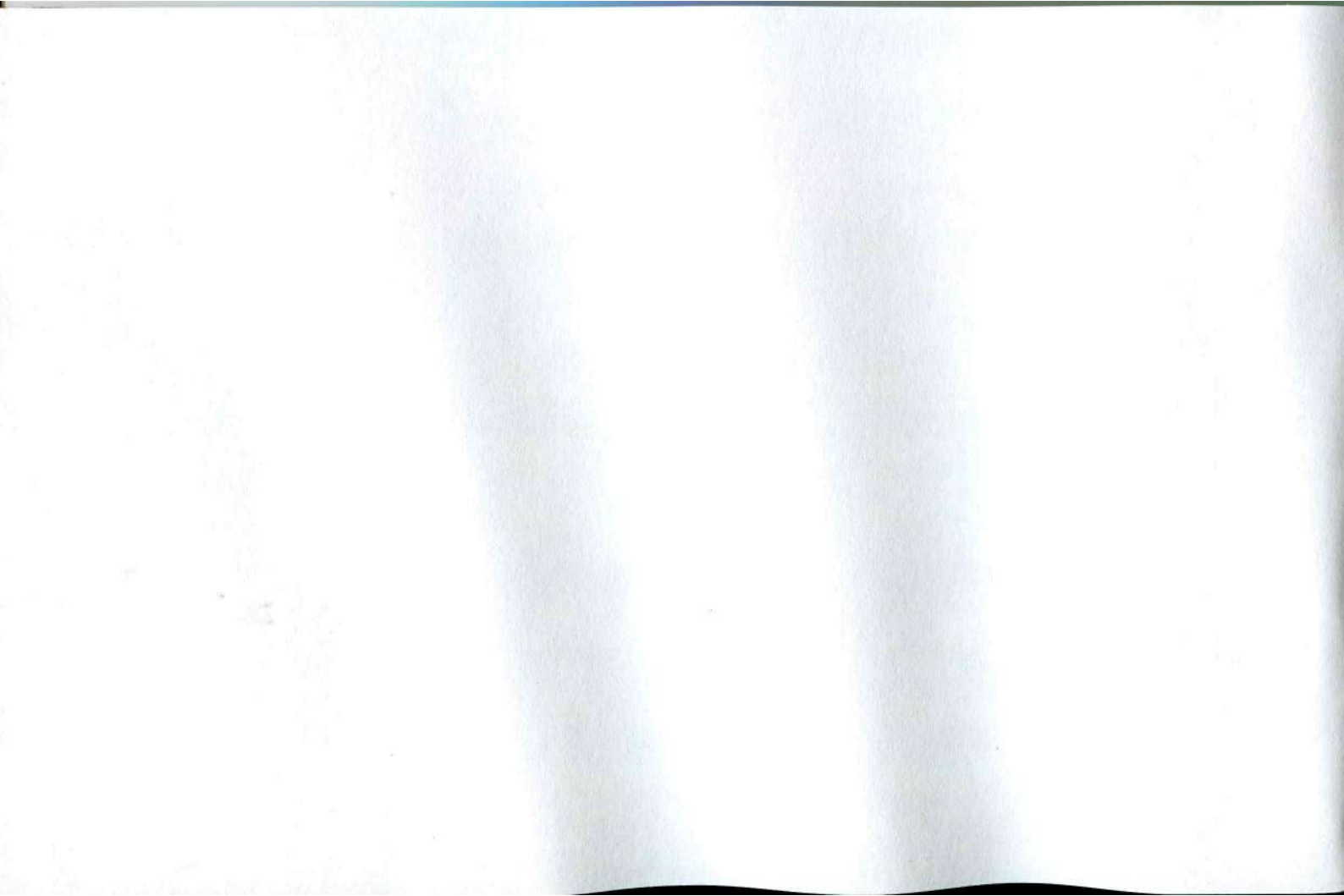


For my Parents



(WITH MY EARS) TO MY FEET'S HEELS

Dennis Buckland

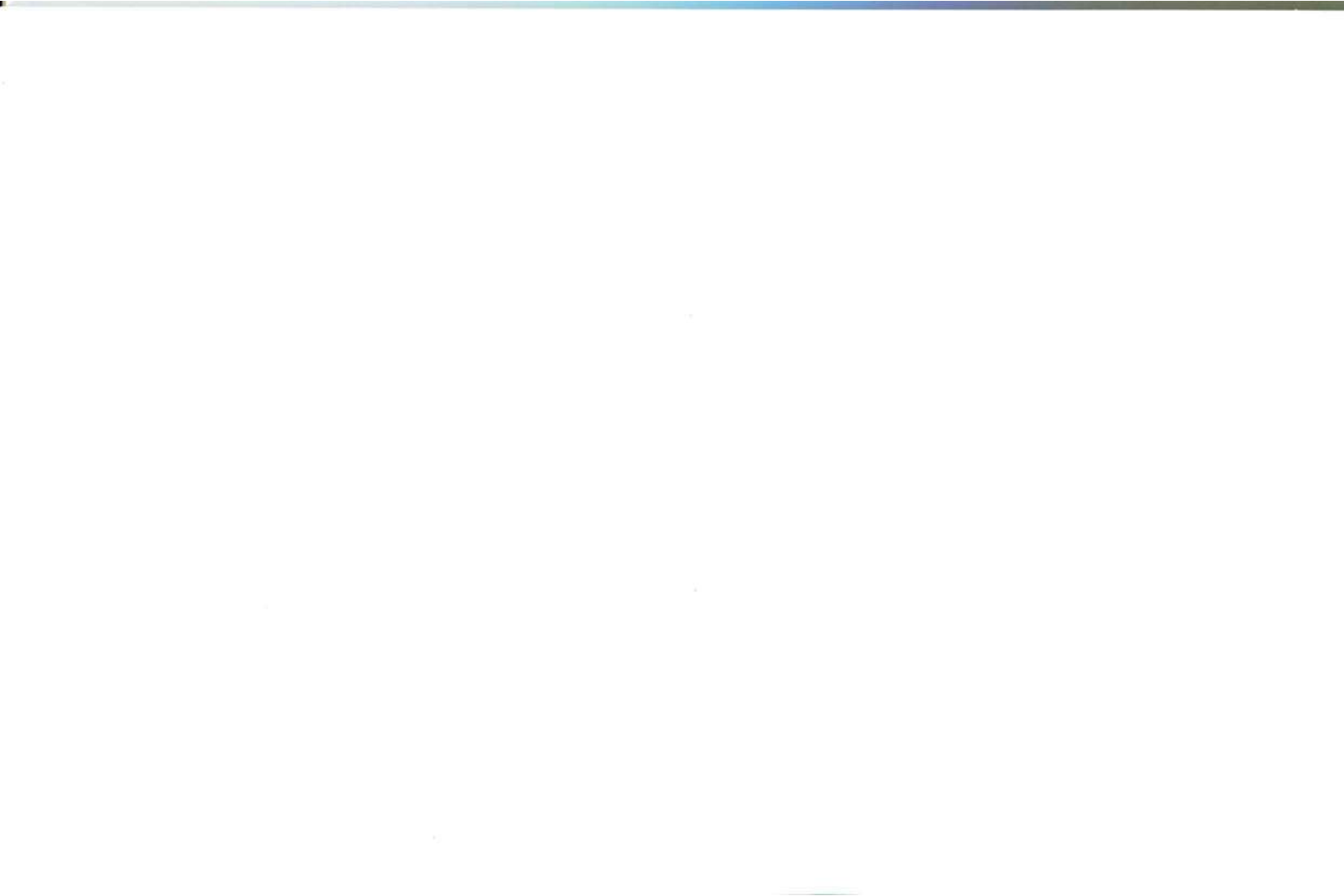
Rietveld Fine Arts, 2023

431-

(2022) V.L.

CONTENTS

Trouble from the offset.....	7
Why Rock Art Research? I.....	9
Sylvia, David, David. John?.....	11
Why Rock Art Research? II.....	18
Rock Art Research	19
First Corner. A disagreement about a sheep.....	21
Third Corner. Quantitative Analysis.....	24
The key to an act of spatiotemporal triangulation.....	24
Lewis-Williams and Shamanism.....	27
Lines and dots and Neuropsychology.....	28
Critics and Empiricists.....	29
Why Rock Art Research? III.....	30
The Problem with Origins.....	31
The road from Vanwyksvlei to Varskans.....	33
Whose Origins?.....	34
Why Rock Art Research? IV.....	35
Art?.....	36
The force that acts upon everything, making it change.....	38
Figures 1-22	
Bibliography.....	49



TROUBLE FROM THE OFFSET

The landscapes of Southern Africa are marked by hundreds of thousands of images, painted onto, as well as hammered and scraped into stone. Any attempt to write a history of the region is troubled from the offset by the question of how to represent the people who were so inventive in representing and expressing themselves on the rocks.

The hunter-gatherers (image-makers, dancer-lovers, human-people) who made their lives on the subcontinent before colonization, had no word to describe themselves as a singular entity. They were a diversity of people who spoke different languages, had different cultures and histories. Dutch settlers lumped all these people under the pejorative, *bosjesman*. In the 1970's academics searching for something less offensive

borrowed the Khoekhoe word *San*¹. San has become the most accepted term, but some groups have self-identified as Bushmen, prompting many writers to revert back to the old term^A.

Part of what causes such trouble with terminology is the existence of what might be called *the figure of the bushman*. While the Bushmen have found themselves at the receiving end of hundreds of years of violent and genocidal history, the bushman is ahistorical, still untouched and hunting somewhere in the Kalahari. *He* has been swathed in so many successive layers of myth that he is hard to define—except as a primitive and in turn demonised and then romanticised other to the Western self. From the adventure-novelist Laurens van der Post^B in particular, we receive the idea of a natural and authentic other to be contrasted with the constructed, almost artificial, Western one.

In 1996 Pippa Skotnes curated the exhibition *Miscast: Negotiating*

A

The majority of South Africans I've spoken to use the term Bushmen, and following their example I will use it in this text. Hopefully in a non-offensive manner, but I recognise its potential for offence. San for many is still the academic term and so when discussing the ideas of researchers in the field I will maintain their choice of wording.

B

Sir Laurens van der Post would have had it that he was an adventurer and a writer, but journalism in the wake of his death revealed he was also a compulsive liar and exaggerator. He nevertheless led a remarkable life, born in the wake of the Boer War as the 13th child of a poor farming family, he died a Jungian guru, and trusted confidant of Margaret Thatcher. Although his time in the Kalahari is disregarded by anthropologists, the success of his books and documentaries made him the international face of the Bushmen for decades.

the Presence of the Bushmen, which she wrote was a 'critical and visual investigation of the term bushman and the various relationships that gave rise to it'.² The exhibition critiqued the figure of the Bushman as presented in books and museums. In a review of the exhibition, Rick Rohde wrote:

The very language and terminology used to constitute and negotiate the presence of the Bushmen is so imbued with the misconceptions and injustices of colonialism that it is all but defunct. Perhaps this will be the abiding legacy of *Miscast*: that any serious attempt to negotiate South Africa's past will be endlessly miscast as long as the diversity of South African voices remains unheard.³

The ensuing years have been no less contentious. Debates about 'usable' and 'unusable' pasts⁴ culminated in a 2013 gathering in which the academic value

of the field of 'Bushman studies'⁵ as a whole was called up for dispute. How can a field whose intellectual lineage is rooted in colonial thought, ever come to understandings that are truly outside of this problematic framework?

Mine is not the voice to break this deadlock. Without quite realising it, I grew up a child of bushman studies. In doing this research I have been trying to locate my position in the landscape, and work out how I can belong in places I am bound to and yet intrinsically alienated from.

¹ See chapter, *What to call Them?*, in Alan Barnard's, *Anthropology and the Bushman* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007), 138–140. For a more in-depth exploration of terminology, see William F. Ellis, 'Ons is Boesmans: commentary on the naming of Bushmen in the southern Kalahari' (University of the Western Cape, *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 38, 2015), 120–133.

² Pippa Skotnes, *Miscast, Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996), 6.

³ Rick Rohde, 'Rich Pickings and Missed Opportunities,' *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 41, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 148.

