nor does the complex of hunting observances itself always involve /Kaggen. A variety of elements are interwoven in particular ways to produce a discursive fabric within the site of /Xam praxis. The conjoining of these elements, rather than the presence of /Kaggen as a trickster or supernatural being, as in Hewitt's analysis of the stories and observances respectively, is the necessary condition, I would maintain, for signification and, by extension, for narrative. These elements are not simply supplementary to the presentation of a universal type, nor are they the random embellishments of a structure. It is they, themselves, that generate the multiple meanings found in the /Xam texts, including those that feature /Kaggen.

In the context of hunting observances, /Kaggen is particularly associated with eland, hartebeest and gemsbok. Not only /Kaggen, though, is linked to specific animals. Other phenomena and entities, including !Khwa, are associated with different

This assertion occurs not in the Bleek and Lloyd Collection but in Orpen's rendition of Qing's testimony in the Malutis, a document which echoes some of the Bleek and Lloyd materials but which also differs markedly from them in many important respects, not least in the greater power it confers on /Kaggen: "Cagn was the first being; he gave orders and caused all things to appear, and to be made, the sun, moon, stars, wind, mountains, and animals" (Orpen 1874: 3). In the /Xam materials, /Kaggen is credited mainly with the creation of the moon and the eland and the naming of places (Bank 2006: 285). Hewitt himself says that "most it might be said that part of the present order of the world was believed to be caused by him" (1986: 138).

creatures. The consequence, for instance, of unmarried women eating tortoises is the wrath of the rain. The thunder will search for those who breach this taboo (L.VIII.26. 8304-8309). If the children kill a locust bird, /Kaunu (a living sorcerer or spirit of the dead, depending on the interpretation of a translated term)¹⁹⁶ who caused the appearance of the edible locusts in the first place, will make them disappear (L.VIII. 31. 8754-8758).

An intricate web of sympathetic relationships can impede or facilitate hunting. I have already described /Kaggen's role in this complex. Many of these relationships do not, however, directly involve him. Looking at the moon after shooting an animal is ill-advised: "the moon is not a good person, if we look at him ... when we have shot game ..." (L.V.21. 5644-5645). Beasts of prey eat the wounded animal as a consequence. Looking at the stars is also counter-productive because the stars arouse the animal's heart and it will want to "walk about like that which as the stars do" (L.V.21. 5682). Children sneezing near a man who has shot an animal results in the poisoned animal's jumping up (L.V.21. 5655). Hunters call to a wounded springbok in a certain way in order to prevent clotted blood from obstructing the action of the poison in the animal's body (Bank 2006: 360). A hunter's acting as if ill and weak is just one of the means of indirect communication connected to hunting. Hunters never directly announce that they have shot game. Their actions tell the group that they have done so (L.V.21. 5685-5686). A man might refuse food (L.V.21. 5688), for example or simply say that he has seen spoor (LV.21. 5694). This applies to all game and not simply to the animals protected by /Kaggen. Nor do all the observances involving the animals associated with /Kaggen necessarily include him. A story is told, for example, in connection with the observances that attend arrow-making about a gemsbok that turned into a lion when it saw the hunter who was stalking it. The hunter in his fright stands on the arrow

¹⁹⁵ "A number of animals, particularly reptiles, were associated with !Khwa: these included the cobra, the puffadder, the tortoise and the water tortoise" (78).

¹⁹⁶ See chapter 5, section B, i, for Anne Solomon's discussion of the term "sorcerer" and the implications of its multiple significations for rock art interpretation.

he himself has tipped with poison and dies (L.VIII.31. 8775-8782). In one account, !Kwha is linked to an eland, that quintessentially /Kaggen animal. When the men cut up the meat of an eland they have shot, it turns into water and evaporates. The men are then turned into frogs. The eland turns out really to have been the rain (L.VIII. 16. 7461-7472).

A whole set of *ofnanna-sse* (hunting observances) that involve the disposal of bones appear to have little direct relationship with /Kaggen. If bones are not placed on the correct heap, the hunters miss their aim. A shoulder blade, however, should be placed in the hut because if the dogs eat it, the hunters will also miss their aim. Even worse consequences can follow from the wrong person's eating a particular part of an animal or from children playing disrespectfully with animal bones. The men will not only miss their aim if women eat the shoulder blade of a springbok, they will be shot with the springboks' invisible arrows and become sick. Extremely precise procedures relate to the apportioning of game. Only particular categories of people should eat particular parts (L.VIII. 14. 7257-7275). The consequences of infringing these rules are dire. I shall conclude the point that the observances related to hunting often operate independently of /Kaggen by mentioning the fact that hunting bows must be treated in certain ways after being used to shoot baboons or the curse of the baboons will live on in the bow (L.V.24. 5911-5916).

The observances are not always a question of avoiding obstructions in order to engage in successful hunting, as is the case with procedures connected with /Kaggen and eland hunting. The observance of taboos and the following of procedures help procure game. The web of sympathetic relationships could also be deliberately exploited in order to facilitate the success of hunting. A girl could, for example, chew meat killed by one of her father's dogs, mix this with dirt from her knee, spit the mixture into the dog's mouth, pat the dog and say "la sa, sa, sa, sa!" to it. This ensures the dog will never look away from game it has seen (L.V.20. 5594-5598).

These examples are chosen at random. There are hundreds more in the materials which could be used to demonstrate the ubiquity of sympathetic bonds in the context of hunting, only some of which involve /Kaggen. But even this is misleading if it suggests that sympathetic relationships are peculiar to hunting. They operate in every sphere of life. I have already mentioned the corporeal 'messages' that presage a particular person's arrival. Once again, numerous examples could be used to illustrate the point. I will mention just one: the association between a dying person's heart and a shooting star (L.V.22. 5776). There is a correspondence between the trajectory of a falling star and the manner in which the heart "falls down" at the moment of death.

The meanings these materials offer the commentator shift and slide, as the angle with which they are looked at shifts. When /Kaggen is placed at the centre of the analysis, as Hewitt does in his discussion of the hunting observances and the sympathetic relationships connected with them, the observances and sympathetic relationships appear as elements in a /Kaggen complex (124-125). But, as we have seen, these sympathetic relationships between the body and the world are ubiquitous in /Xam experience, phenomena as ordinary as lookouts signalling the appearance of game. If hunting observances themselves become the focal point, /Kaggen recedes to an element, albeit a very important one, in a much wider complex. But again this is an illusion, a partial view, for his field is broader than this. He appears outside the sphere of hunting observances as well. Even this statement needs to be qualified. It is virtually impossible to determine in this kaleidoscoping interpenetration of shifting perspectives what is outside what. The more closely the materials are scrutinised, the more they render, in Baudrillard's words, the "world unintelligible" (Baudrillard 2001: 275), both their world and the world from which we attempt to apprehend them.

The stories and the materials, then, encompass a wide range of intersecting fields. They both emerge out of a wider discourse and help to constitute it. It is difficult to isolate what is central to a narrative or discourse and determine what is peripheral

for every element in a narrative, when investigated, in terms of its location within the whole terrain of /Xam signifying practice, offers new vistas of meaning. Bregin (1998) notes of the /Xam narratives that "in their entirety, they form a vastly complex web of linked strands and recurring motifs, replete with esoteric ciphers, allusive references and coded axioms, that make them, to cultural outsiders, by no means easy to fathom" (98). In chapter 9, I show how a seemingly peripheral detail, in the form of a passing reference to springbok, in a long story of a new maiden and the stars can be shown to be part of an expanding web of meaning that participates in the intertextuality of /Xam discourse. Later in this chapter, I will explore the sign "hartebeest", in the context of 'the story in which the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest', in a similar fashion. But first, in the section which follows, I recount 'the story in which the Mantis assumes the form of the hartebeest' (or, as I often refer to it, 'the story of the girls and the hartebeest') and explore the narrative in relation to the aspects of Hewitt's work that I have been discussing in this chapter. I selected the story initially because it happens to be the first one that appears in *Specimens of Bushmen folklore* (Bleek and Lloyd 1911). It has proved a useful choice. The story lends itself easily to a further consideration of the contentions I have made concerning /Xam discourse and /Kaggen's place in it in this section. It also raises several questions in relation to Hewitt's framework of interpretation and to his positioning of /Kaggen as a trickster in the narratives and as a supernatural being in the hunting observances. I do not attempt in this part of the chapter to analyse the story myself. Rather I use the story to assess the usefulness and explanatory power of Hewitt's approach in the context of a specific story. I also briefly consider Guenther's reading of the story, partly to compare it with Hewitt's and partly to introduce part C of the chapter in which I try to position the story in its wider /Xam discursive context.

B. A consideration of Hewitt's work in relation to 'the story in which the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest'

i. The story

The story begins as follows:

The Mantis is one who cheated the children, by becoming a hartebeest, by resembling a dead hartebeest. He feigning death lay in front of the children, when the children went to seek gambro (*/kui*, a sort of cucumber); because he thought (wished) that the children should cut him up with a stone knife, as these children did not possess metal knives.

The children perceived him, when he had laid himself stretched out, while his horns were turned backwards. The children then said to each other: "It is a hartebeest that yonder lies; it is dead." The children jumped for joy (saying), "Our hartebeest! [W]e shall eat great meat." They broke off stone knives by striking (one stone against another), they skinned the Mantis. The skin of the Mantis snatched itself quickly out of the children's hands. They say to each other: "Hold thou strongly fast for me the hartebeest skin!" Another child said: "The hartebeest skin pulled at me."

Her elder sister said: "It does seem that the hartebeest has not a wound from the people who shot it; for, the hartebeest appears to have died of itself. Although the hartebeest is fat, (yet) the hartebeest has no shooting wound." (Bleek and Lloyd 1911:3)

Apparently undeterred by the movements of the "dead" animal and the strangeness of finding an intact hartebeest which has not been killed but has simply dropped dead, the girls quickly proceed with the task of cutting up the animal so that they can carry it home. Even when the separate hartebeest pieces reposition themselves after they have been placed on a bush, the girls continue to apportion the parts of the hartebeest they will carry home. The biggest girl receives the animal's back as her load (5). The youngest girl, the one who earlier experienced the antelope's

pulling at her, is given the head to carry. It is so heavy that the other girls have to lift it onto her (7). As the girl walks, the head moves towards the ground since "the Mantis's head wishes to stand on the ground." The girl heaves it back onto her shoulders. Then, more alarmingly, the head begins whispering, asking her to remove the thong across its eye. When she looks back, the head winks at her. She begins to whimper. The other girls accuse her of lying when she tells them that the head winked. The procession continues. The hartebeest's head goes on winking at the girl. Finally, she unties the thong and the head falls to the ground. The Mantis scolds the girl: "Oh! oh! my head! Oh! bad little person! [H]urting me in my head" (9). All the girls now drop their loads. The parts of the hartebeest rapidly assemble themselves into the "human" body of the Mantis:

The flesh of the Mantis sprang together, it quickly joined itself to the lower part of the Mantis's back....The neck of the Mantis quickly joined (itself) upon the upper part of the Mantis's spine....The thigh of the Mantis sprang forward, it joined itself to the Mantis's back. His other thigh ran forward, racing it joined itself to the other side of the Mantis's back. (9)

The children flee. /Kaggen rises from the ground and pursues them in human form: "while he felt that he was a man. Therefore, he was stepping along with (his) shoes, while he jogged with his shoulder blade" (11). When the children reach home /Kaggen turns back, still running and still carrying his shoulder-blade (his left shoulder blade because he is left-handed, the narrator explains). The Mantis runs along the river-bed. He makes a noise as he steps in the sand. He runs into his own house and then, after emerging from "a different side of the house" (11), runs back and passes the children's house again.

Now begins a lengthy recounting of the action to the girls' father. The children tell most of the tale in unison but the youngest girl relates her own experience, enjoining her father to believe her: "O papa! Dost thou seem to think that the

Left-handedness, according to Hewitt (1986: 153), is associated with the feminine.

hartebeest's head did not talk to me?" (11). Her father, however, appears to understand exactly what has happened: "Have you been and cut up the old man, the Mantis, while he lay pretending to be dead in front of you?" (13) In response, the children emphasise how impossible it was to tell the Mantis apart from a hartebeest. They describe how the pieces of the hartebeest carcass reconstituted themselves as a man and chased them. Their description of the Mantis's running around the house is more graphic even than the initial description offered by the narrator:

"Therefore, the hartebeest ran forward, while his body was red, when he had no hair (that coat of hair in which he had been lying down), as he ran, swinging his arms like

"And when he saw that we reached the house, he whisked round. He ran, kicking up his heels (showing the white soles of his shoes), while he running went before the wind, while the sun shone upon his feet's face (soles), while he ran with all his might into the little river (bed), that he might pass behind the back of the hill lying yonder" (13).

Both their parents, not just the father as before, now tell them that they have cut up the old man, 'Tinder-owner', another appellation for the Mantis. The girls respond with yet another account of their adventure.

ii. Locating the story in terms of Hewitt's division of the /Kaggen materials

I shall begin this appraisal of Hewitt's work in relation to this story by considering the story's position in terms of his structural breakdown of the /Kaggen materials. Clearly this is not a group B narrative in which /Kaggen saves his community from an external danger that he has been alerted to in a dream. Although it appears to exhibit only a few of the features that Hewitt identifies with group A narratives, he lists the story as a group A narrative (146). While admitting that it is anomalous in many respects, Hewitt employs ingenious arguments in order to show that it does conform to the group A structure. The price of doing so, I would argue, includes the subordination of many of the singular elements of the narrative and the

suppression of both its intertextuality and its ability to span different modes of /Xam experience.

According to Hewitt, function B in a group A narrative involves the protagonist, /Kaggen, incurring "the hostility of another person or other people whom he meets" (180). /Kaggen usually initiates conflict with a non-family member whom he should either avoid altogether or in relation to whom he should follow certain rules of protocol. Hewitt maintains that this motif is still present in this story but that the roles are reversed since /Kaggen "is found in the position of the non-family member for whom the family employ rules of avoidance" (186).

Most of the other group A features have similarly to be stretched in order to accommodate this narrative. Function E, for example, involves a magical flight in which /Kaggen extricates himself from a tight situation by flying away and commanding his things to follow him. In this story, argues Hewitt, this motif becomes "merely an escape without magic because it is performed not by /Kaggen but by the girls whom /Kaggen has frightened." According to Hewitt this does not matter structurally since the magic element is still present in the story when /Kaggen transforms himself into a hartebeest and later "reassembles the parts of the body of the dead hartebeest into the form of a man."

In most of the stories, maintains Hewitt, /Kaggen contradicts "expected behaviour." In this story he does not do this directly. Instead he tricks "others into doing so" (162). He accomplishes this aim by employing a type of trick not usually employed in "a weakly stratified society" (158), the strategic trick, "involving a move which anticipates a response of which he intends to, and does, take advantage" (154).¹⁹⁸

Hewitt identifies "four kinds of trick" which /Kaggen uses (154). He surmises that the frequency of trick type employed by a trickster in the narratives of a particular culture might correspond to the complexity of social organisation. Certain trick-types would be more likely to feature in narratives from stratified societies in which "the dominant objective is overcoming the powerful" than they would in narratives, like most of the /Kaggen ones, in which "self-gratification is the objective"

Hewitt's procedure here is adroit and contributes, no doubt, to achieving some understanding of the way narratives are constructed in terms of plot. It is also to my mind another example of the structuralist propensity to force heterogeneous materials into a unified framework. The singularity of the story disappears and with it the play of discourse in which its signifying power resides. Paradoxically, perhaps, both the ability of the text to generate multiple layers of meaning and its discursive relationship with the broader signifying field reside in this singularity.

The protagonist's leaving home is the first function that Hewitt accords group A narratives. Home, maintains Hewitt, is one of several "structural co-ordinates which may have been culturally significant" (181). It is the zone of rules and stability. It must be vacated in order for conflict to occur. To leave home is to leave behind the security of the social order and to enter a world devoid of rules. Hewitt, in accordance with his structuralist propensities, reduces the relationship of home and world to the nature/ culture dyad. Home is left. Conflict inevitably follows in the unruly space of the wilderness, /Kaggen's true stage, before home is regained. The social order can then be re-asserted in the socialised space of the homestead.¹⁹⁹ But /Kaggen in this narrative is not pictured leaving home. The girls

(157). In terms of this structure, one could conjecture that /Kaggen's employment of a strategic trick here and in the hunting observances points to the realisation that unequal power relations exist between hunters and their quarry.

¹⁹⁹ In most of this thesis I argue against the use of this dichotomy and maintain that it is being projected onto the /Xam materials by the analysis. It would be possible too, though, to retain the division Hewitt establishes between the home and the outside world but explain it in a different way. Home, for example, could be read as the place to which stories return from the world of possibility beyond its precincts. This accords with simple, everyday experience in which people go out to find food by hunting animals and collecting plants. The incidents that ensue provide rich narrative material. In a sense people forage stories as well as plants and animals. Many of the stories, as here, involve incidents that happen to women who are away from home gathering food plants or to men who are out hunting. Home is the place where adventures are recounted rather than undertaken. This is consistent with //Kabbo's account of stories floating from afar and before entering the social space (see chapter 6). In this reading, home is not opposed to the outside world in an antagonistic relationship, as in Hewitt's analysis, but is the site where experience of the world is inserted into

leave home. In terms of Hewitt's delineation of the narrative functions this should make them the protagonists of the story. The story, though, is located by Hewitt as belonging to group A, and all the stories in this group, he asserts, feature /Kaggen as the protagonist (180).

Apart from the fleeting reference to his running through his house (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 11), /Kaggen is encountered outside the context of the home altogether. Unusually, for the stories of the First Times in which he appears, particularly those designated as group A stories by Hewitt, /Kaggen is not situated within his domestic group either. He is a mysterious figure who falls outside the human compass. He is last pictured disappearing into the wilderness behind the hill (13). Although /Kaggen is critical to the narrative, he is not present in the same way as a character that he is in most of the other group A stories. The story is told from the girls' perspective. In many ways, /Kaggen operates in this story, I would argue, more as the /Kaggen of the hunting observances than as the trickster with the extended family of Hewitt's plot A and B narratives. This kind of hybridity, a story that possesses elements of the First Times and the present order, cannot be accommodated in terms of Hewitt's structural breakdown of the materials although, as we saw in the previous section, he does allow for the functional continuity of the /Kaggen of the narratives and the /Kaggen of the present order hunting complex. Later he does find underlying structural parallels between the two kinds of materials, contending that /Kaggen occupies a liminal position in both (207-208), but this correspondence exists well beyond the level of his division of the stories that I am discussing here.

discourse. The point I wish to make here is that even if Hewitt's dualism is accepted, it does not necessarily have to generate the meanings he gives it. In actual fact, many of the stories do occur at home and conflict may occur there. This is not true of most of the /Kaggen narratives themselves, but it is difficult to see from the logic of Hewitt's placing of the home within the symbolic order why this structure should be confined to them.

Much of the difficulty Hewitt experiences in fitting this story into his framework arises from the narrative perspective of the story. Although the story has several narrative viewpoints, they all preclude the perspective common to many of the stories in which the narrator tracks the actions of /Kaggen and is able to comment on his intentions and motivations. While the /Kaggen of this story resembles the /Kaggen of the stories of the First Times insofar as he wears shoes, is still a person and lives in a house, none of the intimacy with which he is dealt with in many of the other stories attends his figuring here. Not only is /Kaggen's family absent from the story, but so is the narrative voice through which they might enter it. Hewitt remarks that in group B narratives, /Kaggen's "family is rarely mentioned and never has any bearing on the plots ..." (147). This story, though, does not exhibit any of the other features that Hewitt attributes to group B narratives. Hewitt himself, as we have seen, insists that it is a group A narrative.

I shall now turn from the story's structural features to a consideration of it in terms of the social roles or functions that Hewitt imputes to /Kaggen narratives. Hewitt, as we have seen, accords the family lecture a central ideological function in the narratives. The admonitions of /Kaggen's family articulate the social values of stability and order. The group A narratives are the vehicle for the enunciation and reinforcement of these values. Hewitt states that in this story "no reprimand is given by the parents and no direct statement is made to the effect that the girls had been doing anything wrong by cutting up the animal." Nevertheless, he argues, the narrative does emphasise the discrepancy between their intention "to collect veldkos" and "what actually happened" (162). The message here articulated, then, by both the external narrator and the parents, concerns the relationship between /Kaggen and the hartebeest and the wisdom of avoiding an apparently dead but mysteriously intact hartebeest. The Mantis pretending to be a hartebeest should never be mistaken for a real hartebeest (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 13). The message is delivered in an informative key, however, and not the normative key that Hewitt imputes to group A narratives. Nor does it conclude the narrative (Hewitt 1986: 162). Hewitt concedes that the story is not overtly didactic although he does

suggest that it might be delivering a message about the confusion that results from reversing gender roles. The cutting up of meat in the veld is generally performed by men (163).²⁰⁰ Once again, I would argue that this message is a feature of the story that is more consistent with the hunting observance complex than with the world of Hewitt's group A narratives. The hunter, as I shall note in chapter 9, had to be able to distinguish between real animals and spirit animals. Dia!kwain's wife loses her life as a result of her husband's shooting the wrong kind of springbok (L. V. 9. 4653-4688).

The other functions Hewitt gives the stories do not, in my view, fit the story altogether comfortably either.²⁰¹ It is difficult, for instance, to see how the story functions as a safety valve for anti-social emotions through inviting identification with the Mantis. /Kaggen's strangeness and remoteness is one of the story's distinguishing features. This distance follows, as I have already pointed out, from a narrating perspective which is focused on the girls' experience of him as an unknown and frightening figure. Nor is the story aetiological in an obvious sense. It might, though, describe the origin of a taboo on women collecting meat on their own, for instance. Hewitt suggests as much when he states that the storyteller "was at pains to specify that they intended to collect *veldkos* and this would appear to be an important contrast to what actually happened." To prove such a point, however, on the evidence of both the narrative and ethnographic information available is

" The plant food collected by females was consumed by individual families while the meat hunted by men had to be carefully distributed among all the members of the band in the prescribed fashion (Hewitt 1986: 36). Hewitt surmises that this "hartebeest meat" would have presented difficulties when it came to distribution, the preserve of either the hunter or the man who owned the arrow with which the animal had been shot. This was no small matter. "The distribution of food was the cornerstone of/Xam life" (115). It helped ensure not only survival but social equality (citing Marshall 1961). Thus the ideology connected to the practice involved the basis of social organisation.

²⁰¹ I will note in section iv below that Guenther's reading of the story supports Hewitt's functionalist assertions more than Hewitt's own discussion of it does.

difficult. Hewitt himself notes that it was probably not "tabu for women to handle meat in this way." (171).

When Hewitt employs his functionalist explanations, he tends to force the stories into a predetermined mould, predisposing how each story will be read and encouraging a reading of the stories as closed texts that culminate in the reinforcement of a message rather than as fluid points within a mobile signifying field. The functions he lends the stories reflect also, in my opinion, logocentric concerns and predilections: the quest for presence and wholeness (social cohesion), the nostalgia for origins (aetiology) and the fall (the secret identification of the auditors with /Kaggen and his wildness). This story clearly, in important respects, eludes these frameworks.

This story calls both Hewitt's structuralist division and functionalist explanations of the materials into question. It refuses to conform readily to the categories he assigns the materials. Instead it exhibits qualities associated with both the observances and the stories. In doing so it appears to span the divide between the First Times and the present order of things and to participate simultaneously in two discursive orders which Hewitt separates. Hewitt, does, however, detect a functional unity between these two types of materials. I shall discuss this aspect of his work in the next section in relation to this story. The way in which the two orders of /Xam existence are posited has consequences not only for the reading of /Kaggen but also for the manner in which the stories are understood temporally and discursively. I will return to this question of the relation between the present and past orders repeatedly in the chapters that follow.

Hi. /Kaggen in 'the story in which the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest': trickster or supernatural being?

Brown (1998: 53) notes that stylistically it is "difficult to tell a narrative of recent events from one dealing with the Early Race." The difficulty of positioning 'the

story of the girls and the hartebeest', however, results as much from its thematic and discursive features as from its style. Hewitt treats the narratives and the observances as different species of /Xam discourse and practice but also argues for a continuity between them. He separates them by locating them in different orders of /Xam existence, the order of the present and the order of the First Times, and then brings them together again by finding deep structural and conceptual templates which unite them. In all the discourses involving him, maintains Hewitt, /Kaggen is consistently on the side of the animal world against the world of men (131).

/Kaggen's opposition to the world of men in the group A First Time stories, though, does not take the form of directly protecting animals from hunters. Instead he brings calamity to the group by ignoring common sense and social strictures. The consequences of his actions are largely unintended. /Kaggen's intervention in hunting in the present order, on the other hand, is intentional and direct. In terms of this difference, this story seems to conform more to the observances connected with /Kaggen than to the narratives. The story could be read as an example of /Kaggen directly protecting one of his animals, at least from future attack. The results of his actions are intentional and he does not ignore common sense or warnings.

The continuity Hewitt discovers between the narratives and the hunting observances is an ideological and thematic correspondence rather than a generic one. The two types of discourse, in his scheme, are divided not only by time, belonging to mythological and "real" time respectively, but are different in kind. The group A narratives, it may be said, are fiction while the hunting observances belong to practice, entering discourse in a great variety of modalities: stricture, received wisdom, informal comment, instruction, biography, autobiography. /Kaggen appears as an impeding instrument in relation to the hunting of the big game animals that fall under his aegis. Many of the hunting observances, as I showed earlier in the chapter, do not include him at all. In the group A narratives, by contrast, /Kaggen and his actions are central. While many of the stories involve hunting, it is not the chief theme.

Hewitt discusses the continuity of /Kaggen, the trickster figure of the narratives with /Kaggen, the supernatural being of belief and ritual in considerable detail (195-211). In the narratives he has a creative aspect which consciously or incidentally benefits men, depending on whether he appears in a group A or B narrative (195). In the beliefs surrounding hunting he obstructs the actions of men but protects the animals he has created. He is, therefore, consistently "for life even if the order which humans attempt to place on him is anathema to him." Once again, his role in this story seems more consistent with the beliefs surrounding hunting. It could be argued that he is protecting an animal but it would be difficult to suggest that his actions in the story benefit men, either directly, as in the group B narratives, or indirectly, as in the group A narratives.

Hewitt argues at length that there is a structural correspondence between "the narratives of group A and the belief structure informing the hunters' eland rites" (207-208). In both narratives and beliefs, /Kaggen employs tricks and occupies a liminal position, between the normative human order and nature, on the one hand, and "between amenable and unamenable nature", on the other. Nature, it is important to note here, occupies a different position in these two sets of binaries. In the first instance, it is the pole that offsets culture. In the second, it takes the place that culture occupies in the first binary. It is positioned against unruly internal

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forces that threaten to overwhelm its own order. /Kaggen occupies the pole associated with nature in the case of the narratives and the pole associated with

²⁰~ This polarity operates within the realm of nature. The forces opposed to "amenable nature" include the dangerous aspects of nature such as lightening and violent storms and also a kind of wildness of game that places the animals beyond the reach of men and their hunting technologies. A reading of Solomon's book (forthcoming) suggests that these forces are supernatural and are linked with the spirits of the dead. Hewitt, too, of course, does not disregard the supernatural aspect of figures like /Kaggen and !Khwa. Once again it must be stated, though, that categories such as "natural" and "supernatural" are not /Xam ones. They imply a conceptual division that probably does not accurately reflect the ways in which the /Xam constructed discursive categories. Difference and the properties of writing operate in /Xam discourse through separation and postponement as they do in all discourse but in ways that are specific to /Xam discourse.

unamenable nature in the case of the eland rites. Structurally they are interchangeable, argues Hewitt, since both "moral autonomy and the autonomous wildness of game involve that which is non-social and irrational - that which is beyond the power of normal human strategies to control" (196). Despite Hewitt's conflation of the two structures, it is apparent that his location of 'the story of the girl and the hartebeest' as a group A narrative has to be questioned in terms of his own system of binaries. The story more readily fits the structure of the hunting observances since /Kaggen's actions in the story figure the intractable and unpredictable aspects of nature. He occupies, therefore, the second pole of the binary of the observances rather than the second pole of the group A stories.

Anne Solomon (2000) notes that 'the story of the lynx and the anteater', mentioned earlier, "obliquely describes the end of the creation phase of San existence. Nevertheless, the mythological beings that belong to the Early Race, though vanquished, were apparently still believed to be active in the lives of the living. An understanding of this mythological past and of the belief in the ongoing presence of the 'First Bushmen' in the lives of the 'modern' ('real') San contextualises the apparently alien time of the narratives." Solomon suggests here that a relationship of continuity or contiguity between the two worlds exists that significantly qualifies their division into entirely different orders of existence. The manner in which the different discourses relating to /Kaggen are located, which parallels this division, has also then to be qualified. Solomon retains the separation between the two orders but proposes several points or mechanisms of transference. She also maintains that the precise nature of the relationship remains open and unquantifiable. The structural correspondence that Hewitt discovers between the narratives and the beliefs concerning /Kaggen becomes an ontological convergence for Solomon. Not only /Kaggen, but all the beings of "mythological" time continue to exist and to interact with the living. The discursive order or field of/Xam intertextuality embraces the different modes of being of the dead and the living.

The relationship between the first and present orders is complex. It has important implications for reading /Kaggen, who appears in both of them. The question remains as to how this complex web of convergence and difference should be named in terms of its temporality and its embedment in praxis. In the final part of this chapter, I will provide more evidence for my contention that 'the story in which the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest' calls the way in which Hewitt establishes the division between the first and present orders into question. But first I will consider, in the next section, Guenther's sexual interpretation of the story, an interpretation that Hewitt also broaches. This reading qualifies my reading of the story as relating chiefly to hunting observances without, I would argue, foreclosing such a reading. Just as the story cannot be confined to Hewitt's structures or functions or to the mythical past or the practical present so, too, I would argue, it evades single interpretations.

iv. Further interpretative questions raised by the story in which 'the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest'

As indicated earlier in the chapter, this story bears traits of group A narratives but does not fit readily into their mould. It is not even certain whether it is set in the First Times although the presence of a /Kaggen in human form who lives in a village would seem to indicate this since these elements feature in the /Kaggen stories of the formative, "mythological" period rather than in the hunting observance discourses. Guenther, as befits his comparative and general approach, which I critique in the next chapter, links the story with others in the southern African Khoisan cultural area. While Hewitt keeps to the sphere of /Xam narrative practice when discussing the meaning of the story, Guenther elucidates the story on the basis of his knowledge of stories outside it. Both, however, appeal to structural correspondences and relationships rather than attempt to examine the details of the story itself. In the final part of this chapter, I will also investigate relationships which extend beyond the story. I do not seek, though, to reduce the story to a type,

as both Guenther and Hewitt do, but rather to foreground its protean plurivocity by suggesting something of the intertextual fluidity of its signifiers.

Guenther (1989) begins his discussion of the story by asking whether the /Xam version of it has not been irreparably distorted by the need to divest it of sexual elements for its Victorian audience. He locates the tale within a widespread genre of lascivious !Xun, Dama and Nama stories that all involve a trickster figure who places himself in the path of girls in the form of a dead antelope. "The girls excited about this windfall of delectable meat, proceed to cut up the carcass and either prepare it for cooking or walk off with it carrying away parts of the antelope-Trickster. The latter now starts to have his fun with the girls and, eventually his way, as certain of the severed parts entered the girls" (90).

Such a reading of the story does support some of the functional elements that Hewitt attributes to the stories. The description of the running Mantis seems to carry a suggestion of masculine sexual triumph, a characteristic of the story that emerges from Guenther's comparative approach to it. This might invite the sort of vicarious identification, at least from men, that Hewitt asserts acts as a social safety valve whereby potentially dangerous impulses are transferred from the realm of practice to the realm of the imagination. One could argue also, on the basis of Guenther's reading, that the story possesses aetiological implications involving the sexual sphere. The girls conclude their account with the statement that: "This fatigue, it is that which we are feeling; and our hearts burnt on account of it. Therefore, we shall not hunt (for food), for we shall altogether remain at home" (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 17). This might literally refer to a temporary condition of fatigue from which they will recover and continue with their food gathering activities. It might also refer to hunting specifically and assert a division of labour in which hunting remains the preserve of men. In terms of Guenther's reading it

²⁰³ Guenther's use of the term "trickster" indicates the influence of the type of universal thinking critiqued in the last chapter on his analysis and is consistent with his reading of the story in terms of a comparison with others from outside the /Xam cultural sphere

could be interpreted, though, as a statement that reinforces or even inaugurates certain gender roles in the domain of sexuality. Hewitt also detects such a possibility in the story, noting that "the threat behind /Kaggen's actions" might have been sexual and concluding that, at the very least, "the boundaries between male and female are ... undermined at a symbolic level behind the overt drama of the plot"(163).²⁰⁴

The work of Guenther (1989; 1996; 1999) is invaluable in showing correspondences between stories collected over a wide area.²⁰⁵ His introduction of sexuality into a consideration of this story, which results from this broad approach, offers fruitful possibilities, such as those to which I have just referred. I would insist, though, that the particular elements of an individual story such as this are at least as critical to the way it produces meaning as are the broader relationships pointed out by Guenther. The fact that the antelope in this story is a hartebeest, as I will show in the last part of this chapter, introduces into its interpretation a chain of significations that would be absent if it were another species of antelope, as it is in the other stories to which Guenther refers. The presence of /Kaggen rather than a !Xun or Nharo "trickster", for instance, also brings with it a complex of signifying elements peculiar to /Xam discursive practice. Even when structural similarities can be found with other /Xam materials, as, for example, in the case of the

²⁰⁴ Hunting antelope and sex are sometimes symbolically conjoined in the narratives. The identification of male sexuality with hunting (including the cutting up of meat) has been made in regard to the Ju'/hoan by Biesele (1993) and in regard to the /Xam by Parkington (1996). This should not, however, preclude other metaphorical interpretations of hunting. Solomon (forthcoming: 188) points out that rock painting scenes depicting the hunting of female antelope are possibly "concerned with catching a female rain animal"

²⁰⁵ The sort of comparative approach Guenther employs with this story was particularly popular among oral literary scholars in the 1950's and 1960's when many of them were concerned with "the geographical spread of particular motifs" (Hofmeyr 1994: 8). Writers like Schmidt (1989; 1996) and Barnard (1992) are among those who locate stories and cultural practices within a broad Khoisan cultural field. By "the early 1970's, it was issues of performance and structuralism that came to predominate." Hewitt's study, conducted as it was in the 1970's, although only published in book form in 1986, can be seen, in the light of this statement, to be a product of its time.

correspondence between this story and an incident in which !Kwaha resembles an eland and is cut up by hunters, (L.VIII.16. 7461-7472), the significance of the employment within a narrative of specific signifiers needs to be carefully investigated.

One can agree with Guenther that the overtly sexual elements in the story have been suppressed but also note that the story seems to display an integrity that does not point to hasty revision and censorship on the part of the narrators in order to protect the sensibilities of a female Victorian collector. In addition, while it must be conceded, in the light of the comparative material provided by Guenther, that a reading of the story as primarily sexual cannot be discounted, evidence can also be assembled, as I show in the remainder of this chapter, to support a link between the story and /Kaggen's propensity to protect certain large game animals. Hewitt, as we saw in the last section, makes this link not only in the obvious instance of this story, but in regard to the relationship between the narratives and the observances in general. Both these readings, the sexual and the protection of game animals, as well as others that suggest themselves when considering the text, need to be allowed to co-exist, a position Guenther himself often advocates (1999: 227-228). At the same time it must be emphasised that the story signifies quite readily without the support of any of these sorts of explanation. Meaning is available on its surface even as it eludes easy explication. As simple discourse, without reference to gender or hunting observances or any wider symbolic structure, the narrative is immediately capable of exhibiting its plurivocity.

I would suggest that the story can be read in such a way that the questions surrounding it multiply rather than get neatly, but artificially, answered. I think this is possible even though these questions and some of the answers they suggest are inescapably and fatally framed within the discourse of the myth of the lost origin. Elements within the story can be traced in relation to their wider references within the singularity and practice of /Xam signification rather than selected for their susceptibility to insertion within a predetermined template. In this way, the layers

of possible meaning are increased and expanded, and the possibility of a final reading is eternally postponed. The aim is not to pretend to elucidate /Xam texts, which will always remain simultaneously inaccessible and transparent, but to elucidate the politics of analysis and to use the texts to turn the hermeneutic gaze back on itself and its inadequacies

C. The hartebeest and /Kaggen in /Xam discourse

Hewitt, with some difficulty, reduces the story to its structural functions. Guenther reduces it to its Khoisan type. Both read the narrative as predominantly a trickster tale. In both their readings, many of the elements of the story become incidental. I would propose, instead, that the story be read in terms of its detail and as the site of an intersecting web of signifiers. While the signifier "/Kaggen" is undeniably part of an intricate set of signifying relationships, other elements in the story, apart from /Kaggen, can be tracked as well in order to reveal chain upon chain of signifier, capable of countless configurations and sequences. While a universalising approach surveys the materials with a panoramic gaze, a critical practice that is fascinated by the singularity of /Xam discursive practice can discover the "unintelligibility" it seeks in the detail. "The richness of the San narrative tradition," observes Solomon (forthcoming: 57) "lies ... in its differences" rather than in its relationship to a "pan-San cosmology" which if it exists, does so at the most general (and in some ways, banal) level."

When assembling the references from the materials that relate to one of the elements in a story, it should be borne in mind that these references are circumscribed for interpreters as they would not have been for /Xam auditors by the limited range of the materials available and by unfamiliarity with /Xam language and praxis. Such a procedure can never do more than hint at the levels of meaning

²⁰⁶ See Baudrillard's critique of the universal in chapter 3, section v and his advocacy of a method of critique which renders the world less intelligible than it presents itself to us.

that every signifier would have generated for a /Xam participant, meanings that would have continually shifted according to an individual's location in /Xam history. In addition, single /Xam words often had multiple meanings, a characteristic of /Xam languages generally (Solomon forthcoming: 74). What this approach can do, though, is point to the modalities of /Xam textual practice, which themselves create and generate meaning rather than reflect palely the meanings that emanate from an extra-linguistic origin.

I shall concentrate on the obvious figure of the hartebeest from the story rather than on a peripheral element, as I will do with the reference to springbok in my analysis of 'the story of the girl and the stars' in the last chapter. I have chosen the signifier "hartebeest" because of its overt links with the signifier "/Kaggen", the focus of my attention in the three chapters that comprise the second part of this thesis. I explore the ways in which the hartebeest is linked to /Kaggen as well as to other signifiers whose contributions to the overall signification of the story are elusive but important. In addition, I will argue that the term "hartebeest" is itself an unstable signifier. It is not simply a single term attached to a set number of signifieds but a signifier that spans the symbolic, the imaginary and the real. It can signify directly or through metaphorical association or metonymic extension. It can also refer to the particular or to a generic form.

