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The Bushman Susurrus

Stories of Struggle. Stories of Hope.

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Preface

October, 2020.

“What *is* white privilege, anyway?”

Todd takes a deep breath and waits, sheepishly, for at least some shade to be thrown his way. It’s a Wednesday evening, and I’ve joined a meeting the Mankind Pride male affirmation workshop. The men assemble monthly at the Center On Halsted, a kind of Boystown City Hall, and according to their website, “the purpose of the ManKind Project is to create a safer world by grooming ‘better’ men.”

I’m here at the invitation of a friend, Brian, who worries that I may become a churlish grass widower, while my husband is in South Africa—continentally distant, minding the small hotel we own. Brian lured me by revealing that the topic of discussion will revolve around how to be less racist, and given my South African background, he figured I may have some thoughts to share.

I’m an hour into the three-hour meeting, and already I’ve been made the brunt of some lighthearted banter, and I’m randomly called “buddy.” Two new guys arrive and are welcomed with yippity enthusiasm. Displays of maleness are brisk and pointed around these parts. Ultra-truncated resumes are rattled off in resonant, declamatory style lest anyone thinks anyone sounds gay.

“I’m Ken. I’m an accountant in Streeterville.”

“I’m Eric—HR.”

I feel duty-bound to share some of my knowledge around the state of whiteness on two continents with Todd. Mindful not to lower the tone, I gingerly skim over some highlights: inequality, historical imbalances, disproportional wealth distribution, extreme subjugation, segregation, and how sometimes apathy leads to extermination. I end with a little flourish on Apartheid itself, since being South African—and a member of the white tribe of Africa—gives me privileged knowledge of the inner workings of these things. I make a “hold my drink” throat-clearing noise. “Racism is there when Band-Aids mostly match peachy-pinky skin. And we have to

rethink what we mean with the word privilege.” I point out that according to the *Black Agenda Report*, racism implies power and that black people in the United States have very little institutional power. “We may have seen a black president but don’t hold your breath waiting for a Black Federal Reserve Chairperson. That is a tempered glass ceiling.”

Shaun—one of the few voices of diversity in the group tonight—says that privilege is a changeable thing. He points out that he is on this third martini and that his theory applies mostly to restaurants and the service industry. “Do you feel that you are at a disadvantage professionally?” Ken asks, to which Shaun replies that he spent most of his career as a diversity hire and that while the disadvantage of not having the kind of leg up as white colleagues, it pales into insignificance when it comes to committing crimes like driving while Black. “I can’t just grab a jeans and hoodie. White people already think I stole my own damn Audi.”

After a bathroom break, Dylan, *meneur d’hommes*, and a handsome man in his sixties with a wise countenance to boot, launches a breakaway diversion, which he calls “Deep Diving.” He asks us to “deep-dive” into our bias and complete the line: *Shedding my bias, if I came from a place of strength, rather than worry, I would...* Adrián, subdued until now, raises his hand. “I would ask for a raise. I’m a trucker... and I’m divorced.” He stops and looks down before sharing with the group that he is Mexican, not out, and that the guys at the trucking depot in Indiana can never know. The group grows quiet, hesitant to “deep-dive.” The format is not designed for grief. I don’t think the group was *made* for grief.

“Henrik—what’s *really* going on in South Africa?” Todd again.

I share my feelings of isolation and disenchantment with the post-Apartheid government, which is flailing and floundering under the weight of such rampant corruption that the economy has been downgraded below junk status. I wonder aloud if white Africans have pissed in the goodwill soup so much that we are beyond redemption; and even if we manage to negotiate a mutually agreed-upon future tailored to the complex tastes of big American investment and deep African