⁴ Michael Chapman, 'Bushman Letters/Bushman Literature Usable and Unusable Pasts', *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, 33.2. (Published online: Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 78-91

⁵ Luan Staphorst, 'hulhugag [ne e: #kakən au hi jenni jemm (Europe-ans are those who talk with the tip of their tongue): colonialesque knowledge, attuned thinking and the bloody body of scholarship known as Bushman studies', *Southern African Humanities*, Vol. 34 (Durban: KwaZulu-Natal Museum, 2021), 58.

WHY ROCK ART RESEARCH? I

A boy with big circles under his eyes and no front teeth is clambering unassisted along a jumbled ledge, undercut by a sheer cliff. His goal is an inaccessible, but particularly attractive overhang of quartzitic sandstone. He knows from experience that this is just the kind of place where he might find handprints.

A study measuring the size of the handprints against various records of indigenous people's bodies has shown that the majority are the handprints of sub-adults; either boys between the age of 12 and 14 or girls between 14 and 16⁶. This has led to conjecture that the prints, which often occur in large groups, may have been related to initiation rituals. The choice of secluded locations for the handprints seems to support the theory as seclusion is a notable as

pect of Kalahari puberty ceremonies.⁷

As the boy probes his way across the rock face, the weathered protrusion he is standing on snaps. It falls and he falls with it. Reflexively he grasps for a hold, and somehow catches himself with his elbows on the edge of the ledge. He hasn't fallen much more than his own height, but if he had fallen any further, he would have fallen very far indeed. Most of his body is dangling beyond the cusp into open space and he hears his broken foothold crash against the boulders below.

(See figure 1)

This moment seems to last a long time, but at length he regains his purchase and slowly makes it back down to solid ground. All he is left with is a sharp pink scratch directly down the middle of his torso. He doesn't tell anyone about it, but when he gets home he is nervous his mother will no-

tice how his hands are trembling.

⁶ Anthony Manhire, 'The Role of Hand Prints in the Rock Art of the South-Western Cape', *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol. 53. (Cape Town: South African Archaeological Society, 1998). 98- 108.

⁷ Manhire references Schapera. *ibid.* 105.

SYLVIA, DAVID, DAVID. JOHN?

The final line of the first stanza of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is one the boldest and most transparent statements of intention ever made:

That to the highth of this
great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justifie the wayes
of God to men.⁸

In stating that the wayes of God need *justifie-ing*, Milton is starting his epic from the awkward admission that his god's claims to beneficence were somewhat challenged by the state of the world he found himself in. Good (if presumptuous) Christian that he was, Milton sought to help his god out by writing a story which would explain everything.

History is often like this. A lot of histories are just stories that we tell ourselves, or stories that have been told to us to justify the way the world is and why we are the way we are. As is frequently pointed out, this is often to the benefit of whoever the present victor is. The last few hundred years of history have seen the rise of a victor of unparalleled power. Sylvia Wynter calls him *Homo oeconomicus*, and as she says, nobody really likes him.⁹ Yet he has managed to convince us that the destruction he wreaks in the name of endless accumulation is an unchallengeable rule of nature, a battle against scarcity that you either win or lose.

This is quite a state of affairs to *justifie*, and it has taken quite some storytelling to reach a point where a world like the one we live in seems so inevitable. One of the reasons I thought to start this chapter with Milton, is because the fall from grace is in fact one of the stories in question.

In their book, *The Dawn of Everything*,¹⁰ David(s) Graeber and Wengrow begin by exploring Rousseau's idea of the Noble Savage. This is the familiar story that things used to be better, people used to live in small egalitarian groups and were generally nice to each other, until somebody started farming, fenced off their land and called it private property. Thence issued all the ills and misfortunes of man; but like original sin, we can't go back and are doomed to wait for technology to improve our lot.

Nowadays this might not seem like such an outlandish tale. After all, we have been told about hunter-gathering societies like the Bushmen or Hazda who do in fact live in small egalitarian groups, often with markedly different ideas about property. When Rousseau was writing however, this was a particularly strange story to concoct. He had no awareness of the Bushmen or any other small egalitarian group's existence.¹¹

On closer inspection it turns out that Rousseau simply made it up. It was a hypothesis, a thought experiment that he entered into an essay contest on the origins of inequality. Now the question, why was this the subject of an essay contest in 1750's France? To answer this, Graeber and Wengrow take us to Canada's Great Lakes, where at the time French Jesuit priests were engaging in debates with Iroquois people in attempts to convince them of the benefits of Christianity.

To the priests' surprise they were met by a people well versed in debate, who turned the argument around and made pointed critiques of European civilisation. Why were the Frenchmen all afraid of their captains? Why, when one was hungry, did the other not feed him? Many more of these complex debates and even a famously eloquent Wendat leader, Kondiaronk, made their way back to France, spurring a flurry of questioning that had never happened before in

the hierarchical traditions of Europe.¹²

Rousseau's essay was therefore an attempt at refuting critiques of European society that had originally been mounted by people from outside of Europe. Graeber and Wengrow take this story to many more thrilling conclusions, and I can only suggest that you put down my thesis and pick up their book. Amongst other things, their book made me aware of many of the stories I had grown up with and taken for granted, most of them Eurocentric and deeply limiting to the sense of human possibility.

The Dutch settlers of the Cape left us less writing than the French settlers of Canada.¹³ Spurred to search for a Southern African equivalent of Lahontan's accounts of the Wendat^C, I found the writings of Peter Kolb, a German astronomer who ended up working as a Cape Magistrate's secretary when his funds dried up.¹⁴ He published a work well summed up by its full title: *The Present State of the*

*Cape of Good Hope: Or, A Particular Account of the Several Nations of the Hottentots: Their Religion, Government, Laws, Customs, Ceremonies, and Opinions; Their Art of Wars, Professions, Language, Genius, &c., Together with A Short Account of the Dutch Settlement at the Cape*¹⁵

He unfortunately doesn't give any clear voice to the people he pejoratively refers to as the Hottentots, which might be called Khoekhoe or Bushmen today, although as Alan Barnard points out, Kolb doesn't seem to make this distinction. What differentiates Kolb from later writers of that century, is that he repeatedly shows admiration for local craft and customs (alongside ridicule of those too alien for his taste). In concluding his chapter, 'A Review of the Vices and Virtues of the Hottentots,' Kolb writes:

And Numbers of 'em have told me, that Vices they saw prevail among Christians; their Avarice, their

Envy and Hatred of one another,
their restless and discontented
Tempers, their Lasciviousness
and Injustice were the Things that
principally kept the Hottentots
from hearkening to Christianity.¹⁶

This perhaps suggests the existence of an Indigenous South African critique of European civilisation, from a time before Europeans had asserted themselves as inherently superior. Squinting, we might catch a glimpse at the beginnings of a more equitable exchange that the Christians reneged upon, but one which has captured the imaginations of contemporary South African artists like Andrew Putter and Judith Westerveld.¹⁷

There is also a South African parallel for Jesuit Priests debating with the Iroquois. Historical records from missionaries sent to convert (and thus subdue) the population of the Cape, repeatedly suggest that the Bushmen were extremely resistant to both Christian and

capitalist ideology.¹⁸ These attempts at 'civilising', follow more in the tradition of Thomas Hobbes, than of Rousseau, who suggested that before civilisation, people lived in an unruly state of violence.

In 1809 the new British Governor of the Cape, despairing of the violent situation on the frontiers, resorted to gifting the Bushmen with herds of live-stock. In his words, to 'to impress them with a sense of the benefits arising from permanent property',¹⁹ the intention being that they would abandon their hunter gathering lifestyle and become pastoralists who could be traded with. When this failed, a later report suggested the founding of Mission stations where the Bushmen could be introduced to God and industry, and from which they could be sold things.²⁰

The Bushmen simply ate the sheep, and while they were willing to listen to missionaries, saw no reason that the Christian god was better than

theirs. The structure of Bushmen society was vigorously egalitarian, group structures and relationships were fluid as a rule. The culture was receptive to myths and stories, absorbing them easily without damaging the whole because a central rigidity rejected anything that challenged the traditional fluidity.²¹

It seems clear that the Bushmen were peoples who, to use Sylvia Wynter's word, had a contrasting *mythoi* (Frantz Fanon might say sociogeny^C) to *Homo oeconomicus*. This idea of a *mythoi*²² is the second reason why I chose to begin this chapter with John Milton. *How on earth did he ever get so presumptuous?*

Sylvia Wynter might answer this question with a story about Copernicus^D, who made the claim that the earth moved. Before this Copernican leap, it was thought that the earth and the people on it were condemned by the fall to the unmoving centre. Showing that the earth, like the other planets, was

in fact a moving object, gave Copernicus's contemporaries a new sense of agency. Opening the way for a more *cognitively* open order of knowledge in which the universe was ordered by god for the understanding of men.

This paved the way for Darwin's theories, which would dispute even Christianity. Wynter claims that Darwin laid the groundwork for a new definition of what it is to be human that is distinctly *biocentric*. It is this story of *biocentrism* that is used to justify *Homo oeconomicus*, by reducing humans to organisms governed by inevitable laws. Laws that place *Western Man* on top.

When Wilhelm Bleek embarked on his study of the !xam language, he commissioned a series of photographs of the !xam prisoners in Cape Town. These photographs treated their subjects like specimens, they were forced to stand naked next to measuring equipment.²³ How depressing that a student

C

Fanon most famously develops the concept of sociogeny in *Black Skin, White Masks*. He uses it to explore how social factors influence psychology of an individual, through codes and masks. It is paired with ontogeny, a biological understanding of the development of an individual organism, and phylogeny, an evolutionary understanding of the relationships between groups of organisms.

D

Sylvia Wynter expands on Fanon's concept of sociogeny in her work, which I encountered through the text, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations" in *On Being Human as Praxis*. She uses the term *mythoi* to describe socially constructed origin stories that function with our bios (read ontogeny/phylogeny) to make us hybrid beings.

of the study of language, that liberating and creative force, was so limited by his world-view that he was so readily able to dehumanise other beings.

It is through the liberating and creative force of language that Wynter appeals for a new definition of being human as an active *praxis*. This begins with a rejection of *biocentrism* and an acknowledgment of our hybrid natures containing both *bios* and *mythoi*.²⁴ She calls these the 1st and 2nd sets of instructions, and it is the non-genetic 2nd set that is able to implement changes in the world through the agency of the human brain, as shaped by the narratives of its given culture.

It feels particularly relevant for this thesis that she locates the birth of this new being, *Homo narrans*, in what is now the Southern Cape coastline of South Africa.²⁵ Finds of worked and engraved ochre in Blombos Cave, dating back 77 000 and a 100 000 years, have been called the earliest

signs of modern human activity.²⁶

(See figure 16)

Wynter follows the writing of Judy Granh in suggesting that the ochre was itself symbolic of menstrual blood and that it was used to ritually initiate biologically born individuals into a symbolic existence. Performatively uniting *bios* and *mythos*, and for Wynter, 'giving humanness a different future, by giving it a different past'.²⁷ A past in which there was no Eden, no forbidden fruit, and no fall was inevitable.

8

John Milton, 1608-1674 *Paradise Lost* (London, New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 23

9

Sylvia Wynter, Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future. Conversations" (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 12-13

10

David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything, a New History of Humanity* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021)

- 11 Graeber and Wengrow, *the Dawn of Everything*, 28-37.
- 12 Graeber and Wengrow, *the Dawn of Everything*, 44- 59.
- 13 See Nigel Penn, *The Northern Cape Frontier Zone 1700-c.1815* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Department of Philosophy, 1995), IX. What documentary evidence that there is largely comes from official and legal sources. See also, Justine Wintjes, *ARCHAEOLOGY AND VISUALITY, IMAGING AS RECORDING: a pictorial genealogy of rock painting research in the Maloti-Drakensberg through two case studies* (Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Philosophy, 2012), 25.
- 14 Barnard, *Anthropology and the Bushman*, 13.
- 15 Peter Kolb, 1675-1726. First published in German 1719, trans. Guido Medley (London: W. Innvs, 1731).
- 16 Kolb, *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope*, 336.
- 17 See Putter's photographic series *Hottentots Holland: Flora Capensis* (2008) and Westerveld's video project *The Remnant* (2016).
- 18 Penn, *The Northern Cape Frontier Zone*, 435-461.
- 19 Penn quotes Governor Macartney, *The Northern Cape Frontier Zone*, 404.
- 20 Penn, *The Northern Cape Frontier Zone*, 459.
- 21 Penn, *The Northern Cape Frontier Zone*, 431.
- 22 Wynter and McKittrick, *Unparalleled Catastrophe for our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations*, 14-16.
- 23 Andrew Bank, *Bushmen in a Victorian World, The remarkable story of the Bleek-Lloyd Collection of Bushman folklore* (Cape Town: Double Story Books, 2006) 102-128.
- 24 Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations", 16.
- 25 *Ibid.* 62-69.
- 26 *Ibid.* 66. Wynter and McKittrick cite David Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in the Cave, Consciousness and the Origins of Art*.
- 27 *Ibid.* 70.