In the story that I discussed in the last section and which I will continue to investigate in this one, we encounter not a real hartebeest but /Kaggen disguised as a hartebeest. Lucy Lloyd's title already emphasises this point: 'The Mantis Assumes the Form of a Hartebeest.' This observation is duplicated in the page heading which accompanies the story for fourteen pages: 'The Mantis in form of a Hartebeest.' Lloyd's intervention in naming the story entails an interpretation that cannot go untested for, in a sense, as we shall see, the Mantis and the hartebeest already, and always, share a form. But let us assume for now that we have before

²⁰⁷ The naming of a story played a crucial role in the way stories were constructed from the /Xam materials by Bleek and Lloyd (1911) and by Dorothea Bleek (1923). See chapter 6, section ii.

us, as did the girls, a hartebeest which we, but not the girls, know to be /Kaggen. This creature is both more and less than a hartebeest. It possesses an uncanny wholeness and an uncanny capacity to elude the children's hands, to shrink from their grasp and evade the status of object. This is a hartebeest only through the eyes and voices of the girls: "The children perceived him, when he had laid himself stretched out... then said to each other: 'It is a hartebeest that yonder lies ...' " (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 3). We know, through our privileged relationship with the narrative voice of the story, that this whole, intact hartebeest lying so enticingly in the way of the girls is really the Mantis who "cheated the children, by becoming a hartebeest, by resembling a dead hartebeest." /Kaggen does not merely pretend to be a hartebeest. He really becomes one. To do this all he has to do is resemble one, a quality that is intrinsic to him since the Mantis and the hartebeest possess the same head shape and gait (Hewitt 1986: 128). What he does pretend, though, is to be dead: "He feigning death lay in front of the children". The presence here, by the way, of death, even in simulated form, calls into question once again the neat division between first and present times and the attribution of properties such as the absence of death to the First Times. /Kaggen wants the children to cut him up with a stone knife. These children, it is asserted, do not possess metal knives. The /Xam, too, it would appear, retain a Stone Age!

The references to hartebeest in the Bleek and Lloyd collection are not as extensive as those pertaining to springbok or eland, for instance. Nevertheless, an exploration of these references rapidly discloses a wider referential context for the story and reveals the exuberance of the signifier itself. The hartebeest is one of the Mantis's special animals. It is one of the buck endowed by the Mantis with colour. He fed the Gemsbok, the Hartebeest, the Quagga and the Springbok different kinds of honey which resulted in their attaining different colours. The "Hartebeest is red, because the comb of young bees which he ate was red. So he became like the comb

- See chapter 5, section B and chapter 8, section i for further discussion of the presence or absence of death in the First Times.

of young bees" (Bleek, D 1923: 10). The Mantis not only creates the Eland and the Hartebeest but endows them with colour by feeding them different kinds of honey. Colour is not simply descriptive. It signifies identity; it gives these animals their particularity. The hartebeest, as well as the other buck which /Kaggen invests with colour, are signifiers, then, of difference. While all the signifiers in the narratives participate in a play of difference, signifiers such as "hartebeest" make this play explicit.

It is important to note in passing that in the scheme that writers such as Hewitt (1986: 116-118) and Solomon (forthcoming: 38-39) apply to the materials, identity confusion prevails during the First Times until the anteater lays down the laws of the species and confers separate identities on them. If /Kaggen's endowing of the antelope with identity through feeding them different kinds of honey is also taken into consideration then it must be admitted that the /Xam materials do not contain a single account of the division of the Early Race into creatures with separate identities; they contain instead many intersecting versions which are only contradictory for so long as they are read with a view to extracting from them an

²⁰⁹ One could, at this point, deviate from tracking the hartebeest and turn to the role of the signifier "honey" in the narratives, a substance that appears in many different contexts. Parkington (1996) links it to sexuality, femininity and fecundity in a consideration of the story Dorothea Bleek (1923) entitles 'The Mantis makes an eland.' In this story the Mantis makes an eland from Kwammang-a's shoe and raises it on a mixture of honey and water. Parkington argues that the phrase, "The eland grew up eating Mantis's honey" (Bleek, D. 1923: 1), could be "read metaphorically as implying sexual infidelity" (Parkington 1996: 283). Like hunting meat, which is symbolically conflated with male sexual activity (Biesele 1993), honey is exclusively collected by males (Hewitt 1986: 35). In 'the story of the Mantis and the Eland', /Kaggen's failure to return home with honey alerts his family group to the fact that something is up. The Ichneumon is sent to spy on his grandfather and sees him feeding what the Ichneumon, who along with everyone else has never known an eland (this is the first one), calls a "strong thing" (Bleek, D 1923: 1). Honey is intimately linked to the Mantis and to his special animals in an intricate web of signification. "[Symbolically honey was regarded as creative substance associated with game animals and the moon" (Hewitt 1986: 224). Honey, I would argue, is absent from 'the story of the girls and the hartebeest' as a signifier but present as a signified by virtue of its relationship with the signifiers that do occur directly in the narrative.

authorised version of the /Xam myth of origin. The order of things in the narratives does not obey this logic or fulfil this expectation. It is possible for both the anteatler and /Kaggen to parcel out identity at different times and in different ways just as it is possible for death to exist and not exist in the First Times.²¹¹ The story entitled 'the Mantis takes away the ticks' sheep' also describes /Kaggen's assertion of the differentiation of species (Bleek, D. 1923: 30-34). All the narratives could be described as exploring the nature of identity in one way or another. I discuss this aspect of them at greater length in 'the story of the sun's armpit' in chapter 7.

No mention of eland appears in this narrative and yet hartebeest and eland are always inextricably linked. The whole symbolic order in which the eland participates is present, I would maintain, in the story through a web of intertextuality. Eland would always have been a silent but signifying presence in a telling of 'the story of the girls and the hartebeest.' Guenther (1996: 90) connects, as we have seen, 'the story of the girls and the hartebeest' with sexuality. Parkington emphasises the sexual significance of eland: "The eland has a quite specific connotation related to the parallels seen by hunter-gatherer people between hunting and sex, and the roles these activities play in defining social roles (1996: 282). An intertextual relationship between the two antelope is established by the sexual connotations they share as signifiers. But sexual signification is not the only link between them. *The Mantis and his friends* devotes two and a half pages to the connection between the two antelope in an extract that is entitled, 'The hartebeest and the eland' (Bleek, D. 1923: 10-12). This piece does not only concern the eland and the hartebeest, it also supplies information about the relationship between /Kaggen and the hartebeest that has an obvious and immediate relevance to a consideration of 'the story of the hartebeest and the girls.'

See chapter 6 for a discussion of the /Xam materials and the notion of the myth of origin.

²¹¹ See chapter 8 for a discussion of this paradox in 'the story of the moon and the hare.'

The Hartebeest and the Eland are things of the Mantis; therefore they have magic power.

The Mantis is used to go with the Hartebeest when he walks about. Our parents used to ask us, Did (sic) we not see that Hartebeest's head resembled the Mantis's head? It feels that it belongs to the Mantis: that is why its head resembles his head (Bleek, 1923: 10)

This extract is followed by a section that relates specifically to the Eland. The text, then, returns to the Hartebeest, but this time in conjunction with the Eland:

People say that the Mantis first made the Eland: the Hartebeest was the one whom he made after the death of his Eland. That is why he did not love the Eland and the Hartebeest a little, he loved them dearly, for he made his heart of the Eland and the Hartebeest (12)

Here the hartebeest and the eland are conjoined in the heart of the Mantis. The gemsbok is also dear to /Kaggen but less so than are the eland and the hartebeest:

The Gemsbok was the one whom he did not love so well, yet he was fond of the Gemsbok. For there are Hares which we see when we shoot Gemsbok, and those Hares do not stir, because they want us to kill them. We look at them because they are his Hares. He wants us to kill the Hares, in order that the Gemsbok may live.

And the Gemsbok recovers, if we kill the Hare, because it feels that the Mantis is the one whom we kill. He becomes a Hare, because he means to kill him, in order that the Gemsbok may recover, and he remembers that he once did so. He made himself into a wounded Hartebeest, because he wanted the people to cut him up. (12)

And so we return, by another route, to 'the story in which the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest', embedded in a discourse which also features the eland, the hare and the gemsbok. Situated in this way, the story can be seen to participate in and expand the theme of the special relationship between the hartebeest and the Mantis, which is also the subject of the extract. In the extract, 'the story in which

the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest' is posited as history, something the Mantis did in the past. Although the story is set in the period of the First Times, /Kaggen's actions in it are seen as of the same order as his ongoing and "present" protection of certain game animals. The common context of the story and the excerpt illustrates that there is a continuity between the order of the everyday and story time. But the grammar signals their separation. The two orders are placed within a single discourse at the same time as they are separated by shifts in tense: "The Mantis is used to go with the Hartebeest when he walks about" (10) and "He made himself into a wounded Hartebeest..." (12). His transformation into a hartebeest in the story is paralleled by his turning into a hare to assist the recovery of wounded gemsbok. The actions of the Mantis in the First Times and those of the Mantis of the present times are seen to directly correlate. This accords with Hewitt's view of the correspondence between the trickster of the story time and the actions of the supernatural being of the present order context of hunting. He attributes the concordance, however, not to a direct parallel, as is presented in the extract about the hartebeest and the eland, but to a correspondence of outcomes. The social order, according to Hewitt, is re-affirmed in both the stories and the hunting observances, but in very different ways. In the former, the actions of the Mantis, who is a maverick part of the community, provides an opportunity for the articulation of social values. In the latter, certain collective behaviours become necessary as a result of /Kaggen's actions in protecting the game.

The hartebeest feels so strongly that it "belongs" to the Mantis that this identification takes physical form. This resemblance is the consequence not the cause of the association of the hartebeest and the Mantis: "It feels that it belongs to the Mantis: that is why its head resembles his head" (10). The association is one of love. The Mantis's heart is made, in part, of the hartebeest. The hartebeest, in turn, feels that it belongs to the Mantis. From this knowledge, comes the correspondence between the heads of the insect and the antelope. The hartebeest's feeling for the Mantis is reciprocated for /Kaggen goes with the hartebeest wherever it goes. In a sense, they are not separate beings since they are so closely united. But they are not

a single being; they are not identical. To be in the presence of the hartebeest is also to be in the presence of the Mantis. To be in the presence of the Mantis does not necessarily entail being in the presence of the hartebeest, though. Neither the Mantis nor the hartebeest is a stable presence. Since they are overdetermined signs, they are always both more and less than themselves. The hartebeest is a metonymic signifier, standing in for a realm that is both more extraordinary and more mundane than itself. Its self is always absent, always in the process of signifying. It never rests in a signified. But whether the hartebeest refers to the "Platonic" type of the stories or to the hartebeest one might encounter in the field (which also might not be a hartebeest after all), whether the mode is magical or economic, whether the context is the First Times or hunting practices, the relationship between /Kaggen and the hartebeest remains consistent. The bond is more than symbolic. It belongs to the elusive order of reality. It is manifested outwardly in the resemblance between the head of the insect and the head of the antelope, a resemblance that is interpellated for children: "Our parents used to ask us, Did (sic) we not see that the Hartebeest's head resembled the Mantis's head?" In a sense, the girls of the story are not tricked. They fail to notice the obvious resemblance between the heads and so cheat themselves.

Not only is the hartebeest like /Kaggen, it is also, and as the result of a different relationship which also involves /Kaggen, but on another axis, similar to the eland. The two antelope are not linked by likeness or physical contiguity, as are /Kaggen and the hartebeest. They are joined, rather, through their being "things of the Mantis" and sharing, as a result, magical power. They are both creations of /Kaggen, denizens of a common history, a history that involves human hunters and death. The tragic knowledge of this relationship with humans is carried by /Kaggen whose heart is made from the eland and the hartebeest, the result, in part, of a primal murder, eternally replayed.²¹² /Kaggen accompanies both the hartebeest and

²¹ /Kaggen clandestinely makes an eland from /Kwammang-a's shoe and raises it on honey. After the Ichneumon discovers his grandfather's secret, /Kwammang-a or a group of meerkats, depending on the version, kill the eland (Bleek, D. 1923: 1-9).

the eland. He "sits between the Eland's horns" and does all he can to protect the eland from hunters. "The Mantis", it is said, "does not love us if we kill an eland" (12). Since this discourse situates both the eland and the hartebeest in the Mantis's heart, it follows that killing a hartebeest elicits a similar reaction from /Kaggen. 'The story in which the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest' can then be read as a pre-emptive strategy of /Kaggen's, a way of protecting real hartebeest from future attacks. /Kaggen is impelled by his love for these animals, a love that is incorporated in his body and so exists as a force different from usual love, of which he is also capable in a deep and profound way. He cares, for example, for the gemsbok, even going so far, when a gemsbok has been shot, as to turn into a hare so as to tempt the hunters to kill him. In this way he takes the energy of dying away from the gemsbok and transfers it to himself: "And the Gemsbok recovers, if we kill the Hare, because it feels that the Mantis is the one whom we kill." In relation to the hartebeest and eland, however, "The Gemsbok was the one whom he did not love so well, yet he was fond of the Gemsbok."

The extract from *The Mantis and his friends* also refers to the danger that eating the flesh of the hartebeest constitutes for women with young children:

A woman who has a young child does not eat the Hartebeest, nor does she spring over the Hartebeest's head, for the Mantis would press down the hollow place on her child's head, and the child would die, if she did so.

So our parents used to tell the women who had young children to cut out a piece of the Hartebeest's foot between the toes, to thread it upon a sinew and make a charm and put it on the little child. For these are things upon which the Mantis sits, and the Mantis would smell the thing's scent on the child and would not press on its head.

Our parents used to say that the Mantis sits between the Eland's horns. When a man has shot an Eland with an arrow, he does not come home. He walks about as if he were ill; people carry him away as if he were ill, for he wants the Eland to act as he does. (Bleek, D 1923: 10-11)

A structuralist approach to this extract would try to detect the underlying framework of these beliefs while a functionalist explanation would seek to demonstrate how they serve to reinforce /Xam social values. Both approaches downplay the significance of the detail in their search for the truth behind the appearance. The structuralist strategy reduces the details of the cultural practice to the outward expression of a deeper structure while the functionalist explanation subordinates them to a meta-cultural motive: the maintenance of social systems. Logocentrism always seeks to discover a logic beneath the surface of the text. In this case, it is tempted to seek a logic in the linkage of the eating of hartebeest to /Kaggen and to children's heads. /Kaggen and the hartebeest have the same head. It is, therefore, also part of /Kaggen's body, his head, that is being violated when a hartebeest is eaten. Accordingly, /Kaggen exacts revenge by violating the heads of the most vulnerable humans, babies. But this is to treat such materials as riddles to be deciphered rather than accepted. There is no deeper truth or logic to be excavated, perhaps, only an appearance to be made more apparent. The logic of the transference of danger away from a child through the foregoing of one sort of use of the body of the hartebeest and the ritual embrace of another is here linked to the practice of eland hunting and, by the end of the section, as we saw earlier, to 'the story of the girls and the hartebeest.' Hartebeest, hunting, children, females and /Kaggen occur directly in both the extract and the story. The story has to be explored in terms of these relationships, the exact nature of which, however, it seems to me, is impossible to reconstruct without the availability of the wider context of the /Xam discursive field.

A hypothetical /Xam interpreter of the story would have brought to his 'reading' a great deal more of the sorts of intertextuality I have been exploring in this section on the hartebeest. A long discourse delivered by Dialkwain (L.V.I7. 5257-5300) and published under the title, "The Mantis tries to save the hartebeest", in Lewis Williams's *Stories that float from afar* (2000: 229-232) provides a sense of the scope of the intertextual field in which the sign hartebeest participates. The extract describes the steps /Kaggen takes to rescue a wounded hartebeest. When a man has

shot a hartebeest, the Mantis enters his hut and stands on his quiver. The women know then that a hartebeest has been shot: "For this thing is showing us. It really knows that one of our men is shooting a hartebeest. The Mantis is a thing which is a hartebeest's thing. He is with the hartebeest" (229). /Kaggen does not come into the hut simply to convey this information, however. He wants to provoke the women into catching him and expelling him from the hut or chasing him away with stones (230). He then flies to the wounded hartebeest and encourages it to recover. It is wise not to chase away the Mantis when he comes to a hut in this way or even to refer to his presence directly. Standing on the hunter's quiver is not /Kaggen's only option. He can pinch the sleeping child of the man who has shot the hartebeest. When the child cries the man will stand up and the dying hartebeest, with whom the man is sympathetically conjoined, will receive the strength to stand up too. The women take care to give a crying child the breast before it can disturb its father. The information in Diakwain's extract, I would argue, is directly pertinent to 'the story of the girls and the hartebeest' even though the two texts belong to different orders in the scheme that Hewitt has applied to the materials. The close identification between /Kaggen and hartebeest, evident in his steps to prevent hartebeest hunting in the extract, is unquestionably a field of signification which intersects with the story.

Another close connection between /Kaggen and the hartebeest is present in almost all the /Kaggen stories, although it does not occur in this narrative in which they are physically conflated. /Kaggen, generally in the stories, goes out accompanied by his hartebeest things. This term refers chiefly to his bag. It is made from hartebeest calves and is addressed, accordingly, as "Hartebeest children" (Bleek, D. 1923: 17; 19; 23; 31). Whenever /Kaggen needs to extricate himself from a tight situation he summons his Hartebeest children, his kaross, his shoes and his quiver and they fly with him to a water hole where he recovers from his wounds (Hewitt 1986: 180). The ability of the 'hartebeest' in this story to reconstitute itself is paralleled in the ability of the hartebeest children to participate in /Kaggen's escapes and in his regeneration.

Following the tracks of a signifier such as "hartebeest" is largely a question of guesswork. Apart from our linguistic, cultural and discursive remoteness from it, it is a sign which, within the context of the materials themselves, is unstable and unreliable. The hartebeest is not only dear to /Kaggen, it is also, to some degree, as we have just seen, part of him, his heart. It is larger than life, a hyperreal entity. But hartebeest are also one of the most prized sources of meat. The term "hartebeest" can signify a flesh and blood game animal that can be hunted and eaten; a "mythological" denizen of the first times and the generic hartebeest of the observances. He is not an individual animal, exhibits no gender or personal characteristics and yet, equally, is not a collective noun, as in a discourse, for example, that might describe the habits and movements of hartebeest. But nor is each of these significations ever foreclosed. This potent signifier is accorded relatively little space in the Bleek and Lloyd collection. Nevertheless, the references to the hartebeest in the materials which I have explored here give some idea of the wide range of its field of signification. All the elements in the stories, including /Kaggen, could, in my view, be read as protean signifiers within a /Xam symbolic order that is never a closed system. Within this symbolic order, which is always also the "real", the hartebeest, /Kaggen, people and a great many other signifiers intersect in intricate ways. Hewitt, as we have seen, focuses on the structural components of the stories, imputes a conservative function to them and regards /Kaggen as a trickster and narrative operational principle. This approach cannot, in my view, explore or account for the discursive capacity of a signifier like the "hartebeest" in this story. Nor can Guenther's comparative approach. As we saw earlier in the chapter, the species of the antelope discovered by the girls is incidental in Guenther's reading of the narrative.

In some, or even all, of its details, a commentary such as this may err. Inevitably certain meanings have eluded the analysis and others have been found where they do not exist. The point is, however, not to unlock the meaning of the text but to gain some idea of the intricacy of its workings and to indicate that the materials

signify within a wider economy of difference rather than in relation to an underlying narrative structure or to a universal archetype, the trickster. Nor do the details in the story merely lessen the tedium of a didactic lesson or sugar-coat a moral.

While I would argue that "external" readings often say more about their own location in an episteme than they do about their "object", I do not wish to suggest that an analysis of the story is only possible from within /Xam discourse. Nor do I wish to imply that there exists somewhere a pure /Xam interpretation of the story which might be reclaimable were it not for the inadequacies of linguistics, history and ethnology. /Xam discourse was not a closed system, consistent with a timeless anthropological space of cultural purity. Discourse is always dialogic in the Bakhtinian sense²¹³, a lived practice, rather than a Platonic medium. The /Xam also interacted in complex ways with other languages and cultures. The intertextuality of their discourse stretched beyond the open confines of anything that might be described as intrinsically /Xam discursive practice. At the time of the recording of the materials, for instance, the informants spoke Afrikaans as well as /Xam. Each teller and listener would herself have embodied different and unstable sites of textuality that would have interacted unpredictably with the stories.

Matthias Guenther (1989; 1999) and Anne Solomon (forthcoming) work with the same materials as Hewitt does. They also discuss /Kaggen in some detail. Both of them regard /Kaggen as a trickster. In many respects their reading of him differs significantly from Hewitt's, however. It is these differences that form the chief focus of the next chapter.

" See Mikhail Bakhtin's *The dialogic imagination: four essays* (1981) and *Speech genres and other late essays* (1986). These works set out his assertion that language is a lived practice rather than a static system of signs. Speech acts, including storytelling, always occur in the context of social relations and are subject to negotiation.

CHAPTER FIVE: /KAGGEN IN THE WORK OF GUENTHER AND SOLOMON

This chapter continues the discussion of the interpretation of /Kaggen conducted in the last two chapters. It considers Matthias Guenther and Anne Solomon's treatment of the /Xam figure in relation to Hewitt's work. I concentrate on Guenther's reading of /Kaggen in his book, *Tricksters and trancers - Bushman religion and society* (1999) and on Solomon's, *San worlds* (forthcoming)²¹⁴. This chapter, like the previous one, focuses on the contrast between functionalist and structuralist assertions about the narratives on the one hand and their treatment as /Xam discursive practice on the other.

Guenther's work (1989; 1999) has been nearly as influential in /Xam narrative studies as Hewitt's. He has written more about /Kaggen than anyone other than Hewitt. This writing has not been subjected to close critical scrutiny. Such scrutiny is, in my view, the essential prelude to new studies of the narratives themselves. Without it, observations about the stories continue to be reproduced as though they were truths and the theoretical premises behind statements on the narratives remain submerged and uncontested. The differences between Hewitt and Guenther's work reproduce some of the differences in general trickster studies (examined in chapter 3) and in the field of comparative mythology (examined in chapter 6). These differences relate to debates as to whether tricksters and myths promote or challenge social order. It is important, in my view, to situate debates about the narratives in this broader context as well as to show that both schools of thought still exhibit the influence of the metaphysics of presence identified by Derrida.

²¹⁴ These works contain their most comprehensive writing on the figure of /Kaggen. Solomon's other work (1989;1992;1994;1995a;1995b;1997a;1997b,1998;1999) is more concerned with rock art interpretation than with a consideration of narrative. Guenther's *Bushman folktales; oral traditions of the Nharo of Botswana and the /Xam of the Cape* (1989) is primarily interested in demonstrating the interrelatedness of the Nharo and /Xam oral traditions.

Anne Solomon (forthcoming) has written extensively about the narratives as will be evident when her book, *San worlds*, which is still in press, is published. Obviously the influence exerted by this book on studies of the /Xam narratives has still to be felt. I discuss her work here because my own analysis of the texts has been irrevocably influenced by aspects of her work, especially her contentions about the spirits of the dead. She does not focus on /Kaggen to the same extent as Hewitt and Guenther do but, nevertheless, has important things to say about him.

A. Guenther's writing on /Kaggen

i. Guenther's view of the /Xam "trickster", contrasted with Hewitt's

Hewitt, as I described in the last chapter, divides the /Kaggen materials into group A and group B narratives and separates these from other materials such as animal and sidereal stories.²¹⁵ He removes particular stories from the anarchic mass of the materials and groups them together in certain categories. When the overriding concern is their classification into types, the details of individual stories, with a few notable exceptions, become of secondary importance. Many of the narratives' signifying elements are missed as a consequence. Although Matthias Guenther emphasises the textual details of the stories even less than Hewitt, he does not attempt to impose an order on the materials in the same manner. He emphasises, rather, the fluidity and openness of the texts and the ambiguity, variability and protean nature of /Kaggen. He matches this version of the trickster with the requirements of a foraging economy in which socialisation tends towards flexibility, adaptability and a high degree of individual autonomy.

²¹³ Hewitt, of course, is not alone in separating the materials in this way. The published collections from Bleek and Lloyd (1911) to Lewis-Williams (2000) all order the materials in various ways. Critical studies, including this thesis, adopt a similar strategy. Hewitt's interest in constructing structural typologies, though, means that his ordering of the materials is more systematic and forms an integral part of his understanding of them.

As indicated by his title, Guenther identifies /Kaggen as a trickster. Although Hewitt employs a structuralist approach and Guenther positions himself as an anti-structuralist, they both attribute characteristics of the universal figure of the trickster to /Kaggen. They both also acknowledge his uniqueness among trickster figures and attribute this to the extraordinary and incompatible range of his characteristics.

²¹⁶ However, they interpret the co-existence of these contradictory elements differently, as I shall show in the pages that follow.

Hewitt, as we saw in the last chapter, regards the trickster of the group A narratives as functioning primarily as an opportunity for the articulation of socially conservative messages or as a safety valve for the transference and disposal of anti-social impulses. He explores the existence of another more serious, saviour kind of /Kaggen in his study of the group B stories. He delineates the structures in which the two kinds of /Kaggen appear and relates these to the separate treatment of the two dominant themes of /Xam society, life and death, on the one hand, and the social order and its negation, on the other. He suggests that particular narrators might demonstrate a predilection for one or other of these themes and, thus, for one or other version of the trickster. Guenther, by contrast, foregrounds /Kaggen's paradoxical attributes.²¹⁷ He does not sort the stories into different kinds in order to accommodate the different kinds of /Kaggen. Instead he locates the signifying power of /Kaggen in his ability to embody contradiction and to simultaneously span divine and absurd character traits.

Guenther (1999) does not discuss Hewitt's work on the /Xam narratives, which preceded his own *Tricksters and trancers: Bushman religion and society* by twelve

^{2,6} Guenther (1999: 97) does, however conflate /Kaggen with other Bushman and Khoi figures. It is all of these figures together that are uniquely different from tricksters in other parts of the world. Hewitt (1986: 210) positions /Kaggen more firmly within /Xam society itself.

²¹⁷ In this he follows several of the writers I discussed in chapter 3, notably Pelton (1980) and Douglas (1984).

years, although he does cite it frequently. Nevertheless, much of his reading of the /Xam narratives and /Kaggen appears to emerge from a dialogue with Hewitt's work. His book explicitly takes issue with structuralist and functionalist readings of the trickster, readings which as we have seen, in terms of the Bleek and Lloyd materials, are most extensively and obviously represented by Hewitt's work. Guenther bases his own interpretation of the trickster on /Kaggen's relationship with a foraging ideology which, he argues, characterises all Bushman societies as well as other hunter-gathering cultures worldwide. Unusually, he opposes functionalist and structuralist interpretations through himself delivering an analysis that is functionalist and structuralist and noting its limitations: "I took a double-barreled functionalist-structuralist shot at a couple of features of Bushman myth in chapters 5 and 6, and concluded that the analysis it allowed, while arguably elegant, obscured as much as it explained" (Guenther 1999: 244). The structuralist or functionalist analysis to which academicians are bound, he claims, gives the impression that Bushmen "beliefs and myths are logically consistent and symbolically integrated." In fact, argues Guenther, the "'wonderful muddle' that is Bushman religion contains every conceivable trait and pattern, permitting of every conceivable analytical or interpretative approach" (244). The muddle is not the result of confusion but a life strategy required by a hunter-gathering economy: "Bushman belief can be regarded as an ideology consistent with the mobility, openness, fluidity, flexibility, adaptability and unpredictability of the forager's life.... Foraging, as argued earlier, is an ideology, a basic ethos, which interacts dialectically with social organisation." Bushmen only resort to structure in time of crisis, "the reverse of the more familiar lapse into disorder undergone by ordered societies in like times ..." (246-247).

²¹⁸ Hewitt, though, is not alone in his focus on the function of the stories as I indicated in chapter 1, section B, ii, c. The function of trickster stories in general is a recurrent preoccupation as seen in chapter 3. Guenther himself, as I shall point out later in the chapter, engages in functionalist explanations even as he criticises them.

²¹⁹ While Guenther and Pelton (1980) both emphasise the fluidity of a world view that contains the trickster, Guenther relates this fluidity to economic practice while Pelton reads it as primarily a philosophical and theological orientation. Hyde (1998), as mentioned in chapter 3, links the trickster

Guenther would maintain, then, that for the Bushmen, the structure that Hewitt discerns beneath their texts is a last resort. The narratives are not a medium for socially conservative messages. Instead, they present an ambiguous, open-ended ideology suited to the requirements of a flexible foraging economy. This ideology is best exemplified in the figure of the trickster. For "deep-seated epistemological reasons", which he does not enunciate, Guenther states that "'anthropological-academics cannot tolerate ambiguity ...'" (227). This renders them constitutionally incapable of understanding Bushman cosmology, which abounds in contradiction. At its centre is a god who is simultaneously "destructive and creative". Overall, Bushman cosmology consists of an ambiguous blend of "the numinous and the ludicrous" (227).

Guenther accuses both functionalists and structuralists, as well as anthropologists and academics in general (with their entrenched rationalism), of bringing to their interpretations the "a priori assumption" that "there must be structure" (228). Functionalists, he claims, regard all religion and the myths through which religion is articulated as the "grease and glue of tribal society, its core institution." He quotes Malinowski (1948: 101) when describing the functionalist position that myth is a "hard-worked, active force" and a "pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom" (228). This does indeed seem an accurate description of Hewitt's functionalist explanations in which the /Kaggen narratives function to reinforce social cohesion and articulate social values and knowledge. The structuralist

with hunting in a similar way to the way in which Guenther links him to hunting and gathering. The difference is that Hyde operates within a biological evolutionary framework. The trickster has his roots in hunting and the development of the intellect that accompanied it. He transcends his origins, though, and flourishes in all cultural contexts. Guenther's Bushman trickster is firmly located within a hunting-gathering economy.

²²⁰ Like Barnard (1992), Guenther posits a pan-Khoisan deity with multiple and ambiguous qualities. In my view, this deity is attributed to the /Xam chiefly as a result of their location as a Khoisan people. There is little evidence in the Bleek and Lloyd collection to support it. See also Hewitt (1986: 40).

version of this tendency Guenther characterises, with an obvious, but unstated, reference to Levi-Strauss, as an argument for the existence of a "deep-seated rationality within belief and ritual" in which myth "is treated as a culture's 'meta-theory', containing logical components that are based on binary oppositions and that operate through complex, chainlike metaphorical transformations and inversions" (228).²²¹ Hewitt's reading of the stories in terms of a nature/culture, raw/cooked, clothed/naked set of oppositions is inspired to a considerable degree by the structuralist method of Levi-Strauss to which Guenther is clearly referring.²²²

According to Guenther (229), both functionalism and structuralism assume that an order lies beneath the surface of myths waiting to be excavated and logically re-presented. For some researchers this inner order consists of core elements that survive the apparent contradiction and ambiguity of the materials. This essentialist strategy involves two projects: "one concerns the selection of elements to include in the core, the other the treatment of those elements that lie outside it" (230).

Personal variation in the way storytellers present their materials as well as other "peripheral phenomena" tend to be dismissed. Once again Guenther might be referring to Hewitt for whom "narrative forms" can only be "elaborated at a 'purely' entertainment level by individual performers" (1986: 183), although, as we saw in the last chapter, Hewitt does devote a late chapter to a discussion of the influence of individual narrators on stories.

Guenther goes on to identify some of the work which for him employs the way of thinking he is criticising. Laurens Van der Post, claims Guenther, exhibits the tendency to project categories onto the materials when he writes about the Mantis as

²⁻¹ Earlier in his book (159), Guenther notes that Malinowski's functionalist approach and Levi-Strauss's structuralist one "come to the anthropologist's mind" when "dealing with myth."

. See, especially, Levi-Strauss (1966; 1969). Hewitt (1986: 264) lists several of Levi-Strauss's texts in his bibliography although he only refers to his work once in the body of his text (102).

the God of the Bushmen and as an "archetype of renewal and redemption" (231). Yet another school of researchers, he claims, insists on regarding the Bushmen as proto-scientists, again at the expense of the details of the narratives themselves. Then there is Lewis Williams's "trance hypothesis" and Megan Biesele's work "in which the theme of the equality and complementarity of men and women is seen to be the dominant symbol of Bushman cosmology and ritual" (232). Whatever the paradigm, argues Guenther, whether "theistic, sidereal, animistic, prosaic, shamanic, gender, symbolic", none "encompasses the field in its entirety, despite the claims to the contrary."

Contrasting with the rationalist interpretive tendencies listed above, which he loosely designates as structuralist or functionalist, is Bushman discourse itself, best exemplified in the figure of the trickster, /Kaggen. This discourse is characterised by contradiction, ambiguity and fluidity. It is anti-structural (235), open-ended, indirect and allusive (236). Guenther links it directly to the particular constitution of self required by the demands of a foraging economy. In accordance with the exigencies of hunter-gathering, Bushman communities consist of small groupings of "autonomous individuals rather than norm-governed social personae" (237). Social groupings are mobile. Individuals or families can move from one band to another with comparative ease, in response to conflict or resource scarcity, for example. Only in times of threat, according to Guenther, would the Bushmen resort to structure. In their struggles with the settlers, for instance, they sometimes formed large social groups with centralised and hierarchical structures of power. This is the exception, though, a temporary response to a crisis. When the threat recedes, they break up into small bands again. These bands are characterised by egalitarianism,

²²³ Rather surprisingly, given his own employment of the trickster motif, Guenther does not extend his critique of Van der Post's use of the language of Jungian archetypes to a consideration of the use of the trickster term itself.

²²⁴ Hewitt is conspicuous by his absence from this list even though his work contains the most extensive treatment of the narratives and exemplifies many of the positions Guenther wishes to criticise.

absence of status, absence of property and loose marital arrangements. Bushmen social configurations, at ordinary times, are "egalitarian 'societies against the state'" (240, citing Clastres 1977) and against hierarchy, structure and order.

Since the world of the forager is in continual flux, it requires great adaptability and a high level of opportunism from individuals.^{2 5} Foraging is subject to many variables and unpredictable circumstances such as rain, game movements and plant availability. It is a way of life that requires a world-view that can accommodate ambiguity and contradiction. In the variable, "topsy-turvy" world of the forager, the trickster is a key or "meta-player" (237-238). He embodies "the ambiguity that pervades Bushman mythology and cosmology ..." (4). He injects "ferment" and "laughter." He both affirms and derides values and beliefs (238). The mythological space of the First Order is another critical component of this complex. It admits an 'extra dimensionality of existence' into the world that parallels the Bushman experience of the complexity and disorder of the everyday and provides another instance of "the creative dissolution of the order of things" (238) that pervades foraging ideology. /Kaggen is the first citizen of this mythological realm.

Guenther contends that the stories, with their ontologically ambiguous beings and dreamlike quality, accord with the ambiguity that characterises the present (70). /Kaggen, too, spans the mythic and the "real." The trickster tricks time. "He can be as much a creature of the mythological past ... as of the recent, historical present"

⁵ Hewitt (1986: 30) notes that "children were explicitly encouraged to be self-supporting and learn to gather, catch and cook food as an insurance for themselves against the sudden loss of both or either parent." Although Hewitt is discussing the vicissitudes of hunter-gathering in a difficult environment here, the evidence of the notebooks and the narrators' biographies make clear that settler violence was a chief cause of adult mortality. The genocidal context in which the narrators were raised seems to me to inform Dia!kwain's statement that being an orphan wasn't a "light thing" but "a great thing it is" (L.V.6. 4411 rev.). The encouragement of self-reliance might, then, be seen as a response to crisis. Guenther's thesis, though, contends that cooperation superseded individualism in times of crisis.

²⁶ Guenther borrows the term "meta-player" from Hynes (Hynes and Doty 1993: 214).

(104). He moves between the "real and surreal realms" and the worlds of the living and the world of the spirits of the dead. While Guenther and Hewitt both situate /Kaggen as a trickster who is peculiarly suited to the existential modality of the primal time "when beings and states were inchoate and dreamlike, as well as fluid and flawed and ever-ready to change their forms or being" (7-8), Hewitt considers the primal period as intrinsically separated from the present, a period of chaos that stands in contrast to the relatively stable condition of the everyday world. Guenther sees more consistency between the two periods: "To a certain extent, the ambiguity of the First Order, with its ontological fluidity, its trickster protagonists, were-beings, and meat-women, still persists in the present world" (70). The mythic time and its exemplar, /Kaggen, are directly linked to the ontological requirements of a family-based foraging economy. Unlike the cooperative activities of more pastoral or agricultural economies, many hunter-gathering activities, including types of hunting, are conducted by individuals and require the flexibility and opportunism displayed in the /Kaggen stories (22).

Guenther questions the functionalist assumption, to which Hewitt subscribes, that religion and myth are always "integrating" forces (5). This, he argues, is only true of more structured societies with hierarchically patterned distributions of power. Bushman social configurations, he maintains, are so loose that they may not even constitute a society (7). Accordingly, Guenther locates /Kaggen within a Bushman religion that, he argues, differs from most religion in that it does not legitimate a power structure. Many of the unusual qualities of /Kaggen and other Bushman tricksters can be attributed to their place in societies that are uniquely free of asymmetrical relations of power. One of the chief qualities of the Bushman trickster that makes him unique in world literature, he contends, is that he is simultaneously a trickster and a deity. "While tricksters in other parts of the world may hold religious or sacred significance ... nowhere does the figure's status as divinity appear to be defined as clearly as in Khoisan religion" (6). The Bushman trickster is both a protagonist "of whimsical or outrageous tales" and a god, a figure of

"numinous power and portent" (6). He is especially a figure of "confounding plurality, plurivocality and ambiguity..." (6, quoting Hynes and Doty 1993).

Guenther locates, as I have said, the source of the ambiguity that he finds embodied in /Kaggen in the foraging ethos, which requires equality and sharing, on the one hand, and self-reliance and individual autonomy, on the other. The co-existence of an ethos of communalism with a stress on individualism, he claims, provide the site of the contradiction and uncertainty that carries so much mythic force in the /Xam materials. The treatment accorded the trickster in the tales forms part of a technique of "reverse dominance" (44), a levelling mechanism that reinforces egalitarianism and the communal ethos. In such small groups, values are negotiated directly at the level of individual agency. Individuals strategically negotiate the culture's values "in order to gain something of value" (40). An ambiguity, figured in the multi-faceted trickster, arises from the tension between individual agency and collective values. Altruism and communalism, argues Guenther, meet self-interest and individualism in a particular way in hunter-gathering economies (48). Although the individual is "subject to ongoing surveillance" in such intimate social groups, hunter-gatherers typically display "an individual autonomy syndrome" (50). This results from egalitarian values, gender equality, the lack of power institutions, the absence of coercive apparatuses and a loose and fluid social organisation. The

²²⁷ This contention, it seems to me, is not different in kind from Van der Post's contention, criticised by Guenther (see above), that the Mantis is the God of the Bushmen and an "archetype of renewal and redemption." Other figures, too, despite Guenther's assertion of /Kaggen's uniqueness, have commonly been accorded the attributes of trickster and deity in the literature on the trickster. An example would be the Yoruba figure, Esu (Gates 1988: 52). Jung also attributes a dual nature to tricksters (Jung 1956: 195).