nihilism, it may still never be enough. I want to explain that the South African democracy was not concocted out of micro-aggressions and myopia to wholesale human rights denial. Rather, it was nurtured in the fertile soil of repentance, confession, and brutally plain-spoken admissions of complicity, facilitated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It proved that, as with most things in life when you've really screwed up, a simple "I'm sorry" goes a long way to heal the hurt. I want to tell them about our eleven national languages—that we are more than the obvious binary. I want to tell them about the research I am doing into the now-extinct /Xam Bushmen—how they got that way, and their storytelling tradition that is both weird and totally relatable. And the way those stories were narrated by the last five /Xam Bushmen describing their slow descent into genocide. And how by analyzing their mythology, I have come to realize that they read as cautionary tales for our times. I hesitate. I am not sure they're interested in so much detail, but my consideration will be moot because Todd will wonder if black South Africans would like whites to leave. (He thinks Africa is a country.) He will allude to some passé white guilt complex as his idea of a starting point for healing, in a place he has never been, because you know, Mandela, and so, rather than talk about our dogma and other's discrimination—next time let's talk about waking up from the American dream, Todd.

"Maybe I should write a book about it," I say.

By 9:00 p.m., the group dynamic ebbs, and we do an online version of a post-game huddle, chewing the collective cud. Dylan implores us to "remain strong" or something and lands a final clunker about "embracing the feeling of being loved." I drift off, wondering if this really is the new normal. I think about my threat to write about Africa. I would write about the stories I grew up hearing and the weird way they seem relevant in all sorts of situations. I would write about Ubuntu, the idea that I am me because of you, and that the world could be better off for seeing things in a

different light—in a new way which is actually an ancient way, so ancient that it is now extinct. And that the how and why behind that extinction, by itself, is a cautionary tale worth hearing.

We pledge to be “brothers who get real” and that we will allow ourselves to indulge in personal mental maintenance. What I experience most intensely within the group, however, is inertia. It is made all the more prominent by ersatz concern, forced niceness, and coy flirtations with strangers who, under most circumstances, I would probably not have spent an evening with. I imagine them in their condos scattered across this beautiful city, and like me, they are making tea, drawing a bath, or watching Netflix as we stare out of our windows. In one way or another, we always manage to take detours from isolation and virulent loneliness. I decide to go ahead, and make good on my promise.

This, is that book.

PART I

The Background

people were those who
broke for me the string
therefore,
the place became like this to me

“the broken string”

—as told by Diälkwain during December, 1875, transcribed by Lucy Lloyd

1

Arrival

On the morning of March 1, 1510, Dom Francisco de Almeida, nobleman and first viceroy of Portuguese India, dropped anchor at the “southern Portal to the Indies.” A few hours later, he and nearly sixty of his crew were dead.

Various theories around the how and why of the day’s events still exist. Stepping ashore, De Almeida and his men angered the Goringhaiqua—a Southern African Bushman nation—because they landed within disrespectful proximity to the Goringhaiqua settlement. During a brief altercation, several Portuguese were injured. The sailors retaliated by confiscating livestock and seizing children standing nearby. The Goringhaiqua drove a herd of cattle at de Almeida and his men with rapid precision, encircling them—leaving them vulnerable to panicking hooves and a myriad sharp spears. During the confrontation, de Almeida and fifty-eight Portuguese marines were gored and trampled to death.

Consequently, the Cape of Storms, halfway point on the grueling voyage from Portugal to India, was abandoned (Vergunst). The Portuguese would not return, instead setting their sights on what is now Angola and Mozambique as pitstops, and so, the “brush with the Hottentots¹ in 1510, decided the fate of South Africa” (Burman).