WHY ROCK ART RESEARCH? II

A figure is stooped inside a tiny cave, shaped like a cupped hand turned over. He looks around, astonished. He is surrounded by images that leap across the walls: slender figures flee from the out-reached paws and open maw of a lion that bristles with tooth and claw. As they run, their extended limbs grow hooves and their heads become those of antelope. Their bodies are covered with white dots, indicating ripples of magical potency. Some begin to bleed from their noses and then, in sudden spasms, their bodies fold up and they throw their arms back to become swallows. Each figure is connected by an unbroken string from the back of his neck to another figure, and the threads continue beyond their bodies to converge on a crack in the cave wall.

He is moved. The story he sees

played out in paint is one of ecstatic transformation, of people connected to each other by strings that thread into the land. He is moved because a week earlier he had taken a tab of acid on top of a mountain and transformed into a flower. She wonders if this feeling of being a flower is a feeling of being trans.

(See figure 2)

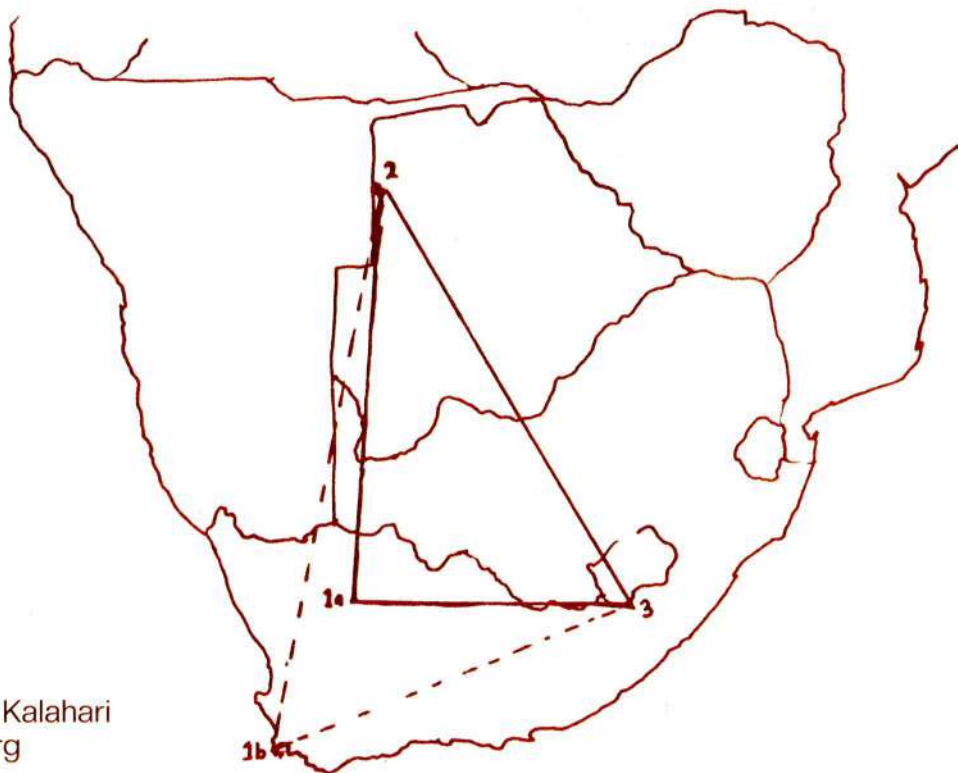
ROCK ART RESEARCH

In the previous chapter I ascribed symbolic and metaphorical meaning to specific details of the rock paintings which I was describing. I drew attention to blood issuing from figures' noses (to threads connecting, to dots buzzing) and I interpreted these as being signs of transformative spiritual experiences. Where did I get these ideas from? They are certainly not self-evident, and the image makers are no longer around to provide explanations or corroborate the claims. Any student of Rock Art research would, however, immediately recognise the telltale idioms of David Lewis-Williams' trance hypothesis.

Lewis-Williams was the most successful of a new generation of archaeologists who staged a revolution in the understanding of Bushman art in the 1970's and 80's. His 1981 PhD thesis, *Believing and Seeing* achieved this new under-

standing through theory applied to a model which I think of as an act of *spatiotemporal triangulation*. In order to explain his model, I'll need to locate the three corners.

A map of Southern Africa with a triangle super-imposed, showing the locations of the 'three corners' of Lewis-Williams's model discussed in the following chapters:



- 1a- |xam-ka !au
- 1b- Cape Town
- 2- Nyae Nyae, Northern Kalahari
- 3- Southern Drakensberg

FIRST CORNER. A DISAGREEMENT ABOUT A SHEEP

This disagreement took place in an area with many names. For a century or so, its aridity kept European descended Trekboers at bay, and they called it the Thirst Lands or the Agterveld. By the 1850's however, pressure on land was enough to encourage pastoralist farmers to venture into this dry place, where they came into conflict with |xam groups who had already been living there for millennia, and who called it |xam-ka !au. This conflict came to a close with a genocide, perhaps the first officially documented one in modern history.²⁸ Strangely, it was following their dispossession that |xam-ka !au acquired its modern name, Bushmanland.

(See figure 4)

It was in 1869 in |xam-ka !au (quickly

becoming Bushmanland) that a man with two names, David Hoesar and Dialkwain, shot and killed another man, Jacob Kruger.²⁹ On the surface of it the disagreement was about a sheep, but it was really about land and ultimately about survival. Dia!kwain was arrested, and sent to Cape Town to join a number of other |xam men serving sentences of hard labour building a breakwater for the city's harbour.

(See figure 5 through 8)

A renowned German philologist, Wilhelm Bleek, became aware of these men and their complex click language. He believed that the |xam was a primitive language which could be used to test evolutionary theories on the origins of speech. The looming extinction of the |xam language added a certain urgency to the project. He requested permission from the Governor to have a series of these prisoners transferred to his home, where they could

E

Some of the clicks.
 | - the dental click created by pressing the tip of the tongue against the upper front teeth and sharply withdrawing it. Something like a tut of annoyance.
 ! - the cerebral click is created by curling up the tip of the tongue against the roof of the palette and withdrawing it forcibly
 || - the lateral click is created by covering the whole palette with the tongue and withdrawing it backwards. A sound similar to the one used to encourage horses
 # - the palatal click is created by pressing the tip of the tongue flatly against the area where the palate and the gums meet and withdrawing it sharply.

While the above gives an approximation of the sounds of |xam, it is a tonal language, which made it a daunting task for Bleek and Lloyd to create written characters that could capture the complexity of the verbal articulation.

Adapted from *Specimens of Bushman folklore*, as sourced by Bank in, *Bushman in a Victorian World*, 398

be interviewed at leisure. Bleek was interested in proving that the |xam were of a particularly poetic mindset, and for this reason guided the project towards the collection of mythology. He was joined by his sister-in-law Lucy Lloyd, and together with their |xam teachers, |a!kunta, ||kabbo, #kasin, Dia!kwain, !kweiten ta ||ken and |han#kass'o,^E they recorded over 12 000 pages of oral testimony.

In 1911, long after Wilhelm's death in 1875, Lucy Lloyd published *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. A decade later when Wilhelm's daughter, Dorothea, visited Bushmanland in search of more tales she announced that |xam could be said to have gone extinct as a spoken language. The enormous *Bleek and Lloyd* archive itself was almost forgotten in the back of a library storeroom until its rediscovery nearly a century after it was started.

SECOND CORNER. A MOLTEN CHOCOLATE BAR

In 1945, an engineer for the Raytheon Corporation was experimenting with a radar when he noticed that his chocolate bar had melted. One of the founders of the company, Laurence Marshall, was excited by the development of the microwave, or 'radar cooker', as a peaceful technology for the company to invest in after the war. He struggled to find a market for it however, and the other directors at Raytheon chose to continue pursuing military applications.

Marshall took this as his sign to retire; sell his shares, forsake civilisation, and take his family off to the lost world of the Kalahari, where they could study the more peaceful existence of the bushman.³⁰ In 2020, Raytheon, as one of the world's largest producers of guided missiles, made profits of over \$54 billion.³¹ Meanwhile, many groups in the Kalahari have

been forcibly moved off of their land, possibly to make way for diamond mining.³²

None of the Marshalls had any background to prepare them for their experiences among the !kung, now called Ju/'hoansi, and yet they were all to make their contributions. Laurence's son, John was to become a documentary filmmaker and activist, maintaining contact with the Ju/'hoansi for over 50 years.³³ Lorna Marshall, whose background was in literature, not anthropology, published careful observations of social practice and religious belief. Her writing began a new era of anthropology in the Kalahari. This was to boom in the 1960's and 70's, when liberal Western academics saw political alternatives in the egalitarian communities of the Kalahari Bushmen; in 1968 Marshall Sahlins coined the term, 'original affluent society'.^F

It was in the 1970's that a secretary of Lorna Marshall, Megan Biesebe, began focussing her research, like Bleek

and Lloyd's, into religion and folklore. The stories that she collected from Ju/'hoansi in the Northern Kalahari proved to be remarkably similar to *kukummi* collected from the Bushmanland !xam, in Cape Town, a century earlier.³⁴ In 1978, she published a paper in collaboration with Lewis-Williams about the similarities between the !xam and Ju/'hoansi rituals, especially a supposed first eland kill ritual.^G This laid the ground for theorisation about a pan-San belief complex, and comparative studies.

G

The eland, *Taurotragus oryx*, is a large antelope once common to Southern Africa. They cut imposing figures, with some adult males weighing nearly a tonne and standing 1.6m at the shoulder. Both males and females have spiralled horns and can form herds of up to 500 individuals, preferring plains and open plateaus

F

Graeber and Wengrow discuss Sahlins' essay in the *Dawn of Everything*, (135-140). They see it as being in the tradition of 'speculative prehistory' begun by Rousseau. Sahlins begun with the 'kung (or Ju/'hoansi), who he frames as being affluent in that they had plenty of the things they found to be important. Their lifestyle and social structure allowed for plenty of free time in which to do what they wanted. He speculated that our ancient ancestors lived similar lifestyles to the 'kung, and that like the 'kung, our ancestors made a conscious choice not to partake in agriculture. This choice would mean that the adoption of agriculture was also a decision. This is a departure from Rousseau's myth, where the fall is a blind mistake, for Sahlins, humans partook of the fruit with foreknowledge (we've still paid a price though, in the form of ever decreasing amounts of free-time). Graeber and Wengrow point out that while much of Sahlins' essay holds true, the assumption that the 'kung are representative of our ancient ancestors doesn't. There are a multitude of ways to structure a hunter-gathering society, so no 'original' one exists. See also, Barnard, *Anthropology and the Bushman*, 13.

THIRD CORNER. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The rupture with an art-for-art's-sake understanding of rock art, and the adoption of a more symbolic approach was to come, surprisingly, from the application of statistics. In the 1960's Patricia Vinnicombe began methodically recording paintings in the Drakensberg, with a list of twenty characteristics for each image. One of the major outcomes was the realisation that the proportion to which certain animals, particularly eland, were depicted reflected neither the faunal population of the Drakensberg nor the cooking pots of the Bushmen.