²²⁸ This reference, like those in the last chapter in which Hewitt quotes Radin, illustrates the influence on the reading of the figure of /Kaggen of the general trickster literature. Guenther, though, seems much more consistently drawn to the comparative perspective that this literature invites than does Hewitt. It is revealing that he does not quote, to any significant degree, the writers in Hynes and Doty's book who argue against the use of the trickster "term" and the universal approach its use invites while freely quoting the writers who champion the use of the term and the comparative approach to mythology.

individual chooses with whom to associate, live and find food. Individuals require relationships in order to survive but these are not fixed and do not "*involve long-term binding commitments and dependencies*" (50, quoting Woodburn 1982: 434, Guenther's emphases). Guenther notes the similarity between this mode of the self and contemporary individualism but maintains that, unlike the "culture of narcissism", Bushman are individuated but "organically tied to the community" (54).²²⁹

Where Hewitt reads /Kaggen as the operational principle of narratives that enable the articulation of social values and normative discourse, Guenther situates him in relation to the kind of formation of the self required of a foraging economy. In such an economy, "the fluid composition" of social groups contributes to "the fragmentation of belief patterns" (81). /Kaggen's character, in Guenther's view, is consistent with the flexible individual qualities required by a foraging economy. For Hewitt, by contrast, /Kaggen's character provides an example to people of what they should not imitate. While Hewitt regards /Xam society as conservative, a necessary quality given the difficulties of surviving in a harsh physical environment, Guenther maintains that "Bushman expressive and mental culture, lie at a far remove from the conservative pole" (135).

In Guenther's view, /Kaggen exhibits the ability to cope with ambiguity and fluidity. The absurd situations he provokes illustrate the contradiction between communalism and individual autonomy at the heart of Bushman experience. He is a figure of open-endedness; he is against structure. Where the logocentric tradition requires certainty and structure, Bushman religion is based on the premise that knowledge is uncertain. This follows, asserts Guenther, from the absence of power in Bushman society. Since it is freed from its habitual role to legitimate power, myth can "remain within its proper, mythic time, where order is inchoate and power

²²⁹ In this regard, Guenther approvingly quotes Diamond: "the fulfilment - delineation of the human person within a social, natural and supernatural (self-transcendent) setting - is a fundamental trait of simple societies and differentiates them from complex ones" (53, quoting Diamond 1963: 103).

absent" (84). The form and content of religion can be "surreal, amorphous and fluid." /Kaggen embodies the uncertainty of knowledge and the fluidity of this mythico-religious complex. He is a figure of "profound ontological ambiguity and moral ambivalence" (98), who is attuned to "a spirit of disorder and flux" (96). These characteristics do not belong to /Kaggen alone: "The Bushman protagonist, like his trickster colleagues from all over the world, is a creator of beings and things, as well of rules and categories, on the one hand, while on the other, he transforms, distorts and inverts what he has created or decreed" (101).

Hewitt, as we saw in chapter 4, situates /Kaggen firmly on the side of nature. Guenther provides a different view. He quotes Lewis-Williams (1981: 124) who writes that /Kaggen, the Mantis of both the /Xam and the Malutis, was "a divinity who maintained the equilibrium between man and nature" (112). The non-dualistic Bushman vision of life, argues Guenther, would not set nature against culture. The merging of contrary characteristics that are morally incompatible in one trickster God is a product of this non-dualism (113), which, in turn, is a product of everyday experience. This, he notes, confuses interpreters schooled in a dualistic tradition. The Bushmen are similarly confused when presented with Christian dualism. They tend to regard Jesus as a trickster figure (116) in spite of the fact that Christianity, a religion of a God who does not laugh and who is an "architect of order and structure" (121), has little place for a "figure who embodies self-contradiction, a spirit of disorder and who is an enemy of boundaries." Since Christianity has little capacity for self-caricature and self-irony" (121, quoting Cox 1970: 141), its dualistic framework cannot accommodate the "conjunction of trickster and divine traits in the same god figure" Nor, by extension, he argues, can researchers, schooled in secular versions of this tradition, tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty in their analyses of non-dualistic cultural figures.

Guenther's work provides a tacit critique of many of Hewitt's positions concerning the narratives and /Kaggen. Hewitt's taxonomic organisation of the materials

²³⁰ Cf. Hynes (1993, pp. 33-45). Note Guenther's appeal to the universality of the trickster.

provides an example of what Guenther identifies as the chronic academic inability to "tolerate ambiguity" (227). The materials, argues Guenther, are not susceptible to being located within a structuralist framework since they are based on an anti-structuralist ideology. Guenther also criticises the functionalist explanations of the type Hewitt offers. In everyday life, he maintains, the Bushmen are guided more "by practical, rational, and secular considerations" than by "their myths and tales." He attributes the tendency by critics to inflate the didactic dimension of tales to too close an "articulation between myth and social reality" (161).

ii. A critique of Guenther's reading of/Kaggen.

I agree with many aspects of Guenther's reading of the figure of/Kaggen. I approve of his criticism of the reductive nature of structuralist and functionalist interpretations of the /Xam figure. I share his opinion that the /Kaggen narratives celebrate the uncertainty of knowledge and the ambiguity of experience. I concur also with Guenther's refusal to separate the mythical period from the present, metaphorically and ontologically (104). Nevertheless, I would maintain that Guenther himself exhibits many of the logocentric tendencies this thesis has sought to detect in critical practice and which he criticises in the work of other, largely unnamed, critics. For a start, he insists, at all times, on considering /Kaggen as a type, an example, albeit it an unusual one, of the universal figure of the trickster. Nowhere does he attempt to align himself with those writers who have problematised the figure. Instead he approvingly refers to the writing of Doty and Hynes (6) who argue for the usefulness of the figure of the universal trickster (see chapter 3). He wishes to make a contribution to trickster studies, stating that "I take delight in introducing this complex, unusual and highly interesting character to the world's rogue's gallery of such figures." At various points in his text he points out the ways in which /Kaggen exhibits general trickster attributes. He discerns similarities between him and the Winnebago figure, Wakdjungkaga, studied by Radin, for example (103). In a chapter entitled 'The Bushman trickster', Guenther conflates /Kaggen with other Khoisan trickster figures (95-125). "He is /Kaggen to

the Cape /Xam, Pate and Pisamboro (or //Gawama) to the Nharo and G/wi of Botswana, Piisi.koagu to the //Gana of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Kaoxa (or #Gao!na, !Gara, Hice, or Hoe) to the Zhu/'hoansi of Botswana and Namibia, Jackal and Haiseb ... to the Hei//om, Nama, and Damara" (97). In a note (253), he states that the tricksters (the protagonist-divinity figures) of the Khoi and the Bushmen "are the same in form and substance."

The universalising tendency in Guenther's thought is clearly evident in his comparative anthropological approach in which statements about a particular culture, in this case the /Xam, are made on the basis of a consideration of both a wider Bushman culture and of hunter-gathering economies in general. He consistently argues from the general to the particular. His work, *Tricksters and trancers: Bushman religion and society*, is based on linking the /Xam trickster with the Kalahari trance practitioner.²³¹ The two figures are symbolically and structurally conflated. Both, for Guenther, are masters of the liminal and the ambiguous, meta-signifiers in the foraging ideology of the Bushman. Anne Solomon (forthcoming) provides a critique of a least one manifestation of the pan-Bushman approach adopted by Guenther. The trance interpretation of the rock art, she maintains, has rested on false premises, the inaccurate idea that a correlation exists between contemporary Kalahari trance practice and the role of the "sorcerer" in the /Xam narratives.

The figure of the trickster is linked in Guenther's text to other universal terms like religion and myth. These terms provide an overarching idealist framework for his analysis in which elements in the narratives are identified as examples of universal

²³¹ It is not certain that the trance dance was ever practiced by the /Xam. There is no unambiguous evidence of trance dancing in the Bleek and Lloyd collection (Solomon forthcoming: 103).

²³² In contrast to Guenther, Mac Linscott Ricketts as we saw in chapter 3, separates the shaman and the trickster, maintaining that the shaman represents the impulse to transcend "the weakness of the human condition" while the trickster helps people endure "the absurdity of human existence" (Ricketts 1993: 105).

categories. In the next chapter I will examine the logocentric foundations of the concept of myth. The same sort of presuppositions, in my view, attend the anthropological use of the term "religion." Guenther situates the narratives within the field of the religious and locates /Kaggen as a particular kind of divinity, a trickster deity.²³³ /Kaggen is an example, he maintains, of a ubiquitous core element of a Khoisan religious complex which includes a "dual notion of divinity" (a concept, he admits, which is not developed in /Xam religion), a "trickster figure who is both protagonist and god" (again an idea that has to be qualified when applied specifically to /Kaggen), vaguely defined spirits of the dead,²³⁴ a "cosmogonic notion of an early order of existence ... and its transformation into the present order", a closeness to animals who are significant economically, mystically and symbolically", "ritual trance" and "male and female initiation rites" (88). Guenther compares a generalised Bushman religion, characterised by the presence of trickster figures, with Christianity, finding the former fluid and open and the latter closed and legitimating of power. The question remains, however, about the universality and scope of the categories that allows such a comparison to be made in the first place. He accuses other interpreters of fitting the culture to the theory. This location of the narratives within religious categories and concepts seems to follow the same course and is based, in my view, on a philosophy of presence in which metaphysical concepts are treated as social facts.

Work such as Guenther's, Barnard's and Lewis-Williams's, that is based on a posited pan-Bushman or pan-Khoisan culture, often ignores or glosses over important differences and details. It betrays a tendency to dehistoricise. This is

²³³ Cf. Lewis-Williams 2000: 8.

²³⁴ In the light of Solomon's recent work (forthcoming) these previously shadowy figures begin to dominate the foreground. I discuss some of the implications of this for interpretation in the next section of this chapter.

²³⁵ There is little evidence in the notebooks of elaborated and formal male initiation among the /Xam although Hewitt (1986: 131) claims that the eland observances enjoyed the same status among males as the menarcheal rites did among females.

²³⁶ See Barnard (1992), Lewis-Williams (1981) and Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1989).

evident in Guenther's foraging ideology, exemplified in the figure of the trickster, which underplays much of the historical complexity of the economic and social position of the Bushmen. Edwin Wilmsen (1989) explores this history in relation to the Kalahari in his work, *The land filled with flies: apolitical economy of the Kalahari*. He shows that for several hundred years, at least, Bushmen in the Kalahari have been caught up in broader political and economic relationships than Guenther's positing of a foraging ideology would suggest. While Guenther regards more complex organisation as a response to crisis, Wilmsen argues that significant numbers of Bushmen were pastoralists for long periods of time, only resorting to foraging as a response to dispossession. He offers a history in which Kalahari Bushmen switched between foraging and pastoralism many times during the thousand or so years of Iron Age occupation of the Kalahari. Robert Gordon (1992), writing about Namibia, similarly argues for a more complex view of the Bushman than the image of the perennial hunter-gatherer allows. Bushman, he contends, were central to the ivory trade, which was chiefly conducted by hierarchically organised Bushmen groupings. In his 1994 Masters thesis, Peter Jolly maintains that there was "contact between San and Khoi pastoralists at the Cape for 1800 years" (23), a contact which resulted in much greater economic, ideological and political complexity than the model of pristine Bushman foragers would concede. /Xam contact and conflict with Korana groups and with white settlers is documented in the Bleek and Lloyd notebooks. One of the informants, #Kasin, was himself half Korana, a fact that Bleek might have tried to suppress since he failed to "record a genealogical diagram for #Kasin, yet he did for all his other informants" (Bank 2006: 205-207). This, conjectures Bank, was because Bleek's "ethnographic enquiries were also shaped in terms of race." The /Xam traded with whites (152) and with the Tswana to the north (93). "There were Xhosa migrant communities living not too far from Dialkwain's home area ..." (253), as well as a little to the south of /Kabbo's home at the Bitterpits (141). Dia!kwain

" Guenther's has strongly contested many aspects of Wilmsen's work. See, for example, Guenther and Lee (1993).

²³⁸ See chapter 1, section B, iii, c.

revealingly tells a story of how his mother had to seek the assistance of a game sorceress in order to procure springbok in a time of scarcity since they possessed no cattle (251-252). It is likely, then, that only at certain periods in history would /Xam individuals and groups have required the traits that Guenther argues were inculcated by the foraging ideology which is figured in /Kaggen. At other times completely different life coping strategies would have been required. Of course, Guenther's foraging ideology is premised on flexibility but this flexibility is based on the notion that the /Xam's primary and essential way of life was foraging. Deviations from foraging were temporary.

Guenther does not engage with the texts in any detail. Brown (1998) notes, in this regard, that "anthropologists like Biesele and Guenther generally offer little discussion of thematic intricacy...." Guenther's statements apply to a broad consideration of the narratives and pan-Bushman culture in general rather than to the sort of close reading of the texts which might point to some of their discursive strategies and signifying practices.²³⁹ While celebrating the Bushman proclivity towards uncertainty of knowledge, figured in the ambiguous trickster protagonist, Guenther himself does not explore the play of signifiers in their texts which might offer this sort of uncertainty but instead submits the texts to generalised claims. In the previous chapter I showed how his analysis of 'the story in which the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest', based on a conflation of the story with similarly structured ones from the region, missed the generative play of the signifier, "hartebeest" in the narrative. Although he criticises the academic impulse to submit materials to an overarching paradigm, this tendency is exemplified in his own comparative and Platonic approach to the narratives. He links individual stories to their types in an ideal realm of Khoisan narratives. His theory of a foraging ideology works also as an overarching paradigm into which the narratives can be

²³⁹ Solomon (forthcoming: 246) notes that Guenther's "1989 study, a comparison of Nharo and /Xam stories was designed to 'allow for the analysis ... of the relationship between myth and social structure' (quoting Guenther 1989: 14). She compares Guenther's general approach to the materials with Hewitt's who "engaged more specifically with problems of 'meaning' in /Xam stories"

fitted. His reading of the /Kaggen of the narratives is influenced more by this thesis than by a close reading of the texts and is also predetermined by his understanding of the role of the trickster in world mythology. Reading a culture as anti-structural can still emanate from an intellectual approach shared by structuralism.

Guenther's yoking of a rigid social structure and the intellectual tradition of structuralism also seems to require closer examination. He implies that structuralism itself originates in tightly structured societies. Only an "anti-structural" social configuration like the /Xam band could have at its ideological centre a figure as anarchic and unpredictable as /Kaggen. There is, in Guenther's work, a correlation between highly organised social formations with centralised authority structures and rationalist intellectual tendencies, a contention that a detailed examination of intellectual movements in the west would have difficulty in establishing. The twentieth century intellectual phenomenon of structuralism did not always originate in the most tightly structured sites of European society. This link appears more metaphorical than historical. Guenther, in my opinion, too loosely conflates philosophical or linguistic structuralism with social structure

Another symptom of Guenther's logocentric tendency to submit the Bushmen and the narratives to a particular thesis is his attitude to power in Bushman social formations. His foraging ideology is based on individual flexibility and the avoidance of structure whenever possible, an ideology figured in the character of /Kaggen, with his irreverent attitude to power and authority and his predilection for opportunism. Guenther's contention that societies like the /Xam are "free of hierarchy and power structures" (5) stems, it seems to me, at least in part, from the philosophy of the noble savage that Derrida (1976) links with logocentrism and the nostalgia for the lost origin. It rests also on a narrow understanding of power that Foucault's work, especially, has rendered redundant (1970; 1980). Guenther (1999: 50) himself comes close to a more sophisticated version of the analysis of power pioneered by Foucault when he observes that individuals in such small groups are continually under surveillance. At different points in his text he

acknowledges that Bushman are not "harmless people" without social conflict (44-45) and that Bushman societies exhibit unequal gender relations. The male activity of hunting, in particular, claims an unequal "share of social, political and religious significance, if not power" (148). Despite these qualifications, the overall thrust of Guenther's thesis is to downplay the existence of power relations in /Xam society. In the statement just quoted he seeks to distance the exercise of power to some degree from an unequal "share of social, political and religious significance." He fails to acknowledge that power can be exercised through tradition, precedent and the pressure of the group as much as through formal power relations. Guenther describes the presence of a mechanism of "reverse-domination" which takes the form of deflation of anyone who appears to be getting above himself and which is displayed in the narratives whenever /Kaggen overreaches himself (34). This mechanism, he claims, is symptomatic of the relative absence of power relations in Bushman culture. It seem to me, though, that this mechanism could just as easily be read as indicative of the existence of the tensions of power within /Xam bands, tensions which might even be exacerbated by the absence of formal power structures. Reverse-domination, I would argue, is a means whereby the group exercises power over the individual. Its presence registers the contestation of certain kinds of power, not the absence of power itself. Power informs the very process of subjectification; it is never absent from signification. Identities, even those such as the /Xam identities discerned by Guenther which are predicated on the freedom of the individual from the group, are formed within discursive systems, the site of the operation of power in its productive aspect.

The absence of power, at least in its narrow and institutionalised guises, is crucial to Guenther's positing of hunter-gathering society as fundamentally different from

- See Foucault (1981; 1985; 1988) for a description of this process in relation to sexuality. About the ubiquity of power, Foucault (1980) writes: "Between every point of a social body, between a man and a woman, between the members of a family ... there exist relations of power ..." (187).

²⁴¹ See chapter 2, section B, i, for a discussion of this aspect of Foucault's work and its relevance to a reading of the /Xam narratives.

other kinds of economic and social formations. Religion in Bushman societies, he claims, is freed from its usual role of legitimating power. This allows Bushman religion to concentrate instead on "altered states". "Myth, too, is able to remain within its proper mythic time, where order is inchoate and power absent... (84). . This position, it seems, to me is based not on a close examination of the /Xam materials but on the need to support his thesis of a foraging ideology that is against structure and power. Guenther's reading of the /Kaggen narratives as a component of socialisation for the kind of individual identity suitable for a hunter-gathering way of life still locates them as part of the apparatus of power the group exerts over the individual, even if the intent of this ideological coercion is individual autonomy.

Guenther also reproduces a key feature of logocentric thought in his separation of speech and writing.²⁴³ Derrida, as we have seen, has shown how all signifying practice relies on the interplay of the properties usually imputed to speech and writing in logocentric thought rather than on their separation, which Guenther emphasises when he writes that "unlike the written style, which is fixed, orality, by its very nature, creates variation" (85). In a discussion of Biesele (1993), he notes that "oral texts evince a greater propensity for being metaphorical and oblique." Orality, for Guenther and Biesele, is on the side of spontaneity, fluidity and ambiguity (figured, for Guenther, by /Kaggen) and writing on the side of rigidity and structure. Familiarity with writing predisposes westerners to "concentrate not on the message as such but on words *per se* ..." (Guenther 1999: 85). Rather curiously, considering his linkage with orality and variation, his avowed dislike of structuralist reductionism and his stress on ambiguity and uncertainty in the narratives and in Bushman religion, this results, Guenther claims, in "outsiders such as anthropologists and folklorists" overemphasising differences and gaining "the impression that people's ideas and beliefs are much more varied in their meaning

²⁴² Cf. Lewis-Williams's contention that trance, as the dominant mode of Bushman religious experience, formed the subject matter of rock paintings. See section B below.

²⁴³ See chapter 2, section A, i. Much of Derrida's critique of Rousseau and Levi-Strauss with regards to the association of speech with the absence of power could be applied to Guenther.

than is the case from the native perspective." This assertion is, however, consistent with his generalising, comparative mode of analysis.

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, Guenther's critique of functionalism does not liberate his own text from functionalist explanations. This is to be expected in chapter 6 of his book in which he deliberately invokes a functionalist reading in order to question it (146-163). Functionalist thinking underlies much of his argument in the rest of book as well, however. Its major thesis, the articulation of Bushman religion (which includes narratives and the figure of the trickster) with a foraging ideology that socialises individuals for flexibility relies on a functionalist foundation. The /Kaggen narratives function to reinforce a foraging ideology that produces particular kinds of individuals.

Rather curiously, Guenther confesses his functionalist position at the beginning of his book: "my framework is essentially sociological (or functionalist)" (3, brackets in original) and then proceeds to consistently criticise the reductionism of functionalist interpretations. On the page after he identifies his analytical framework as functionalist, he writes that "the paradigms based on these two notions, functionalism and structuralism, have severe limitations in the context of an analysis of Bushmen religion" (4).

After a reading of Hewitt and Guenther, we are left with two versions of /Kaggen. In many ways these versions compete. Both versions, however, depend on the category of the trickster. I shall now briefly turn to Anne Solomon's recent work (forthcoming). She is not centrally concerned with /Kaggen, but she does discuss him in some detail. Although she, too, regards /Kaggen as a trickster, she is critical of many of the interpretative tendencies that I have identified in Hewitt and Guenther's work.

B. Solomon's writing on /Kaggen

i. Solomon's view of the /Xam "trickster"

Solomon's work, *San worlds* (forthcoming), discusses /Kaggen within the framework of a wider consideration of southern San narrative and rock art, which she uses to support her critique of the shamanistic theory of rock art interpretation. She regards /Kaggen as the /Xam representative of a southern San figure who displays both common characteristics and interesting variations across his range. Her reading of the figure is based chiefly on the Bleek and Lloyd notebooks and on the information recorded by Joseph Orpen from Qing in the Malutis, published in the *Cape Monthly Magazine* in 1874 as a paper entitled 'A glimpse into the mythology of the Maluti Bushmen'.²⁴⁵ /Kaggen or Cagn (in Orpen's orthography) is, she contends, a creator figure with trickster characteristics: "a creator but also a mischief-maker; a character possessed of supernatural powers, but also a joker who often became the victim of his own cleverness" (Solomon: 18). She concedes that the description of /Kaggen as a creator is more apposite to the Cagn of the Maluti San who, in the words of Qing "caused all things to appear and to be made" (Orpen 1874:2) than it is to the /Xam figure, /Kaggen (Solomon forthcoming: 28). This major difference in the depiction of the two figures was first commented on by Wilhelm Bleek in remarks appended to Orpen's paper. While Qing presents Cagn as a "'beneficent' being", the /Xam informants, notes Bleek, represent him as a "fellow full of tricks, and continually getting into scrapes, and even doing purely mischievous things ..." (Bleek 1874b: 11). Bleek observes also that although

²⁴⁴ At the time of writing (June 2006) this work still awaits publication. I have quoted from a version of the manuscript that I obtained in May 2006 from the publisher. Revisions might still be made and the page numbers will almost certainly change. I am confident, however, that the major arguments will remain the same as will the implications of Solomon's work for my study.

²⁴⁵ See chapter 1, section B, iii, a, for some of the background to this paper.

²⁴⁶ Hewitt (1986: 59) also notes that the Mantis of the Malutis has more religious qualities than the /Xam figure. He can be prayed to and is seen as the creator of everything.

"the general character of the myths recorded by Mr Orpen is mainly the same as that of those collected by us, yet there is not one of his myths that is exactly identical with any one of ours." Despite these differences, Solomon still feels justified in locating /Kaggen as a general "San trickster god figure" (Solomon forthcoming: 28).²⁴⁷ She echoes Guenther (1999: 97) when she writes: "/Kaggen, Cagn. Poshiboro (or Pisiboro), #Gao N!a, Huwe, Kaoxa, Kauha - these are but a few of the names given to a protean trickster-god who looms large in the wisdom and lore of the many groups of southern African hunter-gatherers"(19).

Like Hewitt and Guenther, Solomon (29) notes the presence in /Kaggen of contradictory qualities. He is "both ridiculous and beneficent...He can be irascible, generous, stupid and all-powerful" Solomon, though, does not relate these contrary qualities to a foraging ideology, as Guenther/ does, or to different plot structures and themes, in the manner of Hewitt. Instead she notes that "Xam stories of the creation days and of the exploits of /Kaggen and his family combine these contrary traits to great narrative effect." She observes, too, that the "/Kaggen tales offer a wry commentary on the flip side of power and its potential for abuse" (29). She provides several details about Kaggen's attributes. He is represented in the narratives, for instance, with a speech 'defect', a feature, she maintains, also of other "San trickster-god figures' (28). In /Kaggen's case, the defect takes the form of the omission of a particular click consonant from his speech. She follows Hewitt (1986: 153) in noting /Kaggen's left-handedness, a quality associated with femaleness, and figuring, therefore, she suggests, "/Kaggen's contradictory nature" (Solomon forthcoming: 28-29). She positions /Kaggen in the First Times in which the "First People shared the world with a number of animals, who, superficially, at least, behaved like humans. The narratives seem to describe two barely distinct kinds of early inhabitants - essentially, clever people and stupid animals ..." (30).

" In identifying /Kaggen as both trickster and deity, Solomon follows Brown (1998: 55), Guenther (1999) and Lewis-Williams (2000). Hewitt (1986: 40) regards /Kaggen as a supernatural being and, of course, as a trickster but not as a deity.

The identification of /Kaggen as a creator is closely linked to the designation of the narratives as creation tales or myths of origin. In the next chapter I will argue that this designation is reductive and misleading. Solomon herself observes that the /Xam "stories of creation time often appear less concerned with the origin of particular objects or entities than with the social significance with which they were invested in San thought, and with appropriate behaviour" (31). The stories, she suggests then, are not chiefly aetiological but emphasise proper behaviour and values. This position is similar to Hewitt's contention that the stories reinforce social codes.²⁴⁸ Solomon notes that the narratives "pivot" on a "moral imperative" (32). Guenther, as we have seen, warns against overemphasising "the normative influence of folklore ... as against the ludic ..." (1999: 161). Solomon does not, however, ignore the aspects of the stories that Guenther foregrounds. She notes that despite their moral purpose "there can be little doubt that they were told with relish for their imaginative details, suspense and humour ..." (Solomon forthcoming: 32). She maintains that practical knowledge, the reinforcement of norms and the cohesion of the social order have no value unless they are "lived imaginatively" (9).

Solomon uses both the /Xam and the Maluti materials to construct an overall framework for the narrative cycle which features /Kaggen, contending that "implicit in all the stories of the early days, with their improbable scenarios and astounding activities, is the sense that such a ludicrous state of affairs cannot last, and that transformation is inevitable" (36). "The myth cycle ... begins with the dawn of time and charts the uneven progress of creation through to the inception of the proper, but problematic, order of things ..." (14). Among the common themes she discerns in the /Xam and Maluti stories are: "the origins of the world, the often shameless antics of both creator figures and animal-people who were its first inhabitants, and the end of creation, when death came to the world" (4). This largely corresponds with Hewitt's account of the First Times and the manner in which it was superseded by the present order. Solomon, however, especially

Solomon's book contains many references to Hewitt's work.

emphasises the advent of death, an emphasis that relates directly to her thesis of the centrality of the spirits of the dead in /Xam life and art.

Solomon's thoughts about the relationship between the First Times and the present have important implications for the interpretation of /Kaggen. The way these two realms are understood does not only colour the way in which /Kaggen is read; it also influences the degree to which the stories are regarded as myths of origin, the focus of my attention in the next chapter. Guenther's view, for example, which emphasises the permeability of the two orders, invites, I would argue, a less aetiological reading than does Hewitt's which regards the First Order as formative of the second. A firm distinction between a posited time of stories and "ordinary" reality also, in my opinion, tends to focus analysis on /Kaggen's role as creator and his status as a timeless mythical figure rather than on the generative power in /Xam discourse of "/Kaggen" the signifier. I have already noted that Solomon reproduces Hewitt's view of the relation between the two orders in her re-creation of the story cycle of the First Times from /Xam and Maluti sources, in which she contends that the myth cycle traces the transition to the "proper, but problematic, order of things" (6). Later, however, she problematises the temporal modality implicit in this view of the narrative cycle: "Time, in the San account of their existence, is a loop rather than a straight line that extends from the past through the present into the future.... Past and present exist mutually in a way that is largely foreign to our thinking" (218) She goes on to conjecture that "stories of the First People may be less about the past, or an exposition of the relation between past and present, than they are about the relationship between the present and the future. The bad behaviour of the First People of myth is a present human propensity and a current social threat, not necessarily the hallmark of a past era that has been transcended" (219).²⁴⁹ These

~ She continues to echo Hewitt in attributing a moral purpose to the narratives even as she revises his view of the relationship between the past and present, a revision which has consequences, I believe, for the nature/culture opposition Hewitt establishes in his analysis. This opposition is closely linked in his work with the contrast between the disorder of the First Times and the establishment of the "order" of the present.

statements begin to remove the stories, and with them the figure of /Kaggen, from the ahistorical, archetypal sphere of myth (even though Solomon still employs the term) and accord them a crucial place in "present" discursive practice.

One of the chief focuses of Solomon's book, as I noted in the last chapter, is an examination of the role of the spirits of the dead in everyday life.²⁵⁰ Like the understanding of time described in the previous paragraph, the complex of beliefs and practices connected to the spirits of the dead, has crucial ramifications for the way the relationship between past and present in the narratives is interpreted, which, in turn influences readings of /Kaggen. Solomon states that "The dead do not vanish into a past that is 'behind', but go to a parallel realm where they exist alongside the living" (218). //Kabbo gives this realm physical contours, describing it as a great hole in the ground (65). The dead, and this includes the denizens of the First Order, the first "people" to die, continue to be present to the living: "Though they dwelt elsewhere, their lives continued and their powers were everywhere (64)." Pools and "fissures or burrows in the earth's surface" are "supernatural thresholds" where the realms of spirits of the dead and the living intersect (65). Rock paintings are the means by which the invisible world of the dead is rendered visible.

Solomon suggests that there is a relationship between /Kaggen and the spirits of the dead depicted in rock paintings²⁵¹ She conjectures that /Kaggen and !Khwa might be among the supernatural spirit beings represented in the paintings (176-179). She tentatively divides spirits into different kinds, those that are sympathetic to humans and those that are malevolent.²⁵² !Khwa, the rain, "a powerful and deeply sinister

²⁵⁰ I return in some detail to this aspect of Solomon's work in my reading of 'the story of the moon and the hare' in chapter 8.

²⁵¹ Guenther (1999: 104), too, notes the existence of this relationship when he remarks that /Kaggen has the ability to "move seamlessly" between dimensions of existence. These include the times of the present and the mythical as well as the worlds of the living and the dead. /Kaggen is a "living being but associated with the spirits of the dead."

²⁵² A variety of figures, including figures designated as alites or therianthropes and linked with malign or benign qualities by Solomon, appear in the paintings. The alites are generally depicted as

figure" (46) who is closely identified with death would clearly be associated with malign spirits. /Kaggen's place among these beings is more difficult to distinguish since he is a figure of ambiguous qualities. What can be said with some degree of certainty is that he moves between the realms of the spirits and the living. He is one of the denizens of the First Order who continue to exist in the spirit world. He also, as we saw in chapter 4, interacts with the living, especially hunters. Like the moon, which I will discuss in chapter 8, /Kaggen is a being who has unmediated access to the everyday and spirit worlds. He spans the worlds of the dead and the living, and the orders of the First Times and the present. He "connects myth and ritual. He is the link between the mortal world that came into being at the end of creation and the charmed days before, when death and lethal spirits were unimaginable" (Solomon forthcoming: 135). Solomon (189) offers her remarks about the connection between spirits of the dead and /Kaggen in a speculative spirit. Her work sets out to raise questions not to resolve contradictions. It is probable, she asserts, that a world of spirits accompanies /Kaggen. It is in all likelihood this world that must be negotiated in order to achieve a successful outcome to hunting.

The presence of the spirits of the dead, connected to /Kaggen in ways which remain largely inaccessible to us, generates, I would argue, a play of difference and deferral (differance in Derrida's terminology) in the discursive space of the texts in which signifiers move freely between presence and absence, the material and immaterial

animal-like with human heads (166) while the therianthropes possess finely formed human bodies and animal (often antelope) heads (120). Solomon concedes that her interpretations of these figures are inescapably speculative. But she does insist on the plurality of the signifying power carried by the different images. Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1989), she claims, underestimate this variety by contending that the pictorial differences relate merely to degrees of trance (Solomon forthcoming: 167). This reduces a precise system of signs to "idiosyncrasy and the vagaries of individual trance experience." The tendency to dismiss the significance of difference in rock art interpretation is one which I contend repeatedly in this thesis is also prevalent in narrative interpretation. I attribute the reason for this critical predilection chiefly to the rationalist impulse which seeks unifying, underlying truths behind signifying systems rather than attempting to explore the play of difference within them. The next chapter elaborates this contention.

and discourse and practice. The link between /Kaggen and the spirits broadens the field of signification which /Kaggen mobilises and within which he operates as a sign. This field spans the divide between the living and the dead and the past and the present. The /Kaggen narratives owe, to a large degree, their signifying power to this play of difference and likeness that is made possible by the interpenetration of these apparently different orders of existence.

ii. A critical appraisal of Solomon's work

Solomon criticises Lewis-Williams universalising approach in which he downplays obvious differences between the southern and Kalahari San in order to erect his shamanistic theory of Bushman rock art. But she herself downplays major differences between the /Xam and Maluti narratives in order to create a unified southern Bushman meta-narrative that features the same trickster. She also appears to find it difficult to follow the implications of her statement that: "the stories are not aesthetic reworkings of a more concrete reality" (7). Only a few pages later she maintains that "Creation tales are simultaneously concerned with social order and material necessities" (13).

Solomon's approach to the narratives, like Guenther's, is comparative and general. Instead of analysing specific stories, she "presents the outlines of a myth tradition and cosmology that is broadly shared not only by diverse San-speaking peoples, but also to a significant degree by Khoe-speaking pastoralists" (3-4). She claims that "in silhouette the various San mythological traditions are strikingly similar" (56). This is not consistent with her approach to the paintings. She notes, for example, that the resemblances between two very similar painted figures of women from different parts of the country "may be fortuitous" (228) And yet she claims that the

²⁵³ It has to be conceded, of course, that Solomon's reconstruction of a southern San story cycle is based on the undeniable fact that a mantis figure named /Kaggen is common to both the /Xam and Maluti traditions. Nevertheless, I would argue that the attempt to construct a composite southern San myth cycle dehistoricises the two traditions and underestimates their differences.

/Xam story of the lynx and the anteater occupies the same position in the southern San myth cycle as Qing's account of the creation of the eland (39-40). She does, however, regularly question the tenability of a "general account of San cosmology" and of a pan-San approach to interpretation (4). "The use of analogies between San peoples introduces many problems, of both history and art" (5). The appeal to a general San cosmology, she maintains, "obscures the wrinkles, the divergences and contradictions that are evident in an examination of the particularities rather than the broad outlines of cosmology" (56). Even if a "pan-San cosmology" exists, the "richness of the San narrative tradition lies rather in its differences."

The discrepancy in her work between the deployment of a general approach to the narratives and an approach to the rock art that emphasises difference and variety arises partly from the fact that she does not consider literature to be her sphere of expertise. Although her own approach is broad and comparative, she calls for the close reading of narrative texts by literary scholars, noting that anthropologists like Guenther and archaeologists like herself are not schooled in close textual analysis. Only Hewitt, she claims, has really given the stories the close attention they demand (245). She cites Brown (1998: 36) to the effect that anthropologists look at texts "as evidence of social practices and belief systems" rather than as distinctive "rhetorical acts" (Solomon forthcoming: 56).

Another reason for the difference between her broad approach to the stories and her more detailed approach to the rock art lies in the nature of her project, namely the challenging of the trance theory of rock art. This theory is based chiefly on southern African Bushman ethnography and on particular kinds of readings of the /Xam texts and Qing's Maluti narratives, which, Solomon points out, were offered in response to Orpen's questions about rock painting.⁵ Solomon surveys the Maluti and /Xam materials in order to show that their interpretation by Lewis-Williams and his associates was predisposed to fit the trance theory of rock art

²⁵⁴ It is interesting to note that Dialkwain's viewing of reproductions of rock paintings also prompted him to tell stories (Bank 2006: 319).

interpretation. Her demonstration of the importance of the mythology to the rock art is also designed to counter the view of the shamanistic school that the paintings are more closely connected to ritual than they are to mythology (136). "The explanation that Qing offered," she emphasises, "linked rock art to myth as well as to ritual" (5). She wishes, too, to find evidence in the narratives for her own contentions about the depiction of the spirits of the dead in the art and the close relationship between mythology and rock art. Her broad approach to the narratives serves these ends. It is strategic. She assembles the required evidence from the narratives and then turns to the close consideration of rock paintings, especially those depicting therianthropes, that is critical to the elaboration of her major thesis that the figures that have been interpreted as representing trance experience are actually "spirits and/or mythological figures" (148).

Hewitt regards the /Kaggen stories as mechanisms for the articulation of social values. Guenther considers the narratives rather as contributing to the constitution of the flexible identities required by a foraging economy. Although their views of the function of the stories are opposed, Hewitt and Guenther both retain some version of the base/superstructure model with regard to the relationship between the story and "reality". Solomon argues, however, that the stories do not merely reflect another order of the "real". They "are not aesthetic reworkings of a more banal, concrete reality; they are as real as, and as much part of, the lived world (and there is no other) as the mountains and animals" (15). This statement has important implications, I believe, for reading the narratives. It is reinforced by her contentions concerning rock art. Rock art, she argues, is not merely mimetic. It does not supplement other, more important, aspects of life. Painting does not depict experience so much as constitute it. Image-making should be considered as "a strategy devised to make something happen, to change the present and future ..." (179). "San arts created and shaped their makers' worlds ..." (233). It is critical in the interpretation of both paintings and narratives to remember that "Images and stories are not relics or fossils of thought, ritual, society or history, not a language to be translated or a code to be cracked. . . ." San arts belong "to the terrain of the

imagination, of the thought world, rather than to management of and survival in a tangible, physical environment" (1). In assertions such as these Solomon, in my view, parts company to a significant degree with Hewitt and Guenther's functionalism.