It would take a new seafaring monolith to tame the Cape. The first Dutch East India² ship landed in 1652 and the Bushman groups, now tainted as Janus-faced and villainous, were displaced from the onset of the occupation. The blunt cudgel of colonialism thrived, sowing seeds of division and mistrust and setting up a system that would pitch South Africa’s diverse indigenous groups

against each other as they curried favor with colonial forces. To put this into perspective, while English is the lingua franca, South Africa has eleven official languages³, belonging to different groups—and that figure excludes the many smaller dialects. Over four centuries, non-white South Africans were marginalized and brainwashed through discrimination amplified by constant messaging that they were inferior. Brown citizens, like the Bushmen, were routinely reminded that they were not quite white enough to reap all the benefits of privilege, but then again not so black as to be racially classified as such, meaning that at least half white gives half-access, half-status, and half-self determination. This “divide and conquer” strategy based on language, race, and tribe persisted well into the 1980s when the Apartheid government, in an attempt to shore up support for its ideology with at least *some* South Africans of color, established a Tricameral Parliament⁴. The new parliamentary structure gave brown and Indian South Africans a false sense of self-determination, thereby leaving them indebted to the regime and aware of their “superior status” relative to Black South Africans. But this is a story about a specific group, their stories, and their demise.

The Bushmen

The Southern African Bushman represents an origin story. It is also, partly, my story. And not just because a 2018 DNA test revealed that in the last four hundred years, I had Bushman ancestors from the arid badlands of the western edges of Southern Africa. It is a tale—DNA optional—of shared humanity steeped in connectedness. I am hardly unique. Afrikaans-speaking people of Dutch, French, and German descent have strands of DNA—between 6.5 and 10 percent non-European admixture⁵ that link them to a people who have been extinct for nearly one hundred and fifty years (Hollfelder). It also connects white Afrikaners with Black South Africans, who show a similarly high Bushman admixture concentration. Beyond DNA, the Xhosa⁶ language sound system, for example, contains three click sounds borrowed from Bushman languages.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu was one of the first South Africans to have his genome sequenced in 2010 and discovered that he was related to a fellow sequenced Southern African named !Gubi, a Kalahari Bushman from Namibia. Archbishop Tutu mentions in an article on his genome, that !Gubi's wife Anna resembled his mother, and that "it was a truly uplifting experience to discover that I was genetically related to a long line of peaceful and gentle people that have trod the soils of Southern Africa for centuries." During 2013, we were fortunate to host Archbishop Tutu at our home after helping to arrange that he receives the "Freedom of Swellendam," our small town just outside Cape Town. He was still buoyed by the revelation of this DNA test, insisting that everyone called him "Bushy"—true story. Arch Tutu, however, understood the importance of the Bushman connection better than most, and he wrote extensively on the subject. Beyond one-drop rules, language throwbacks, and family resemblances, lies a truth that Tutu is justifiably famous for: Ubuntu—the connectedness of us. According to the philosophy of Ubuntu, we are all reflected *in* each other and *through* each other (Tutu).

The demise of the South African Bushman was the direct result of various shades of sustained aggression delved out over two thousand years of subjugation and land encroachment, first by Nguni-speaking Bantu tribes and then, since 1652, by the Dutch. Steven Pinker suggests that non-state groups such as the Bushmen "survived as hunter-gatherers only because they inhabit remote parts of the globe that no one else wants" (Pinker). Forced to migrate south and eventually further west, much of the world's precious minerals and gold come from places where Bushmen hunted and gathered peacefully until they were displaced to make way for imperialist greed.

But, in addition to being a remarkably accessible human library of culture and tradition, the /Xam storytelling tradition is of universal social relevance. Their tales warn us that an ill-fated struggle may willy-nilly become someone else's fate. And it does. It has. Displacement is rife. Several genocides have occurred worldwide since the demise of the /Xam. Human rights are violently suppressed in some countries and closer to home, turning a blind but "godly" eye to

institutionalized discrimination is a quasi-religion in some parts of the world. We inhabit a world where empathy, as embodied by Ubuntu, is a much-needed salve when you have a hole in your heart.

The folktales of the /Xam are the oral history of a nation shaped by random interactions with a hostile milieu and bellicose occupiers. /Xam history and achievements are minimized and overlooked as the collateral spoils of imperialist victories. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Bushmen had become vanity projects for anthropologists and linguists with white savior complexes.