The numbers evinced that eland were being chosen for representation for a particular reason. Vinnicombe outlined her research in her 1976 book *People of the Eland*,³⁵ in which she also took the crucial step of drawing parallels with the accounts from the Bleek and Lloyd

archive. It was becoming clear that not only could the old art-for-art's-sake rationale for painting be discarded, but that it was tinged with the racist assumptions that demeaned the image-makers and the complexity of their culture. Inspired by Vinnicombe's work, Lewis-Williams mapped out his own area of the Southern Drakensberg in which to begin painstakingly surveying, copying and quantifying.³⁶

THE KEY TO AN ACT OF SPATIOTEMPORAL TRIANGULATION

In *Believing and Seeing*, Lewis Williams drew on all three of these sources. One crucial link he still needed to make in order to apply ethnography from elsewhere to the paintings he had quantified, was to extend the proposed pan-San belief complex some 700km east. While similarities had already been established

between contemporaneous Northern San like the Ju/'hoansi and the historical !xam of the Bleek and Lloyd archive (neither of whom were painters), he now sought to draw comparisons between those !xam and the Southern San painters of the Drakensberg.

(See figures 11 and 12)

Here an 1873 account of conversations between a white magistrate, Joseph Orpen, and a Maloti bushman called Qing, were to provide the key. When a rebellion broke out in his district, the newly appointed Orpen had been sent high up into the Malotis to negotiate. He chose Qing as a guide through the rugged terrain. Qing also showed Orpen some rock art sites that he knew, and Orpen, helped by Sotho interpreters, was able to ask him questions about the paintings. Orpen made a facsimile copy of one of the paintings and sent them to Cape Town to be pub-

lished in *The Cape Monthly Magazine*.³⁷

The editor of the magazine sent a copy of the copy to Wilhelm Bleek for comment. At the time Dialkwain was the !xam teacher living with the Bleeks, and Wilhelm was able to ask him for his interpretation of the images. It was important for Lewis-Williams that Dialkwain was making his comments without having heard Qing's, this meant that Williams had separate interpretations of the same image, from two Bushmen men, one !xam and the other Maloti.

And it seemed that both men were in agreement that the image in question,³⁸ which appears to show a group of men leading an unidentified rhinoceros-like animal by the nose, was about water. Dialkwain saw the image as a scene depicting a rain-making ritual, where a rain-animal had been captured and was being led to a place where rain was desired. Qing's more cryptic remark was that all of the figures were

underwater, and that the creature itself was a snake (possibly a mis-translation). Both men claimed that the creature was being charmed by what Williams identifies with a Siberian word, shaman.

(See figures 13 and 14)

28 José M. de Prada-Samper, 'LANDSCAPE AS MEMORIAL: BUILDING ON THE LEGACY OF LOUIS ANTHING', Resistance in the Northern Cape in the nineteenth century: history and commemoration. Proceedings of a mini-conference held at the McGregor Museum, Kimberley 14-16 September 2011, (Kimberley: McGregor Museum, 2012) 89-101.

29 Bank Bushmen in a Victorian World, 218-223

30 Barnard, *Anthropology and the Bushman*, 53.

31 Julia Blackburn, *Dreaming the Karoo- A People Called the /Xam* (London: Random House, 2022), 66.

32 Survival International, *Kalahari Bushmen thrown off their land as diamond companies move in*, <https://www.survivalinternational.org>, published August, 2003 (accessed Feb 17th, 2023)

33 Matthew Durrington, 'John Marshall's Kalahari Family', *Journal for Visual*

Anthropology vol. 106 (Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 2004) 589-594

34 Barnard, *Anthropology and the Bushman*, 84

35 Patricia Vinnicombe, *People of the Eland: Rock Paintings of the Drakensberg Bushmen as a Reflection of Their Life and Thought* (Durban: University of Natal Press, 1976)

36 David Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing: an interpretation of symbolic meanings in southern San rock paintings* (Durban: University of Natal, Department of African Studies, 1977), 17

37 Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing*, 83

38 *Ibid.* 90

LEWIS-WILLIAMS AND SHAMANISM

The gist of the complex work that Lewis-Williams undertook was to claim that the images were painted by shaman. These were ritual healers who would enter a trance through dancing in order to interact with elements in a spiritual realm. This approach for the first time provided an explanation for elements in the paintings that had up until that point been almost ignored.

For instance, a number of paintings show figures dancing or in procession, bleeding from the nose. Contemporary healers in the Kalahari have been known to bleed from the nose during trance.³⁹ This blood is considered to have a special potency, and might be smeared over participants in the ceremony. Similarly !xam accounts talk about a medicine man 'snoring', sniffing the sickness out of a person

and expelling it in a nasal haemorrhage as 'arrows of sickness'.⁴⁰ Interestingly it is not just people that bleed from the nose in paintings, but occasionally eland.

Lewis-Williams goes on to draw parallels between a series of important ceremonies centred around the eland, known to be performed in the Kalahari, which might have equivalents in both !xam accounts and in the Drakensberg paintings. To analyse the paintings he uses highly detailed tracings, stylised into black and white. This assists him in reading the images semiotically as symbols. The religious nature of these symbols leads Geoffrey Blundell to call this the *hermeneutic approach*.⁴¹

39 Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing*, 213

40 *Ibid* 210

41 Geoffrey Blundell, *NGABAYO'S NOMANSLAND San Rock Art and the Somatic Past* (Stockholm: Elanders Gotab, 2003), 54

LINES AND DOTS AND NEUROPSYCHOLOGY

The hermeneutic approach was quickly bolstered by the addition of the *neuropsychological model*.⁴² Lewis Williams and Thomas Dowson were to draw on a body of research about altered states of consciousness to explain, amongst other things, the strange phenomena of apparently abstract geometric patterns in rock paintings.

Their model breaks down altered consciousness into three phases. One in which 'entopic' (from within the eye) patterns begin to appear in vision. A second phase in which these forms are interpreted according to cultural norms, and a third phase (*the iconic*) in which more complex aural and somatic hallucinations could occur. This would be the phase in which a shaman or !gi:xa might for instance draw on the magical potency of an ani-

mal and transform into it (a hybrid being called a therianthrope in the literature).⁴³

This research was based on supposedly universal experiences available to the human mind, and has since been adopted by rock-art researchers (seeing geometric patterns around the world) to suggest shamanistic traditions in places like Europe, where there is no ethnographic tradition with which to draw parallels. Lewis-Williams has himself gone on to do research in both Lascaux and California.⁴⁴

42
Blundell, *NGABAYO'S NOMANSLAND*, 58.

43
Thomas Dawson, David Lewis-Williams, 'The Signs of All Times Entopic Phenomena in Upper Palaeolithic ART' (Chicago: *Current Anthropology*, Volume 29, 200-238, April 1988).

44
David Lewis-Williams, *Upper Palaeolithic Cave Art: French and South African Collaboration* Cambridge: (Cambridge archaeological Journal 6, 137-139, 1996).

CRITICS AND EMPIRICISTS

Lewis-Williams was to receive challenges from many corners. There were after all some obvious limitations to his hermeneutic approach. In structuring such a broad argument he had to paint in broad strokes that ignore both regional and temporal changes, creating an ahistorical pan-San tradition, a useful tool that hides all kinds of complexities. Anne Solomon has pointed out that the elaborate world of Bushman mythologies isn't even addressed by the approach.⁴⁵

A weaker but interesting criticism was to come from Alex Wilcox,⁴⁶ an older archaeologist and proponent of an art-for-art's-sake position. Wilcox challenges Williams on empirical grounds. Williams, working from a structuralist position, had formulated a hypothesis before collecting his data. Wilcox saw

this as un-empirical selection bias, believing that a valid hypothesis could only emerge out of data collected free from the influence of theory. Williams responded that it was simply impossible to operate free of assumptions or theories.

Wilcox also called upon Ockham's razor,⁴⁷ suggesting that *l'art pour l'art* was a simpler and therefore favourable theory to the complex layers of motivation and symbolism in the hermeneutic approach. Williams retorts that there is nothing simple in Wilcox's assumption, unsupported by ethnographic evidence. Why would Bushmen painters be motivated by the same credo as twentieth-century modernists?

H

Also known as the principle of parsimony, this is the philosophical principle that when evaluating competing theories, the explanation that posit fewer entities (is simpler for having fewer parts) is preferable.

45

Anne Solomon, 'ROOTS AND REVOLUTIONS: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF EARLY AND RESEARCH', *Afrique & Histoire*, vol 6, 77-110 (Paris: Editions Verdier, 2006), 93-96

46

David Lewis-Williams, 'The Empiricist Impasse in Southern African Rock Art Studies', *the South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol. 39, (Cape Town: South African Archaeological Society, 1984), 58-66

WHY ROCK ART RESEARCH? III

The respected modernist painter, Walter Battiss, is sharing a sandwich with a stonemason in a patch of sun by a river. The river is running through a tight canyon, on the inside curve of which is an overhang. The contents of this shelter have got them debating the meaning of art, and Battiss is spiritedly insisting that it is best appreciated when there is none.⁴⁷

Some caves are massed with handprints and others with eland. Here there are some fifty of the massive antelope, masterfully painted in shaded polychrome. While some flaunt the loveliness of their form with a flick of the tail, or proud-footedly assert their bulk, the majority gallop as a herd from left to right. In the middle of their number is an absence. A rectangular panel of the painting has been removed with ham-

mer and chisel. The recently worked rock garish against the patinated surfaces around it. The absence is labelled with careful letters in blueish paint:

PAINTING REMOVED
AFRICANA MUSEUM
JOHANNESBURG
FULL PARTICULARS FROM HISTORICAL
MONUMENTS
W.B. 1941

(See figure 15)

Content with their morning's work, the respected modernist painter and the stonemason dust off the crumbs and gather up their strength to haul their prize out of the canyon to begin its long journey to Johannesburg. They carry it between them, tucked under the crooks of their elbows.⁴⁸

47

Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing*, 5

48

Leila Henry, 'A HISTORY OF REMOVING ROCK ART IN SOUTH AFRICA', *the South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol. 62, (Cape Town: South African Archaeological Society, 2007), 44-48

THE PROBLEM WITH ORIGINS

Archaeology can be preoccupied with origins. Southern African archaeology especially has become associated with the origins of modern human behaviour dating back 120 000 years, but this was not always the case. In a fascinating paper,⁴⁹ Michael Chazan explores some of the limitations of origins through the history of a group of artifacts called the Wonderwerk slabs.

These stones were excavated from the back of a cave on the outskirts of the Kalahari in 1981. They are incised with grid-like geometric lines, and were radiocarbon dated back to around 10 000 years ago. At the time of their discovery they were announced to be the origins of art in Southern Africa. The origins of art globally were thought to be in Europe.

The discovery of the Blombos

stone, and associated artifacts along the Southern Cape coast dramatically overturned these findings. Michael Chazan suddenly found himself able to interact with the Wonderwerk slabs on their own terms, not as objects representing an origin. A sense of certainty has been lost about the slabs, and their abstraction renders them quite ambiguous, but they are once again open to interpretation.

In recent years, a series of discoveries dating back up to 500 000 years—of collections of ironstone, specularite and quartz crystal in Kalahari sites, including Wonderwerk—is threatening the status of the Blombos artifacts. These materials were chosen for unique material qualities and transported from where they naturally occur to locations like the back of a dark cave. This too could be construed as evidence of non-utilitarian, ritualistic practices.

(See figures 16 and 17)

Chazan encourages researchers to begin to see behaviours as occurring on a continuum over time, and not to search for points that separate then from now. This would allow for more uncertainty in how the past is understood, for 'continuity and for a sense of interplay between past and present'.⁵⁰

49

Michael Chazan, 'Reframing the Wonderwerk slabs and the origins of art in Africa', from *The pasts and presence of art in South Africa: Technologies, ontologies and agents* edited by Chris Wingfield, John Giblin and Rachel King (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2020), 19–30.

50

(ibid., 27)

THE ROAD FROM VANWYKSVLEI TO VARSKANS

2pm: It's day three on the road. This morning we climbed the Strandberg and saw beautiful engravings of elephants. I did my performance for the landscape and then I read my mom the song about the lizard that Jhan+kass'o's mom sang to him after she killed his pet rabbit. We don't play with meat she said to him. We're thankful for the aircon in our borrowed Landover.

4pm: We haven't had cell-signal in two days, and so when Vanwyksvlei appears on the horizon, we turn our phones on in anticipation of a flood of messages. As soon as they roll in, we roll to a halt and begin texting. Suddenly hungry faces appear all around the car. We drive on a bit, but wherever we go new faces appear. Some of them are crying.