Solomon is also critical of structuralist interpretative approaches. When discussing the form of rock art, for example she argues that "forms (or 'structures') arise within processes; it is not, as in structuralist models, structures that somehow prescribe the resulting form" (287). She criticises structuralism's "anti-historical nature ... its hyper-rationalism, its lack of attention to material origins and processes, its emphasis on supra-individuality and ... its linguistic core" (278). Lewis-Williams and Dowson's shamanistic theory of rock art, she argues, exhibits several of these features of structuralism. Their model could not, for instance "accommodate history and change" since art was seen to originate "in the relatively timeless workings of the brain" (283), a notion that "directly parallels the idea of the 'mental structures' shared by all humans that is at the heart of Levi-Strauss's structuralism" (283). Such an approach "bypasses the people who are doing the thinking, and their concerns in any particular setting (cultural, social, historical, etc.)" (284). She prefers "theories of practice and agency ... that give "priority to the ways in which people make, make use of and *redirect* the 'meaning' of symbols in particular contexts and in the negotiation of power relations" (280). She emphasises, too, the gendered nature of "arts, artefacts and ritual" (281).

Her own treatment of /Kaggen is not, in my view, consistent with these theoretical positions. Her reading of /Kaggen as a trickster creator deity, in particular, derives from just the sort of structuralist architectonics she here criticises. While Solomon agrees with Lewis-Williams's view of /Kaggen, she is a strong critic of his theory of rock art. I would argue, though, that both Lewis-Williams's shamanistic rock art theory and his contention that /Kaggen is a trickster-deity result from the same species of thinking. Both conflate specific cultural figures with universal constructs: the shaman and the trickster. Solomon's contention that the term

'shaman' is used so loosely and generally as to be meaningless is surely true, too, of the term 'trickster' (forthcoming: 93). Solomon objects to the view that southern San healing practices are monolithic (141). This parallels my objection to the view that a range of narrative figures from a diverse range of "Bushman" cultures are instances of the same trickster figure.

Solomon knows that logocentric presumptions have predisposed earlier critics to construct elaborate theories on imagined foundations. The critique of one such theory, the shamanistic theory of rock art, forms the chief purpose of her book. Even though she provides meticulous material and logical evidence for her emphasis on the depiction of the spirits of the dead in the rock art, she is careful not to offer her interpretation as the new truth about the paintings. Her thoughts are offered as possibilities rather than as the discovery of the truth. She is aware that "meaning does not exist within a text, image or other cultural work, but that we assign meaning to it" (115). I believe that the importance of her work lies, in part, in this spirit of uncertainty. Like Guenther's deconstruction of his own structuralist and functionalist analyses of the narratives, it is a sign that critics are beginning in Bushman studies to foreground to some extent, at least, the limitations of their own interpretative traditions and tools. This tendency is, I believe, critical to a re-examination of both the figure of /Kaggen, my project in the three chapters that comprise this part of the thesis, and of the location of the narratives as stories of origin, the focus of part 3.

I should like to conclude this examination of interpretations of /Kaggen by asserting that he should not be confined to the realm of the mythical and archetypal, a position his designation as trickster, I believe, invites. He should rather be located within /Xam signifying practice. /Kaggen, indisputably, has a unique place in the /Xam imaginary and as a generator of /Xam discourse. As I contended in chapter 4, though, each of the other signifying elements in the web of signification of which /Kaggen is part is not simply accidental or decorative, but itself possesses signifying capacity. This property of all the signifiers in the narratives is ignored by readings

which focus only on the figure of /Kaggen, especially those that position him in relation to other "tricksters." In the chapters that follow I will make similar assertions in relation to the sidereal narratives. Just as /Kaggen should not, in my view, be reduced to a universal archetype, so the stories of the sun, moon and stars should not be reduced to aetiological myths and their details dismissed as decorative and adventitious. In line with Solomon's contentions about the rock art, I would argue that the sidereal stories belong to the /Xam practice of the present rather than to the realm of historical explanation. They are productive rather than reflective of some other, more significant cultural or social domain, as functionalist explanations imply. Nor are they reducible to irreducible narrative cores surrounded by irrelevant but entertaining detail, as structuralist approaches suggest. As with the /Kaggen stories, they belong to a highly textured and textual field of /Xam signification.

PART THREE: THE /XAM STORIES OF THE SUN, MOON AND STARS

CHAPTER SIX: THE /XAM NARRATIVES AND THE MYTH OF ORIGIN

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God's spirit hovered over the water.

God said, Let there be light, and there was light (Genesis 1: 1-3).⁵⁵

The old woman said to the children, "Children going yonder! Ye must speak to him, when ye throw him up ..ye must tell him that he must altogether become the sun, that he may go forward, while he feels that he is altogether the sun, which is hot; therefore, the Bushman rice becomes dry ... Therefore, thou must altogether shine, taking away the darkness; thou must come, the darkness go away" (Bleek and Lloyd, 1911: 47)

The /Xam stories have frequently been characterised as "myths of origin." Hewitt (1986: 47), for example, considers the "fictive early period" as "formative." He regards the celestial narratives, the subject of chapters 7, 8 and 9, as directly aetiological: "The narratives which deal with the sun, moon and stars are, with few exceptions, entirely aetiological constructions ..." (93). Solomon terms all the narratives of the First Times, "creation tales" or "creation stories" (forthcoming: 4) and discusses the origins of the sun, moon and stars in some detail (6-11). She maintains that "many stories that do not deal with the creation of anything in particular are nevertheless also 'creation stories', since they tell of events and evolutions during the extended period during which creation was ongoing and the world was taking shape" (8). James describes stories such as that of the sun's armpit, explored in the next chapter, as "creation myths" (2001: 148). Brown (1998: 64), too, refers to "creation tales" that are "concerned with mythological origins." In this chapter I will explore the implications of these descriptions. I will

first examine the term "myth" itself and then consider the consequences of locating the stories, particularly, the sidereal ones, in terms of origin.

In the last three chapters, I discussed the treatment of /Kaggen in the work of several of the major writers on the /Xam narratives, with special reference to their designation of him as a trickster. I identified the use of a universal category like "trickster" as an example of what Derrida has termed "logocentrism." I pointed out the Platonic structure of thought underlying the use of the term, in which the particular is reduced to an instance of a general category that exists in a realm outside history and outside discourse. In chapter 3,¹ I argued that, despite divergent opinions about the trickster, writers on the trickster share certain logocentric assumptions about the universal character and ontological status of the figure, a contention also articulated in relation to the trickster by Anne Doueihi (see chapter 3). The writers who use the trickster concept differ among themselves chiefly as to the role or function of trickster tales. Some assert that they reinforce the social order while others contend that they offer an ideology of fluidity and flexibility that makes social change and growth possible. As we saw in chapter 3, Doty (1993), Hynes (1993), Vecsey (1993) and Street (1972) hold the first view while Pelton (1980) and Makarius (1993) tend towards the latter position. These differences have been reproduced in the writing of Hewitt (see chapter 4) and Guenther (see chapter 5) on the /Xam character, /Kaggen. Solomon, as described in the concluding section of the last chapter, restates some of Hewitt's positions in this regard.

The idea of the myth of origin is a product, I believe, of the same ideological formation that I have examined in relation to the concept of the trickster. The trickster himself is often situated within the time of origins and accorded a central aetiological role. /Kaggen, for instance, is seen as "the architect of creation" by Solomon (forthcoming: 21) and David Lewis-Williams maintains that "... the /Xam

²⁵⁶ The stories of the sun, moon and stars are often referred to in the literature as the sidereal materials. Hewitt sometimes refers to these stories as celestial narratives.

god was a trickster-deity" who "created all things" (2000: 8). The debates concerning the role of myth replicate, as we shall see in this chapter, those concerning the trickster. Do myths reinforce the social order or encourage its transformation and reformation? Certain writers have also questioned the usefulness of the term and denied its universality (for example, Kirk 1974), just as writers such as Beidelman and Douehi have questioned the deployment of the term "trickster."

My particular interest in the term "myth of origin" stems from Derrida's linking of the western intellectual tradition with a myth of origin. I have contended that the myth of origin identified by Derrida and the intellectual structures that attend it have predisposed the ways in which Bushman have been viewed, a contention shared by writers like Wilmsen (1996) and Bregin (1998). The way in which the /Xam stories of the First Times, especially those concerned with the sun, moon and stars, have been designated as primarily aetiological (for example, by Hewitt 1986: 93) is a product, I argue, of the intellectual structure that Derrida links with the myth of the lost origin. I explore the question as to how thinking that carries the weight of one myth of origin can be in a position to identify and interpret another myth of origin. I also consider ways of reading the narratives that go beyond their designation as myths of origin, ways which are, at the very least, conscious of the hidden assumptions that attend a logocentric analysis. Some of these approaches are suggested by the work of Foucault on discourse (see chapter 2). In relation to /Xam narrative studies, aspects of the work of Brown (1998) and Solomon (forthcoming) provide promising leads. I referred to these aspects of Solomon's work at the end of the last chapter. Brown proposes that "research into aesthetic strategies and critical practices of the specific societies in relation to their performance genres, constitute a small indication of the direction that still needs to be followed" (20). Elsewhere Brown (1995) insists that narratives should be located "within the signifying practices of their society" (80). These strategies of reading oral literature are clearly articulated in the work of Karin Barber, which argues for the explication of narrative within the indigenous exegetical frameworks

of the traditions from which they emanate. I conclude this chapter, therefore, with a discussion of some of the implications of Barber's work for my analysis of the stories of the sun, moon and stars that occupies the final three chapters of the thesis.

i. Myth

a. Defining myth

Levi-Strauss maintains that there is no meaning in myths; they are what enable meaning (Leach 1970). Karin Barber (1999: 28), on the other hand, locates meaning, not in a hidden structure that hides behind all narratives, but in the discursive conventions which allow texts to enunciate: "the conventions in accordance with which the text/utterance is generated ... it is by means of these conventions (genres) that any meaningful utterance is formed, recognised as such, and its meaning grasped". These discursive conventions or genres are culturally and historically specific, unlike Levi-Strauss's universal structures. Is myth a universal genre, as Levi-Strauss's position implies, and the very condition of meaningfulness, or are there an endless multiplicity of local genres, as Barber suggests, a contention that renders so wide and universal a term as "myth" itself largely meaningless? If meaning is dependent on local discursive conventions, as Barber argues, how does one account for the similarities that have been found between North American trickster stories, for example, and the /Xam trickster narratives²⁵⁸ or are these similarities merely a product, as I suggest in chapter 3, of the western vice of universalising and generalising, the need to discover underlying

²⁵⁷ Statements such as these echo Foucault's analysis of discourse (see chapter 2, section B, i). My own consideration of the discursive qualities of the /Xam materials has chiefly been inspired by this aspect of Foucault's work. The implications of Barber's work suggests ways in which many of Foucault's insights can be applied to oral literature.

²⁵⁸ Hewitt (1986: 131), for example, implies that there are such similarities when he quotes Radin's description of the North American Winnebago trickster in order to describe /Kaggen. Guenther (1999: 6) positions /Kaggen within "the world's rogue's gallery" of trickster figures, a gallery that includes North American figures.

order in apparent chaos, a product of the metaphysics Derrida exposes? Finally, are myths in or out of time? Barthes (1986: 109) supplies an answer: "Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message: there are formal limits to myth, there are no 'substantial' ones". Myth is "a mode of signification, a form. Later, we shall have to assign to this form historical limits, conditions of use, and reintroduce society into it: we must nevertheless first describe it as a form." Myth "is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the 'nature' of things" (110). I shall return to these questions and to the implications of Barthes's statement in the discussion that ensues in this chapter and in the course of my examination of the /Xam sidereal materials in the three chapters that follow this one.

The designation of the /Xam stories as myths was common in the early days of the materials' existence in which the term 'myth' seems to have often been used interchangeably with folklore (as in the title of Bleek and Lloyd's *Specimens of Bushman folklore*)?⁵ Bleek himself offers a comparison of /Xam mythology with the mythology of the Maluti Bushman collected by Orpen (Bleek's remarks in Orpen 1874: 11). Bank (2006: 158) maintains that Bleek was more interested in myths than in "legends or information of an everyday kind" since he believed that the "'Bushman mind'" - was more closely related to the European mind of distant times, and of a far more poetic cast than 'the mind' of Bantu speakers." This belief led him to record only stories that were "of a mythological character" (159) and to downplay "materials of everyday life (195). Contemporary writers, with the exception perhaps of Solomon (forthcoming), refer to the materials more often as

²⁵⁹ Myth is often distinguished from folklore. William Bascom (1984: 5-29) discusses the differences between myth, legend and folklore at length. The three genres differ, for instance, "in their settings in time and place, in their principal characters and, more importantly, in the beliefs and attitudes associated with them" (12). Myths often have an aetiological function and are set in creation time. Folktales can occur at any time. Myths are accepted as true whereas folktales are considered to be fiction. Trickster tales are usually folklore (8) whereas creation tales can be classified as myths. Since most commentators read the /Kaggen stories as both trickster and creation tales, they do not easily fit these categories.

stories, narratives or *kukummi*, the /Xam word for narrative (Hewitt 1986: 47), than as myths. Nevertheless the term is not rejected by them and still appears frequently in their work.²⁶⁰ The term "myth", applied to materials such as the /Xam narratives, I will argue, following Derrida (1976) is a concept that itself is rooted in a particular myth of origin. A close investigation of the word illustrates, I believe, many of the difficulties that bedevil an enterprise which seeks to understand the /Xam stories on anything like their own terms, difficulties that are related to those I raised in regard to the figure of the trickster in the previous three chapters. I believe that the use of universal categories like trickster and myth militates against the location of the narratives within a /Xam discursive field.

The /Xam narratives of the First Times are located within the domain of myth, not by virtue of any intrinsic qualities they possess, I would contend, but simply because they display enough of the features identified by mythographers as typical of myth, a universal and comparative term applied to certain types of cultural expression of an imaginative, "sacred" and narrative nature from all eras and all parts of the world. The most extreme version of the ahistorical view of myth, as of the trickster (see chapter 3), is probably Jung's. For Jung, myths are "'psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul'. They are experienced rather than invented, being original revelations of the pre-conscious psyche" (Tomaselli 1995: iii).

The term "myth" is also, of course, often used in different ways from the one I am reviewing here. Tomaselli proposes a materialist definition: "myths are culturally constructed dominant connotations that represent an ahistorically represented social condition. They are recurring themes, icons and stereotypes which claim common recognition within a cultural group" (ii). Robert Gordon, as we have seen, uses the term to describe the western production of particular representations of the

⁶⁰ See, for example, Hewitt (1986: 201), Watson (1991: 19), Brown (1998: 71), Guenther (1999: 4), Bank (2006: 146) or Solomon (forthcoming: 3).

Bushman. In this sense it signifies false consciousness or a kind of fiction that takes itself to be the truth. In the work of Barthes, the term has been given an application that includes the description of a kind of bourgeois thinking that sees itself as the only valid type of thinking. (Coupe 1997:157)). Barthes also uses the term to refer to a wide range of contemporary cultural practices. As I have often observed in the course of this thesis, the intellectual tradition that has created the category "myth" is increasingly itself seen to rest on a myth of origin. This myth functions, I argue, as a mechanism through which the present is ideologically inserted into a constructed tradition. In this assertion, I, too, deploy the term in a particular way, in order to highlight the factitiousness of the truth claims of a local, historically-bound tradition of reason with timeless, global and universal pretensions. For now, though, when considering how to inscribe the /Xam stories within the realm of myth as the term is generally used within the field of Bushman studies, I shall take a more orthodox definition of myth and examine its claims: myth "is typically a traditional sacred story of anonymous authorship and archetypal or universal significance ..." (Cupitt 1982: 29).

The textually unobtrusive but ideologically potent term "typically" already asserts the analytic gaze and constitutes the term, "myth", as an object with finite parameters, even as it is invested with a timeless and boundless significance. Reason, authorised by the academy, is establishing at the outset of the definition its authority to universalise, categorise and fix within a taxonomic order. It affirms its capacity to reduce to type and exerts its hegemony over other discursive practices, such as myth, through its power to bring them within the domain of its own critical practice.

Once a story has been located as myth it can then be scanned for the features typical of "a traditional sacred story of anonymous authorship". Like "typically", all the terms in the sentence, seemingly so simple and natural in their signification, betray their logocentric character when interrogated. The term "traditional" asserts the

²⁶¹ See Gordon, R. 1992. *The Bushman myth: the making of a Namibian underclass*.

privileged position of modernity and posits a relationship between things that can only be discerned by modernity's teleological gaze, that peculiar vantage point from which the past is surveyed from a point in the future.

Through its positing of a timeless narrative realm, the use of the term "myth" serves, I would argue, to delineate a modern space characterised by notions of dynamic literature and culture. In a similar fashion, the category "sacred" helps to distinguish a modern, scientific, rational space. The designation of areas of experience as sacred is a mechanism whereby western rationalism presents itself as secular and reasonable, thereby obscuring its own metaphysical, "mythological" premises.²⁶² The use of the term "sacred" when applied to as diverse a literary corpus as is included in the term "myth" helps to perpetuate also the idea that particular societies are so close to the origin that they exist in a state of unity in which experience is not yet fragmented into the spiritual and the ordinary.²⁶³ I believe that regarding the /Xam narratives as sacred tales obscures much of their diversity and complexity. It also disregards their constructed nature. They do not exist as hermetically sealed sacred artefacts other than in the edited versions of them, which betray "Western assumptions of 'aesthetic unity'" and do not accurately reflect the ontological status of the narratives (Brown 1998: 11). //Kabbo, for example, rarely gave a narrative from beginning to end" (Hewitt 1986: 240).

The word "story" asserts the division between fiction and non-fiction (rationalism, of course, inserts itself into the second category), a distinction which the /Xam word

²⁶² See chapter 2, section A, i, for Derrick's analysis of these premises and Chapter 3, section v for a description of Baudrillard's critique of rationalism and universalism in which he emphasises their quasi-religious qualities. Spivak's assertion that the idea of the primitive has been crucial to the genesis of rationalism also informs this critique of these concepts (see chapter 2, section B, iii).

²⁶³ The range of subject matter and experiences exhibited in the /Xam stories under consideration clearly demonstrates the falsity of this position. These experiences include, but are far from limited to, those that might be described as spiritual. The stories, I would argue, are social and dialogical spaces, not religious artefacts.

for discourse, "kukummi" , does not make and one which many forms of contemporary thought consider untenable. Rorty (1991), for instance, proposes that truth is a property of our representations of the world rather than something we can 'find' in the world. In a similar way, the /Xam did not regard "historical legends" as more or less true than stories of the First Times (Hewitt 1986 :57-58) The word "story" like the term "myth" also signals the universality of a particular sort of discursive practice that is amenable to comparative treatment.

The term "anonymous authorship" distinguishes the performative storyteller from the individual author with a biography and a documented identity. It carries with it a great many other imputations as well, however, about the contrast between the enlightenment subject, a deliberate agent, a conscious, differentiated individual, an author, on the one hand, and the anonymous, pre-modern purveyor of myths, on the other. The term "anonymous author" in this context performs several ideological functions, I would argue, besides referring to the fact that in oral traditions the "original" inventor of a story is usually not known. It obscures the fact that all writing, and not just myth or traditional stories, participates in a discourse which precedes it. It separates myth from the realm of the privileged artist, the work of art which is an exclusive artefact, a manifestation of private genius. It extends the rationalist strategy of defining things against itself. It has echoes of the notions of the primitive that are related to Levy-Bruhl's assertion that myth belongs to "archaic consciousness" in which the individual mind is subsumed in the collective mind in a state of "mystical participation" (Levy-Bruhl 1928). The term "anonymous author" simultaneously relegates the individual storyteller to the amorphous collective and celebrates principles of individual production and private property rights, whereby writers who will not endow storytellers with the "author-function" (Foucault, 1987:108), can distance their activities from oral practices, patent their writing and garner intellectual capital. It also, somewhat paradoxically

" Kukummi "means stories, news, talk, information, history and what English-speakers call myths and folklore" (Lewis-Williams 2000: 9).

in this context, gives the story an origin. It began not in discourse but emanated from an author, even if this author is inaccessible in her remoteness and anonymity.

'The story of the sun's armpit', which I will discuss in the next chapter, can easily be shown to comply with the definition of myth I have been discussing, a fact that says as much, in my view, about a certain kind of interpretative procedure as it does about the story's "nature".²⁶⁵ It is traditional. It belongs, supposedly, to a pre-modern cultural complex in which it was repeated in recognisable form from time immemorial. Since the /Xam were exterminated as a linguistic community soon after these stories were collected, this is an assumption based on the way similar stories are purported to persist in related "traditions." "Tradition" here refers to a locality outside history that is beyond re-arrangement. Levi-Strauss's positing of societies "without history" (Leach 1978: 9), people who experience themselves as sealed off in time or as a succession of time-presents, comes to mind. Myth, in this view, escapes time. The traditional nature of the story is authenticated by its lack of untraditional elements.²⁶⁶ Nothing intrudes from the colonial or modern eras. It is sacred in the sense that it belongs to the mythical First Time and contains supernatural elements. It is obviously a story. It could not be "true". The sun cannot possess an armpit. Ultimately, only science can deliver information about the sun which is not a story. 'The story of the sun's armpit' is a story of anonymous

²⁶⁵ Bleek and Lloyd (1911) call this story, The children are sent to throw the sleeping sun into the sky. I am using a version here of James's title for the story, "the armpit of the sun" (2001: 31).

The stories, for example, which in all likelihood would have appeared in Afrikaans among the farm labourers of/Xam descent would have been excluded from the category of the "traditional." Guenther (1986) shows how oral literature adapts to changed circumstances.

²⁶⁷ Brown (1998: 62) suggests that some of the narratives might have been employing a technique of analogy with which to comment on contemporary events. The stories might not always be as traditional as they appear at first sight.

²⁶⁸ Actually the narrative (or narratives since there are two versions of the story) of the sun's armpit in the notebooks does not easily fit the description of a story if form is the chief criteria. It belongs to a much longer discourse that does not have a clear beginning or ending and contains several digressions. It is the editing process that precedes its inclusion in selections such as *Specimens of Bushman folklore* which gives it the formal features of a tale and confers upon it a title.

authorship. We do not know who invented it. Finally, 'the story of the sun's armpit' can also easily be accorded the "universal and archetypal significance" that Cupitt's definition imputes to myth. Despite the ease with which this story can be made to comply with the definition of a myth, I will attempt to show in the next chapter that it is much more dynamic, unstable and generative of multiple meaning than its designation as a myth of origin would suggest.

While most of the writers who write about the /Xam narratives label them as myths of origin or creation tales, in one way or another, the description of the narrative process by some of these same writers provides an antidote to the implications of this designation. Bank (2006), as I mentioned in chapter 1, provides biographical and historical details that show how the telling of the /Xam stories to Bleek and Lloyd were influenced by events and personal experience. They were not static, timeless myths that were simply recited verbatim. Hewitt himself accords the /Xam narrators a role that is close to that of the writer, even though his earlier structuralist breakdown of the stories and his emphasis on the aetiological nature of the sidereal materials, in particular, underplays their influence. The narrators did not simply repeat timeless accounts. They created narratives by bringing together discursive elements and ordering them within the space of the performance. Hewitt traces this process in regard to a number of versions of different stories. He shows how Dorothea Bleek's versions of 'the story of /Kaggen and the eland' (Bleek, D. 1923: 1-9) combine elements that never appear together in the notebooks, which instead contain many narratives that feature some of these elements. Hewitt (1986: 217) concludes that "there is no one authentic version of this story, but rather a number of combinable elements" Nor do the narrators simply combine plot elements. They apply not only humour (208) and stylistic devices to the materials but organise them in uniquely individual ways (239). As a result, their narratives exhibit different interpretations of characters and events. /Han#kass'o, for example, organises the materials in such a way as to "emphasise the creative and benevolent side of /Kaggen's character" (220) while //Kabbo foregrounded /Kaggen's ambiguous nature (241). Hewitt (231-232) notes how //Kabbo organises the

elements in his version of 'the story of the all-devourer' (Bleek, D. 1923: 34-40) in a manner that articulates: "how far not to go in the direction of culture as represented by non-San groups" The narrators, it can be seen, exploited the multivocality of /Xam discourse in ways far removed from the image both of themselves as anonymous purveyors of narrative and of the narratives as timeless myths. The stories are unstable and fluid texts produced by historically-situated individuals, not examples of a "universal genre" that emanates from the "'collective consciousness' of the tribe" (Brown 1998: 17).

b. The function of myth

Almost all the writers who have discussed the /Xam narratives raise the question of their function.²⁶⁹ Hewitt (1986), as we saw in chapter 4, accords them the role, chiefly, of reinforcing the social order. Watson (1991: 190) writes that "it was through myth, above all, that they [the /Xam] endowed the world with meaning and, moreover, forged that correspondence between human meaning and a presumed universal order that assuaged their deepest fears, their unanswerable needs." Brown (1995: 89) maintains that the /Xam "stories of the Early Race serve the important function of mediating discursively, major social, political and economic problems facing Bushman society." In a similar vein he writes elsewhere (1998: 39) that their "complex mythological and aesthetic systems ... [helped] to mediate relationships between individuals, groups and the environment. Guenther (1999: 158) argues that "the domain of myth and lore stands in a dialectic relationship with society [S]tories ... provide significant input to people's social construction of reality." Biesele (1993) links Bushman narratives with foraging. She claims that "the

²⁶⁹ The purpose of the western novel or of academic practice itself is not given a similar sort of attention for reasons, I would argue, that relate to the fact that societies like the /Xam are regarded as organic and close to the origin whereas western societies are not. This seems almost a pre-condition for anthropological functionalist explanations. Of course the implications of Bourdieu's work (see chapter 2, section B, ii) on the function of scholarly practice make for uncomfortable reading for an academic. It might be time "to anthropologize the heritage of the Euro-United States" (Spivak 1999: 157) in this regard.

symbolic systems of hunter-gatherers" are not "superfluous aesthetic activity." They are "enabling features of their adaptation" (42) and structure "a specific kind of human survival" (46).²⁷⁰

The preoccupation with the role of the narratives in /Xam studies is consistent with a general preoccupation with the role of traditional narrative or myth in the wider literature. The discussions about the role of myth parallel, in most respects, the discussions about the role of the trickster that I described in chapter 3. Writers tend to emphasise either the conservative or the dynamic social role of myth. Laurence Coupe (1997:6) in his book, *Myth*, describes an influential strain in mythography that imputes to myth an imperative towards completion, towards the affirmation of order and perfection through a mechanism of contrasting the disorder of finite life as experienced from day to day with the order and plenitude of mythical time. If the /Xam stories are indeed stories of the affirmation of order, and they have been read in this way (Hewitt 1986), then it must be conceded that they elicit this affirmation by following an inverse procedure to the one Coupe describes. They show the confusion of categories that occurs in mythical time and contrast this with the order of present time.

Ricoeur (quoted in Coupe 1997: 8) contends that although mythical narratives "may be paradigmatic (and) imply a social and cosmic order," they are also "a disclosure of unprecedented worlds, an opening to other *possible* worlds which transcend the established limits of our *actual* world" (Ricoeur 1991: 490). In a

²⁷⁰ Hofmeyr (1999: 23) criticises Bieseles "technological determinism" and links it to the conservation of the idea of pure hunter-gathering. Bieseles, she argues, has "analytically screened out Tswana, Herero and white settler influence". She maintains that: "On some levels, this is indeed a strong argument for narrative - namely that we are 'wired up' for narrative, which is fundamentally about survival. Yet at the same time this goes alongside a sweeping and deterministic mode-of-production argument which will leave literary critics feeling uneasy." Brown (2006: 15), too, criticises the sort of functionalism contained in Bieseles statement on the basis of his reading of "//Kabbo's intended return home" which suggests that for //Kabbo "identity and storytelling, are more mobile, transcendent and yet rooted in place than such [functionalist] paradigms allow."

similar vein, Guenther (1999), as we saw in the last chapter, has read the /Xam narratives as accounts of the fragility and permeability of order.

The /Xam obviously constructed their stories from the practices, materials and experiences of everyday life. Can we then say that the stories function to facilitate this way of life? I would argue that the emphasis on the function of myth or stories, whether the explanation is universal or culture-specific, shifts the emphasis away from their ability to signify on their own terms, as discourse.⁷¹ In this respect it makes little difference whether they are regarded as a conservative or dynamic force. Stories, I would argue, do not represent a realm of experience beyond themselves in the way that discussions about their function suggest. They are not pretending to entertain while reinforcing social cohesion or inviting social transformation. They themselves constitute a realm of experience. They do not merely reflect or illustrate other aspects of culture.⁷² The reading of the /Xam sidereal stories as "aetiological constructions" (Hewitt 1986: 93) encourages critics, I believe, to dismiss their discursive details and to concentrate on their purpose since, if they are myths of origin, then they clearly have an explanatory role.

⁷¹ I explore the implications of this statement in the three chapters that follow, most explicitly in chapter 8. This aspect of my analysis is especially indebted to Foucault (1970; 1976).

⁷² Cf. Solomon (forthcoming). See chapter 5, section B, i. Most of her statements in this regard pertain to rock painting but are also, in my view, often applicable to storytelling. She maintains, for instance, that it is a mistake to treat "image-making as simply supplementary to something else" (182), as functionalist explanations do. "Instead, we may consider image-making as a strategy designed to make something happen, to change the past and the future, as 'instrumental action' ..." (179).

⁷³ Hewitt's own admirably detailed and suggestive analysis of 'the story of the Dawn's Heart and his wife the Lynx' in his chapter on the sidereal narratives belies this contention since it discusses many elements of the story that are not aetiological (Hewitt 1986: 91-104).

ii. Origin

The aetiological aspects of the /Xam narratives have frequently been emphasised. This is particularly true of the sidereal stories that I will discuss in the three chapters that follow this one (Hewitt 1986: 93). Most of the narratives are indisputably set in a period of change and contain explanations as to how things came to be as they are. It is my contention, however, that their categorisation as "myth of origin" is derived chiefly from the western intellectual complex of the lost origin delineated by Derrida (see chapter 2, section A, i). The deployment of the category contains certain untested assumptions about myth, which I described in the last section, and about origin, temporality and presence, the subject of the discussion that follows in this section. Several questions need to be asked in relation to the use of the term in regard to materials like the /Xam narratives. What exactly are stories of origin? What are the consequences of applying a universal category like this, or the trickster, to a culturally and historically specific discursive practice?

A reading of the /Xam texts that is the product of European modernity inevitably projects a temporal mythology of origins onto them that betrays its own history. It brings with it a double projection, a projection of an implicit relationship with a certain motif of lost presence as well as a projection of a certain experience of temporality and origin that is formed within the shadows cast by the first projection. The origin, in this form, is a condition that turns always to the future and a secularised eschatology, like a sunflower to the sun. Reason tracks the "other" in order to delineate itself, celebrate its own history and glimpse its origin. Since it claims itself to have passed through various stages of evolution, it purports to understand the lower cognitive phases. These include the mythical and religious pre-scientific phases of its own history as well as systems of knowledge that fall outside this tradition. The very idea of origin and the typologies which identify stories as creation myths emerge, I believe, from this particular intellectual history

and demonstrate its power to bring what it is not into its orbit and make it part of its own knowledge base.

Western thought has always thematized the other as a threat to be reduced, as a potential same-to-be, a yet-not-same. The paradigmatic conception here is that of the quest in romances of chivalry in which the adventurous knight leaves Arthurs's court - the realm of the known - to encounter some form of otherness, a domain in which the courtly values of the Arthurian world do not prevail. The quest is brought to an end when this alien domain is brought within the hegemonic sway of the Arthurian world: the other has been reduced to (more of) the same. The quest has shown that the other is amenable to being reduced to the status of the same (Godzich 1986: xii).

In what ways can the /Xam stories be distinguished from the western discourse of the lost origin and the myth of creation and fall which underpin it? The anthropologist Megan Biesele has described the overall ideological template of the

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Kalahari Bushmen as a "fall into grace". This view, when applied to the /Xam, at any rate, would have to be qualified in the light of Solomon's interpretation of southern Bushmen narrative materials in which she maintains that although the end of the First Order brought stability and ended category confusion, it also brought death and the introduction of the realm of the spirits of the dead: "A properly ordered world has been attained, but at the price of immortality. Henceforth the problem of death becomes paramount" (Solomon forthcoming: 44). The spirits can assist or harm people. Behaviour must be regulated, often in intricately detailed ways, in order to placate or enlist the aid of these entities. The heavy knowledge of experience was part of the order of the /Xam "present", which was "no pre-industrial paradise. Death swam in the life-giving water and spirits walked and flew about the landscape" (196). Despite these qualifications, it is clear that the stories do not involve a quest for a return to an origin or display a nostalgia for innocence and purity. Western thought, Derrida maintains, guiltily stares into the future. The /Xam stories appear to certify the present with a clean conscience.

In an interview I conducted with her in June 2003.

I discuss this aspect of Solomon's work in chapter 8.

When they are concerned with origins, it is in a different key and for different motivations than those that are familiar from the western context.

The assumption that the narratives are stories of creation or origin has led, in my view, to a circular movement whereby certain materials, selected and ordered in accordance with this expectation, come to form an apparent unity of intent, theme and type that identifies them as stories of origin. In the next three chapters I discuss the /Xam sidereal narratives. Collections of the stories often start with them.

Specimens of Bushman folklore (1911) begins with three Mantis stories but then devotes the following forty pages to sun, moon and star stories. Initially, at any rate, Bleek expected to find evidence of moon worship, the local manifestation of what he believed was a widespread primitive practice (Hewitt 1986: 91-92; Bank 2006: 155). Accordingly, he imputed to the sidereal narratives a particular importance.²⁷⁷ A narrative sequence that begins with the sidereal stories might well, I believe, give a false impression of the place the sun, moon and stars enjoyed in /Xam cosmogony. Hewitt (1986: 91-92) notes that relatively few of the stories in the archive actually concern the sun, moon and stars. This is the case even though the collectors, particularly Bleek, tried to elicit as many sidereal narratives as they could from their informants (Bank 2006: 155). Hewitt disagrees with Bleek that the /Xam worshipped celestial bodies although he does concede that these bodies were addressed on occasion.

In chapter nine I show how, in the /Xam materials, the things of the sky originate on earth. In the creation story of Genesis, and in much western thought, the order is reversed. The importance attached by scholars to the heavenly bodies in the /Xam

²⁷⁶ The selections of stories published by Markowitz (1956) is weighted in favour of the sidereal materials. The titles of the versions in poetry of /Xam stories by Watson (1991) and Krog (2004) betray a similar bias.

²⁷⁷ Bleek distinguished Bushman sidereal worship from Bantu ancestral worship (Bank 2006: 126). Solomon's (forthcoming) demonstration of the importance of the spirits of the dead in /Xam life suggests that Bleek not only exaggerated the importance of the celestial bodies but underestimated the importance to the /Xam of ancestral spirits.

materials results not from the /Xam order of things, I would maintain, but from reading the /Xam narratives in terms of an order of things extrinsic to them. The logic of this order of things determines the ordering of the materials and the sequences in which the stories are read. Particular readings are presupposed. The creation of blocs comprised of the sidereal stories, for example, forms relationships between stories and erects hierarchies and priorities which are absent in the original Bleek and Lloyd notebooks and were probably absent from the storytelling contexts in which the stories were once presented.

Certain stories, no doubt, tended to be told in particular seasons. Others were related in response to a specific event, a hunting incident, for instance. This indigenous contingent ordering was far from the thematic treatment which oral narratives now receive, however. A reading of the Bleek and Lloyd collection from beginning to end induces a very different sense of the stories and produces a different set of meanings.²⁷ These sorts of meanings are almost impossible to reproduce in the analytical space of a thesis in which an order of a certain kind must be imposed on the objects that constitute the field of study. The narrators in the notebooks, moreover, often "conclude a narrative in mid-dialogue" (Hewitt 1986: 237). //Kabbo, especially, is given to lengthy digressions and dialogues which encourage multiple perspectives. He seldom tells a narrative from beginning to end (239). It is only in the selections that many of the stories appear like well-rounded myths. As I mentioned earlier, Dorothea Bleek (1923: 1-5), whose book consists entirely of /Kaggen stories extracted from the amorphous mass of the materials, was so keen to emphasise the aetiological import of the materials that she neatly cobbles together a story which contains an account of the creation of both the eland and the moon, even though none of the three narratives she uses combines the two events (Hewitt 1986:213-214).

Arrangements of like with like invite the meanings that comparison and categorisation can offer. They assist in the description of a /Xam story cycle like

²⁷ A phenomenon noted by Bregin (1998: 87).

that offered by Solomon (forthcoming: 18-57), which provides a coherent account of creation. They also reduce, however, the range of possible meanings that an ever-shifting juxtaposition of stories elicits. The isolation of discrete stories and their organisation into categories, like sidereal stories or /Kaggen narratives, also misses the movement of intertextuality in which all the materials participate and through which much of their signification is produced.²⁷⁹ Readings of the narratives as primarily aetiological overlook this play in which "each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (Kristeva 1986: 37).

The choice to place the story of the sun first in a selection or to begin an analysis of the narratives with the sidereal materials follows, as I have just argued, from the influence of a cosmogony alien to the /Xam and presupposes the production of certain types of meaning in accordance with the logic of that cosmogony. That the stories follow a different logic can be illustrated by attempting to extract from them the sequence of creation events. A difficulty immediately presents itself. Different stories and versions of the same story occur in the archive. It is impossible to establish an authoritative or fixed version. Even once a selection of versions has been chosen, further difficulties arise in ascertaining the order in which to place the various stories and the events they contain. One possible sequence suggests that the People of the Early Race preceded the moon which preceded the sun. Before the sun is thrown into the sky and hacks at its stomach, the moon is always full. In 'the story of the Mantis and the eland', however, in which the moon is created, sunlight already exists (Bleek, D. 1923: 1-9). The Mantis creates the moon from his shoe in order to provide light only when the contents from the burst eland gall darken the sky.

This sort of exercise illustrates the futility of teasing out sequences in the stories. In their chronologies and details the stories "contradict" each other. A coherent,

²⁷⁹ Bank (2006: 175) notes how an element in a story could trigger the telling of another one. These "fluid shifts" characterise Lloyd's notebooks, in particular.

authoritative and comprehensive account of creation does not appear to be their concern. Hewitt (1986: 173-174) notes that no sequence of stories emerges in the notebooks comparable to the myth cycle Radin discovers in the Winnebago materials.²⁸⁰ Each narrator, moreover, told stories in different sequences. What accounts, then, for the ordering of things in the stories if they are not part of a wider, sequential creation narrative? Parkington suggests that the eland motif in narratives and rock art has little to do with creation. . This motif, he maintains, refers to complexes of belief and practice other than those that appear on the surface of the story. Parkington (1996) argues that the stories involving eland concern gender division and sexuality. If they are stories of creation at all, maintains Parkington, then their creative focus concerns the symbolic rather than the natural order. "These are clearly not simple creation stories because a wide range of animals (porcupine, dassie, blue crane, baboon, meerkat, springbok) already exist and participate in these early events. The real creation is that of the category, hunter, or more generally the relationship between a hunter and his prey" (284). Many of the stories (and rock paintings), he maintains, refer symbolically to male initiation as hunters, the necessary prelude to both being allowed to marry and to kill eland.²⁸² Solomon, too, qualifies her description of the stories as creation tales by observing that they often do not seem to be concerned with "the origin of particular objects or entities ..." (Forthcoming: 31). Instead they are concerned with their "social significance."

" Solomon does discern a myth cycle that is common to both the /Xam and the Maluti Bushmen. In order to do this she has to order the materials in a particular way. Orpen (1874: 3) himself reworked Qing's testimony in order to make the stories "consecutive."

²⁸¹ At the time the notebooks were compiled the /Xam themselves no longer produced rock art although their forefathers engraved rocks (Bennun 2005: 254-255; 291-292; 357; Bank 2006: 74; 236-9). Xaa-tin, the father of one of the informants, Dialkwain, made chippings of animals (Bank 2006: 238-239).

²⁸² Bank (2006: 139) notes, however, that the /Xam informants' biographies do not offer any real evidence of male "first-kill rituals."

²⁸³ Solomon (forthcoming: 31) notes also that "Creation of the earthly landscape is not a very common theme in the narratives" /Han#kass'o's account of the creation of the Strandberg from

Even if it must be conceded that the /Xam stories are in some sense, myths of origin, it is clear that they are not stories that concern an ultimate origin. The /Xam First Time, as we have seen, is set in a world already substantially formed. If there was ever a primordial being, he has absconded from the confines of the narratives.²⁸⁴ Unlike the story in Genesis,^{2 5} but like the stories Levi-Strauss analyses in *Raw and the cooked* (1969), no primordial being is in evidence in the /Xam materials. There is no creator.²⁸⁶ In the Maluti Bushman Qing's testimony to Joseph Orpen, /Kaggen (or Cagn in Orpen's orthography) is described as making all things (Orpen 1874: 3). In the /Xam materials, however, he operates only as a part-time demiurge. A range of agents: semi-divine beings, zoomorphs, anthropomorphs, talking animals who are also people, people who are not like people are now, ordinary animals and celestial bodies operate in the liminal space between the first creation and the present world, effecting transformations through a range of actions, impelled by a medley of motives, intentions, desires, accidents and mistakes. Boys and girls as well as /Kaggen create.²⁸⁷ Lynxes and anteaters

an agama lizard's body is an exception (Bank 2006: 283). The question needs to be asked why this should be the case. The answer lies, I would surmise, in an ordering of things in the stories that is not primarily concerned with origins but with the relationships that exist in both the social and discursive orders.

²⁸⁴ Alan Barnard (1992: 83) has claimed that all Khoisan people possess the concept of a creator God who is responsible for the initial phase of "double creation". In this scheme, the events of the First Order comprise the second phase of creation. The creator made an imperfect, incomplete universe, one characterised by a state of mildly disjunctive chaos. If this creator god, described by Barnard as present in all Bushmen cultures, exists in /Xam belief, he does not appear in the notebooks or intrude into the world of the First Order with which the stories are concerned (Hewitt 1986: 40).

²⁸⁵ Genesis is not alone, of course, in this respect. Here is a Hopi example: "First they say, there was only the Creator, Taiowa ... Then he the infinite, conceived of the finite" (Waters, 1963: 3).

²⁸⁶ This is my view. Most commentators refer to /Kaggen as a creator. These include Lewis-Williams (2000: 8); Guenther (1999: 101); Solomon (forthcoming: 18) and Bennun (2005: 169). Hewitt, as we saw in chapter 4, argues against /Kaggen's being regarded as a creator (40).

²⁸⁷ See chapters 7 and 9.

classify. The actions of baby hares have cosmic consequences. Agency is diffuse. No transcendental signified sets the teleological chain of events in motion or sanctions the chain of being. There is no hierarchy to be legitimated, no elite program to be ritually consecrated. Difference in the stories is asserted in an ecological key rather than in an evolutionary or asymmetrical one. More often than not things originate by accident rather than design, the elevation of the sun being an exception to the general pattern. /Kaggen's creation of the moon is an ancillary result of his rescuing the baby eland he has made (Bleek, D: 4). It is an "extrication device" rather than an act of creation (Hewitt 1986: 155). /Kaggen makes fire available to people as an unintended consequence of trying to steal food from the ticks (33). Creation is as much a matter of chance events as it is of actual agency. The process enacted is generally one of making manifest, often in passing, what is latent, the mobilisation of innate identity that is a social category. Frequently this involves the recognition of the specificity of a species.

In many respects the world of the First Order is like the one that succeeded it except that, as Levi Strauss claims of all myth, the action occurs "at a time when humans and animals were not yet distinct beings" (Wiseman and Groves 1997:150). When they are taken on their own, though, and their aetiological elements isolated or accentuated, the sidereal narratives suggest that the world of the First Order was altogether different from this one. As I pointed out earlier, there was, for instance, in terms of a certain type of logic that attends a certain ordering of the materials, at stages of this formative period, no sun or moon. To understand the stories in this way, though, misses the point. They operate in a symbolic field not concerned with literal representation or "logical" temporal sequences. As Levi-Strauss-(4) insists, the logic mythological stories follows is as "logical" as the logic which seeks to comprehend them. A story like that that of the sun's armpit, I would argue, is not primarily concerned with the origin of the sun or even with the nature of an existence without it. It obeys its own logic. The anatomy of this logic is, of course, the question. It is a question which has been answered in a variety of ways, in

²⁸⁸ See chapter 8.

regard to both this particular corpus of stories and other bodies of stories located in "mythical" time. Levi-Strauss has gone so far as to maintain that myths do not contain meaning themselves so much as produce meaning through mobilising the relationships between the images they manufacture to form a structure through which the world can be understood (Leach, 1978:71.) My own interpretative strategy is to insist on the narratives' discursive and textual character.

In ways that are central to the way I shall attempt to read the stories, the /Xam sidereal stories are not, I would argue, primarily accounts of origin or creation although they possess aetiological information. They are concerned more with the way things are or will be than with investigating how they originated. They are not articulated with a teleology. The stories mobilise overlapping possibilities, I believe, rather than chart a line of cause and effect or reveal a cosmic design unfolding in time from an origin. They can be read as heterotopian, occasionally dystopian, speculations in which the plastic shape of the present is projected into the parallel social imaginary of the First Order. Above all, they are discourse, constituting rather than reflecting experience and "reality." In the final section of this chapter I discuss some aspects of the work of Duncan Brown (1998) and Karin Barber (1991; 1999) that have influenced my adoption of this position. This discussion forms the prelude to my analysis of the sidereal materials in the three chapters that follow.

iii. Interpreting the /Xam narratives

Patterns can undoubtedly be found in the stories and between these stories and others in the collection and in other collections. Motifs, characters, plots, refrains recur. One such pattern concerns the aetiological aspects of the stories which can be extracted and formed into a myth cycle. The problem, I would argue, lies in separating the discovery of such patterns, surface or deep text, from an expectation of them that precedes a reading of the narratives. An approach that seeks to establish a framework derived from a metaphysics of presence, in which particular

patterns are made to surface from beneath the world of appearances, will miss the fact that the stories themselves might be revelling in the play of appearance, as Gates (1988) maintained the black American materials he was studying were doing or offering a meta-discourse about other signifying practices in the culture, a property Barber (1991) attributes to the Yoruba *oriki* she analyses. An approach that reads stories as hermetically sealed myths overlooks not only their textual and meta-linguistic properties but their rootedness in the specificities of history and society. Brown proposes the development of interpretative "models that acknowledge simultaneously the textuality and historicity of oral texts, of combining a sociology with a poetics of literature.... [T]he crucial questions for criticism become: what does the text seek to accomplish in the spheres of social and political action, and how does it accomplish this (by what rhetorical features/formal strategies)?" (Brown: 1998: 17-18, brackets in the original). In this regard, he writes that myth can often be read as "modern analogy" (62). As an example, he describes how Guenther (1989: 150 -151) conjectures that the peaceful outcome to a story of a lion and jackals might encode a longing to return to "the time before marauding settlers."

An analysis of 'the story of the sun's armpit', discussed in the next chapter, can discern dichotomies in the narrative, and try to listen to the ways in which the story speaks in the space between these poles. It can note how the story negotiates the distance, bridges or enlarges it, between light and dark, warmth and cold or sharing and selfishness, for instance. It can chart the creative synthesis between old wisdom and cunning on the one hand, and youthful physical capacity on the other, or between male and female, a synthesis which brings light, warmth, fertility and food. It can seek to relate the location of the sun in the old man's armpit to an

It is worth taking note of Evans-Pritchard's contention that in the Zande materials "there is nothing buried. All is on the surface and there are no repressed symbols to interpret" (1967: 175)
²⁹⁰ "*Oriki* are a genre of Yoruba oral poetry that could be described as attributions or appellations: collections of epithets, pithy or elaborated, which are addressed to a subject" (Barber 1991: 1).

ideology of spiritual power, connected to bodily secretions in healing. But what an analysis of this sort cannot do, to any significant extent, I would argue, is recover the ways in which historically and socially-situated /Xam participants would have received such a story. Levi-Strauss's injunctions about the central importance of the auditors in the storytelling context should be borne in mind. Meaning only exists through listeners who, as in a musical performance decide what the message is: "Myth and music thus appear as conductors of an orchestra of which the listeners are the silent performers (Leach 1978: 130).

Karin Barber (1999: 45) argues that it is possible, even imperative, to grasp "what a text is constituted for, and how people within its circuit of signification seize it". The reward of doing so is that literary texts "tell us things about society and culture that we could learn in no other way" (1999: 1). Gates's (1988) study of the Signifying Monkey, discussed in chapter 3, emphasises the importance of understanding the internal discursive economy of texts from outside the western signifying system. For Barber it is precisely the recognition of the discursive nature of these texts that makes them so amenable to interpretation: "literary texts are revealing because they are inherently discursive" (1991: 3). " Her chief method of gaining an insight into indigenous texts is to examine "the prevailing and culturally established modes of interpretation." "Texts", she claims, "are set up to be interpreted in particular ways; they engage the hearer in specific kinds of

²⁹¹ See Biesele, M.A., Katz, R. and St. Denis, V. 1997, for a discussion of the link between bodily secretions and spiritual power among the Kalahari Ju'/Hoansi. The restorative power of body odour occurs in several stories in the Bleek and Lloyd collection, including that of the Dawn's Heart star and his wife (Hewitt 1986: 96). Bodily secretions could be used for beneficial or malevolent purposes. It "was capable of affecting in various ways anyone who came into contact with it. Such secretions could be active in transferring essential characteristics from one person to another" (101).

²⁹² The acceptance of the discursive nature of texts is, of course, a necessary condition for the occurrence of the sort of hermeneutic activity Barber invites. If universal archetypes, deep structures or unmediated sociological or historical information are being sought in the texts in accordance with particular ideological and theoretical expectations then the discursive nature of the texts might well be missed. This, in my view, has happened in many of the interpretations of the /Xam narratives.

hermeneutic activity" (1999: 28). Brown (1998: 20) similarly stresses the importance of conducting "research into the aesthetic strategies and critical practices of specific societies in relation to their performance genres."

The importance of these statements cannot be over-estimated. Like Gates (1988), Barber argues for the autonomy of a signifying practice. It has to be understood in terms of its own discursive codes if elemental interpretative errors are to be avoided. The acknowledgement of indigenous systems of exegesis is a salutary antidote to academic claims to a hermeneutic monopoly. As Barber asserts (1999: 27), knowledge of the way the praise poetry she discusses in her essay is received and interpreted is an essential preliminary step to an analysis of the materials. The /Xam materials do, however, present particular difficulties in following Barber's method. In the absence of live performance, it is difficult to do more than acknowledge the importance of the non-verbal elements of the stories which elude the process in which they were textualised: the dramatisation, mime, character specific locutions and vocabularies, and interactive techniques (Hewitt 1986: 51). The absence of contemporary /Xam speakers, storytellers and listeners means that the meanings the narratives evoked in their auditors have to be reconstructed on the basis of educated conjecture. This not only involves reading the notebooks in new ways but considering contemporary Bushman storytelling practice and reception as models, a comparative procedure which has been criticised in relation to rock art interpretation in which contemporary Bushman cultural practice in the Kalahari has been used as evidence in support of particular readings of the paintings of the Drakensberg (Solomon forthcoming: 98-106). The social context, whose presence, in Barber's view, is necessary for the emergence of the textuality of oral texts (Barber 1991: 8), has to be reconstructed in ways that the social contexts of the praise poetry (1999) and the *oriki* (1991) Barber studies do not. Nor do the /Xam appear to have possessed an exegetical tradition comparable to the one described by Barber in relation to Yoruba praise poetry (1999). The meanings the stories might have produced were not socially sanctioned and monitored in the same semi-

formalised manner. The stories were truly popular mediums. There were no specialist storytellers (Hewitt 1986: 49). Although Hewitt (50) surmises that certain stories were reserved for adult audiences, the listeners to stories were generally of all ages and both genders. There was no special time or place for storytelling. They were "part of sociability." Nor do the /Xam appear to have formally recognised different genres with different conventions (56),²⁹⁶ a contributing factor to the types of exegetical practices that Barber describes. The /Xam texts do not appear to contain obscure historical references and allusions or in-house riddles whose meanings can only be unravelled by secret, specialist or initiate information and knowledge.

The Bleek and Lloyd notebooks do, though, contain an "indigenous" meta-narrative of the stories since the narrators provide extensive background information to and explanations of the narratives, sometimes as a result of the knowledge the narrators gained of their new auditors' ignorance of many of the features of /Xam life and

²⁹³ The West African praise poetry she discusses (1999) is particularly suited to the method she proposes for they have coded meanings accessible to those inducted into a culturally sanctioned discourse of exegesis. Expertise in this practice brings with it forms of cultural and symbolic capital.

In this sense the /Xam narratives were closer to the *oriki*, Barber (1991) studies in *I could speak until tomorrow: oriki, women and the past in a Yoruba town*. The enigmatic *oriki* utterances, though, demand interpretation. They work through exegetical invitation. The /Xam materials do not appear to work in quite this way although they contain their own ambiguities and resonances.

These statements, of course, are made purely on the limited evidence of the notebooks. Bieseles's (1993) study in the Kalahari emphasises the importance of gender in the way stories are told and received. While there might not be the "gendered division of genre", Isabel Hofmeyr (1993) discovers in her Transvaal study group, there is certainly a gendered narrative perspective. In the near total absence /Xam female informants in the notebooks, we can only conjecture about the influence of gender on /Xam storytelling. Jeursen (1994), as described in chapter 1, section B, ii, c, discovers a dissident female voice in certain stories.

²⁹⁶ It is difficult, though, from the available evidence to gauge to what extent generic distinctions were articulated in /Xam society. Brown (1998: 26) notes that "Bushman societies have generally not maintained rigid generic distinctions between verse forms and narrative, or between sacred and profane genres." He links the absence of "institutionalized generic distinctions" to the absence of social stratification (50).

sometimes in answer to specific questions from the collectors (Bank 2006: 173). The explanatory information was usually noted on the pages facing the main text but also sometimes formed a new discourse in its own right. Dialkwain, especially, often provided more information than story (Hewitt 1986: 244).²⁹⁷ Bank (2006: 167-168) notes that many of the explanations and notes were added after the actual process of dictation. They were "part of the collaborative work of translation." The employment of dialogue in the narratives, as Hewitt points out, also allows for the existence of multiple perspectives and exegetical commentary in the stories themselves: "when the action is over, events may be endlessly discussed by the characters, argued about, seen from different points of view and told from the perspective of even quite peripheral characters" (55).

Along with this explicit exegesis, offered by the informants in notes to the materials and by the perspectives allowed by the technique of dialogue in the stories, critics following Barber's approach can also exploit the fact that literary texts themselves frequently offer hermeneutic tools. It "is often through literary texts that exegetical commentary is directed towards systems of signification." (1991: 2). This is a feature of their literariness: "Literary texts function like nodal points in the flow of speech. They are salient.... [l]andmarks in the flow of speech, reference point to which speakers orient themselves or from which they take their departure" (2). An understanding of how the /Xam texts themselves interpret the broader discursive field can become a valuable tool in interpreting them. Fresh meanings become available from a reading of the texts if their exegetical qualities are mobilised. In addition, the limitations of logocentric interpretative tools begin to be exposed in new ways.

²⁹⁷ Dialkwain's explanatory material seems to suggest that the stories do not, for the /Xam themselves, conceal deep allegories or recondite allusions. Without these explanations, the association of certain jackals with visiting sorcerers (L.V.14: 5055) or, in Solomon's view (forthcoming: 79-80), with visitations by spirits of the dead, for instance, would be difficult for a non-/Xam interpreter to recover, but only the youngest members of a /Xam community would require this sort of information.

²⁹⁸ I discuss this aspect of the narratives in chapter 4, section v and in chapter 8, section ii.

The /Xam texts contain the sorts of hermeneutic tools to which Barber refers in several forms. Hewitt (1986: 192) notes of the //Kaggen narratives that "/Kaggen's ambiguous nature must have often presented individual narrators with the task of interpretation" /Kaggen's flouting of social convention creates critical perspective. In regard to his predictive dreaming in the group B narratives, Hewitt observes that: "By being an outsider who nevertheless has such an access to the real shapes behind appearances, he shares something of the position of the blind seer or the hermit magician in the fictions of other cultures" (178). While I would disagree with the universal and comparative implications of this observation, I think this statement offers insight into how /Kaggen operates as a sign that encourages exegesis on the part of narrators and listeners and which mobilises a meta-commentary on /Xam signifying systems.

Hewitt (1986: 119) also describes the presence of mediating figures in the stories: "[T]he child informant, featuring in many of the narratives, and mediating figures such as the partridge and the lynx ... are ciphers functioning as part of the mechanics of the plot." I would argue that such figures do more than facilitate the unfolding of the plot. By standing outside the action to some extent, they offer analysis of it and foreground the discursive and textual nature of a narrative. They thus contribute to the exegetical commentary to which Barber refers, a commentary which can be turned on "other signifying systems' beyond the narratives. Humour, a strong feature of the /Xam narratives, could be regarded as another distancing mechanism that enables exegesis on the part of audience and narrator. Satire contains a critical perspective. The representation of both /Kaggen and an array of other figures in the stories is often satirical in nature.

Barber (1991) insists also that oral literature is ideological.²⁹⁹ One of its features is struggle (5). Recognising the ideological nature of /Xam texts, also allows them to

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She approvingly quotes Volosinov's contention that speech is "an essential ingredient in all ideological production" (1991: 2, citing Volosinov 1973: 15).

signify in ways in which have been closed to them in most of the commentary. The influence of the metaphysics of presence has predisposed critics to underestimate the presence of conflict and power in the narratives since people like the /Xam are located as ideal communities that exist outside history.^{3 J} When ideology and power are returned to the texts they emerge as sites in which different versions of truth are tested and contested. Instead of discovering the single "truth" behind an oral text, as functionalist or structuralist explanations seek to do, resulting in reductive explanations characterised by the use of universal categories like "trickster" and "myth of origin", an interpretative strategy can be pursued that invites the enunciation of a multiplicity of /Xam voices. Despite his use of functionalist and structuralist modes of interpretation, Hewitt, as I pointed out a little earlier in this section, does not disregard this aspect of the /Xam narratives. He notes how the presence of dialogue in the stories allows for discussion, disagreement and multiple perspectives (Hewitt 1986: 55).

Barber (1991), as we have seen, notes the exegetical properties of literary texts, oral texts included. She notes, too, that these texts are "accompanied by well-developed indigenous methods and techniques by which their interpretations are carried out" (4). Van Vuuren (1994) finds in a discourse of //Kabbo's the existence of a "meta-discourse" relating to cultural production (63). She reads this piece and the phenomenon of 'Bushman letters' (discussed in chapter 4) as "indigenous literary theory". In the discourse to which Van Vuuren refers, //Kabbo locates the source of his stories differently from the way commentators with functionalist explanations have done. Stories do not result from a need for explanations of origins or for the

³⁰⁰ There are, of course, exceptions to this generalised statement. I have already noted the example of Jeursen's reading of conflict in the girl and star story discussed in chapter 1, section B, ii, c.

¹ See chapter 5, section A, ii, for a discussion of Guenther's remarks concerning the absence of power in /Xam social configurations.

³⁰² A consideration of these texts leads her to conclude that the "central function of the narratives" is knowledge in its various aspects (including intuitive knowledge) rather than entertainment (65). She simultaneously points to the textuality of narrative and undermines this textuality with a functionalist assertion.

reinforcement of social values. Instead, they float from afar. He sits in the sun and listens for them. Stories come while one is sitting in the sun: "that I might sit listening to the stories which afar come ... I shall perceive a story with them; while I feel that they sail out from afar; while the sun does feel a little warm ..." (L.II.32. 2875-2877).³⁰³ This, bracketed off from its context, which I shall soon supply, is reminiscent of Levi-Strauss's idea that people are the medium for rather than the producers of myth. Levi-Strauss notion is more applicable to the world of the Logos, the metaphysics of presence and the lost origin, however, than it is to the context of //Kabbo's stories. Logocentrism is a truer example of the way "myths think themselves out in men and without men's knowledge (Leach, 53)" than is the process //Kabbo describes, for //Kabbo knows when stories think themselves through him and, poignantly in this context, knows when they do not. He situates the source of stories within a community of belonging and within discourse: "I do not hear stories, while I feel that I do not visit, that I might hear stories which sail along, while I feel that another place's people are those which are here, those do not hear my stories. They do not talk my language; for they do visit their fellows ..." (L.II.32. 2876-2879).

Stories require expansive social interaction: "The Flat's people do visit their fellow's houses; that they might smoking sit at the door (of) them. Therefore, they hear stories, at them. For they feel that they are used to visit, for they feel that smoking's people (they) are" (2880-2881). The discursive space is socially bounded. It is dialogical. Language always "manifests itself in discourse, the word oriented towards another" (Dentith 1995: 34) [CJommunicative acts only have meaning, only take on their specific force and weight, in particular situations or contexts ... (3). Stories require social equality and compatibility: "Yes, I do think of visits, that I ought to talk with my fellow men; for here I work together with women, and I do not talk with them, for they merely send me to work" (Brown

³⁰³. The women and children of the Early Race who appear in 'the story of the sun's armpit' discussed in the next chapter could be credited for stories as well as for light and warmth, for stories come while sitting in the sun.

1998: 46, quoting //Kabbo). In an alien environment, the stories cannot live and multiply. While //Kabbo could recount narratives in Mowbray, he could not receive new ones. Although he was responsible for the narration of thousands of pages of materials in the notebooks, it is clear, that for //Kabbo this was not really storytelling. We have access to //Kabbo's stories. We can read them, finger them, transcribe them, rework them. But in the wider application of the term used here by //Kabbo, we can never possess his stories. They will always tease and elude us. Our attempts to bring them into our own discourse through visiting our like, in books and seminars, only dispossess us further. The stories can no longer float. Even if they could, they would not float to us.

What happens when a myth detects itself? Derrida (see chapter 2) and //Kabbo in very different ways appear to reveal something of the substructure of their own discourses. Is this detection part of the myth itself, part of its enabling web, or can it lead to a speaking from without myth? What can be revealed of another's myth which isn't framed within one's own myth? //Kabbo doesn't ask. He knows where he wishes to smoke. But I shall not follow his example. I shall continue to search for a methodological sleight of hand, a tactic of critical evasion that bypasses, intermittingly at least, logocentrism, just as the stories themselves sometimes seem to test the limits of the /Xam episteme.

Levinas identifies "a form of truth that is totally alien" to the self and yet calls out to the self. It requires the self "to leave the realms of the known and of the same" (Godzich 1986: xvi). The "truths" the /Xam stories might offer summon from beyond the confines of the intellectual tradition which seeks to apprehend them, just as they once continually invited their auditors into unknown expanses, even as they configured and were figured by the daily rounds of a way of life south of the Orange River.³⁰⁴ These "truths", too, must be allowed their inaccessibility and their difference even as we seek to comprehend them. It is only then that the sort of

³⁰⁴ Solomon (forthcoming: 10) argues that "San arts, because they are themselves imaginative, demand that we participate in them by envisaging different ways of being"

dialectic that Brown (1998: 2) proposes can be put into play, in which text and interpretation as well as past and present question each other. The awareness of how a historically situated method of interpretation projects its own concerns onto historically-situated texts, allied to the realisation that those texts themselves offer hermeneutic tools, is the precondition, I would argue for the move to be made that allows the "past [and its texts] to call into question the social practices of our present-day society" (25).

In the remaining chapters of this thesis, I extend the discussion carried out in this chapter into a consideration of several sidereal narratives. I attempt to show that these materials do not exist in a hermetically sealed, ahistorical realm of myth but operate as living discourse. I show also that they signify in ways that go beyond their designation as creation tales. Hewitt's contention that almost all the sidereal materials "must be regarded more as static figurative conceptions than as narratives" is a symptom, I believe, of his reading them as "entirely aetiological constructions" (Hewitt 1986: 93-94). I aim to show not only that these stories are not static but that they possess the ability to ask questions of us and the world and "to 'talk back' to modern understandings ..." (Brown 1998: 27).

CHAPTER SEVEN: 'THE STORY OF THE SUN'S ARMPIT'

In this chapter I examine a story that concerns the sun. In the two chapters that follow this one, I analyse several stories that feature the moon and stars. In the course of my discussion of these stories, I explore the theoretical and interpretative questions raised in the discussion of myth and origin in the previous chapter.

I begin with an account of the narrative, based on two similar versions of it in the collection.³⁰⁵ Both versions were narrated by //Kabbo. The first was told to Wilhelm Bleek (B. 11.15. 487-499) and was published in *Specimens of Bushman folklore* (1911: 44-55). The second version, on which I have mostly relied, was narrated to Lucy Lloyd (L.1 1.35.3205-3208; 3225-3233). I discuss the narrative's aetiological implications. Various interpretations of the story are then offered and critiqued. I go on to consider the story in terms of power and agency before investigating its discursive features: its chain of speaking, the nature of the laughter it presents and its mode of interpellation. This is followed by a consideration of identity in terms of the narrative and an investigation into how a /Xam mythic framework plays itself out in the story. I conclude the chapter with a consideration of the story's narrative voice

i. The story

Two women of the early race instruct the sons of the younger woman (the older woman is childless) to creep up on the old man who has the warmth and light of the sun under his armpit.³⁰⁶ The boys should toss him into the sky and instruct him to follow the path designated as his, "Ye shall say to the old man, that, his path must

³⁰⁵ Hewitt (1986: 91) maintains that there is no need to describe the content of the sidereal stories because they "are well known from published sources" Even if I could assume this to be the case, I would still find it necessary to relate the stories again for the purposes of the textual analysis I wish to apply to them here.

³⁰⁶ In the story, this old man is generally referred to as the sun.

truly be yonder (L.II.35. 3168). Oh children! Ye must give directions (orders) strongly to the old man, that the old man may not forget; for the old man alone is the one who is warm" (3169). The boys are to creep up on him quietly, "For a man who (is) very cunning, he (therefore) also is ..." (3157). Not only should they caution the younger children not to laugh while the old man is sleeping, lest he awakens, but when they "presently go stealthily to lift him up ... ye shall not go laughing" (3166). If they manage to contain their laughter, he will only "startled awake", while he is ascending.

The words of the boys will be as much constitutive of the sun's new position as are their physical actions: "The old woman said to the children, 'O children going yonder! Ye must speak to him, when ye throw him up ye must tell him, that, he must altogether become the sun, that he may go forward, while he feels that he is altogether the sun, which is hot; therefore, the Bushman rice becomes dry ..."

³⁰⁷

(Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 47). Later, once they have accomplished their mission, the boys discursively confirm the new dispensation: "Therefore, thou must altogether shine, taking away the darkness, thou must come, the darkness go away" (51).

The children faithfully carry out these instructions. They are praised by the women for having listened well and for having acted with resolution. This follows an account of the eagerness with which the first dawn is awaited: "They sleep; the day breaks, the children first, they awake, they look at the darkness, they say, 'The darkness does yonder go darkness goes out from the daybreak's side; the darkness goes towards the evening's side" (L.II.35. 3213 - 3214). The grandmother³⁰⁸ includes herself in the praise she bestows on the boys, claiming, at the same time, a personal fulfilment and intent for the event: "Yes, my grandsons, I

³⁰⁷ Bushman rice refers to the ant larvae that formed an important component of the /Xam diet.

³⁰⁸ The grandmother is an older woman who is not the boys' biological grandmother. It was common practice to address "any elderly relative or person distinctly senior to the speaker" as "'grandfather' and 'grandmother'" (Hewitt 1986: 28).

wished that ye should do thus for me, to the old man, that I might be able to be warm" (3219). The acclaim for this action is extended to all the First Bushmen: "For, we are the earliest Bushmen, we are those who work well".³

ii. Interpretation and the question of origins

As soon as a story presents itself, an array of possible interpretative strategies arise. Of what might a first move consist in the case of this particular story? A structuralist might gloss over the details and seek the underlying pattern in the narrative that links it to others of its type. Hewitt, though, finds the sidereal narratives generally unsuitable for the kind of structuralist analysis he applies to the /Kaggen stories. For the most part they do not "warrant much attention as verbal art" (1986: 91). They "are very undeveloped as narratives" since "there is little attempt to build the narrative in any way, and no plotting of events" (94). This, in Hewitt's view, makes them structurally uninteresting. Despite Hewitt's assertion, I think that 'the story of the sun's armpit' could inspire a structuralist interpretation that pivots on the nature/culture binary that Hewitt regularly employs in his readings.¹⁰ One could read the story, perhaps, as one in which the sun (nature) is subordinated to culture (the economic practices of the Bushmen). A state of affairs has been instituted in which nature is separated from culture. The sun is ejected from the cultural field and forcibly placed in its proper sphere within nature, where it is positioned in relation to culture. The story could, in terms of this sort of analysis, also be located within the liminal zone between nature and culture. Bushman rice is a natural product, the larvae of ants, that is cooked by nature in the form of the sun rather than on the cooking fire (a part of culture), but which is transformed, nevertheless, into a cultural product, cooked larvae. The

¹ More often than not, the narrators do not represent the first Bushmen as "working well." In the primeval period, "the world was far from being in good order. Animals could speak, while people lacked manners, culture, good sense and goodwill" (Solomon forthcoming: 20).

³¹⁰ Hewitt's detailed analysis of 'the story of the Dawn's Heart and his wife' is a good example of an interpretation that employs this binary (Hewitt 94-103).

nature/culture binary in a story such as this could, though, just as easily be read to posit a contrary logic: the recognition of the interpenetration of nature and culture. Both these structures, however, the separation of culture from nature and the interdependence of nature and culture, rely on the binary "nature/culture", submitted as a universal rather than as a product of a specific intellectual history. Neither structure, I would contend, forms part of the enunciating strategy of the text itself.

Contending ideological interpretations also offer themselves.³¹¹ The ejection into heaven of the sun, for example, could be linked either to the presence of power relations in Bushman social systems or to a non-hierarchical ordering of affairs on earth in which the chain of being is not related to power differentials but to an ecological interdependence. The manner in which women and children together determine the position of the sun could provide evidence for an egalitarian ethos that is blind to age and gender. Conversely, it could be read as a compensatory mechanism whereby old women and children are granted a role in stories that they lack in ordinary daily life. The story can also be read as an assertion of the foraging ethos or, conversely, as a critique of it.

³¹¹ This ideological multivocality stems, in part, from differences in approaches to interpretation, the point I am making here, but also from the ideological and dialogical nature of texts, in general, that I referred to at the end of the last chapter.

³¹² Guenther (1999), as I discussed in chapter five, discovers a foraging ethos in the stories. Accordingly, he reads the narratives as celebrating individualism, egalitarianism and flexibility among other things, the qualities required by hunter-gatherers in a socio-economic context in which, as in modern society, the individual forms the basic economic unit but requires forms of co-operation in order to mobilise this individualism. The reinforcement of this ethos, based on survival needs and the facilitation of economic activities, could be read into the story of the elevation of the sun. The superstructure elevates the base - literally!

³¹³ Much depends on whether, for instance, the story is read as affirming, qualifying or condemning individual agency. This in turn rests, to some degree, on whether one reads the story as a celebration of the actions of the women and the boys or as a condemnation of the sun. Both readings are invited. That the story is capable of mobilising different perspectives in this way supports Barber's observations about the ideological nature of texts (1991: 5), discussed in chapter 6.

It is also possible to read the narrative theologically, as a parable about alignment with the "Tao", for example, or the evolution of God. I use these terms metaphorically. The Bushman description of alignment does not concern the alienation of culture from nature (and consequent disharmony with the Tao and the restoration of harmony with it) that interests the Taoists. Rather it appears to celebrate the coordination of nature/culture, or culture and nature, if we insist on the distinction, with the Tao. The true expression of the sun's accordance with its place in the totality of things is "going along" its path in the sky. Another kind of theological reading might consider the narrative in terms of genesis and evolution. But if the narrative concerns evolution, then it is an evolution whose trajectory does not commence in a fall. It is not a restoration. Nor is this evolution open-ended. Once the desired state of affairs exists, the movement towards change ceases.

The stories, I argued in the last chapter, do not provide explanations of origins so much as celebrate the order of the present, which includes the generative play of discourse. Most commentators, though, have read them as stories of origin, locating the narratives within a creation time when things were still coming into being (Hewitt 1986: 47, 93; James 2001: 149). This particular story lends itself more readily to this designation than many of the others since it obviously deals with an inaugural event. Its aetiological import is explicit. The story explains how the sun came to be in the sky. This is convenient and practical for the /Xam. The rice is dried and the women can leave the warmth of the fire and go out and collect food. Humans have taken the chance to adjust the cosmos to their satisfaction. Even if the narrative is read as a myth of origin in this way, however, it must be conceded that it is not an account, along the lines of the first book of Genesis, of the beginning of everything. The sun already exists as an old man living in a Bushman band.³¹ The story concerns not his creation, but his elevation into the sky. The focus is as much on the activity of the boys and the initiatory role of the women as

³¹⁴ He is, though, according to //Kabbo's comments on the story, already an outsider. He is a man but not a First Bushman (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 54-55).

it is on the sun. Nowhere in the stories related by the /Xam informants, as I argued in the last chapter, is an attempt made to explicate ultimate origins. Barnard (1992), as I pointed out in the last chapter, ascribes the absence of an account of ultimate origins in Khoisan stories to a double-creation framework in which a deity brings a world into being and then leaves other agents to finish off the details. The sun exists in the armpit of the old man. How this state of affairs arose in the first place is a question the story does not attempt to explore.

Whether or not the story is considered primarily aetiological, it is surely important to examine not only the particular anatomy of the aetiological explanations it offers but also the ordering of all the other elements within it. The sun is depicted as selfish, jealous, violent and bad-tempered. He is expelled from human society. A dualistic identity politics is enacted in which his difference and distance from the human community is asserted. By the end of the story, though, the sun is praised for "having worked well" and is seen to possess a sense of service, invoked when he is celebrated for shining so that the people may be warm and the rice may dry. His sense of compassion and "humanity" are appealed to when he is asked, for the sake of the children, not to completely destroy the moon after he attacks it with a knife.³¹⁶ The sun is not given a one-dimensional, archetypal nature. Does it follow, then, that the story provides evidence of a non-dualistic ideology in which good and evil are not essentialised?¹⁷ The one figure in the /Xam stories who seems to lack

¹⁵ Nor is such an exploration conducted elsewhere in the materials. The diversity of agency in the world of becoming in the /Xam stories, here exemplified by the old women and the boys, could possibly be contrasted with creation stories in which there is a single source of creative energy (although the actual work is often delegated to a hierarchy of demiurges), in such a way as to posit an ideological linkage between asymmetrically ordered societies with a complex division of labour (linked to single sources of creation) and non-hierarchical social aggregations such as the /Xam.

³¹⁶ This incident is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

¹⁷ Tumbull (1968) attributes such an ideology to the pygmies he lived with. He locates its roots in the relationship with nature enjoyed by hunter-gatherers. An ideology of good and evil follows, Tumbull maintains, from the alienation from nature initiated by agriculture and pastoralism. Certain forces in nature are seen as evil since they constantly threaten to overwhelm the success of

mitigating qualities, and who then might be interpreted in terms of essential evil, the all-devourer, is said to have been borrowed from African sources (Hewitt: 1986: 225). Solomon (forthcoming: 74), though, argues for the existence of malign beings among the spirits of the dead. Whether or not the danger posed by these entities is a function of a particular relational or temporal structure or the result of their essentially evil nature is a question that requires further investigation.

Solomon (forthcoming: 46) herself maintains that "in San thought, good and evil, life and death, do not appear as irreconcilable, polar opposites. In this regard, it is important once again to consider the degree to which a secularised form of the Manichaeism that runs through western thought is responsible for the detection in materials such as the /Xam narratives of dualistic categories like good and evil, raw and cooked, nature and culture. Conversely, it also has to be considered whether or not the attribution of the lack of categories of good and evil among people such as the /Xam rests on an Utopian need for evidence of unalienated wholeness and the recovery of the fullness of presence.

The sun is represented as an old man who can speak and be addressed as a person.³¹⁸ The time of the stories is characterised by a state of affairs in which the human and non-human are not clearly differentiated. The attribution of human

agricultural activities. Brown (1998: 66) posits a connection between Bushman thought and their closeness to nature when he suggests that the repeated cycles of Bushman narrative "may proceed from the fact that their lives were to a large extent governed by the cycles of the natural world."

³¹⁸ In the last chapter, I mentioned the existence of an indigenous commentary on these stories on the reverse side of the notebook pages. //Kabbo delivers such a commentary on this story: "the Sun was a man; but, *not* one of the early race of people who preceded the Flat Bushmen in their country. He only gave forth brightness for a space around his own dwelling. Before the children threw him up, he had not been in the sky, but, had lived at his own house, on earth. As his shining had been confined to a certain space at, and round his own dwelling, the rest of the country seemed as if the sky were very cloudy; as it looks now, when the Sun is behind thick clouds. The sky was black (dark?). The shining came from one of the Sun's armpits, as he lay with one arm lifted up. When he put down his arm, darkness fell everywhere; when he lifted it up again, it was as if day came. In the day, the Sun's light used to be white; but, at night, it was red, like a fire. When the Sun was thrown up into the sky it became round, and never was a man afterwards" (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 54-55).

form or personality to animals, gods and cosmic entities like the sun is a form of anthropomorphism, as Guenther points out (Guenther 1999: 73; 161). The question to ask is how this phenomenon works in the specific instance of the /Xam discursive order. The sun, moon and animals mostly speak as humans do only during the time of the First Order. This leads Guenther (1999: 73) to read this phenomenon as integrating the orders of the imaginary and the real: "symbolic acts of anthropomorphization link the wild animals of today more closely to the human-animals of the first order; thus, echoes from the mythological past resound through the world of animals of the present." This is surely true, too, of the sun, moon and the stars. They continue to be present as emissaries of the worlds represented by the other realms, including those of the narratives of the First Times and of the spirits of the dead. In terms of the /Xam discursive order they are crucial signifiers in the intertextual field that encompasses not only discourse and the body (as we saw with the case of 'Bushman letters' in chapter 4) but the wider physical world of animals and cosmic bodies. They operate as signs at the threshold of two or three /Xam sign-systems, marking the cross-pollination and interpenetration of these systems as well as their difference. Their territory is the *"passage from one sign-system to another"* (Kristeva 1986: 111, italics in the original).