6pm. We left Vanwyksvlei as far behind us as we could. It is 150km to Brandvlei, and about 30 more to the farm we will sleep at. On the horizon I can see the SKA shimmering white in the heat, all the dishes turned out to the universe.

8pm. It is dark and we haven't made it to the farm yet. I'm not worried though, I've spent so long clicking through this area on Google Earth. I know that after the body of water on the left, there will be a mountain on the right, and the next farm gate we see will be the one. As predicted, the stars blink off something smooth to our left and outline the silhouette of a mountain to our right. We must be close.

(See figures 18 to 21)

WHOSE ORIGINS?⁵¹

Just south of the Kalahari, the area that the !xam teachers of Bleek and Lloyd called theirs, !xam-ka !au, has by some strange historical coincidence been superseded by a scientific project. It has come to coincide almost exactly with a newly declared *Karoo core radio astronomy advantage area*, a radio dead zone in a continuous spectrum from 500 MHz to 10.0 GHz. The reason is that a radio station, the SKA (square kilometer array) is under construction. This multi-billion-dollar international project is tasked with detecting the origins of the universe.

This location was chosen due to its low population density, and yet there very definitely is a population. Recent work by folklorists and linguists has shown that the people living on the farms and in the townships of the Northern Cape carry a much adapted, but nevertheless living

version of the culture and language of the !xam. And yet local communities were not consulted and won't benefit in any meaningful way from the investments.

51

David Morris, John Pakington and Jose De Prada-Samper, 'Elusive Identities: Karoo !xam Descendants and the Square Kilometre Array', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 45, (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2019) 729-747.

WHY ROCK ART RESEARCH? IV

Someone is leafing through a book. They are reading a lot of these. This one was commissioned by Dorothea Bleek and published in 1940.⁵² It contains reproductions of rock art copied by the sisters Mollie and Joyce van der Riet, alongside some modest descriptions. Jill Weintraub has written about this book in the context of knowledge production, from the human experience of this place called 'the field', to the handsomely bound volume that seems to bear little relation to this experience.⁵³

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, many of the Van der Riet sisters' copies are still remarkably moving. One double-page spread in particular jumps out at our reader:⁵⁴ an intricate crisscrossing of delicate limbs makes a chain as a troupe

of small antelope appear to fall, hesitantly at first, and then one after the other, down and down and down, before nimbly regaining their feet and then disappearing in an effaced flake. A human figure echoes their fall and apparently swings from a thread he grasps above his head, which is surrounded by buzzing dots. Another small humanoid figure with the head of an antelope is seated below the group, gazing up at them in amazement.

I think this scene would make for a very beautiful tattoo. I can see it flowing down the side of my body, from just below my right armpit, till it wraps around my thigh. I think I would feel more like myself if I had it. For a while I entertained the idea of getting it under my skin, maybe even as a performance. Something about the idea of getting this tattoo as a public gesture made me deeply uncom

fortable. As an artist, or perhaps just by instinct, I have an inclination to test the limits of that uncomfortable feeling. In some ways this project had its beginnings in the uncomfortable feeling I had looking at the hole Walter Battis left in a cave wall. I love Battiss' paintings dearly, and I think he genuinely loved the scene of eland that he hacked out of that overhang.

52 Dorothea Bleek, Joyce and Mollie Van Der Riet. *More Rock-Paintings in South Africa: From the Coastal Belt Between Albany and Piquetberg* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1940)

53 Jill Weintraub, Sisters at the Rockface - 'the Van der Riet Twins and Dorothea Bleek's Rock Art Research and Publishing, 1932-1940', *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 68 (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, Dec 2009) 402-428.

54 Bleek and Van Der Riet, *More Rock-Paintings in South Africa*, plates 18 and 19.

ART?

In South Africa there is a longstanding mistrust on the part of traditional processual archaeology—concerned with excavatable and datable deposits, of interpretative archaeology—concerned with images. As we've seen, Lewis-Williams made large advances in the field of interpretation, borrowing tools from anthropology and semiotics. But while he was successful in providing a framework behind the religious meaning of rock art, he hasn't satisfactorily explained why it was made. It has been rather unconvincingly suggested that the images were made as illustrations of experiences in trance.

A more satisfactory explanation has yet to emerge, but Justine Wintjes and Laura de Harde have suggested that the thinking of Alfred Gell might be useful.⁵⁵ Unlike the hermeneutic approach, Gell disregards

symbols and semiotics for an interpretation of art that is inherently social, focusing instead on agency, intention, causation, result, and transformation.⁵⁶

Gell suggests that anthropologists and archaeologists have been so successful in interpreting religion, in large part because they are not religious.⁵⁷ They don't need to share the beliefs of another culture in order to understand them. This kind of atheism doesn't exist in Westerners looking at art objects from other cultures. We come to art loaded with a lot of theoretical baggage that says we should value objects that appear to be art. There is an added fear that in trying to understand artifacts from other cultures as art, we will be applying those Western values in places they don't belong, and on top of that we aren't entirely sure what art is anyway.

Following from Gell we might learn to look at art, wherever it is from, as philistines. To de-mystify and de-artify objects and interpret them on an

immediate, material and functional level. One way Gell reads art as functioning, is through technical processes that have the effect of enchanting us, *casting a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form.*⁵⁸

In Western art we might be familiar with enchanting technologies in the form of framing devices like the white cube. Wintjes and Harde suggest that in the case of rock art there is increasing evidence that the process of making the paint might itself have been imbued with magical potency. It is clear that the images are not simply illustrations or representations, but that they would have been sites of enchantment, of transformation that would have played an active social function in changing the world in which the image-makers lived.

55

Laura de Harde and Justine Wintjes, 'To paint, to see, to copy: rock art as a site of enchantment', from *The pasts and presence of art in South*

Africa: Technologies, ontologies and agents edited by Chris Wingfield, John Giblin and Rachel King (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2020), 63-78

56

Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6.

57

Alfred Gell, Eric Hirsch, chapter: 'The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology', from *the Art of Anthropology* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 1999) 40-68

58

Ibid. 44

THE FORCE THAT ACTS UPON EVERYTHING, MAKING IT CHANGE

In Cape Town this January I had the privilege of visiting the centre where part of the Bleek and Lloyd archive—the dictionary cards—are now being processed for digitalization. The efforts redoubled after a fire burnt down the library where the manuscripts were being stored (most of the archive was saved by a properly functioning fire-door). While they might be thankful now, professor Pippa Skotnes explained to me that when she wanted to begin the process of digitalization, the largest obstacle in her way was the librarians.

(See figures 9 and 22)

They eventually acquiesced on the con

dition that she only produce six copies of the archive on DVD. Their reasoning being that people would stop using the library if the material were freely available online. Of course, the opposite has happened. Library requests grew exponentially, not for visitors wishing to consult the material (which is now accessible at the click of a mouse) but to be in the presence of an original.

My search for originals, took me on an ambitious road trip to visit |xam-ka !au for myself, and see places and engravings there which I had grown up with images of. The sites I wanted to visit are on undisclosed locations on private land, and it took careful negotiation with landowners and archeologists to get permissions. There was one site, Springbokoog, for which I couldn't get permission. Pippa Skotnes described it to me as the most beautiful of places.

There is an engraving there of an elephant with a young calf under her

trunk. She is surrounded by a tight cluster of thirty human figures, their arms raised and clutching bundles of objects that have been described as fly-whisks, spears, ostrich feathers and bullrushes. The image is covered in scratches. I was excited to discover that while I couldn't visit this site, a reproduction had been commissioned by the British museum in 2010 to decorate an exhibition of Karoo plants in collaboration with Kew Gardens.⁵⁹

My trip to London turned out to be a dead end. The reproduction had been lost or destroyed after the exhibition. The story of how the reproduction was made was, however, an interesting one. A Kenyan expert on African rock art was consulted by the museum to inform the artist employed to make the engravings. He had in turn consulted South African archeologists who had furnished him with a selection of high-res images to work with. In the case of the Springbokoog elephant they had given specific advice

to leave out the scratches. Explaining that the scratches had likely been a later attempt at censorship on the part of a colonial-era farmers' conservative wife, offended by the penises in the image⁶⁰ (all but one of the figures is visibly male).

Andrew Patterson has subsequently written a paper⁶¹ in which he suggests, among other things, that the scratches are an intentional part of the composition. He points out that two short sets of scratches appear to highlight the locations of the elephants breasts and birth-canal, hardly the act of a censor. The larger diagonal scratches he interprets as *rain marks*. The very location on a high ridge, and the material the image is etched into, a high-iron dolerite that acts as an earthing point for lightning, drive home this connotation with rain. The objects which are usually interpreted in a shamanistic idiom as flywhisks, Patterson reads as bullrushes (there is a *vlei*¹ nearby, called Olifantsvlei where these

would have grown and where the water-loving animals would once have visited when they sensed rain, and where an elephant might have gone to give birth).

Patterson uses these elements to conclude that the image is a composition that combines ideas of rebirth and sexuality with the rain cycle, marking these concepts into the landscape to make a place with spiritual power. For corroboration he draws on Ju 'ho-ansi ethnography and their concept of *n!o'an-ka!`ae*, the 'force constantly acting on everything to make it change', and which is considered to be the secret of both creation and procreation.⁶² Those scratches might have been activating the latent potency in the imagery, and the rock. What was once seen as vandalism, might in fact be an act of enchantment.

Springbokooog is close to the town of Vanwyksvlei and both are close, by the standards of the scale of this area, to the site of the SKA. This is

a place being used for a wildly different understanding of landscape, one where landscape is merely convenient for its sparse population, allowing attention to be directed out towards deep time in the far distant cosmos.

I would have liked to visit this place too, but even if I had been able to get permission, I would have had to leave my cell phone and camera behind. Electronic devices risk interfering with their data collection. There is strong criticism that laws passed to protect this data collection prevent the economic development of towns like Vanwyksvlei that lie in its radius, and trap already disenfranchised people in cycles of poverty. This begs the question of what should be prioritised—the search for origins, or human lives? People living within the 'core radio astronomy advantage area', might begin to experience the past brought into the present not as a representation, but as a palpable manifestation

of ongoing colonial power relations.

I find myself thinking once more of Walter Battis removing a panel from a rock art site. His characterful copies not fulfilling a desire to possess something he imbued with the aura of the original. This is a powerful aura but one which, as Michael Chazan experienced at the back of Wonderwerk cave, is seldom as it seems. In Chazan's call for *continuity* and *interplay* I sense something of that Ju |'hoansi concept of n!o`an-ka|`ae. Allowing that force to guide us, we might see that where the uncertain here and now is at stake, origins should be left to lie.

But if origins are to be sought (and they will always be), let's approach them stripped of the authority that a certain concept of authenticity gives them, and instead approach them as the challenging, sometimes enchanted, and ever changeable things that they are. Liberated from this authority and opened to n!o`an-ka|`ae, the search for origins

J

Spoken by |Kabbo,
the oldest of Lloyd's
Xam teachers. He was
while longing to leave
Cape Town to return
home, where he could
once more partake in the
collecting, weaving and
sharing of new stories.

Words originally published
in *Specimens of Bushman
Folklore* (1911, 299-303),
but I encountered it
through a text by Luan
Staphorst, 'Owning the
Body, Embodying the
Owner: Complexity and
Discourses of Rights,
Citizenship and Heritage
of Southern African
Bushmen', *CRITICAL
ARTS* Vol. 33 (Abingdon-
on-Thames: Routledge,
UNISA Press, 2019) 116

could instead become a project of story-
telling. Storytelling available to anyone
that would be a storyteller. Storytelling
through which we can decide what kind
of origins we want for ourselves. And
consequently, what kind of present?

I do merely listen, watching for
a story, which I want to hear;
while I sit waiting for it; that it
may float into my ear... that I
may listening turn backwards
(with my ears) to my feet's
heels, on which I went; while I
feel that a story is the wind. J

59

The Voice of America, *British Museum Brings a Bit of South Africa to Central London*, YouTube, 9 August 2010, News Report. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V19s4zbE_ZY, accessed 17 February 2023.