Much recent theory offers a critique of language itself as a kind of anthropomorphism, a projection of human categories onto the always elusive other. Derrida writes of language as though it is the medium through which the always deferred human subject hails the haunting absence of the extra-human world and takes the echo of its own address as an object, which always remains a source of desire since it is never attained. "[T]he order of the signified is never contemporary" (Derrida 1976: 18). This narrative in which the sun is invested with human attributes, as well as the many others that employ this technique, could be said to be making visible this language of desire.

It is also possible that the anthropomorphism that operates in regard to the sun and other mixed beings of the narratives might demonstrate a /Xam understanding of

the phenomenon Buddhists call *sunatta*, or emptiness, in which there is no independent arising and nothing exists apart from its interrelatedness with other things and beings. The sun's separation from the human world is, paradoxically, the necessary condition for the proper expression of this interrelatedness. I do not intend to argue such a theory here. I am simply trying to claim that the attribution of anthropomorphism to materials like these in conjunction with the attribution of a temporality to them whereby mythological time is divided from the present might say more about modern rationalism's erasure of certain forms of experience and signification than about the narratives. A particular pattern of rationality, formed on the axis of the lost origin and addicted to scientific idolatory - a truth exists behind the veils of appearance that can be discovered by the enquiring mind - fits everything into its own range of experience and its own epistemological grid. It offers the truth of the sun, the truth of the moon. The rest is just a story. The sun is not a bad-tempered, selfish old man but a small star spinning along in a backwater of a provincial galaxy. Even as the centre is denied, it remains, but somewhere in a bigger, more central place.

'Myth', it is sometimes maintained, shapes, reinforces or reflects in some way, the ethos of a community.³¹⁹ Very often, according to this way of understanding, myth does this by referring to the possibility of infraction, imaginatively previewing the consequences of selfishness, disobedience and so on. ^{-5TA} This, I would argue, lends "myth" a moral ambiguity that undermines the ethical thrust imputed to it, a quality easily observed in the /Kaggen stories in which the attractiveness of the main protagonist outweighs, in my opinion, the moral force of the admonitions his family administer to him after one of his escapades. His "bad" motives, after all, usually have creative consequences. On one level this story of the sun sanctions the sharing ethos and condemns the withholding of the individual's power from the communal

³¹⁹ See chapter 6, section i, b.

³²⁰ Cf. Hewitt's reading of the /Kaggen narratives described in chapter 4.

³²¹ In this way the /Kaggen stories are of the "Devil's party" as Blake famously observed of Milton's representation of Satan (Blake 1977: 150),

energy grid. One suspects, though, that in this context this ethic is incidental. It is not so much, perhaps, that the sun does not share his warmth as that others have to devise a strategy to share in his warmth. It is at least as much a question of being successful as being "good." The narrative, in my view, is not primarily ethical or didactic just as it is not chiefly aetiological. Nor is its meaning likely to be inferred from the consideration of a composite of ethical, aetiological and other factors. The story's nature also refuses to emerge through a process of elimination, a kind of negative theology of criticism. What is the nature of this story? How does it speak to us, its untutored listeners? It does not hide beneath its surface. It possesses no mystery. Anyone can understand it. And yet it allows no unexamined meta-statement to adhere to it.

ii. The chain of speaking

'The story of the sun's armpit' starts with a chain of speaking. We are placed immediately within discourse and its materiality. Barnard (1992), as we have seen, ascribes the absence of an ultimate origin in Khoisan stories to a double-creation framework in which a deity, like a Florentine master, leaves the details of his incomplete canvas to the apprentices to complete. The apprentices here are the old women and their boys. Their chief instrument of artifice is speaking. A chain of speaking is established in which the speakers change but the speaking itself never ceases. The chain of speaking involves the old women telling the older children to tell the younger children not to laugh. The old women then tell the older boys what to tell the sun. The older children in turn tell the women what they have told the sun and then the women tell (themselves, the world?) what the older children have told them, and so on.

At a point in the story, when the children report back to the women, the narrative voice switches from the women to the boys²² who continue to articulate their

³²² The children returned. Then, the children came (and) said: "(Our) companion who is here, he took hold of him, I also was taking hold of him; my younger brother was taking hold of him, my other

experience until the women join them in watching the first sunrise. In between, the narrator himself either directly describes the action or reports on what the women or boys are saying in the third person. Thus the story is presented to us in multiple ways. Switching of narrative voice characterises the /Xam stories in general. It is a technique that affords obvious opportunities for dramatisation and characterisation.³²⁴ In many of the stories, the technique of shifting narrative voice allows for multiple perspectives (Hewitt 1986: 54-55). This is particularly noticeable in a lengthy story, included in Lewis-Williams' *Stories that float from afar* (2000: 52-77), which concerns a death on the hunting-ground. The narrative is

younger brother was also taking hold of him; (our) companion who is here, his other younger brother was also taking hold of him. I said: 'Ye must grasp him firmly.' I, in this manner, spoke; I said: 'Throw ye him up!' Then, the children threw him up. I said to the children: 'Grasp ye the old man firmly!' I said to the children: 'Throw ye up the old man!' Then, the children threw up the old man; that old man, the Sun; while they felt that the old woman was the one who spoke "(Bleek and Lloyd 1911:44-55).

³² The narrator presents the action directly: "They arose, going on, they stealthily approached him, they stood still, they looked at him, they went forward; they stealthily reached him, they took hold of him) they all took hold of him together, lifted him up, they raised him, while he felt hot." The narrator also presents the action through reported speech: "The other old woman said to the other, that, the other one's children should approach gently to lift up the Sun-arpit, that they should throw up the Sun-arpit, that the Bushman rice might become dry for them, that the Sun might make bright the whole place." The action is presented directly through the speaking of the women. This usually takes the form of their addressing the boys: "Ye must go to sit down, when ye have looked at him, (to see) whether he lies looking; ye must go to sit down, while ye wait for him." Finally, the action is presented through the voices of the boys: "the youth talked to his grandmother: 'O my grandmother! we threw him up, we told him, that, he should altogether become the Sun, which is hot; for, we are cold. We said: 'O my grandfather, Sun-arpit! Remain (at that) place; become thou the Sun which is hot...'" . To this chain of speaking could be added //Kabbo's commentary on the story (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 44-55).

³²⁴ It was but one of the rhetorical devices that storytellers had at hand. Others included accents and registers and a wide repertoire of expression and gesture. Storytellers employed a specialised vocabulary for different animal characters as well as specialised forms of enunciation based on the shape of the animal's mouth (Hewitt 1986: 51-53). Such storytelling resources enlarged the range of experience discursively available and helped bring the unthought temporarily within the environs of narrative.

built up almost entirely of different perspectives of the same event. In the story of the sun, however, the boys' voices are an extension of the women's voices. The presence of different narrative voices does not, in this instance, betoken a multiplicity of contending perspectives but an aggregation of discursive power. There is a unity of forces, a balance between old and young, male and female, as the human community directs its energies to procuring a reliable source of energy.

In the Bleek and Lloyd collection, the power of speaking to bring about or cancel events is continuously reiterated. Representation makes things happen. Here the chain of signification begins with an injunction to the boys to tell the young children not to laugh at the old man sleeping. In order for an even greater state of plenitude to ensue, laughter must be suspended. A completely contrary state of affairs does not prevail prior to the events related in the story. There is no formless void waiting to be filled, only an unsatisfactory state of affairs requiring improvement. The story occurs in a setting of domestic congeniality characterised by the excessive gaiety of children. The sun himself is represented as a grumpy, selfish old man rather than as a figure who engenders fear, even in small children.

Not only the young children have to still their laughter. The older boys, too, are cautioned to go stealthily, not to go laughing. What is the nature of this laughter? It is not a nervous laughter, "a laughter that does not laugh" (Bakhtin 1965: 45). The children do not fear the old man. Is it ribaldry, a mode of speaking or a mode of forgetting? Is it a species of hilarity peculiar to the nature of children? Does it participate in the "undestroyable, ... eternal laughter of the gods" (70)? The women make no appeal to the boys' courage and masculinity. They impress upon the boys, rather, the requirement for success of temporarily repressing their hilarity.

" James (2001: 149) writes that "The people of the early race were, it is suggested, able to intervene to re-order their world partly because they were in command of a powerful 'First Bushmen's language'. This could be used like a potent, perhaps magical, formula to bring about a desired result: so that 'the thing should assent to their talking (discourse)', //Kabbo explained: the word as creative word."

We enter a comic modality. Why does this old man, who does not himself laugh, elicit this laughter? Is it merely a response to his isolation and anti-social nature or does it derive from some other source?

Ironically, the old man's social alienation leads to his performance of a benign social function. His self-assumed isolation precipitates his ejection from the community, the necessary prelude to his provision of the required solar services. Ironically, too, he follows his own path by a decree of others, a victim of the women's power speaking through the boys. His presence in the skies will be an enduring testimony to the force of the integration of the energies of old females and young males, of anima and animus, if one wishes to accede to the unfashionable inducement, at least in passing, of a Jungian interpretation. The sun is interpellated. He knows himself and his function as "natural" when hailed by the authoritative speaking of the boys. Interpellation, though, in its Althusserian usage generally refers to the social reinforcement of habitus. Here we have, rather, a summoning of the sun's knowledge of self or identity, which is coeval with his social function. This identity has been there all along. It only has to be activated, acknowledged, the call answered again and again. The use imperatives by the boys has less of the force of a command than a revelation. The sun should assent to their talking not because they tell him to but because the order of things requires it.

This order of things is already known to the women. They provide a contrast with many of the other first Bushmen in the stories who, as we shall see, are often ignorant of even the most basic sorts of readily acquired empirical knowledge. A man, for instance, cuts his pregnant wife's stomach open in order to gain access to a share of the meat he believes her to have eaten (L.VI.2. 4064). The man does not know that cutting her open will kill her. Poignantly, he holds her up on a stick,

³² "I shall then suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing ..." (Althusser 1971: 174). See chapter 2, B, ii, for a description of Bourdieu's concept of habitus.

hoping she will live again and lamenting: "My wife! My wife! My wife" (4067)! He has to be told by the other people, "that a woman is one who always used to seem as if filled with food when she is pregnant" (4068). In this story, by contrast, the women possess the knowledge of how things ought to be. Although this knowledge of the order of things is established, it still has to rendezvous with the need which searches for it and the habitual acknowledgement of its summons. The events in the story are foreknown to the women but are not preordained. The order is predetermined, but not predestined! The boys must faithfully follow the steps laid out by the women if humans intentionally participating in the correct ordering of things are to succeed in their objectives. They must go stealthily, matching the old man's cunning. They must speak strongly if their use of language as an instrument of power is to be effective. The old man has to be brought into the compass of their discourse and become part of their knowledge system. In this way a correlation between knowledge and practice is established. He becomes subject to culture and the linguistic field, the verbal *Ixoe*.²¹ But he is also ejected from culture, the community and the *Ixoe*. This results partly from his lack of culture, (attending to his own needs only). In the process, two possibilities of venerable age are contrasted: the wise women closely connected to the children and the frozen solipsism of the old man who has severed his ties with the life-giving forces that make fructifying relations possible.

The old man is thrown into nature, the sky, where he again becomes part of culture when he turns the raw (the ant larvae) into the cooked (by drying the eggs). But even as a division is being instituted between nature and culture, it is being collapsed since the process of bringing the sun into human economic activity is as much a movement of locating the natural within culture as it is of accepting the limits of culture and recognising its dependence on nature. Once again, I would maintain, a dichotomy between nature and culture is, in all likelihood, being projected onto the stories from a critical tradition that experiences itself as fallen from grace and alienated from nature.

³²⁷ The *Ixoe* constitutes the territory of a /Xam band (Hewitt 1986: 27).

The boys should speak strongly to the old man so that he does not forget. Speech has the power to resist the extinction which follows forgetting. Or rather it has the power to replace a certain type of remembering with another. The old man should forget his self-containment, his state outside memory, and begin with a memory from which the coercive origin of his social role has been replaced by the knowledge of his identity as the sun. In this way, the agenda and values of the society become naturalised in him and his memory acquiesces in his role. Memory is domesticated, perhaps the condition of all remembrance. It is the power of one sort of forgetting, which is simultaneously a remembering of another sort, that will keep the sun in his revolutions. His new knowledge must become habitual and embodied. This involves a constant retracing of the beaten path rather than a quest across new horizons. Through the old women and the boys, the sun is produced by the social world; he is removed from his state of static self-sufficiency and inducted into social categories of thought. His role in the world will now appear self-evident to him since his self has become an artefact of the world. It is not the contents of the boys' speech alone but the materiality of words strongly asserted, words as objects rather than signifieds, which will inscribe upon the mind of the sun the course he will subsequently tread through the sky, a path which is both physically and psychologically located. The sun's assumption of his self and his role is his path.

The sun assents to his position in the new geopolitical order the boys establish through their practice and naming. The boys, then, engage in self-panegyrics, a mode of speaking in which signifier and signified are conjoined. The women extend the praise to all the doings of the First Bushmen. This, in the mouths of the storytellers, might be read as ancestral praise. More often than not, though, the First Bushmen are figures of ridicule rather than eulogy (Hewitt 1986: 48). Their

actions do not always have salubrious results. Nor are the First Bushmen the ancestors of the /Xam.³²⁸

The story ends with the first sunrise and more speaking. The boys do not immediately see the fruits of their exertions. They have to wait until the next day: "They sleep; the daybreaks, the children first, they awake, they look at the darkness, they say, "The darkness does yonder go ... darkness goes out from the daybreak's side, the darkness goes towards the evening's side (L.II.35: 3213-3214). The awe with which the children witness the first light of dawn is dramatically expressed. The women then awake and deliver a commentary, one which affirms their foreknowledge:

"look there and you will see the old man's rays
that come up first to give some light to that part of the sky,
and the sun will follow as he comes from behind the hill,
and he will soon become white,
and he will stand above the head of the hill" (James, 2001: 33)

³²⁸"When the first Bushmen had passed away, the Flat Bushmen inhabited their ground. Therefore, the Flat Bushmen taught their children about the stories of the First Bushmen" (note to the story in Bleek and Lloyd: 1911: 44-55). According to one informant, the /Xam are descendants of springbok: "We who are Bushmen, were once springbucks, and the Mantis shot us, and we really cried (like a little child). Then the Mantis said, we should become a person, become people, because we really cried" (L.VIII.4. 6365'). Such a momentous event, from an anthropocentric perspective, is recorded in the Bleek and Lloyd collection only as a brief explanatory aside in a long story about elephants' stealing a child.

³" In the notebooks the story runs into another story of the sun's attacking the moon, which I consider in the next chapter.

This commentary is repeated by the children and the women, in turn, several times.³³⁰

In this closing sequence, the chain of signification continues. The children remark on what they witness. The women discursively pre-empt the next event in the sequence. The children then validate the women's predictions with their observations as events unfold in the manner the women have foreseen they will. The children have praised their own actions. The women have praised the cleverness of the First Bushmen. Now, in the course of their witnessing, the children praise the sun and invest him with a degree of agency that qualifies Hewitt's contention that the sun is only acted upon: "the sun is now coming to stand above the hill's head: it seems he has really worked well since yesterday when he started travelling along his road in the sky" (James, 33), and again "the sun has worked well for he is white and will travel above us" (34).

iii. Identity

The boys are told to throw the old man into the sky and instruct him to follow the path designated as his, "Ye shall say to the old man, that, his path must truly be yonder (L.II.35. 3168). By the end of the story, the sun travels this path day after day. The connection between journeying and ontology occurs regularly in the materials. Being and movement are inseparable. Death is seen as the erasure of a person's footprints by the wind (L.V.I5. 5147) and rain that attend her death

³³⁰ As noted in the last chapter, Hewitt regards this story as "very underdeveloped". "It consists principally of a description of a single figure, the sun being acted upon, 'with little or no attempt to build up the narrative in any way, and no plotting of events'" (1986: 93-94). These shortcomings would have been overcome in performance, James (2001: 148) suggests, since the story offers compensatory dramatic possibilities. Much could be made, for instance, of the boys' creeping up on the old man or of this extract, the anticipation with which they wait for the darkness to leave the "daybreak's side" and their delight and wonder at the sunrise. James rescues the story, it could be said, for orality from the death of "writing", the "wooden" structure, Hewitt attributes to it.

(L.VIII.28. 8465), the effacement of the inscription of her movement. The sun's path and his journeys along it are not, I would argue, merely metaphors. There is nowhere in these narratives a spiritual or allegorical domain which excludes the corporeal or, for that matter, the social. A path is matter made social. There is nothing outside matter; spirit is always embodied, although never absent; thought is strung onto a bow in the form of thinking strings. The enactment of the self involves "going along in one's way." The sun cannot be the sun while he remains still. Identity requires fluidity, movement, action, praxis, discourse. It is not a static state of being but a mode of acting in the world. This movement, though, is not a quest that involves the surmounting of countless obstacles. The goal is not the return to a paradise that has been lost. In the /Xam stories, grace attends movement through a world which itself is not a static backdrop but a fluid medium. Life is not a journey towards somewhere else, as it is when the myth of origin involves a fall from grace. It is a question, simply, of moving.

³³¹ The /Xam materials do not, in my view, generally deal in metaphor in the western sense although the production of terms like "thinking strings" through translation might seem to suggest otherwise. Western metaphor involves a belief in the literalness of the real. It privileges the signified over the signifier. It depends on a myth of origin in which presence is lost, or withdraws sulkily on flimsy pretexts, so giving rise to an inconsolable, abstract thought which can only motion in the direction of the concrete through images. This species of thinking subsists on allegories. A criticism related to such a tradition will encounter difficulties in remaining faithful to the materiality and self-referentiality of a story like this. Brown (1998: 68) argues, though, for the centrality of metaphor in "the aesthetic and social life of the /Xam." Many of the "narratives employ metaphor extensively, or can themselves be read as extended metaphors" While not disputing his observation about the way in which some of the stories work, I would maintain, nevertheless, that "metaphors" work so differently in /Xam and western discursive practices, due mainly to the Platonic nature of the western signified, that the two culturally specific figures of speech cannot be conflated. An example in which a metaphorical reading of San materials proved misleading is given by Solomon (forthcoming: 140). Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1989: 51) read some of Qing's statements regarding "death and revival" as metaphors for trance whereas, according to Solomon, these statements should be taken at face value.

The force with which the children imprint upon the old man's memory (to use a print medium image, an apposite example in this context of the hopeless incapacity of language to evade its own text!) the path he is to follow mobilises another critical aspect of identity. Memory and identity are conjoined. This is different from Krishnamurti's idea that "I" consciousness is a false entity, fabricated from the stuff of memory, consisting of little more than the vapour of what has always just departed (Jayakar 1986: 119-120). In this story the ego discovers itself, the one whom it really is, through the activation of "correct memory." The self can now proceed along its path, hear the songs of its own songline. The social participates in the individual. It is the necessary factor in the potentiation of individuality. But the individual also participates in the social. The properties of the individual illumine the world of the social, facilitating its activities. The individual, thus, forms part of a social ecology that embraces nature and culture. Difference is necessary in the larger scheme of things. Difficulties resulted when the sun's nature was hidden as a result of his living in a First Bushman community. Hewitt (1986: 103) detects a similar "tension between the ostensible human form of the characters and their fundamental animal nature" in the animal stories. This tension is resolved when difference is asserted.

The sun is in the sky so that the rice may be dried and the women may be warm when they set about food gathering. This social and economic ecology is embedded in discursive practice. It is also installed in the sun's memory in the form of a knowledge of the path he is to follow. The social, economic and ecological purchase of identity is proclaimed: "O children going yonder! Ye must speak to him, when ye throw him up, .. Ye must tell him that, he must altogether become the sun, that he may go forward, while he feels that he is altogether the sun," which is hot; therefore, the Bushman rice becomes dry ... (Bleek and Lloyd, 1911: 47). More than an inscription of the women's will upon the sun's memory occurs, though. The activation of the circuits that the sun must describe each day also goes beyond learned behaviour. I have already released Bourdieu's notion of habitus into play earlier in the chapter. Particular values, norms and codes become such an

integral part of individual being that their practice is unthinking and embodied. They become part of the individual's structure of feeling and constitute his body. The sun's new behaviour will be embedded in his new body. He possesses a man's body before the boys throw him up. Once he is in the sky he loses this body; he becomes round and shines.

This is, of course, to read the story from a position in which identity is understood as the confluence of the doxa and self-consciousness - the mechanism whereby the social order (and its truth regime) is naturalised within the site of the individual. The story of the sun does concern one especially unique individual. There is only one sun. In most of the stories of the First Order, however, identity is located rather in individuals who typify groups (the different species) and is represented either as a process of becoming or as a sudden initiation through crisis into an individuation which embraces the species and goes beyond the individual, part of the emergence of the natural order of things from the creative disjunctions of the First Order.

It could be argued that all storytelling participates to some degree in the kind of speaking demonstrated by the boys when they act as the women's conduit. Storytellers, or perhaps stories speaking through storytellers, enable for the band or band-cluster, the activation of knowledge through memory; power is naturalised in discourse through its recognition as history or story. By virtue of its representation of an 'us' that is mobilised through recognition, the story contributes towards the production of a socially-sanctioned identity. Equally, and simultaneously, stories produce others, strangers (Bauman: 1997: 17) and these provide the necessary

³³² The consistent deployment of the term the "First Order" in my consideration of this story does not imply that I accept that it is a temporal rather than a discursive category. I discuss this question elsewhere, most fully, perhaps, in chapter 5 when considering Solomon's work and in chapter 8 when discussing death and the moon.

delimitations of identity, a mechanism apparent in this story in which the sun both achieves an identity and is cast out of the community.³³³

The story can, as I have just shown, be enlisted as an illustration of the social manufacture and incorporation of self-identity. A particular identity of self is asserted in relation to a group identity. The manner in which the sun is discursively practiced upon, the meeting of power and knowledge in discourse, the naturalisation of learned behaviour, the acknowledgement of the instrumentality of identity and the recognition of its economic utility (the sun in the sky can dry the rice and enable the women to gather plant foods) all point to the constructed nature of identity. But it is equally possible to discover in the story support for a different notion of identity, one in which identity becomes something waiting to be uncovered. Although there is indeed a false identity which results from conditioning, there is somewhere a true identity that is not a construct or the result of a positioning within discourse. The discovery of this authentic self becomes a matter of stripping away or of a sudden conversion, such as occurs when the sun is tossed into sky.

iv. Two myths of origin

I have argued in this thesis, following Derrida, that western thought is based on a myth of origin. I have also argued that the reading of the /Xam narratives as myths of origin needs to be heavily qualified. They are far from simple aetiology. In this section, I would like to accept, for purposes of comparison, the description of both traditions as related to different myths of origin. I shall take the story of Genesis as

³³³ Many of the stories of separation could be seen as making strangers and delimiting identity. Hewitt (1986: 229) notes of the story of/Kaggen and the ticks' sheep that "the ticks, like the baboons and elephants (in two other stories), are treated as different and menacing racial groups." Hewitt also contends that IKhwa (198) and the antagonists of group B narratives (184-185) consistently represent threatening outsiders. Brown (2006: 29) notes that "Many oral literatures and other aesthetic forms from hunter-gatherer societies set up accounts of land and social groupings which include some and exclude others, establishing distinctions between those normatively 'inside' and those 'outside.'"

the representative western myth of origin. I am, of course, primarily interested in the differences between the two traditions rather than their correspondences. This interest accords with the focus of this thesis on singularities.³³⁴ I shall begin this comparison between the two myths of origin with a consideration of the contrast between a depiction of woman as responsible for the fall and a depiction of women as the source of creative activity, as is the case in this story. Women, in the /Xam materials, appear unquestioningly to accept the division of labour in which their role is collecting plants. There is no suggestion anywhere that women feel that there is an unequal division of labour in a /Xam band. They will not, however, accept a man's not fulfilling his role. A man, for example, who does not provide meat is scorned. The sun's failure to provide light and warmth is unacceptable. A strong picture of female agency and initiative is presented in the story. The women refuse to accept the state of paralysing inaction to which the cold reduces them. Cold is a state that is interchangeable with fear. The two conditions elicit similar reactions. Through rejecting cold, they reject fear. One might, if one wished, detect a hint of gender inequality in the story since the women resort to what is sometimes seen as a traditional form of female politics in which women exercise power indirectly through male proxies over whom they exert influence, in this case, their sons. This pattern is not common in the stories, however. While gender dynamics is inevitably a feature of the stories, most commentators and ethnologists have remarked on the unusually high degree of gender equality in the small Bushman social groups.³³⁵

There is, in this narrative, a congruence between discourse and event and a correspondence between power and knowledge. The sun is inserted into discourse, an insertion that is conditional on the women's foreknowledge of the sun's path. The result is a particular relationship of power between people and the sun. It is not a question, however, of a pyramid of hierarchically structured relationships so much as a creative tension of forces. People eject the sun into the sky. Subsequently,

³³⁴ See chapter 3, section v.

³³⁵

Jeursen's thesis (1994) is an exception in this regard.

though, they ask the sun for favours (Hewitt 1986: 92). In the period of becoming, people enjoy some influence with natural forces. Through their relationship with spirits who control the rain and movement of the game, for example, (Solomon forthcoming: 75-87) they continue to do so in the world of everyday living. But people are also subject to power exerted the other way. The moon, for instance, introduces death. Spirits of illness harm people (87). The biblical myth of origin establishes man's dominion over nature. In the /Xam narratives, we seem to be in the presence of another sort of complex altogether, one that includes, as I suggested earlier in this chapter, interdependent and ecological features. It could be asserted that a story such as this helps give man the illusion of control over forces which dominate him. It then works as a compensatory mechanism for human impotence. When forces like the sun become explicable they become part of the /Xam's own world. James (2001: 148) conjectures that the subjection of the sun and other "heavenly bodies" to the processes of "mythologizing and naming" gave the /Xam a certain power and "ownership" over threatening natural forces. When this story is inserted into the whole corpus of /Xam narrative, though, I would argue that a different picture emerges, one characterised by fluid power relations and porous or non-existent boundaries between species and between nature and culture.

Identity in the stories, as I indicated in section iii, usually concerns categories. The sun, moon and certain stars are unusual in this regard since their categories consist of only one member. It is in the interests of the overall order of things that each category should discover its identity and incorporate all its members. Each species, for example, should behave in accordance with its latent identity. One could, then, ask the theological question of the /Xam narratives that is asked of Genesis about determinism and free will. In this instance, though, one would not be interrogating the story in order to problematise the origin of evil but to explore the strange dynamics of a space of becoming in which, on the one hand, identity appears as fluid and plastic and species cross-dress and co-exist in a problematic but common humanity/animality, while, on the other hand and concurrently, identity is subject to a design that will inevitably be realised. Genesis concerns a fall away from

perfection while the /Xam story represents a movement towards the way things ought to be (even if this state is imperfect), an unfolding revelation in the comic rather than the portentous mode of the first myth. One mythical complex results in a teleology and the other does not. The /Xam stories celebrate a process of unfolding that is, paradoxically, already complete. However, since the action occurs, I would argue, in parallel time, the process is never closed.³³⁶ In the story of the sun it is in the interests of the general community that the sun follows his path in the skies. From this flows benefits for all. The women help to precipitate this event. There is a sense of creation unfurling through the medium of a tapestry of agents rather than through the brute commands of a dictatorial creator. The biblical myth, by contrast, is centred on a single transcendental agent. It continually plays itself out in history and turns on an experience of lack and desire.

At the beginning of the narrative the women describe the way "the sun lies (in his own sun)."⁵¹⁷ The sun sleeps in himself. He is complete. This is not a satisfactory state of affairs. Here again the western and /Xam mythical structures diverge. In the Gnostic tradition, the loss of unity results in the descent into matter and the confusion of dualism. Even in the mainstream creation story in Genesis, the creation leads directly to division and the introduction of good and evil. But in the /Xam story the movement towards emanation is encouraged. The condition of unity

"Because the Second Order is both a continuation and an inversion of the First Order, the mythological past and primal time pervade the historical present, and myth and reality confers on the present order an abiding aura of ambiguity" (Guenther 1999: 66).

³³⁷ "[F]or we always are warming ourselves here, while we do not go seeking food; that we might eat; while we do frightened sit, on account of the cold, while the sun is the one who afar lies in the sun (his own sun)" (L.II.35. 3170).

³³⁸ Gnosticism, it should be emphasised here, is not without influence in western thought: "The reason of the enlightenment is fundamentally gnostic ... we may well come to see modernity as the period when the Gnostic claim to be able to account rationally for all truths has held sway ..." (Godzich, preface to De Certeau 1986: xv). The Gnostic claim to salvation through reason is a crucial component of a wider intellectual scaffolding in which reason retains a link with the state of unity, truth and full presence which preceded the fall.

is condemned. Narcissistic, self-contained withdrawal is rejected. Attributes should not remain locked within ideal substance, but reach out and nourish life. Only when the sun's rays radiate into the world can the women leave the tight, closed circle circumscribed by the reach of the warmth of the fire and go out and collect food, the life-giving principle which, in turn, generates fresh life.

I offer these comments on the story in a speculative spirit. My aim has been to demonstrate the text's ability to signify in multiple ways rather than to provide a single interpretation of it. Only an unstable, uncertain kind of critical practice can hope, in my view, to sporadically encounter the meaning of a story of this sort. Guenther (1999: 227-228) maintains that different readings of the stories should be allowed to co-exist even though anthropologists like to resolve things into logical orders. This story does not only reveal the inevitable order of things, as I have described in this chapter, it also presents multiple possibilities and parallel ontological modalities. What would happen if the boys did not succeed and there were a world without a sun? What would it be like? What configurations would life assume? These sorts of questions are especially invited by this literature, in which the process of signification is foregrounded.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE /XAM STORIES OF THE MOON

This chapter concerns the moon stories. It begins with a consideration of several questions that relate to their interpretation. These include the nature of death in the stories, their aetiological status and the order of things in which they participate. This is followed by an account of the story in which the sun attacks the moon and an investigation into power relations in the story. I go on to discuss identity in terms of the story's capacity to create certainty or uncertainty and its ability to produce strangers. The chapter ends with a comparison between two versions of the moon and hare stories

i. The moon, death and the ordering of objects

Anne Solomon assembles a great deal of evidence to show that the term translated as "sorcerer" in the Bleek and Lloyd manuscripts has been incorrectly interpreted. Her assertions introduce new analytical possibilities for the researcher reading the /Xam narratives, and illustrate both the radical historicity of hermeneutics and the pitfalls of translation. Solomon, as we saw in chapter 5, argues that the figures referred to in the Bleek and Lloyd materials as rain and game sorcerers were not, for the most part, living people, specifically not the specialist shamans whose trance experiences Lewis-Williams (1981) and Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1989) have claimed form the subject matter of much of the rock art of Southern Africa.³⁴⁰ "All

³³⁹ It might be more accurate to refer to the textuality of translation rather than its pitfalls.

Solomon's new "translation" (through her explication of the term "sorcerer") makes new meanings possible while foreclosing others; new objects suddenly become capable of discursive formation while others abruptly disappear into the realm of superannuated hypotheses.

³⁴⁰ In the sphere of rock art research, Lewis-Williams's theories have for the past few decades provided a different way of seeing the paintings. Solomon shows, however, that his shamanistic theory stems not only from a linguistic mistake, but also from a confusion of categories that arises from the logocentric penchant for discovering universal patterns. The category of the shaman has been allowed to obscure the existence of other categories of being and experience, ones particular to

the evidence suggests", she writes, " that the /Xam believed that the dead became spirits who were dangerous to people; and that 'sorcerers' are not living magicians" (Solomon forthcoming: 43).³⁴¹ Although Solomon refers here to the spirits of the dead as a source of danger, they could also, she asserts elsewhere, assist the living (66). They were requested to influence the movement of game or the rain, for instance. Certain ancestral figures could help bring a gentle, female rain or keep away a violent male rain.³⁴ The realm of the spirits, Solomon maintains, interacted continuously with the human world.^{3 3} "[T]hough departed, the dead were no less real and present than they had ever been. Though they dwelt elsewhere, their lives continued and their powers were everywhere" (64). Solomon notes that this sometimes makes it difficult to distinguish between living people and spirits in the Bleek and Lloyd notebooks (84).

The world of the spirits is a realm that could be described as exacting a conservative response from human society. Unless certain procedures are followed or taboos observed, forces from the spirit world can harm and kill beings in this world. Most dangerous of all, Solomon asserts, is the Rain which corresponds in intricate ways

the southern San, to whom belong both the /Xam and the Maluti Bushmen, whose stories and paintings Solomon considers in her book (65-110). Like the trickster, the shaman is a universal signified that is indiscriminately conflated with a wide range of culturally located figures.

³⁴¹ Bank's reconstruction of the lives of the informants suggests that Solomon might have overstated her case in some respects. According to Bank, the informants themselves had personal experience of living healers, rainmakers and people who could influence the movement of game (Bank 2006: 251-252; 292; 294).

³⁴² See, especially, Solomon (forthcoming: 38-63), for a full exposition of these views.

³⁴³ To employ terms such as "world" or "realm" is to misleadingly invest this other order with a geography of its own. It does not exist in a world outside this one. It corresponds with this world but does not parallel it. It is as though, perhaps, two differently focussed versions of the same image were superimposed. The resultant picture is sharper than either of its constituents. And yet this other realm, that is also this one, can claim space as uniquely its own: it is under the ground, behind the surface of the painted rock, beneath the water.

with death (46-55). Strict procedures must be followed so as not to invite the wrath of this figure. Individual inclination should be subordinated to socially and ancestrally sanctioned social conventions and modes of action. The presence of the spirit world, however, also extends the reach of individual agency since individuals can exert a greater influence over the environment by enlisting the aid of spirits. Even the Rain can be controlled by benevolent spirits at the request of the living in order to produce rain when required (81-87). A situation of great fluidity exists in which a multiplicity of groups and individuals interact with a multiplicity of spirits in a variety of ways. Relations with the spirits of the dead form part of ubiquitous, mundane experience for the /Xam and the Maluti Bushmen. The world depicted in the creation stories is qualitatively different, contends Solomon, from the everyday world in a very important sense. Death was absent from it. The world of the spirits of the dead could not yet exist, and nor could relations with them.

With the introduction of death and the concomitant ordering of the present world, the denizens of the world of the First People passed into the world of the spirits (37-38). If we follow the logic of Solomon's delineation of the meta-narrative of the narratives, some of the inhabitants of that world, notably the sun, moon and stars, still exist in this one. They are subject, though, to the present, routine order of things and must keep to their paths. Although the celestial entities once participated with the rest of creation in an immortality that became mortal or that proved finite, they alone have never died. In a sense, then, the sun and moon are spirits of this world. They are neither absent from the world nor completely of it. The moon most obviously participates in this dual structure since it is described as dying and returning to life. Only the ostrich shares the moon's ability to resurrect itself

See chapter 9 for a discussion of the threat !Khwā (the Rain) presents at the time of a girl's first menstruation.

³⁴⁵ Even in the spirit world, Solomon suggests, on the basis of evidence from the paintings, spirits die as they pass from one spirit form to another, a movement that progressively distances them from the human realm and renders them potentially more hostile to human life (97).

(Hewitt 1986: 223). The new moon, accordingly, can be asked "to bestow its revived energies" upon people (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 56).

Since the celestial bodies were once people of the Early Race, they belong to an extraordinary group of entities that, though present in this world, still possess characteristics of the time of stories. The movements of the sun and stars, the cycles of the moon and the interactions of the sun and moon are narratives that are continually re-enacted. The moon, sun and stars participate in a story that is always re-presented. The sun, moon and stars, ^{i An} as well as the many vestigial reminders in the present of the primordial time, such as the hare's lip and the part of its body which is said to consist of human flesh, blur the divide between the First Time and the present.

The sun, moon and stars embody in the present that foregrounded or one-dimensional presence that appeared in the world of the stories of the First People. The moon, though, participates also in the realms behind the scenes. It not only spans the first and present orders but the realms of the living and the dead, for it dies and returns. It has, therefore, some relationship with the uncanny powers connected with death. Although its connection with death does not invest it with the malignity associated with death's chief embodiment, the male rain or !Khwa, it has an ambiguous quality. It should not, for instance, be looked at after shooting game: "It is that which we fear. For, our mothers used to tell us about it, that the Moon is not a good person, if we look at him. For, if we look at him, when we have shot game, the beasts of prey will eat the game ..." (L.V.21. 5644-5645). The moon is, as we shall see in section iii, in some sense, responsible for death and the complex relations with the realm of the spirits which death institutes. The moon also has benign properties, however. /Kaggen created it in order to provide light.

⁴⁶ In one story, /Kaggen makes the moon from an ostrich feather (Bleek, D 1923: 9).

³⁴⁷ As indicated by their diverse aetiologies, the stars have individual characteristics and do not belong to a single category.

⁴⁸ See section iii, below.

Hewitt notes that the new moon could be requested for help with hunting or finding ant's chrysalids, but not the full moon which was a figure of ridicule (Hewitt 1986: 92). Although absence from the world usually represents danger since it betokens presence in the spirit world, the moon's absence is experienced as loss rather than threat.³⁴⁹

Solomon's work provides a new context in which to consider the /Xam signifier, "moon." This emphasises once more the importance of reading the narratives in their cultural singularity and not as illustrations of universal themes. The moon in the stories is not the moon of science or of romantic aesthetics. It is not interchangeable, I would argue, with the moons of other mythological complexes. It is an entity whose characteristics belong to the particular ordering of objects

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peculiar to /Xam storytelling. The nature of the moon of the /Xam narratives recedes as we approach it with the analytical tools that have emerged from an altogether different ordering of things and a particular mythology of origin, one in which signifieds are moored to signifiers in historically specific ways. This difficulty is illustrated as soon as all the different /Xam narratives of the moon are brought together and arranged in the sort of order that the articulation of western thought with the lost origin demands, a point I made in chapter 6.³⁵¹ Seeming

See section ii, below.

³⁵⁰ Bank (2006: 163-164) maintains that "//Kabbo's moon is not simply an abstract entity in a distant cosmological realm, nor even necessarily the moon of his homeland." Bank argues, on the basis of his reconstruction of a storytelling context often characterised by a correlation between the telling of a story and contemporary events, that //Kabbo's story, discussed in the next section, describes "the shape of the moon visible to him and others in the night sky over The Hill." The story was inspired by "the immediate natural environment, not the recollected landscape of the Flat Bushmen" (165). //Kabbo's version of the moon and hare story, which is discussed in section iii, was also prompted by the viewing of a waxing moon "over the 'head top' of The Hill" (169).

³⁵¹ In one story the /Xam "trickster", /Kaggen, creates the moon by throwing his shoe into the sky (Bleek, D 1924: 5-9). He needs it in order to see in the darkness he has caused by bursting the gall of the eland he has made. This momentous event, in terms of western cosmogony, is but a passing detail in a long narrative. The sun in that story precedes the moon. It is already in the sky when the

contradictions and inconsistencies arise whenever a reading of the stories is attempted that assumes that they refer to a familiar (often claimed as universal) cosmic and temporal order in which objects are dispersed and related in specific ways. Foucault (1976: 121-122) cautions that a field of statements should be "treated not as the result or trace of something else, but as a practical domain that is autonomous (although dependent), and which can be described at its own level (although it must be articulated on something other than itself)". The rules of discourse "define not the dumb existence of a reality... but the ordering of objects" (49). The point is not so much to investigate Bushman beliefs about the moon, but to attempt to describe how the narratives that concern the moon bring together certain discursive objects and order them so as to generate meaning in particular ways. The different narratives of the moon are not meant, in my opinion, to deliver information about a common entity, the moon. I shall explore what they do instead in the course of a consideration of two narratives in the remaining two sections of this chapter.

ii. 'The story of the sun and moon': some considerations

Soon after the sun has been thrown into the sky, he discovers that he is not alone in his circuits. Already jealous of his unsolicited position, the sight of the moon on the opposite horizon, red and rounded, enrages him. He attacks the moon: "He resembles fire which blazes (burns) up, as he comes out, he does resemble which burns up a great tree, as he comes from behind the mountain top, he red above standing comes. Therefore the sun is angry with him. Therefore the sun says that the sun soon shall pierce/break him with the sun's assegai/spear..." (B. 1V. 559-560). The moon is created. In the story that I will now scrutinise, the moon is already present in the sky when the boys throw the sun into space. The moon precedes the sun.

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A study, such as this, that treats them as a bloc, reinforces this fallacy. The tendency, to "organise in advance, the discourse that we are to analyse ..." (Foucault 1976: 25) is especially inviting when confronted with materials whose internal ordering is so different, but it is one which must be resisted as strenuously as possible if an analysis seeks to allow the stories to signify on anything like their own terms.

561). Whenever the sun and moon are both in the sky, the moon is red and full. The moon most resembles the sun at this time. The sun considers this a provocation. The sun is also angered by the moon's ability to resurrect itself. In his own words: "I was angry with him because he living did come again. Therefore, I piercing broke him, when he did not know that I should piercing break him. Therefore, he was startled, as his body stood streaming with blood" (569-570).

Bauman (1997: 17) asserts that: "All societies produce strangers; but each kind of society produces its own kind of strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way." In the story explored in the previous chapter, the sun is made strange when he is ejected into the sky from the band of the familiar.³⁵ This movement, though, is simultaneously, and paradoxically, a movement towards domesticity and socialisation since it is the mechanism whereby the sun's labour becomes part of culture. His solipsistic state of self-completion is forcibly rendered social. In this story, his first voluntary act in his new position consists of an assertion of his isolation. The sun discovers another man, like himself, red and bright (it would take more science than he possesses to realise that these lunar attributes are his own reflection) on the opposite horizon, in his new domain and directly in his path. He could perhaps embrace his double as himself. But the double, by its proximity and its bearing of a likeness that threatens to nullify the markers of identity, exacts his rage. Complete in himself, the old man cannot embrace the same. The similar must be attacked, almost destroyed, and then only allowed continued existence if it signifies in a key of otherness, as a stranger. Difference here oscillates between the poles of the same and the other. Although the sun allows the moon to live in a reduced form, he is incensed that even "the putrid can emit light". His alternation

" He was already a stranger in the band, though, not a First Bushman like the others, according to //Kabbo's note to the story Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 54). He thus becomes doubly a stranger.

³ In a similar way, baboons have especially to be marked off from humans because of their resemblance to them. They are shown to make the most undesirable in-laws in the narratives (Hewitt 1986: 109-110).

between anger and mercy is continually replayed: the inevitable cycle elicited by the stranger who is the same but other, or other but the same.

In the process of making strange, of differentiation, the sun and moon are relegated to their own spheres: the sun to the day and the moon to the night.³⁵⁵ At the same time, their difference can only be invoked through bringing them together, forcing them into the tension of the proximate and the similar. All beings, including the sun and moon, in the First Times are people who become separated into various categories in the course of the stories.⁵ This history, in the case of the sun and moon, extends to the present.⁵⁷ These cosmic bodies can be addressed now in the language of people although they can no longer reply in this language.³⁵⁸ They are partly, as I have already suggested, things of the First Times carried over into the present because they are not subject to mortality (although the moon is and is not).

The sun is always alone. In the days of his association with the band, he keeps to himself. Now, he will not countenance company in the sky. He behaves like a lone male animal, jealous of its territory. The moon, on the other hand, is figured as a family person. He directly involves himself in domestic affairs and intervenes in the communitas. But his/her role is ambiguous as he/she both gives and takes

³⁵ The moon's origin is as a thing in the dark, something that lights the dark, as when the Mantis's shoe is thrown up to become the moon and light the darkness caused by the burst gall bladder of the baby eland (Bleek, D 1923: 1-5).

³⁵⁶ Stories such as this one about the sun and moon and other about animals, create categories of strangers and of difference, and yet they also make the strange familiar, domesticate the wild, bring celestial bodies and wild creatures within the realm of the story and the domain of the told and invest them with personality

³³⁷ In a sense, this is true of all the beings of the First Times. After they died they continued to live in the spirit world and interact with this world (Solomon forthcoming: 37). The sun and moon, though, like /Kaggen, have never died and gone away. In this sense they are supernatural.

³⁵⁸ According to //Kabbo, the sun and moon can no longer speak as they could in the First Times: "The Sun had been a man, he talked; they all talked, also the other one, the Moon. Therefore, they used to live upon the earth; while they felt that they spoke. They do not talk, now that they live in the sky." (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 57).

away. He brings light and images regeneration but is also, as will become apparent in the next section of this chapter, responsible for the presence of death.

This ambiguity is replicated in the moon's ambiguous gender identity. In //Kabbo's version of the story narrated to Lloyd, the moon (specifically the full moon) is sometimes referred to as female: "The moon mounts the sky yes, for the moon is the great moon, the moon with her stomach [T]he day breaks, while the moon stands there! (in the west), the sun he comes out, while the moon stands, the sun pierces her, with the sun's knife" (L.II.I. 285-287). The moon ("she is a moon which talks") asks the sun to spare her life for the sake of her children. The moon wants the children to see him (note gender switch) returning home. The sun relents and puts his knife back in his bag. The state of fullness, repletion and being fat belong to a complex related to femaleness. The moon only becomes a man (here, less than a woman) as a result of the sun's attacks. In //Kasin's version, the moon is pictured as a family man who returns home putrid and wounded: "his wife said to the children, 'Father does slowly come, the sun did cut him, therefore he there slowly comes.'" The moon's sudden sex change in //Kabbo's version appears to produce, by way of the moon's own substitution of reflexive pronouns, an instantly gendered domestic role transformation. The moon changes from mother to husband and father. The moment she becomes a man, he is supplied with a wife.

Although the sun is also imbued with the power of speaking and first person consciousness, the moon's ability to speak is especially emphasised by the narrator, for the moon was created from /Kaggen's shoe and the things of /Kaggen speak
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 (Hewitt: 239).² The moon uses this facility to plead with the sun to spare its backbone, for the sake of the children. In 'the story of the moon and the hare' that I

^{3,9} /Alkunta elaborates on the moon's speech in a discourse delivered to Bleek. He explains why the moon speaks like a shoe: He is the Mantis's foot's shoe, and he feels that it was the Mantis who called his name, he will act like a shoe" (Hollmann, ed. 2005: 368). According to Dorothea Bleek "The most difficult click of all is one used by the Moon, the Hare and the Ant eater ..." (367).

to punish a baby hare who will not believe the moon's assurances that the hare's mother will awaken. In the story under consideration here, the moon is only rescued from his own institution, death, by the sun's tempering his aggression and acceding to the moon's request to leave him his backbone: "Therefore, the sun says that the sun will leave the backbone for the children ... Therefore, he becomes a new moon" (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 51-53). The sun's mercy is temporary. His aggressive territoriality is endlessly reiterated. The next time the moon is round: "The sun shall perceive him, this night, for he did come in the dark. The sun shall perceive him, as he stands there". Once again the round moon is attacked and survives only as a rotten remnant of meat clinging to his backbone. The new moon is a wounded man with an empty net, a rotten thing. ° It is, in this form, an unlikely figure of hope or new life as a more familiar juxtaposition of discursive objects might lead one to expect. With the sun's permission and for the sake of the children, though, the moon still emits light, the sign that it will come to full life again. Bleek's translation conveys this message with a biblical resonance, even though the actual words wonderfully deflate the biblical deity's claim on a monopoly of power and glory: "the putrid is what shall give light" (B.IV. 518-519).

The vestige of light that the sun allows the moon out of consideration for the children enables it to grow to full size again. In another discourse concerning the moon, the moon's capacity to regenerate is directly linked to the dead: "the cavity in any new moon which had the appearance of horns was the 'catching place' for people who had recently died. As the moon grew full by this means, the corpses inside were revived by the 'moon water.' When no more room was left, the people were tipped out onto the earth and lived again until they died again when the whole process was repeated" (Hewitt 1986: 42). The belief in reincarnation evinced here is not repeated in other accounts of death in the notebooks. In this extract, the moon resurrects people while in several versions of the story considered in the next section he is responsible for their deaths. Once again, I would argue, that there is

Elsewhere the full moon is described as looking like a man carrying food in a net. This is a good moon. (L.V.16. 5206-5257).

only a contradiction if the materials are seen as transparent windows onto a unified /Xam belief system rather than as multivocal discourse.

In an essay on postmodern religion, Bauman (1997: 165-185) claims that identity is a new phenomenon, a response to postmodern man's unprecedented loss of socially sanctioned certainty. Individuals are now condemned to find/make their own way in the world. One of the consequences is that people no longer have time for the 'fundamental' questions that, Bauman maintains, religions once produced in order to monopolise the answers that people then required (169). Did the /Xam have time for these big questions? This story of the sun and the moon is generally interpreted as an explanation of the big question about why the moon waxes and wanes, just as the moon and hare story is understood as an answer to the even bigger question about the origin of death (Guenther 1999: 144). The presence of different and often contradictory versions of the same story, as well as conflicting explanations of natural events, however, already suggests, in my opinion, that the narratives are not simply explanations of puzzling phenomena or primarily answers to the big questions. But let us accept for the moment that this story provides an explanation of how the moon's cycles originated. The question still arises of what is to be made of the particular anatomy of this particular aetiological explanation. Why does this explanation assume this form and consist of precisely these details? What is the significance of the display of violence from a protagonist whose presence is so necessary to the perpetuation and pursuit of life? Bank (2006: 163) observes that the "[t]he language, often visceral and violent, as in many of //Kabbo's stories, is of hunter and prey." What is the link between power and origin? Would it not be more productive to think of the sun and moon narratives in terms of power rather than of origin? The boys throw the sun into the sky (exerting a form of power over him), the sun wounds the moon (asserting his power over him/her), the moon institutes death in 'the story of the moon and the hare' (displaying power over the living) and so on. In this scheme, again introduced by the analysis rather than inherent in the materials, power is circular, diffuse.

As I point out in the first section of this chapter, Foucault (1976) maintains that meaning follows from the juxtapositioning and placing of elements within a discursive field. In this story, the elements that produce meaning through the relationships that result from their discursive placement include thinness and maleness, fullness and femininity, moon and death/immortality. The story is but an instance of the ordering of these elements, which assume their signifying power not within the compass of a single narrative but in relation to a far wider web of elements, the archive of possible statements available to /Xam narrative at a particular time in history.

iii. Two versions of 'the story of the moon and the hare'

There are several versions of this story in the collection. I shall concentrate on two of them. In the first, told by Dialkwain, the baby hare is punished for crying for its apparently dead mother. The moon strikes him on the lips and condemns him to be chased by dogs. The moon then decides that people "shall altogether die" (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 56 - 65). In the second version, narrated by #Kasin, the hare mischievously reverses the message of eternal life that he is sent by the moon to deliver to men.

The moon and hare story is very widespread. All Khoisan peoples, apparently, possess a version of it (Guenther 1999: 127). About seventy versions have been collected over the last two hundred years (128). Bantu-speaking people also possess variants of the story (128). Guenther's extensive discussion of the tale explores the story's range, emphasising its common features but also noting its

³⁶¹ Solomon (forthcoming: 37) links the range of the story to its importance. The story is seminal in the San myth cycle, she maintains, for it marks the end of the "charmed but tumultuous days" of the people of the Early Race. [W]ith the advent of death ... 'we altogether die and go away'." Interestingly, though, Qing did not know a version of the story (39).

variations. As we shall see, even the two /Xam versions discussed here display very significant differences.

Both /Xam versions involve the hare. It is tempting to see the origin of this in the image of the hare in the moon, familiar from non-Bushmen sources. But even if it could be shown that a common human perceptual apparatus has detected a similar image, difference invests itself in the ways in which this image is figured in narrative. In the first version, the baby hare refuses to stop crying for its seemingly dead mother. It will not believe the moon's assurances that the mother hare will return to life, just as the moon himself dies and lives again. Interestingly, the baby hare already possesses the knowledge of death although death has not yet been introduced into the world. The baby hare's lack of faith results in the moon's decreeing:

"And they who are men, they shall altogether dying go away, when they die. For, he was not willing to agree with me, when I told him about it, that he should not cry for his mother; for, his mother would again live; he said to me, that, his mother would not again living return. Therefore he shall altogether become a hare. And the people, they shall altogether die." (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 59-61).

A logic is here signalled by the syntax, at least in the translation. There is an inevitable progression between incidents. But what is the nature of this logic? From what elements is it produced? It is a logic whose premises are largely invisible. It can also be asked how the moon comes to possess the power to impose such a logic on both discourse and the world. What, ultimately, is the source of the moon's power to console, punish and to condemn to death?

³⁶² It is likely that single narrators would have known other versions of a story from the one they chose to tell. Dorothea Bleek (1929a: 31 If, quoted by Hewitt 1986: 61) describes how "a tale begun by a person from one place could be finished by someone from another place at a later date." But the selection of elements and the ordering of them into a story could be described as a process of individual composition. The narrators, for instance, emphasised certain themes, introduced "motifs from existing stories" and recast characters (Hewitt 1986: 66-67).

The logic of the story as a whole bears little relation to the elements commonly brought together in a logocentric tradition articulated with the lost origin. There is indeed a fall in this story. The consequence of the hare's lack of faith (disobedience of a sort) is a fall from immortality. Placed, however, in the wider context of the narratives of the First Times, this fall corresponds with how things should be. It forms part of the realisation of a better order rather than contributing to a fallen world. The fall into mortality is a fall towards rather than out of presence. It inaugurates the realm of spirits. The advent of death is linked in the story to that other event that commentators place as central to the transition to the establishment of the present order: the separation of species - the hare shall "altogether become a hare." There is also the curious suggestion in the story that people have always died. The difference now is that they will go away when they die. In a sense, the story concerns the revelation or formation of a realm of spirits more than it concerns dying itself.

Guenther (1999) emphasises the theme of separation in the story which concerns the division of the "mythological past from historic present, life from death, child from parent, man from boy" (145). He notes the binary elements that "permeate the story, giving the theme of separation pervasive lateral roots: night (moon) and day (people's villages), and this opposition's incumbent polarities of dark and light, above and below, and cool and warm; solitariness (moon) and community (village); wisdom and maturity (moon); and folly and childishness (hare)" (145). The presence of this binary structure reinforces his assertion that the story concerns "the division of what was once whole ..." (145). Almost immediately, though, he refers to elements in the story such as the presence of human flesh in "today's hare-animal" that qualify such an analysis. He intentionally casts "doubt on the binary features this brief structuralist foray into the symbolic meaning of the tale has

Even if it is accepted that this world is not ideal, (which is likely given the influence of malign spirits in it), it certainly is never presented as fallen.

revealed" (145) in order to cross-examine the efficacy of a structuralist reading of Bushman mythology.

While Guenther questions the structuralist technique of discovering binary structures in a story, Hewitt's analysis, as we saw in chapter 4, depends on this technique. It is interesting to note in passing the questions that can be elicited from the story when Hewitt's nature/culture binary is applied to it. Do the institution of death and the separation of species (in which substance and form become coterminous) signal a drift towards or out of culture? Does the establishment of a code of difference and likeness between groups, as well as the introduction of categories of the familiar and the strange, constitute a move in or out of nature? A natural order is accomplished that requires an unnatural or cultural mechanism of separation. Is death the necessary displacement in which culture arises? Can culture only exist in a space circumscribed by death? The hare's becoming altogether a hare is also nature fulfilled, an expression of the assertion of nature, the reclamation of the natural order of things from a state of relative identity that belongs to culture and the play of fluid social relations that does not exist directly in

As I maintained in chapter 6, an analysis that rests on categories of the division between nature and culture arises out of a particular myth of origin and is projected onto cultures that do not themselves necessarily engender meaning through these categories. In his essay, *From Bystander to Actor*, Bauman (2002: 209 - 210) claims that the distinction between the animal and human worlds, so important in the epoch of solid modernity now replaced by the liquid era of capitalism, no longer holds: "Culture and morality are no longer seen as the exclusive property of homo sapiens and the boundary-mark of humanity. This is not so much a matter of the scientific discovery of facts as of an 'attitudinal shift': a sudden willingness to see what previously went unnoticed, and to dismiss as of secondary or no importance what previously was put right at the centre of the world picture." Bauman considers various reasons for this seminal shift. He conjectures, for example, that "insisting on the uniqueness of *homo sapiens* lost its function once the need and the urge to differentiate the 'degrees of humanity' (and so also of 'bestiality') of the superior and inferior ('civilized' and 'retarded') members of the human race fizzled out, having lost its pragmatic urgency and political usefulness" (210). Suddenly the distinctions between the human and non-human as well as nature and culture begin to be understood, from the vantage point of the postmodern, as the specific product

In the first version of the story, the moon decrees death, or at least a world of spirits where people go when they die rather than, as before, returning to the realm of the living, as the mother hare was going to do before her child contested the moon's claims concerning the resurrection of the body. It might even be asserted that the moon is recruiting for its own realm during one of its cyclical absences from it. In the second version, though, the hare rather than the moon acts as death's protagonist. "The moon, it was the one who ordered the hare, that the hare should go tell the people, that a man who is ill, he shall rise up, like himself, for, he who is the moon, when he dies, he comes again, living comes" (L.IV.I. 3441-3442). The hare goes on his errand, but deliberately turns the message around:

The hare it went, it told turning round the story, it said that a man who dies shall not arise; for, it ordered that a man who dies, he shall altogether dying be finished.

Therefore, people do not rise up, people who die, do not arise; for, they dying are finished. Therefore, people who die, do not living come, for, they, altogether dying are finished. They do not arise, for, they are truly finished. (3442-3444)

Although some of the differences might be attributable to translation, it is notable that in this version, death signals an annihilation, whereas in the first version, in which death is introduced by the moon, a being who himself exists in the two realms of the living and the dead, the dead go away in order to exist somewhere else.

These clearly are two closely related stories, variations of one narrative. But their differences are striking and significant. The role and motives of the moon differ markedly in the two accounts. In the first version, immortality is part of the dispensation. The moon introduces mortality as a consequence of the baby hare's

of a particular history rather than as inherent in the world. Readings (such as Hewitt's analysis of the /Xam narratives) of other cultural products which turn on the tension between nature and culture more and more begin to seem as though they emanate from the context of the analysis rather than from the materials themselves.

disbelief and ingratitude. In the other version, immortality is a gift that the moon wishes to bestow on a world in which it is only an unconscious state of affairs. It is the knowledge of immortality he wishes to grant rather[^] than immortality itself. It is interesting to note that in both versions, knowledge affirms immortality, whereas in Genesis it leads to mortality.

In the first story, the hare seems, at first sight, pathetic, a victim of its youth and emotional dependence on its mother. The punishment meted out by the moon appears harshly disproportionate to the hare's offence. But the hare's ignorance here is not a matter of the absence of knowledge. He obdurately rejects the opportunity to relinquish his ignorance. It is this refusal to accept knowledge that results in the introduction of death. The hare's punishment is linked to a notion of collective guilt that is alien to an ethos of individual accountability but which should seem familiar from the long play of original sin in western thinking.

In this first version it appears, from the translation at lfcast, that mortality is a going away rather than an annihilation, a moving to another place, presumably the world of spirits. So the deliberate exercise of lunar agency results in the creation of this other space or, more accurately perhaps, the moon's initiation of the living into this place to which the moon itself disappears and from which it reappears. Its decree might then be read not as punishment but as an empirical demonstration to the disbelieving hare of the ultimate nature of the illusion of here and there, and of life and death. This situates the story within a framework in which all paradoxes can be resolved. In the second story, the consequence of mortality follows inevitably (and, as always in the /Xam materials from an unspoken ultimate source) from the hare's malicious or mischievous disobedience when he deliberately turns the moon's message around. Death is not a journey to another place, but an end.

In the second version the hare proves an unreliable intermediary between the moon and men.³⁶⁵ As we saw in chapter 3, section iv, Henry Louis Gates (1988) emphasises the intermediary role of the Yoruba figure, Esu-Elegbara (5) who "interprets the will of the gods to man" and conveys "the desires of man to the gods" (6). Gates compares Esu's role to that of the Greek messenger of the gods, Hermes, from whom the term "hermeneutics" is derived (8). Esu is "the figure of the critic" (13) and a "metaphor for the uncertainty of explication" (21). It is tempting to read the unreliability of the hare in this version of the story as illustrative of the uncertainty of interpretation and to derive from this interpretation of the story, itself unreliable, a degree of justification for my approach to analysing the stories in terms of their capacity to generate multiple meanings.

These stories offer two, significantly variant accounts of death. They do, however, agree on the origin of the hare's lip. It could even be argued that the stories are more concerned with the origin of the hare's lip than with the origin of death. The stories display a hierarchy of significance that is not erected on the foundation of a fall from presence. Bauman (1997: 169-170), as I mentioned in the previous section, asserts that organised religions manufacture the big questions in order to create the need for an answer to them. This is necessary since most people, he maintains, are too concerned with mundane exigencies to ask big, metaphysical questions. The /Xam seem as interested in the lips of the hares they encounter in their daily activities as in mortality. Is this attributable to their focus on the everyday realities of survival or did they have such a surplus of time that they realised that the little questions are as important as the big ones?

Both stories explain how the hare got its lip and also explain why Bushmen will not eat a certain piece of hare's flesh which is actually a piece of human flesh left over from the time when hares were people. But perhaps this observation results from the questions that we ask of the stories. Perhaps they are not providing explanations

³⁶⁵ I owe this insight to Neil ten Kortenaar who offered it in response to a paper I presented on this story in May 2006 at the Centre for African Literary Studies, University of Kwazulu Natal.

at all. Instead of asking how the hare's cleft lip originated could we not ask how else the hare could have got its lip? This time, though, let us address the question to ourselves and not the story. We might conclude that there is no other equally satisfactory explanation. It must, surely, have been the result of its being beaten by the moon. The hare's lips speak these things.³⁶⁶ It is self-evident. What, then, are the questions we could ask the story instead?

For we whose fate it is to interrogate, there is a proliferation of these questions. The moon dies; the moon lives once more. Where does the moon go when it dies? Does it visit the world of the dead? Where is this other world? What are its contours, its nature? Is it a psychological zone or a narrative one? Is it an extra-physical space that is, nevertheless, susceptible to empirical investigation and experience? Is it only the categorising, universalising mind and the mechanism of translation from diverse languages into a common one that makes it seem as though different cultures refer to the same phenomenon when they speak of the realms of spirits or the place of the dead? Does this category exist for the enquirer only through the foreclosure of other categories? Does this story confirm the observation that the stories concern a fall into grace? If this is indeed a story of a fall, does it describe a happy landing in the arms of grace or a descent into death and disfigurement? Once again this narrative can be shown to be working both ways, against and with the grain of the dominant frame of interpretation, which contends that the movement in the stories is from disorder and lack towards order and plenitude. The story simultaneously describes a fall into and out of grace. Things in the world are more suitably and properly ordered than they were in the First Times. People and animals are not as stupid or foolish as the hybrid beings of the Early Race. On the other hand, the living become susceptible to the ambiguous world of spirits. The story speaks not only of mortality but also about the

³⁶⁶ The hare's lip is not alone in this, of course. The narratives contain numerous examples such as the lynx's ear tufts and the hyaena's foot (Hewitt 1986: 96). All of these phenomena operate as intertextual signs, uniting past, present and future; the realms of the living and the dead; and the imaginary and the real in a common discursive field.

separation of nature from the human. Henceforth, people have the sole claim on being human. Animals, such as the hare, that were once included in the human are now excluded. They will be completely themselves. But it also indicates the porosity and fragility of these boundaries: the hare possesses human flesh; its lip is part of the human history of mortality.

In conclusion, I should like to repeat a question that I have already asked: where does the moon's power come from? Is it derived from the power of Kaggen, which itself is of mysterious provenance? The moon, after all, began its existence as his shoe?³⁶⁷ It possesses some of his properties: it rises again from near death; its nature is ambiguous and manifold. Once again, though, origin is probably an explanatory red herring. The moon signifies differently in different contexts. It is not consistently "a Mantis thing." Could its power reside in its unique nature - its dying and coming to life again, the gift of death to life it signifies? But even its ability to participate in life and death plays differently in different narratives. In this story, this attribute resides within the moon's selfhood; it invests the moon with special power. In the sun/moon story, however, it is a function of the sun's violence and mercy, and signals the moon's weakness in relation to the sun.

The discussion of the two stories conducted in this chapter has produced more questions than it has supplied answers. Some of this uncertainty is attributable, no doubt, to a distance from the world described in the texts. More importantly, though, I would argue that the narratives themselves are set up to produce ambiguity and openness. It is a property of their discursiveness. As literature they do not provide information about the world so much as direct attention to the signifying systems that produce "truths" about the world. Nor does the text contain ready made viewpoints; it is in the production and reception of the text that

³⁶⁷ He throws his shoe into the sky in order to provide a source of light after the fall of the eland he has made bursts and plunges the world into darkness. "That is why the moon shines at night. That is why the moon is cold, because it is a shoe, it is leather. It is red, because it has earth on it, the dust in which the Mantis had walked" (Bleek, D 1923: 4-5).

viewpoints proliferate. "The text itself says more than it knows, it generates 'surplus' ..." (Barber 1991: 3). In my consideration of 'the story of the girl and the stars' in the next chapter I will pursue this property of the narratives further.

CHAPTER NINE: 'THE STORY OF THE GIRL OF THE EARLY RACE WHO MADE STARS'

This chapter deals with 'the story of the girl and the stars.' It begins with an investigation into the origin of the things of the sky on earth and a comparison of this complex with the myth of the fall. I then consider the girl's motives and the narrator's condemnation of her in the context of the menarcheal restrictions. This is followed by an extended pursuit of the signifier "springbok", both in the story and in the collection as a whole, in order to illustrate my contention that the stories should be situated within a /Xam discursive field rather than located within a universal framework shared by all "primitive" cultures. I conclude the chapter with some observations about the story in relation to the First Times.

i. The earthly origin of the stars

At least two versions of 'the story of the girl of the Early Race, who made stars'³⁶⁸ occur in the collection. The difference between them is not as marked as is the difference between the two versions of the hare and moon story discussed in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, the two accounts together generate a significantly wider range of meanings than only a single version would. In one version, /Hankasso's, the girl's actions follow directly from anger at her mother and, by extension, the social order. As Jeursen (1995: 40-54) emphasises, it is the restrictions on the movements and diet of the individual, whose menarcheal state locates her as pure social product for the prescribed ritualised time, enforced by her mother and other closely related older women, that elicits the girl's ire and leads to her throwing ashes and roots into the sky.³⁶⁹ In //Kabbo's longer version, her

This is the full title of the story in *Specimens of Bushman folklore*.

Hewitt (1986: 76) provides the ethnographic background: "At the onset of her menses a young girl was segregated from the band and placed in a small hut.... There she would remain in isolation until a new moon appeared. The hut was so small that she was forced to lie prone. Her food and water supply was restricted"

actions are impelled not only by anger but by a calculated intent that contains benevolent elements.

In a structuralist analysis, similarities between stories, however oblique, provide evidence of common deep structures. Differences are considered as cultural embellishment (Hewitt 1986: 71).³⁷⁰ Even if it is accepted, though, that individual stories and versions of them simply illustrate deep structures, the question remains as to why the differences between stories and versions take particular forms and not others. Is this variety indicative only of unconscious and hopeless struggles against the rigid determinism of the structure? Or is it rather a question of the preferences of different narrators, as Hewitt implies (235-246)? Could the differences, as Pelton (1980) suggests, celebrate the radical plurality of experience, life and the world? Is it possible that the structure is as subservient to the surface elements as are the keys of a piano to the sonata played upon them? Do these elements themselves locate the sites where new meanings are generated and realms of signification opened? Functionalist explanations are as dismissive of difference as are structuralist ones. All the menarcheal stories become cautionary tales designed to inculcate the puberty rites: "there is no doubt", writes Hewitt (1986: 76) that these narratives functioned primarily to support the [menarcheal] practices outlined above." In the discussion that follows, I aim to show that this story is more interesting and plurivocal (productive of multiple interpretation) than either a structuralist or a functionalist position would suggest.

In both versions of the story, the girl creates the Milky Way by throwing the ashes of *Ihuin* roots into the sky. The red and white stars are then formed when she casts different coloured *Ihuin* roots into the sky. It is interesting to submit briefly to the allure of the Manichean critical reflex that distinguishes heaven from earth, as well as to the impulse to detect general patterns, and enumerate the things of heaven that

³⁷⁰ Solomon (forthcoming: 284) writes: "The founding metaphor of structuralism is the depth/surface dualism, where depth refers to 'mental structures' ... and 'surface' to cultural 'expressions' as the realisation of those deep structures."

have their origins here on earth: the moon (/Kaggen's shoe, a dust impregnated thing of animal skin), the sun (an old man asleep on the ground in a hut of branches), the Milky Way (the ashes of a fire of roots) and the stars (roots, things sunk in the earth). In each case something is thrown into the sky: the sun by the boys, the shoe or feather that will become the moon by the Mantis and, in this story, the stars by the girl of the Early Race. In each case the agents act with deliberate and calculated intent. The least premeditated of these acts is the Mantis's throwing into the sky of his shoe. Even this act, a spur of the moment solution to a particular predicament, has intended and foreknown results. ⁵⁷¹ In each case, the presence of light is the sought after and realised consequence of the act. In each case, the radiant properties of an object or person that remain latent on earth are released by the elevation of an object or person into the sky. Interestingly, both the products of male hunting (/Kaggen's shoe) and female gathering (the *Ihuin* roots) possess the potential to turn into luminous cosmic bodies.

Elevation does not in itself produce light. The agent of transformation has to instruct the cosmic body as to its role and direct it to the path it must now follow in perpetuity. A new discourse must be put into circulation. The girl in this story addresses the Milky Way that appears from the ashes she has cast into the sky: "The Milky Way must go round with the stars; because the Milky Way feels that the Milky Way lies turning round; while the stars sailing go ... (L.II.28. 2506-2507).

The source is the earth. The stars originate in things sunk into the earth. They first enter into discourse through the speaking of a menstruating girl in a hut who lifts herself up off the earth floor on which she is lying in order to throw the ashes of roots into the sky. The stars are assumed into the chain of signification through the words and actions of a girl whose feet are planted on a small piece of earth from

³⁷¹ Calculated intent is not an aspect of the great majority of aetiological events in the materials, however. The "raw and hairless buttocks" of baboons, for instance, are a contingent consequence of their sitting on hot stones (Hewitt 1986: 109).

which she may not move for the duration of the period of her menarcheal confinement. The sky exists in relation to the earth; its luminaries are intended to illuminate the earth.

In the book of Genesis, creation occurs outside the earth, somewhere else. This results in an original place that is always absent, foreclosed. Campion (1994) considers this phenomenon integral to a western complex he traces back to Sumeria. Although his thesis rests on the specificity of the western tradition, he suggests that ultimately the idea of an extraterrestrial creative source is a universal one that originates in what was once a ubiquitous human tendency to venerate the stars, moon and sun. Without wishing to offer the /Xam and their stories as primal evidence to the contrary, ie. without wishing to situate the /Xam as representative of the earliest strata of mankind (among whom veneration for celestial bodies might have been universal; we will never know), the absence of this sort of veneration from the /Xam stories and practice should at least caution one against making the sort of universal claims Campion does.³⁷² At the same time it is striking to note the persistence in western thought of an otherworldly source of creation.³⁷³ Just as the hare's lip for the /Xam provides evidence of a link between the present and the world of the First Times, the presence of reason has supplied evidence of a transcendental source of creation for the logocentric intellectual tradition. Truth, in this conception, comes from somewhere else. Reason escapes the fall into materiality.

In the account of the making of the Milky Way, roots, things of the earth that draw their potency from its mineral embrace - in the arid Northern Cape this power is triune: the power to nourish (food), heal (medicine) and to slake thirst - become,

³⁷² Hewitt argues that "beliefs about the sun, moon and stars" were not of "primary religious importance" to the /Xam (Hewitt 1986: 93).

³⁷³ This structure is not, of course, unique to western thought, which as a category falsely suggests the autonomous development of a qualitatively superior form of ratiocination that is unique to a western world whose boundaries are variously expanded or contracted to suit the thesis.

through the medium of a menstruating girl, celestial lights. This betokens a contrary ideological complex to the one Derrida describes in western intellectual practice in which, as I have just noted, a whole history of the isolation and privileging of a particular type of reason is linked to a structure in which matter originates in spirit and represents a fall or separation from it (this separation is sometimes intended, as in God's acts of creation, and sometimes unintended, as a consequence of angelic or human disobedience, for instance). Could another, altogether different, way of experiencing and knowing be expected to follow from the earth to heaven movement discernible in these /Xam stories? The answer, no doubt, is yes. But I would argue that the anatomy of this structure of reason, imagination and feeling can, to a significant degree, only be known to the interpreter as different. As I have argued in the course of the thesis, interpretation is a discourse that, for the most part, generates meaning in accordance with its inner logic and within an ambit limited by its historical provenance rather than a method that can discover meaning outside itself. The categories that are projected onto the stories, including the categories I have just employed, of heaven and earth and all the distinctions that result from this division: above and below, dark and light, culture and nature, obscure what they hope to illuminate.

Even if the historical limitations of the critical mind that seeks to apprehend the structure of reason within the stories could be overcome and the stories are not, after all, arcane, irrational or unyielding of their secrets, the realm of their practice has gone, leaving the critic who does not devote his time to learning the /Xam language with antiquated translations and a body of materials that, vast as it is, can only provide a small sample of the wider cognitive and affective world of which the recorded narratives were but a small part. Does this render the interpretative endeavour futile? I would argue that on the contrary, it draws its significance from this hopelessness. Tirelessly and relentlessly, the limitations of hermeneutic practice can be revealed while, at the same time, recognising and acknowledging the rich plurivocity of the /Xam materials.

ii. 'The story of the girl of the early race, who made stars'

"[T]he girl arose, she put her hands into the wood ashes; she threw up the wood ashes into the sky; she said to the wood ashes: 'The wood ashes which are here, they shall altogether become the Milky Way' (L.II.28. 2505). She gives detailed and precise instructions as to how the Milky Way, the stars and sun should arrange themselves relative to each other, spatially and temporally: " 'They (the wood ashes) must white lie along the sky, that the stars may stand outside the Milky Way. The Milky Way must go round with the stars; (2506). [T]he stars are those which go along. While they feel that they sail they did sailing along, follow their footprints. They become white, when the Sun comes out. The Sun sets, they stand around above; while they feel that they did turn following the Sun" (2512-2513). This order is linked to the needs of people by the girls' intention and to the Milky Way's affective knowledge of this intention: "The Milky Way gently glows; while it feels that it is wood ashes. Therefore, it gently glows. While it feels that the girl was the one who said that the Milky Way must glow for the people; that the people might return home by night, in the middle of the night. For, the earth would not have glowed had the Milky Way not been there. That and the stars" (2515-2516). All the girl's actions are presented as considered: "The girl thought that she would throw up above the roots of the *Ihuin*, so that the *Ihuin* roots might become stars..." (2156). The creation of the Milky Way is the necessary prelude to the creation of the stars: "She first laying along threw the wood ashes into the sky; that she might afterwards throw up the *Ihuin* roots" ... (2517). The results of this second action can be seen at night: "The darkness comes out; they become red, while they were at first white. They feel that they stand visible around; ..." (2513-2514).

The girl overcomes, with her act of defiant creation, the limitations of her confinement and of the materials available to her: the roots she was given to eat during the period of her first menstruation. This root, //Kabbo explains, is a fragrant one eaten by Bushmen. The girl makes the red stars from the old *Ihuin* and

the white ones from the young roots. She does not stop at star-making, he adds in a note, but also makes locusts, an important but infrequent source of alimentary satiety, from another edible root she is given to eat (2517').

In the space of a single sentence, in the midst of Kabbo's narrative, an abrupt shift occurs. She throws the ashes into the sky "while she felt that she was angry with her mother, because her mother gave her not many *thuin* roots; so that she might eat abundantly; for, she was in the hut" (2517-2518). This anger of the girl is foregrounded in Han#kasso's version. In a fit of petulance, she throws the ashes and roots into the sky and, in what reads as an unintended consequence, they become the Milky Way and stars (6879-6884). Han#kasso's emphasis on menarcheal confinement and its frustrations also occurs in the latter part of //Kabbo's narrative, quoted above. //Kabbo's version reads as at least two main narratives: one of celestial aetiology and the other of menarcheal taboos. There are other narrative possibilities present in the story as well. Far from being a closed text, the story is a site where diverse discursive, symbolic and ideological strands converge temporarily to form a narrative. In the course of the story an unravelling already commences. The language is restless to move along and form other narratives. This might be why the narratives, in the form in which they appear in the Bleek and Lloyd collection, often only possess artificial endings, products of the process of their recording rather than of any internal narrative dynamic. The stories operate as temporary textual spaces in which discourse can articulate and re-form itself. A structuralist analysis, which sees stories as discrete units that relate less to the other stories in a corpus than to stories which apparently share a similar deep structure from other traditions, cannot, it appears to me, account for this discursive mobility.³⁷⁴

This, I should point out, is not true of the sort of structuralist analysis conducted by Hewitt. He is predominantly interested in the relationships between /Xam narratives and relies extensively on /Xam ethnology for his explications of the stories.