60

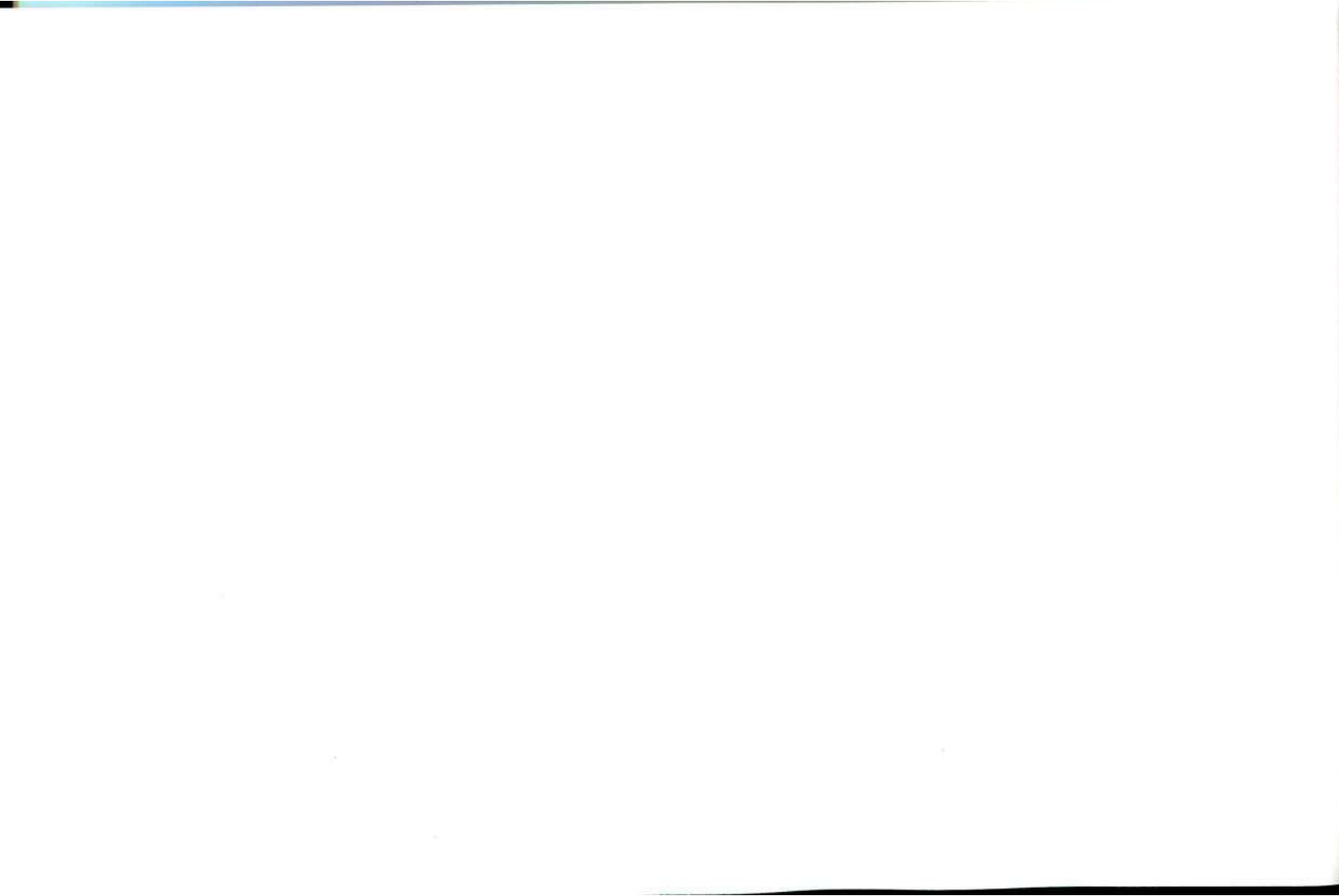
Anecdote from email correspondence with Andrew Patterson in Nov 2022, and conversations with the artist Taslim Martin in that same month.

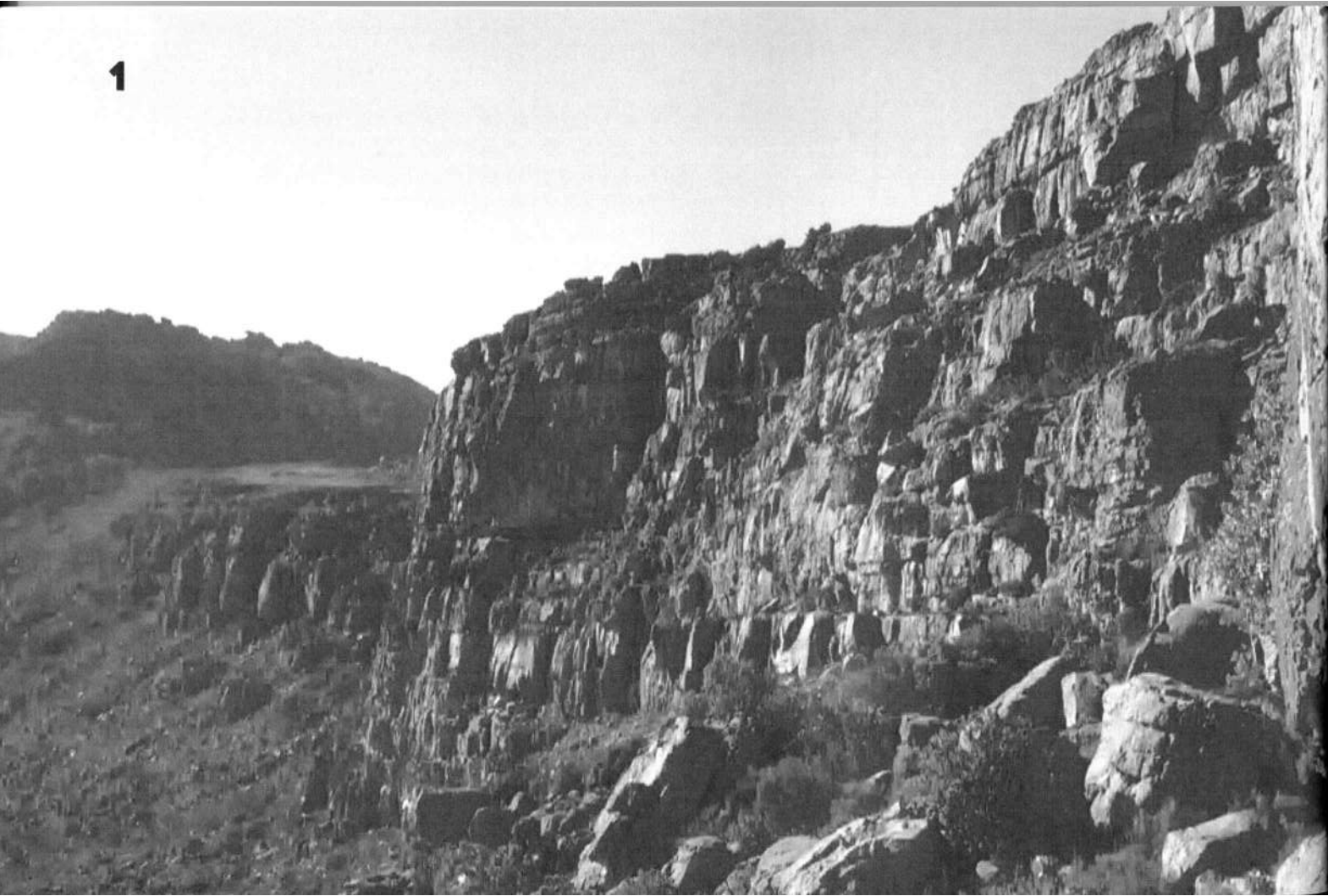
61

Andrew Patterson, THE SPRINGBOKOOG ELEPHANT ENGRAVING Celebrating the birth of a new rain animal, in the Digging Stick, vol. 38 (Cape Town: the South African Archaeological Society, 2021) 5-9.

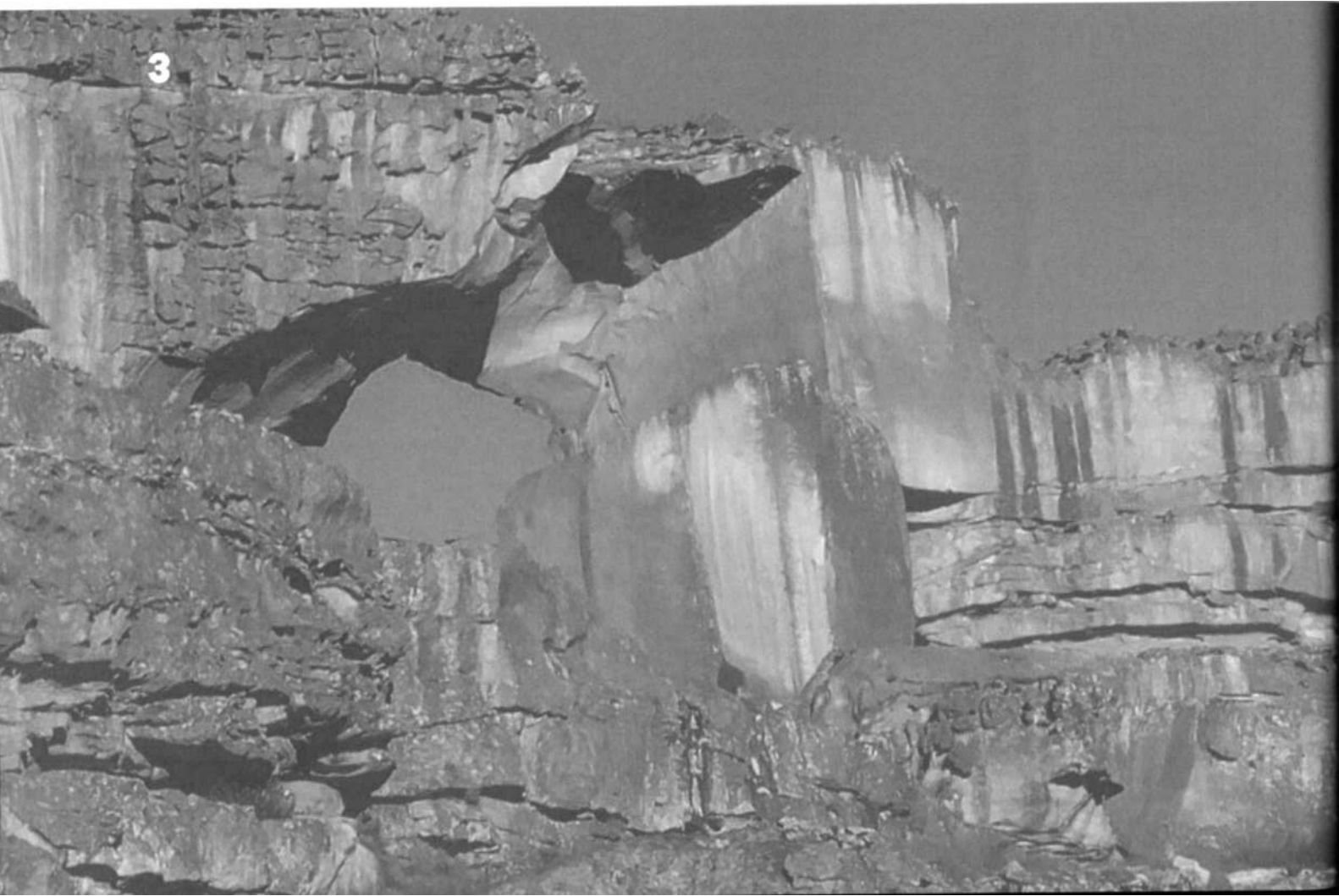
62

Ibid. Patterson references Keeny and Keeny 2015.