Some of the story's elements accord with the designation of the story as one of origin. The stars originated as roots thrown into the air by a menstruating girl of the Early Race. In some stories, though, the stars are said to have once been all people. In yet other stories, specific stars have particular origins. The two lions, Bel and Mat, for instance, become the pointers of the Southern Cross (Hewitt 1986: 107). Some are metamorphosed young men whose transformation into stars follows from their being seen by a menarcheal girl (79). In other stories a menarcheal girl's disobedience leads to "whole families becoming groups of stars" (Hewitt 1986: 59). A group of people who are sitting eating a rock-rabbit are turned into the constellation, 'Corona Australis', when a menstruating girl looks at them (L 11.37. 3333-3343). The precise mechanics of this transformation of person into star and the power that is at work remains unstated. The ontological status of the wrath provoked is not established. Nor is it explained why this wrath should take the form of turning people into stars although it is probable that death and the spirits of the dead are part of the connection. Many of the stars were once people. "When a sorcerer dies, his heart comes out in the sky and becomes a star" (Hollmann, ed. 2005: 240). A star falls at the time of a person's death (James 2001: 245). It goes into the waterpit, !Kwaha's realm (Solomon forthcoming: 68). In the many stories, on the other hand, in which infringement of the restrictions surrounding new maidens results in metamorphosis into water things such as reeds and frogs, it is clear that the rain or !Kwaha has been propelled into action.

Some of the stars feature as characters in the narratives. The Dawn's Heart Star lives in a curious community of people, hyenas, cranes and crows. Another star, /Gauna, named the stars, so bringing them within the circuits of discursive signification (James 2001:156). This diverse stellar narrative context, with all its ambiguities, should alert us to the fact that the stories do not work as simple aetiological explanations. Hewitt (1986: 79) contradicts his own statement that narratives dealing with the stars are, with few exceptions, entirely aetiological constructions" (93) when he contends that the stories connected to menstruating girls and stars exist primarily to emphasise the message that "menstruating girls are

an extreme source of danger to society and need to behave in strict accordance with the rules laid down for their behaviour if disaster is to be averted." ⁷⁵ According to the logic of his statements, the star stories are at the very least both aetiological and cautionary tales. But the star stories are more concerned, I would argue once again, with generating multiple layers of meaning through the way they order discursive elements than they are with explaining origins or with underlining social norms.

The girl makes the stars by throwing roots into the sky. Her motives are presented as humane - she wishes to provide light for people at night, specifically for the young men out hunting. At first reading, (but not, I suspect, at first hearing for a nineteenth century /Xam auditor) her anger towards her mother and the other senior women responsible for looking after her at this time for not providing her with sufficient roots to eat presents itself as an adjunct to this central narrative. Closer consideration, though, suggests that the anger itself might be the central narrative. Jeursen attributes this anger not to tension between individuals but to "opposition in a ritual context... between an individual and gender-biased traditions" (Jeursen 1995:1). Whatever its source, the precise anatomy of the anger remains elusive. The girl does not throw up the few roots that remain for her to eat in a fit of thoughtless pique. If there is a causal link the critical mind can scavenge in the story, it is that the girl's anger with her mother leads her, through some mysterious process, not elucidated in the narrative, to consider the problems people experience in finding their way at night, and to calmly discover and execute a plan that provides a solution to this problem. She throws the ashes "gently". One possible explanation, but not one the story wishes to offer directly, is that her lighting up the

³⁷⁵ Rather curiously, Hewitt states that the narratives "used to support the numerous observances related to menstruation" were probably not "taken very seriously by their audiences" (87). This contrasts with his apparent regard for the efficacy of the /Kaggen stories in reinforcing social norms (Hewitt 1986: 137).

³⁷⁶ These women, the girl's *xoakengu* or mothers were also "responsible for the instruction of the girl in those rites which she had to perform to protect the band from !Khwa" (76). The consequences of her violating the conditions of her confinement were usually first visited on these women and the girl's immediate family (79-80).

night defiantly links her with the social group from whom she is ritually most excluded: the young men. It is their nocturnal hunting excursions which especially require this light. Another is that she contests her state of deprivation and immobilisation by an act that leads to conditions conducive to abundance and movement. She counteracts the circumscribed interior space to which she is reduced with a sky full of stars and the sweep of the Milky Way. Whatever its precise motivation and however beneficial its results, it is the rebellious nature of her act that leads to the narrator's condemnation of her.

The logic of the linkage between the two elements of the narrative appears elusive and strange. This is so only because the ordering of the elements in the story is unfamiliar. All accounts link the girl's confinement with the appearance of the stars. The Bleek and Lloyd collection contains a great deal of material pertaining to menarcheal confinement, the chief ritual feature of a society not overburdened with formal ritual. The violation of the seclusion rules by a menarcheal girl is always represented as attended by the gravest consequences. Menstruating girls should, in any event, be avoided by young men. Hewitt surmises that the danger they represented was connected to the liminal nature of physical emissions. He quotes Mary Douglas: "We should expect orifices of the body to symbolise its specially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind" (Hewitt 1986: 190-191, quoting Douglas 1966: 145). A menarcheal girl not only inhabits the margin that menstruation represents but also the margin between girlhood and adulthood. The danger she represents is, thus, especially potent.

In several stories, the wrath of !Khwa, the rain "god" is provoked by a girl's violating the seclusion rules. !Khwa is particularly associated with the destructive power of male rain and with death. He is "the death-bringer who takes people (notably young women) from the world of the living to that of the dead" (Solomon forthcoming: 72). In many ways, !Khwa is death personified, "a southern San figure of death" (52). He "represents the forces of death in /Xam thought" (50). The punishment for transgression encompasses the whole band, and not only the

transgressor herself. Everyone will be turned into frogs or killed by lightning, for example. But !Kwha's rage is complicated by, or perhaps explained by, the sexual passion which the smell of a menstruating girl or woman arouses in him. He is also drawn by the smell of blood (Solomon forthcoming: 48). Between menarche and marriage, unmarried girls should avoid the rain even when they are not menstruating (Hewitt 1986: 282). In one story, the rain smells a woman in her hut and comes to her as mist. She experiences the sweetness of his fragrance. He abducts her, carrying her off on his back. She manages to escape when the rain sleeps after she rubs his forehead with buchu. She has also to disguise her own scent with buchu so that the rain cannot find her again (L.VIII.16. 7434-7448). The narrator, Dialkwain, adds in a note that the young woman's "understanding was that with which she worked the Rain nicely; and this was why all the people lived, who would have been all dead; all would have been frogs" (7448'). A direct refusal to comply with the Rain's wish to take her would have resulted in the gravest consequences, the death of the community in human form and their transmogrification into frogs. The resistance of the Rain's desire leads to forcible incorporation within the order of the Rain's things. !Khwa is not mentioned in this story of the girl and the stars. The threat he represents at this time would almost certainly have been implicit to a /Xam auditor, though, in the associations elicited by other elements mentioned in the story. Menstrual blood, for example, was known as !Khwa (Hewitt 1986: 284). It is also possible, however, as Solomon's scheme suggests, that the threat of death that !Khwa represents was not yet present at the time of the story since it occurs in the First Times, before the introduction of mortality.³⁷⁷

Whatever the nature of the danger surrounding her, the girl, it must be emphasised, does not actually violate the restrictions. She observes them scrupulously. The anger she evinces as a result of the women's not supplying her with sufficient food is not unusual in the *rites de passages* of menarche in which withholding of food is a deliberate and essential part of the initiation. Everyone in the band is linked to a

³⁷⁷ !Khwa certainly appears as a threatening figure in other stories of the First Times, though.

confined girl by a web of sympathetic relations. If she were to eat a lot of food, then everyone would have to eat a lot. A girl's frustration at her confinement and state of ritual semi-starvation becomes, then, a necessary part of her transition to womanhood. Her frustration is an expression of her powerlessness, itself, at this time, an inescapable consequence of her power.

In this story, the girl's frustration has fruitful results. She is angry but her actions are calm and calculated, and they have a creative intention. Nevertheless, she is said to have acted ill even though she does not actually violate the taboos. Nor is it her anger that is reprehensible. Despite its beneficial consequences, it is her act of creation that is condemned. Why should this be so? The women and boys role in the sun's elevation into the sky is celebrated. /Kaggen's creative acts do not elicit disapproval. Acts of aetiological import are not in themselves blameworthy. It could be that she is a girl of the Early Race and all the people of the Early Race and their actions are considered foolish and reprehensible. She might then be guilty simply by her location within the First Times and the Early Race, although, as just mentioned, the boys and women in 'the story of the sun's armpit' are similarly positioned and do not receive the same sort of condemnation. Other possible explanations emerge when the narrative's other elements are placed alongside its aetiological features. When the aetiological aspects of the story are foregrounded at the expense of these other elements, which are dismissed as merely adventitious and decorative, the order of things established in the narrative is suppressed and so are many interpretative possibilities.

There are different ways of disobeying the menarcheal injunctions (Hewitt 1986: 85). A new maiden's visiting a water hole is one of them. This is not the case in this story. Another common infringement involves the new maiden looking at young men. This girl does not look at young men. The taboo she is mentioned as observing does, however, concern them. In this way their absence is made present. The story mentions the effect the girl's eating of the meat the young men bring in from the hunt would have had on them and their hunting had she eaten it. She does

not eat it. Instead: "she ate the game of her father, who was an old man. While she thought that the hands of the young men would become cool. Then, the arrow would become cool" (L.II.28.2522). She herself realises the danger of eating their meat and only eats game killed by her father, as decreed. But, somehow, the link between the girl's creation of the stars and her confinement is established through her relations with the young men of the band. Even though these relations are presented in the story by their absence, it is on the site of this absence, disguised as mere information, that many of the meanings in the discourse, I would argue, are generated.

The young men are the group from whom the girl's sexual partners will come. For this period, though, she is potentially a source of the gravest danger to them. Solomon (forthcoming: 49) notes that "The initiate, in her burgeoning sexuality, shares with !Khwa the capacity to kill ... she could, merely with a glance, turn a man to stone or into a tree." She can also render the young men's hunting activities ineffectual. //Kabbo states that if she looks at the game, it will become wild.³⁷ The consequences of new maidens looking at men are detailed in many places. In one story a man is turned into a tree by the glance of a new maiden who cannot resist the attraction of the music he plays on his goura (L.II.2. 295). But the state of a new maiden is ambiguous. She has the potential to harm but also to bestow benefits. "Menstruating women were simultaneously a positive and negative source of energy.... The power of women during menstruation was both confined and enhanced" (Jeursen 1995: 4). Elsewhere, a menstruating girl is described as invested with "rain's magic power" (L.V.I3. 4989) for they have the power by their actions to either keep away or provoke the rain's wrath.

"Wildness" here signifies a state beyond the merely non-domestic, a state of the extreme unapproachability of game animals. For the /Xam, it would seem, the wild is a state that occurs on the other side the natural order of things in which game can be approached by man, a condition in which game is possessed of a knowledge that places it outside the compass of men and their arrows. It is not simply a state outside culture, but a state outside nature.

In this story, the girl's creation of the Milky Way is intended to assist the hunters by lighting their way at night. Her act helps them. She might, however, be said to be defying her separation from the men whose meat she may not touch by performing an act which links her with their hunting. She abides by the letter of the rules of menarcheal confinement but defies their spirit. Although she cannot eat the springbok flesh that the young men bring in, she nevertheless assists them in their hunting of springbok. She provides the light by which they can see and, more seriously perhaps, in which they could be seen if her eyes were there.

A story like this cannot be confined to its own narrative circuit. It is situated within a much broader signifying system. That this wider signifying system links, in complex ways, hunting and sexuality has been pointed out by different commentators. Megan Biesele's book, *Women like meat* concerns the linking of game and women, female sexuality and fat, and the pursuit of love and the pursuit of game by the Ju'hoansi of the central Kalahari. A similar complex, whose exact contours are extremely difficult to distinguish, occurs in the /Xam narratives, most explicitly perhaps in 'the story of the #nuturu', a horned insect (probably a species of weevil) which entertains the children when the adults are away. On their return she removes her horns and presents a visage of irresistible beauty to the men who feed her fat and springbok breasts while their wives have to be content with the lean meat. The men are described as feeling as if they were married to the #nuturu (L.VIII.9. 6786 - 6857).

Anne Solomon (forthcoming: 196-213) describes the unique status of a menarcheal girl. She exists in a liminal zone. IDA She is neither adult nor child. She is in danger from !Khoa but also derives a power from him that endangers others. In a

' See, for example, Parkington, J. 1996. Solomon (forthcoming: 35) notes of San people in general that "relations between men and women are characterised in terms of the hunt and eating food. The man is the hunter, the woman the prey; sexual intercourse is known as 'eating fat'."

³⁸⁰ Hewitt (1986: 88) describes menstruating young women as inhabiting a "conceptual no man's-land."

symbolic sense, she participates in a reversal of gender roles. Solomon emphasises that gender describes social facts and power relations as much as it does biological ones. Generally women are identified with antelope as prey or meat. The menarcheal girl, on the brink of sexual availability, attains in her liminal state, the status of hunter and the men endure the peril that attends their inverted position as prey (121). That menarcheal girls and hunters were symbolically conflated is supported by Hewitt's observation that the observances of hunters who have shot an eland and menarcheal girls were almost identical (Hewitt 1986: 131-132).³⁸¹

Success in the hunt is critical to gender harmony. Women would not consider staying with a man who did not bring meat home. "When men return with nothing from the hunt the women berate the men... They spare the men nothing: reproaches, insults, threats. They want a separation. They want to leave these husbands without courage and go and find others who would be able to feed their wives and children" (Glenn 1996: 43, quoting Le Vaillant). #Kasin recounts how he was seriously injured by a leopard when he tried to hunt it. Instead of receiving sympathy, he was scolded for his lack of judgement in pursuing the leopard and consequent failure to return home with food (Bank 2006: 218). This reaction is not related simply to need, for the meat brought by the men comprised a much smaller portion of the daily diet than did the food collected by the women. Hunting not only supplies meat. It feeds an intricate discursive complex. Hunting involves a complex web of interactions with spirits, the environment and other people. It is central to economic practice; it is equally critical to the social and symbolic orders.

³⁸¹ Eland hunters and menarcheal girls were both isolated and treated as if they were ill. Both avoided particular kinds of food and were cared for by older members of their sex. Hewitt's explanation for this correspondence avoids the question of gender and invokes once again the nature/culture distinction. "Both the hunter and the girl had the capacity to harm the band by causing nature to follow its own course beyond the influence of men" (132).

iii. Springbok and the order of things

The symbolic and discursive orders overdetermine the meanings present in a story such as this. I shall illustrate this contention by tracking one of the elements in the story, "springbok."³⁸² The allusion to springbok in the story is not, I will argue, merely adventitious. In themselves, these animals constitute an expansive realm of practices, beliefs and discursive possibilities. The precise nature of the signifying power of "springbok" is impossible to delineate. The narratives and statements about "springbok" can be elaborated, however, a process that in itself illustrates the point.

The signifier "springbok" occurs in the story solely in relation to the girl's avoidance of the young men's game. She can only eat game killed by her father, an old man (L.II.28. 2522). The girl, the first ever in this situation, is presented as knowing of her own accord, and not as the result of special instruction, as would later be the case, that her eating the young men's game would render their hunting ineffectual: "While she thinks that young men's hands would become cool ..." (2522). The game is only once identified as springbok and that towards the end of the section on avoidance of the young men's meat that terminates the story: "While the girl thinks of her saliva, which, she eating, puts into the springbok's flesh; her saliva goes with the bow, the inside of the bow becomes cool; ..." (2523). Another reference to springbok occurs in an explanatory footnote: "She must not when in retreat look at the springbok, for they become wild" (2522'). This note occurs for the instruction of the interviewer and would have been unnecessary for /Xam listeners. Nevertheless, despite the single, and delayed, presence of the signifier

³⁸²I pursued a similar strategy with the signifier "hartebeest" in chapter 4, section C. The sign "hartebeest" was more obviously central to 'the story in which the Mantis assumes the form of a hartebeest', however, than the sign "springbok" is to this one. In this section, my strategy is influenced by Derrida and Spivak's use of apparently marginal textual elements to open up whole texts (see chapter 2).

itself, I suspect that, for a /Xam auditor, the signified "springbok" would have pervaded the story, as would other elements that might seem to be marginal to the central narrative themes.

It is possible, of course, that springbok merely serve as an example of the sort of species hunted as game by the young men. It was the most abundant species in the area, after all. But the girl makes stars so that people "might return home by night, in the middle of the night" (2515-2516). The story does not directly mention the fact that it was springbok, especially, that were hunted at night (L.II.14. 1374-1376; L.VIII.14 7226-7227). The girl's motive for providing starlight could have been to facilitate the young men's hunting of the springbok by night. She might even be said to have initiated this activity by making it possible.

It should not be forgotten, in addition, that she was the first girl to attain sexual maturity. I have already alluded to the link between meat and women, and between hunting and sex, explored at length by Biesele (1993) in relation to Kalahari Bushmen and by Parkington (1996, 2002) in relation to rock art and the /Xam narratives. Springbok in these narratives are frequently associated with reproduction, fatness and female sexuality. In 'the story of the #nuturu', referred to in the last section, it is springbok flesh the hunters divide unfairly amongst the women, giving the #nuturu the fat breasts and their wives the lean meat. Might 'the story of the girl and the stars', then, be primarily aetiological after all? But might it be a story not of the origin of stars but of sex. Through enabling springbok hunting by night, the girl might be said to symbolically initiate sex, substituting springbok for herself, or even, through her newly acquired sexual potency, actually becoming a hunter herself? The presence of starlight introduces another sort of "springbok hunting": courtship and sexual relations. Parkington (2002: 47) notes that "a girl is said to have 'shot an eland' when she first menstruates." Alone among the antelope, the male eland has more fat than the female (Solomon forthcoming: 198). Fat and sex are symbolically linked (210). The signifier, "springbok", seems to carry related connotations.

This possibility should not be allowed to foreclose others. The proliferation and richness of meaning generated by the signifier "springbok" in the stories is extraordinary. Sexuality is only one of the interlocking spheres of meaning it covers. Others include identity, maternity, the rain, interaction with spirits and knowledge. Many of these meanings can be claimed for this story in the way I claimed sex for it, despite the paucity of direct references to springbok in it. As I have repeatedly stated, a story such as this does not form a hermetically enclosed world of its own, nor are its only relations with other stories from around the world that share its deep structure. It is situated in a world of /Xam stories embedded, in turn, in a wider /Xam discursive field, which at the time of the stories' transcription was located in intricate ways within the wider society of the Northern Cape. Each signifier in a story is linked to an elaborate and interrelated system of signifieds in all the other stories and in /Xam discursive practice generally.³⁸³

In several extended narratives, baby female springbok are coveted by other animals. They are kidnapped and raised by mothers of another species. In one story, for example, a she elephant substitutes a baby female springbok for her child (L.VI.1. 3882-3974). The baby in these stories is always female and the illicit coveting always maternal. Overweening maternal desire occurs in the narratives more frequently than does illicit sexual desire although the latter may be more coded, a possibility, as we have just seen, that may be present in 'the story of the girl and the stars' itself.

In both //Kabbo (L.II.2. 323-356; L.II.3. 383-475) and Han# kasso's versions (L.VIII.29 8561-8601) of another story featuring a kidnapped springbok child, an anteater offers to hold a baby springbok while its mother fills a bag with Bushmen's

To a great extent, these links and significations are irretrievable. The "archaeological" (in Foucault's sense) procedures necessary for their recovery rely on evidence from outside the stories that, for reasons of history and ideology, can never be properly assembled and on evidence from within them that cannot be properly historicised.

rice. The anteater takes the child into its hole and refuses to return her to her weeping mother.³⁸⁵ The anteater raises the child. Eventually, the girl escapes with the help of the lynx whose help the springbok's mother elicits (L.II.3. 429). The lynx first reveals the springbok girl's true identity to her. The lynx's motives, though, are far from disinterested. He lies next to the springbok child because she is a "maiden." The anteater covets the springbok girl as a daughter while the lynx wants her as a wife. Eventually the anteater, who fails to retrieve the springbok girl after a desperate underground pursuit, begins to proclaim the rules of species differentiation. Each species should marry its own kind and eat particular foodstuffs. The springbok is the first to be fixed with its identity, fittingly in this context with one which places it in an adversarial relationship with the lynx: "Then the anteater says, 'Springbok stand! The Lynx kills thee, the Lynx kills thee for, thou art a Springbok, for thou art really art a Springbok, a Springbok which grass eats' (L.II.2. 336-337).

This story does not seem at first sight to link directly with that of the girl and the stars. But it is possible to establish connections. For a start, there occurs a subtextual sexual element in both narratives, and this is intimately related to the presence of the signifier and motif, "springbok". Then the themes of identity and motherhood occur in both stories as well and could be explored in various ways. I am not trying to provide a map of these links here so much as trying to demonstrate something of the common textual fabric the narratives share, so that even a single reference to "springbok", as in the star story, alludes to many other narratives and the signifieds this signifier generates in all of them.

In the story, the springbok are explicitly linked with hunting. The information relating to hunting springbok is varied and extensive. In the star story, it is stated

³⁸⁴ The ant larvae that formed an important component of the /Xam diet.

³⁸⁵ The baby springbok's mother is violently punished by her husband. When she returns without the child, he pierces her feet. In general, though, springbok mothers were noted for their protectiveness towards their offspring. (Bank 2006: 358).

that a menarcheal girl's saliva coming into contact with the flesh of springbok killed by young men harms their hunting. This is only one of many situations in which the process of hunting springbok can be obstructed. When a springbok has been hit by an arrow, it takes an especially long time to die. The hunters call gently to the dying animal. Its blood would otherwise congeal and stop running out of its body, allowing it to recover. The relationship between the hunter and the hunted animal leads to the death of the animal when correctly conducted. One of the ways in which this relationship can be disturbed is when a new maiden eats the flesh of springbok killed by the young men from whom she is ritually separated for the duration of her menarcheal confinement. Her saliva, entering the flesh of the springbok, is the medium for the "bewitchment" of the springbok that the young men will unsuccessfully attempt to hunt. The animals become wild and unapproachable. In a similar way, the girl in her confinement is unapproachable, particularly by the young men. Her condition could be said to render her "wild". She is positioned outside the sphere of the social, which for the /Xam appears to extend beyond the human world to encompass the general ordering of things, the following by the different species, which include stars and things, of the paths set out for them.

Once again this conjunction of elements is not peculiar to this story. The death of a man's hunting companion will cause him to miss his aim and the springbok will not die (L.VIII.14. 7281-7286). This phenomenon is particularly linked to springbok, a signifier with manifold signifieds. But in this case, women do not bring down the curse. Instead, the mediation of women and the medium of their saliva provides the mechanism through which the "spell" is lifted and the springbok are returned to the sphere of the "tame." They first smoke the man's arrows with buchu. Then they make cuts in his shoulders with the arrows, suck out some of his blood and spit it into a springbok horn. When the horn is full of blood, they burn buchu. To ensure that the springbok come straight to the man, the women shave a path through his hair. The springbok will now once again lie down and die when the man shoots them. The power of women here to rectify the situation regarding springbok

contrasts with the destructive power the new maiden can exert on hunting, a paradoxical product of her "spiritual" intimacy with the hunters during the time of her confinement in which she is prohibited from having any physical contact with them.

Hunters enter a relationship with the springbok that they have shot in which every action becomes significant. The arrow is not only an "agent of death" but an "artefact of mind" (Deacon 1992). It establishes a connection between the consciousness of the hunter and the wounded animal. His attitudes and actions become critical in determining whether or not the shot springbok will die or recover. The confined girl exists in a similar sympathetic relationship to the young men and their hunting. Her actions affect their well-being and their hunting success intimately. Separated from them, she is powerfully joined to them. She becomes involved in the relationship between the hunter and his prey, a connection that symbolically parallels the sexual relationship between men and women. The other women, those with the power to restore the hunting powers of a man whose companion has died, stand outside this "hunting" relationship. In a similar way the old women who supply the girl with food and water and her father whose meat she can eat, stand outside the realm of power and danger surrounding a new maiden, protected it seems, in some way, by the distance age or consanguinity has given them from the girl's sexual and reproductive potency.

Although no mention is made of the rain in this story, rain is usually present in narratives concerning the confinement of new maidens (Hewitt 1986: 75-88). The new maiden is hidden because her condition can be smelt by the rain which comes to take her. This rain can also enter a hunter's hut and wet his bowstrings so that he cannot shoot springbok. His wife, then, has to turn the hut around (L.VIII. 14. 7221 - 7222). Springbok are particularly associated with rain. They come after the sorcerers have made rain. Solomon (forthcoming: 81) maintains that these sorcerers are spirits of the dead with whom certain people intercede for rain. This sort of rain would not be the angry rain, however, associated with !Khwa, but the

female rain that brings the grass. When the rain has passed, the men wait leeward at night, after they have made a wind that helps them (L.VIII.8. 6725-6727). Unusually, the women participate in this hunting (6753). Once again this has echoes in the story. The girl makes the stars to facilitate night-time activity. This kind of springbok hunting is perhaps the most important nocturnal activity. The involvement of women in the hunting of springbok is particularly noticeable and does not occur in relation to other animals. Their participation is not only practical, however. Women participate as signifiers in the signifying field relating to springbok and to springbok hunting. The girl and star story contributes and belongs, in part, to this field, even though springbok apparently appear only in passing in the story.

In the present order, the world which interacts with that of the spirits of the dead, springbok are associated not only with abundance and sexuality, but also with death. Their presence at certain times and places signifies the death of a human. Interestingly, in the context of this star story, a falling star also possesses the same signification (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 399-393). Dialkwain describes his personal experience of the interrelatedness of springbok and death (L.V.9. 4653-4688). He breaks a springbok's leg after hitting it with a gun ball. It looks up at him, bleats and then runs off. He chases and kills it. When he returns home, his wife tells him he should have left the animal alone since it was giving him a message. The next

Solomon, as I pointed out in the last chapter, maintains that death and the world of spirits do not exist in the world of the stories of the First Times. I think that this view is broadly correct but also requires qualification. The world of the /Xam narratives do not fall easily into such a neat scheme. In this story, the danger related to menarche certainly exists. From where does this danger emanate if not from spirits and death? Once again this confusion, I believe, results from the propensity to regard the stories as delivering information about the /Xam world view rather than as discursive spaces characterised by plurivocity.

³⁸⁷ An animal might not be what it seemed. Spirits of the dead sometimes visited in the guise of beasts of prey. An ancestral spirit might assist hunters by sending a spirit springbok to lead a springbok herd into the hands of hunters. Dia!kwain's father shot such a springbok by mistake (Solomon forthcoming: 77-79).

day the gemsbok he is hunting mysteriously know he is present and avoid him. He consults a "healer" named Snore-White-Lying ⁵⁰⁰ who tells him that the "wildness" of the gemsbok is related to the springbok he had killed the day before. He returns home to find his wife dying. After fetching his niece to suckle the baby, he buries his wife.

[A]nd the springbok... that night upon which we were sleeping, the springbok came, the springbok came to sleep at the place at which we had buried my wife. And Snore-White-Lying spoke, he said to me about it, "Look! Why is it that the springbok come to a place at which the springbok have not been used to come? ... These things they Are those about which we now shall not speak, for, we will remain silent. (4684-4688).

Snore-White-Lying tells Dia #kwain that now he can see the results of the actions of the springbok he had shot.

Springbok are connected, then, not only with identity, fecundity, motherhood and sexuality, as we have seen, but with death. This link is reiterated often in the texts and is a link shared with stars which are closely identified with death and the spirits of the dead (Solomon forthcoming: 67-69). Solomon (forthcoming: 72) writes that "the /Xam recognised at least two, perhaps three, parts to a person after death - the body in the grave, and the heart, first as a star in the sky, then descending into the water." A link, made explicit in this story and several others, exists between new maidens and stars, the second realm of the dead and also, in general, between menstruating women and the waterpit, the third realm of the dead and the territory of !Khwa. By creating stars, the girl could be said to be participating in the creation of a realm of spirits of the dead, or even in the production of spirits. Whatever the anatomy of this structure and the significations it mobilises, it is clear that the new maiden, in her liminal position, is identified with death and the spirits of the dead.

³⁸⁸ Snore-White-Lying was named after his mother, also a healer, who unusually used to snore or suck illness out of people through the nostrils without wearing her kaross, so exposing her white skin (4652'). /Xam healing involved drawing illness out of people through a healer's nose (Solomon forthcoming: 87-93).

The signifier "springbok" is linked to death in manifold ways. A springbok wounded by a poisoned arrow will bleat in order to attract lions to the scene and endanger the hunter. It also tries to lead the hunters away from home, to places where their safety is less assured. Springbok, it is said, wish for the men who have shot them to die as they die. Any wounded springbok behaving in a strange manner should be left alone: "For a springbok which takes us to our death, it is" (4635). Game, in general, but springbok, in particular, know when a person is about to die.³⁸⁹ They can smell death. Springbok are endowed with a special type of knowledge: "For a thing which smells it is ... it knows it, that which we do not know ..." (4647).³⁹⁰ Springbok, through their intimacy with human death, are presumably closely connected to the spirits of the dead, a property, too, as I have just argued, of new maidens who are connected to !Khwa and to the watery and stellar realms of the spirits.

The more the meanings surrounding springbok are examined, the less the designation of the meat hunted by the young men as springbok meat appears as accidental. Both springbok and new maidens carry a signification that is linked in intricate ways to fertility, sexuality, maternity, identity and death.

" This knowledge is available, also, to certain birds like the hamerkop and the bokmakierie (Bank 2006: 269).

³⁹⁰ Knowledge is not the particular preserve of humans and, thus, is not linked to a relationship with a specific history of rationality. In the context of this thesis, it is tempting to argue that the /Xam tradition in which the origins of all living things are located in a single community in which animals, stars, and so on, were said to have been people, and people themselves were springbok (springbok!), allows for the existence of a less hierarchical order of being and a less exclusive distribution of knowledge than does the narrative of the lost origin in which only man is created in God's image and the rational mind retains a privileged connection with "Truth".

iv. Interpretation and the story: some observations

This exploration, prompted by the single appearance of the signifier "springbok" in the girl and star story, demonstrates, I hope, how a seemingly simple story evades easy interpretation for it inhabits a world in which meaning is generated through an order of things whose scope lies well beyond individual stories. Nor is this order of things fixed. It consists of constantly changing relationships between countless signifiers. A quick appraisal of the story might be content with a description of it as aetiological. Apart from its reductiveness and failure to acknowledge the narrative's discursive qualities, such an interpretation leaves many of the questions unanswered that might arise from a consideration of the ordering of the elements that appear in this story and in the materials as a whole. How does one account, for example, for the association of menarcheal girls and stars, which occurs in different form elsewhere (L 11.37: 3333-3343), if this story simply explains the origin of the stars? A functionalist interpretation might be satisfied with an account that finds evidence for the reinforcement of the social order in the narrative. Violation of the social order through breaking of the taboos surrounding new maidens generally in the stories results, as I have said, in people becoming frogs and other water things or girls becoming stars. Such a sequence easily invites a functionalist explanation of the kind just mentioned. But the girl in this story does not violate taboos. Nor do her actions immediately elicit the harmful consequences that violation of the menstrual observances generally do.

In the story, the girl's actions assume a superhuman dimension, part of her power as an Early Race person and as a menstruating girl.³⁹² Although her actions result in people's being able to walk at night by the light of the Milky Way and the stars, she

¹ Hewitt (1986: 87) provides just such an explanation. It is perhaps, then, not surprising that he finds the story "undeveloped" and of little interest as a narrative (94).

^{3 2} The first girl to menstruate, as it happens. This, for Dialkwain makes her "the first girl" (Solomon forthcoming: 30).

is not a /Xam heroine: "This girl is said to have been one of the !khwe-tha-ssho-!k'a (People of the Early Race) and the 'first' girl; and to have acted ill; she was finally shot by her husband. These (Early Race people) are said to have been stupid, and not to have understood things well" (L.II.28. 2505'). Despite being the first girl to attain both biological womanhood and, through her confinement, symbolic womanhood, despite the solicitude she displays towards the young men and despite her creation of spectacular cosmic entities, she is still condemned by the narrator. This /Xam "Eve" receives no better historical press than does the Eve of Genesis, one point of convergence, at any rate, between two traditions I have sought to position as antithetical.

The stories, Solomon (forthcoming: 36-37) maintains, involve the simultaneous coming into existence of the present order of things and the world of spirits. The end of the creation period coincides with the introduction of death. If death and the attendant world of spirits do not exist in the First Times, it must be asked, from where the forces underpinning the menarcheal taboos already present in this story of the First Times come. What will cool the young men's arrows? Could it be simply the power of the girl herself, a power independent of her will or consent, a product of the liminal state between girlhood and womanhood? Is there a power that exists apart from the spirits? Once again, despite a generally discernible pattern in which the worlds of the present and the First Times are separated, one suspects that the boundaries between them are porous and relative. Solomon describes the surface of the rock on which images were painted as a "place where worlds converged" (forthcoming: 181). The spirit world lies underground, behind the earth's surface. In a similar, if less literal way, discourse, narrative discourse in particular, is a site of intertextual convergence, a crossing, where realms intersect and boundaries are blurred. But the events and characters encountered in this space of amplified possibility are not blurred. They possess a preternatural clarity. The present and the First Times encounter each other here, as do the worlds of the living and the dead. This space is, I would insist, not philosophical or historical, but discursive.

CONCLUSIONS

Perhaps we all lose our sense of reality to the precise degree to which we are engaged in our own work, and perhaps that is why we see in the increasing complexity of our mental constructs a means for greater understanding (Sebald 1999: 182)

In the course of this thesis I have concentrated on the body of interpretation that exists in relation to the /Xam narratives of the Bleek and Lloyd Collection. I have, in addition, attempted the close analysis of some of those narratives. It has been my contention that much of the interpretation of the stories illuminates the intellectual tradition from which it has emerged rather than the /Xam materials themselves. I have followed Derrida in characterising this tradition as predicated on the myth of the lost origin and on a metaphysics of presence. I have detected this complex in the interest in the figure of the "Bushman" in its various manifestations and in the way this figure has been constructed as a pre-historical, pure hunter-gatherer with little relationship to the heterogeneity of colonial or post-colonial space. In the interpretation of the materials, I have especially discovered the metaphysics of presence in the use of universal, cross-cultural, comparative discourses involving the trickster and the idea of the myth of origin as well as in the fascination with the function of the stories. I have also argued that the lack of attention to the detail of individual stories points to a hermeneutic practice that is more interested in overarching or underlying patterns and structures than it is in the signifying practices of the /Xam discursive tradition itself.

I have attempted, in a discussion of a small number of narratives, to offer a mode of interpretation that concentrates on their details and which situates them within the wider circuits of /Xam discursive practice. The details of the stories, I maintain, are not subordinate to hidden social functions. Nor are they mere variations of underlying structures. For reasons I make clear at different points in the thesis, my interpretation cannot elude the interpretations I criticise. I cannot pretend to altogether evade their shortcomings. I have tried to compensate for this inescapable

feature of intellectual practice by opting for a self-reflexive, ironic and tentative mode of analysis. I put new statements about the narratives into play rather than claim to reveal new truths about them. This does not mean, however, that these statements are random and arbitrary. They have emerged from a process of close engagement with the materials and make carefully considered strategic claims about them. My analysis tries, however, to maintain a high degree of awareness of its status as a type of discourse that exists within a historically delimited regime of truth.

I hope that the body of interpretation that exists in relation to the narratives will in the future be subjected to even closer critical scrutiny than I have managed to institute in this thesis. The materials in the Bleek and Lloyd collection become better known by the year and will inevitably continue to receive attention. I hope that some of this attention, at least, will consist of close textual analysis. In this thesis I manage to discuss five stories in some detail. Each of these stories offers much scope for further discussion. In addition, there are thousands of pages in the materials that invite detailed treatment. I have hardly touched, for example, on the animal narratives, which comprise as rich a body of texts as the /Kaggen narratives, or the other sorts of materials in the collection: the wealth of informative matter about daily living or the historical and biographical materials which form a rare indigenous commentary, as Brown (1998) observes, on the colonial situation.

Instead of drawing final conclusions, I should like to end this thesis with the comment that the sorts of questions I raise in its pages can be expanded almost indefinitely and the sorts of answers in whose direction I have gestured can similarly be multiplied in numerous ways. The answers which earlier generations of critics wished to glean from the materials regarding human evolution or universal structures or the functions of stories can be shown to reside in the nature of the questions themselves. The sort of approach I am here advocating endeavours to remain more faithful to the narratives' own modes of textuality. It resists the temptation, for example, to use them to provide evidence about earlier phases of

man's history or to employ them as materials for a comparative mythology. Inevitably, though, it is as much a product of its time and discursive context, its episteme, as the viewpoints it deconstructs.

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INTERPRETATION AND THE /XAM NARRATIVES

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Pietermaritzburg, September 2006.

ABSTRACT

There has, in the last quarter of a century, been an increased interest in the /Xam narratives that form the major part of the nineteenth century archive of materials collected by Lucy Lloyd and Wilhelm Bleek in Cape Town from /Xam informants. This has resulted in a proliferation of writing about the Bleek and Lloyd collection and its contents. The critical examination of some of this body of writing forms part of the project of this thesis. The other aim of the thesis is to provide a close reading of certain of the /Xam texts themselves. This thesis is based on the view that the first of these projects has only been attempted in a cursory and indirect fashion and that the second, namely the close reading of /Xam texts, has not yet been undertaken on a scale that parallels the range and complexity of the materials or which exhausts the interpretative possibilities they offer. This thesis aims to fill some of these gaps in the literature without claiming that a comprehensive or definitive study is possible in so wide and rich a field.

Postmodern and postcolonial theory has emphasised the discursive and ideological nature of the language of both hermeneutics and literature. In my consideration of the /Xam texts and the writing that has been produced in relation to them, I attempt to consistently foreground the historicity and textuality of my own practice and the practices of the materials with which I am working. In this regard I question, especially, two assumptions about the /Xam narratives: that they are primarily aetiological and that their chief character, /Kaggen, the Mantis, is a trickster.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Michael Wessels

_____ day of September, 2006.

DEDICATION

To the Jewel in the Heart of the Lotus.

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