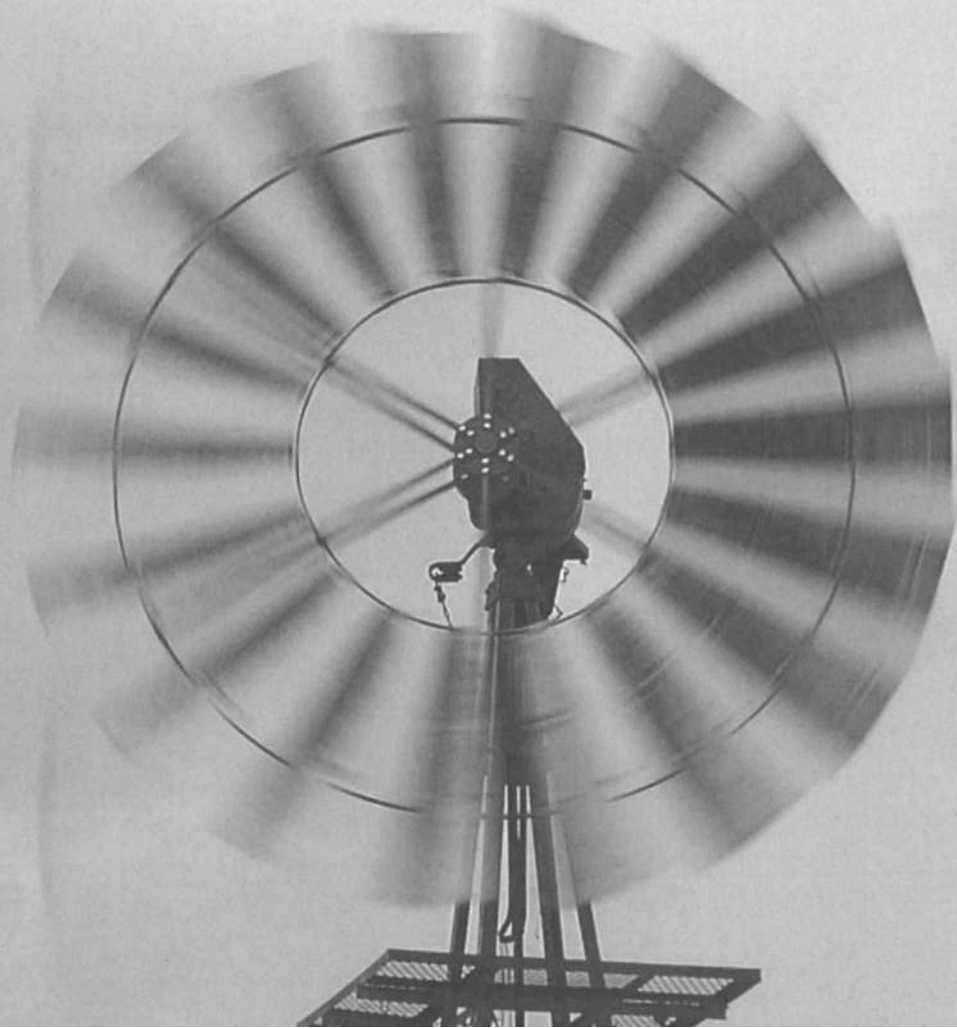
























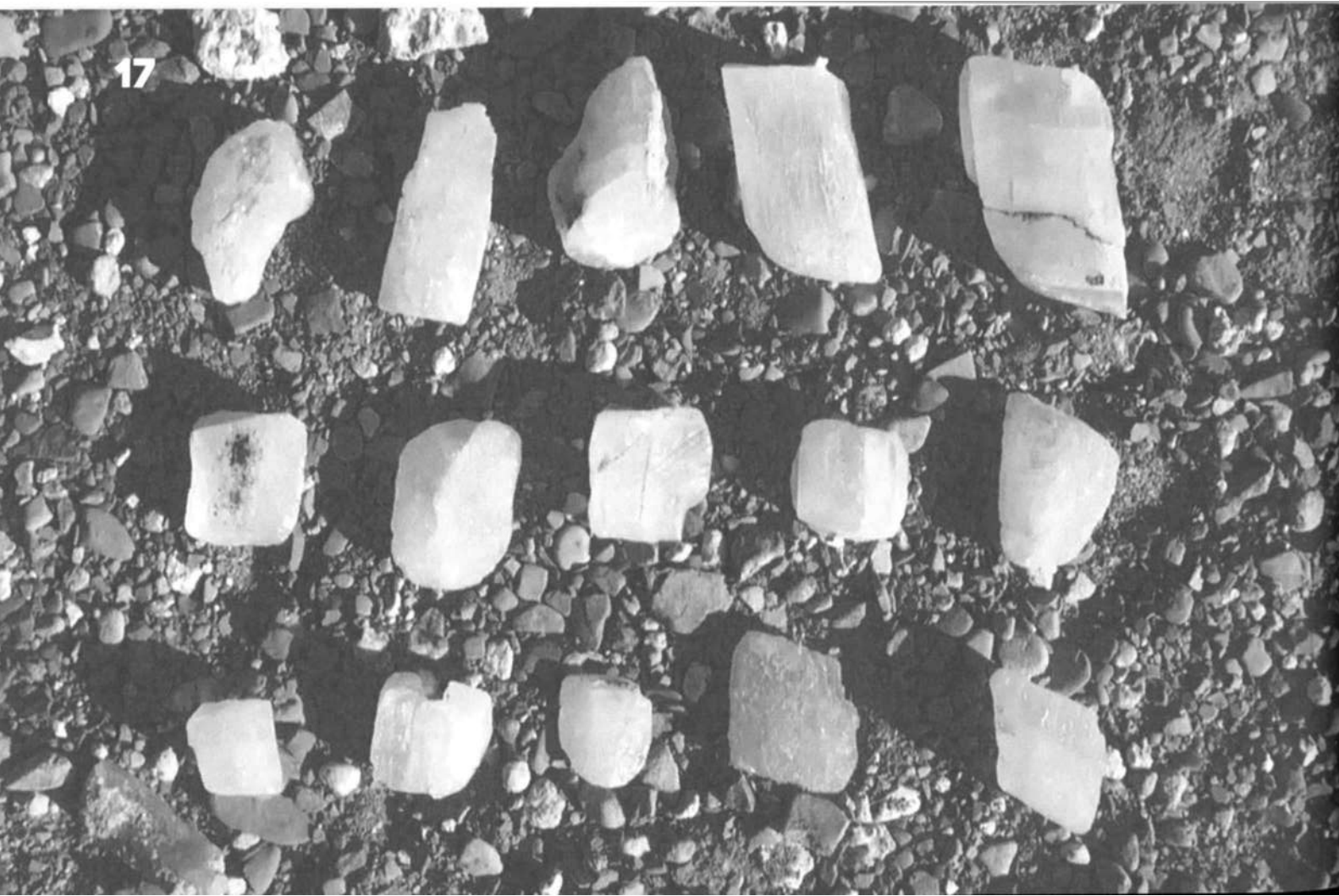
PAINTING REMOVED
MEXICANA MUSEUM
JOHANNESBURG

FOR PARTICULAR REASON HISTORICAL
MONUMENTS

REMOVED

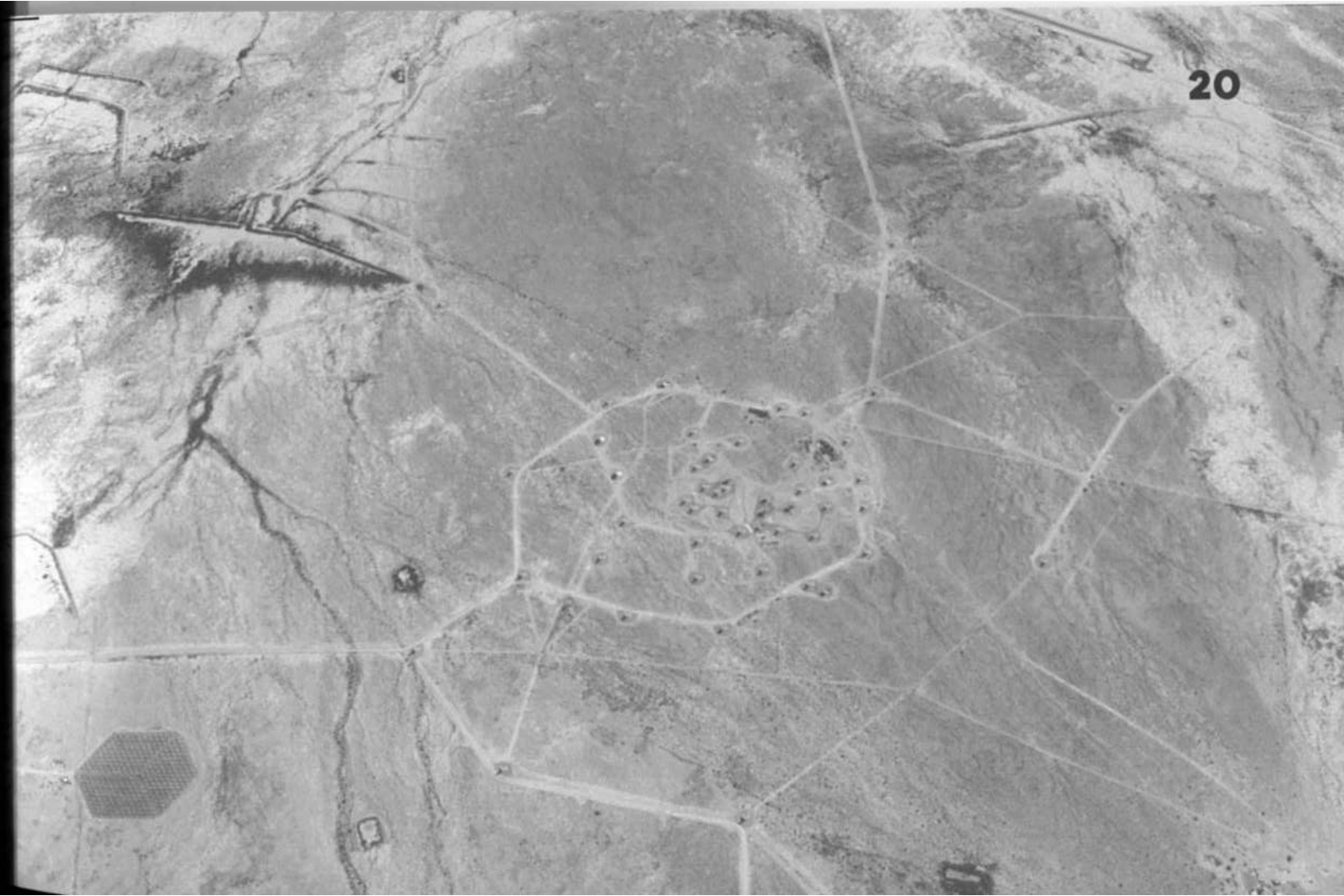
ANTIQUE













Ap. 24. The sun is down, #^Toⁱnⁱ yān
 it comes out of hang Tne
 the mountain, it T^heⁱaⁱn, h
 stands above in the #^Thⁱaⁱn T^h
 heaven, the sun #^Toⁱnⁱ yān T
 goes ^(look) in the heaven. #^Taⁱ hⁱaⁱ

The moon comes T^haⁱn T^haⁱn
 out of the mountain, T^hiⁿ s^ai
 it goes ("look off") in Tne #^Thⁱaⁱn
 the heaven,

The star comes out T^hu^atⁱaⁱn
 of the mountain, s^ai T^heⁱaⁱn
 they it goes ^{mount} above #^Thⁱaⁱn T^h
 9

INDEX OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 1. The Eastern face of the Geelberg, and example of how erosion of quarzitic sandstone forms rugged cliffs in the Cederberg and adjacent ranges in the Cape Fold Belt. Dec 2022

Figure 2. Small urn-shaped bells of flower in the family Ericaceae. There are 627 species of Erica alone in the immensely biodiverse Cape Floristic Region. Dec 2021

Figure 3. The peaks of Cederberg mountains are often weathered into surprising shapes. Here see the Sandfontein Arch. Dec 2021

Figure 4. A place called Bosluis, where a massacre was perpetrated in the 1850's, a witness described it as , "a great salt pan, where the dead were seen like skins hovering over the crusty expanse." Dec 2022

Figure 5. The landscape in Grass-Bushman country, the part of |xam-ka lau which Dia!kwain called home. This photograph was taken not far from Kans, a place which Dia!kwain's father, Xaa-ttin, marked with engravings. Dec 2022

Figure 6. A remaining piece of the Victorian breakwater in the Cape Town Harbor, much of the stone for which would have been quarried by |xam prisoners. Dec 2022

Figure 7. Sheep farming is still the main economic activity in much of the Northern Cape, aided by the hardy Dorper breed. Dec 2022

Figure 8. The invention of wind-pumps gave access to borehole water, circumventing somewhat the unpredictable rainfall and allowing the exploitation of Bushmanland and the Karoo by pastoralists. They have become an iconic sight in these dry places.

Figure 9. Professor Pippa Skotnes handling dictionary cards that form part of the archive, here in Wilhelm's distinctive handwriting. Jan 2023

Figure 10. An old eland bull, notice the prominent dewlap, the flap under his neck. Jan 2023

Figure 11. The remarkable flatness of |xam-ka !au, seen here from a living site in Flat-Bushman country, where one of Bleek and Lloyd's teachers, ||Kabbo, grew up in the 1820's. Dec 2022

Figure 12. An example of the lush and mountainous terrain that forms the Drakensberg, an escarpment with peaks rising over 3000m. Visible here is the band of sandstone in which caves and cave paintings are found, and the cap of basalt that forms the upper reaches. Here from an area in the Southern Drakensberg which Lewis-Williams surveyed for his doctoral thesis. Jan 2022

Figure 13. the |xam spoke of the rain as a creature with legs, an image that comes to

life when you see clouds appear to walk across the landscape. Different types of rain could be seen as male or female. Dec 2022

Figure 14. Rain in the Drakensberg. Jan 2023

Figure 15. The label on the exposed surface where a panel of painting has been removed. Jan 2022

Figure 16. A copy of the Blombos stone on display in Iziko, the South African national museum. Dec 2022

Figure 17. A collection of crystals I gathered in !xam-ka !au, similar to those being excavated from sites in the Kalahari and described as 'semi-translucent white rhombohedrons with regular, well-formed facets that range in maximum length from 0.8 to 3.2 cm'. Dec 2022

Figure 18. An informal settlement adjoining Vanwyksvlei. In season, sheep farmers source their labour from people living in townships like this one. Dec 2022

Figure 19. The large dish antennas of the Meerkat radio telescope, which is in the process of being upgraded into the SKA. The land is managed by SANParks as a nature reserve. Dec 2022

Figure 20. The radio installation as seen on Google Earth. Feb 2023

Figure 21. Human habitation, a sheep farmers' homestead, as seen on Google Earth.
Feb 2023

Figure 22. A page from the notebooks, ||kabbo's comments titled Sun, Moon and stars,
transcribed by Lucy Lloyd. Archive available online at <http://lloydbleekcollection.cs.uct.ac.za/>
Feb 2023

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bank, Andrew. *Bushmen in a Victorian World, The remarkable story of the Bleek-Lloyd Collection of Bushman folklore*. Cape Town: Double Story Books, 2006.

Barnard, Alan. *Anthropology and the Bushman*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007.

Blackburn, Julia. *Dreaming the Karoo- A People Called the /Xam*. London: Random House, 2022.

Bleek, Dorothea. Van Der Riet, Joyce and Mollie. *More Rock-Paintings in South Africa: From the Coastal Belt Between Albany and Piquetberg*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1940.

Blundell, Geoffrey. *NQABAYO'S NOMANSLAND San Rock Art and the Somatic Past*. Stockholm: Elanders Gotab, 2003.

Chapman, Michael. 'Bushman Letters/Bushman Literature Usable and Unusable Past'. *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, 33:2. Published online: Taylor & Francis Group, 2021.

Chazan, Michael. 'Reframing the Wonderwerk slabs and the origins of art in Africa, from The pasts and presence of art in South Africa': *Technologies, ontologies*

and agents edited by Wingfield, Chris. Giblin, John. and King, Rachel. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2020.

Dawson, Lewis-Williams. 'The Signs of All Times Entoptic Phenomena in Upper Palaeolithic Art'. Chicago: *Current Anthropology*, Volume 29, 200-238, April 1988.

Durrington, Matthew. 'John Marshall's Kalahari Family'. *Journal for Visual Anthropology* vol. 106. Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 2004.

Ellis, William F. 'Ons is Boesmans: commentary on the naming of Bushmen in the Southern Kalahari'. University of the Western Cape, *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 38, 2015.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press. 1952.

Gell, Alfred. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 6.

Gell, Alfred and Hirsch, Eric. Chapter: 'The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology', from *the Art of Anthropology*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 1999.

Graeber, David and Wengrow, David. *the Dawn of Everything, a New History of Humanity*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021.

de Harde, Laura and Wintjes, Justine. 'To paint, to see, to copy: rock art as a site of enchantment', from *The pasts and presence of art in South Africa: Technologies, ontologies and agents* edited by Wingfield, Chris. Giblin, John. and King, Rachel. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2020.

Henry, Leila. 'A HISTORY OF REMOVING ROCK ART IN SOUTH AFRICA', *the South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol. 62. Cape Town: South African Archaeological Society, 2007.

Kolb, Peter. 1675-1726. *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope: Or, A Particular Account of the Several Nations of the Hottentots: Their Religion, Government, Laws, Customs, Ceremonies, and Opinions; Their Art of Wars, Professions, Language, Genius, &c., Together with A Short Account of the Dutch Settlement at the Cape*. First published 1719, trans. Guido Medley. London: W. Innys, 1731

Lewis-Williams, David. *Believing and Seeing: an interpretation of symbolic meanings in southern San rock paintings*. Durban: University of Natal, Department of African Studies, 1977.

Lewis-Williams, David. 'The Empiricist Impasse in Southern African Rock Art Studies', *the South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol. 39. Cape Town: South African Archaeological Society, 1984.

Lewis-Williams, David. Upper Palaeolithic Cave Art: French and South African Collaboration. Cambridge: *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 6, 137-139, 1996.

Manhire, Anthony. 'The Role of Hand Prints in the Rock Art of the South-Western Cape'. *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, Vol. 53 Cape Town, South African Archaeological Society, 1998.

Milton, John. 1608-1674. *Paradise Lost*. London, New York: Penguin Books, 2000.

Patterson, Andrew. 'THE SPRINGBOKOOG ELEPHANT ENGRAVING Celebrating the birth of a new rain animal', in *the Digging Stick*, vol. 38. Cape Town: the South African Archaeological Society, 2021.

Penn, Nigel. *The Northern Cape Frontier Zone 1700-c.1815*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Department of Philosophy, 1995.

de Prada-Samper, José M. 'LANDSCAPE AS MEMORIAL: BUILDING ON THE LEGACY OF LOUIS ANTHING', Resistance in the Northern Cape in the nineteenth century: history and commemoration. Proceedings of a mini-conference held at the McGregor Museum, Kimberley 14-16 September 2011, Kimberley: McGregor Museum, 2012.

Rohde Rick. 'Rich Pickings and Missed Opportunities'. *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 41 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 146-148 Skotnes, Pippa. *Miscast, Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*. Cape Town: University Press, 2000), 146-148

Solomon, Anne. 'ROOTS AND REVOLUTIONS: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF EARLY AND LATE SAN ROCK ART RESEARCH', *Afrique & Histoire*, vol 6, 77-110. Paris: Editions Verdier, 2006.

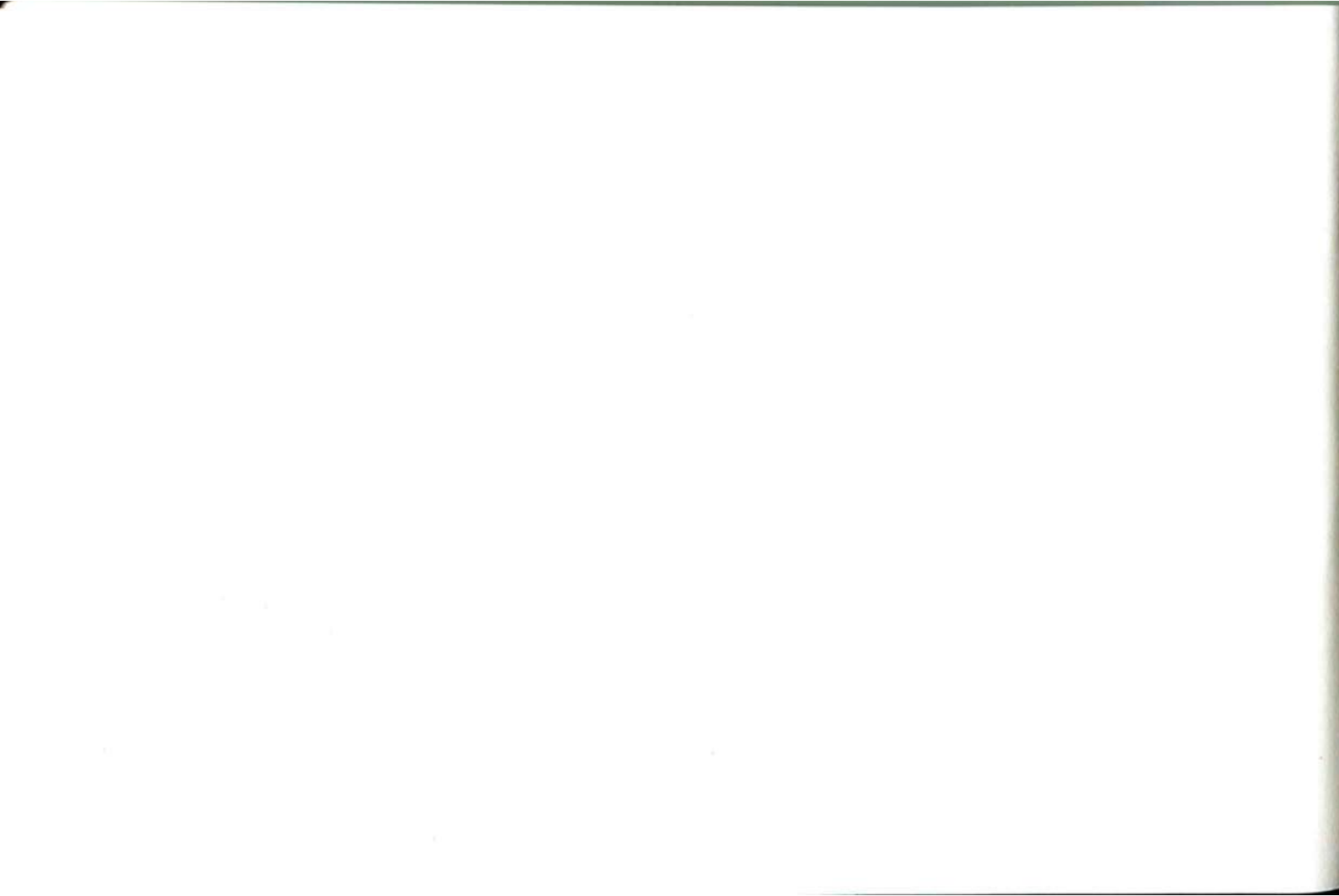
Staphorst, Luan. 'hul|hunaŋ |ne e: ʔkakən au hi |enni |emm (Europeans are those who talk with the tip of their tongue): colonialesque knowledge, attuned thinking and the bloody body of scholarship known as Bushman studies', *Southern African Humanities*, Vol. 34. Durban: KwaZulu-Natal Museum, 2021.

Staphorst, Luan. 'Owning the Body, Embodying the Owner: Complexity and Discourses of Rights, Citizenship and Heritage of Southern African Bushmen', *CRITICAL ARTS* Vol. 33. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, UNISA Press, 2019.

Vinnicombe, Patricia. *People of the Eland: Rock Paintings of the Drakensberg Bushmen as a Reflection of Their Life and Thought*. Durban: University of Natal Press, 1976.

The Voice of America. *British Museum Brings a Bit of South Africa to Central London*. YouTube, 9 August 2010, News Report. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V19s4zbE_ZY, accessed 17 February 2023.

Wynter, Sylvia. McKittrick, Katherine. *On Being Human as Praxis*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.



COLOPHON

BA Thesis

Dennis Buckland
Rietveld Fine Arts
2023, Amsterdam

Teachers: Dina Danish, Jean Bernard Koeman, Frank Mandersloot, Tao Vrhovec Sambolec

Thesis supervisor: Zachary Formwalt

Graphic Designer: Skye McKinney