The /Xam unknowingly embarked on a process of slow extinction the fateful day when they first crossed paths with the white settler. As a consequence of ongoing logistic challenges and after repeatedly experiencing collective trauma, the inherited generational distress at constant upheaval reflexively turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy of extinction. By 1870 they were the among the last of their ancient nation, sitting at the bottom of a white man's suburban garden—strangers in what was once their land—narrating their demise.

By the nineteenth century, the ancient Bushman nations were second-class citizens in their own land—all efforts to establish a viable working relationship with white settlers had failed. Hurling toward extinction, the /Xam language was lost, and the last surviving members were incorporated into bi-racial communities. As a consequence of escalating land grabs by European settlers, many /Xam were jailed for trespassing and cattle theft. Scholar and writer, Antjie Krog, writes how with regular intervals, white farmers would arrange “hunt parties, where Bushmen were hunted and killed like vermin. Local newspapers would carry reports of the last Bushmen killed in their area.” Hunting of Bushmen was allowed as recently as 1927.

Exploring these /Xam folktales is a pilgrimage of sorts. One that I am impatient, breathless even, to invite any reader to undertake with me. Predictably, our story, as with any great expedition, starts with plotting and a set of basics: recognizing a few symbols, some idea of orientation, and

familiarizing ourselves with essential words. Understanding the meticulous and systematic process by which the /Xam corpus came to be—and the randomness of it—is almost as fascinating as the odysseys described by the tales themselves.

A few notes

The term Bushman has pejorative origins but is considered an accepted term, mainly because it is most widely understood, and widely used by remaining Bushmen, though guardedly. A nomenclatural challenge arises due to the fact that the Bushman consists of several groups, each with a unique language and naming customs for their own and other groups. In using the term “Bushman,” I explicitly reject pejorative or sexist implications. I additionally use the descriptor “/Xam” when referring to the people, language, and nation—one of the Bushman sub-groups—and subject of this book.

Bushman, plural Bushmen, is the collective proper noun for the hundreds of indigenous hunter-gatherer groups of Southern Africa who inhabited the vast region, before being displaced by the Nguni-speaking populations during their expansion south from central Africa. The Bushmen comprise three distinct but wholly unrelated language families and two isolates (Metford-Platt).

The /Xam language was spoken by the /Xam-ka !'ē people of South Africa, and were part of the !Ui (or !Kwi) branch of Tuu languages. The last living language of this branch is N|uu and was believed until the 1990s to have only five elderly speakers. Another twenty-five were located in time to create a corpus. Today, only Ouma Geelmeid is alive in Upington, South Africa, having recently lost her sister, Hannah, at the age of 100. Assisted by her granddaughter Claudia, she teaches the N|uu language, they have developed an orthography to ensure the history and heritage doesn't vanish.

In some circles, Bushman and San (from Khoisan) were used interchangeably, before it was accepted as late as 2003 that many “Khoisan” people do not share any linguistic genealogy. The only

common feature is the use of clicks and consonants as phonemes, rather than consonants. The language families are as dissimilar as Indo-European is to Semitic or Turkic, although they live in close proximity.

For pronunciation purposes, the following four click sounds apply to this text:

- / Dental click. Similar to a “tsk” expressing sympathy.
- // Lateral click. The sound made to encourage a horse.
- ! Alveolar-palatal click. A cork popping, the tongue strikes the floor of the mouth.
- ≠ Tenuis palatal click. A softer popping cork, the back of the tongue is raised to the hard palate.

2

The Philologist, His Sister-in-Law, and the Noble Savage

//Kabbo's Intended Return Home

—as told by //Kabbo during July and August, 1873, transcribed by Lucy Lloyd

a story is like the wind
 it comes from a far-off quarter
 and we feel it
 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

A traditional /Xam tale resembles a scarcely audible whispered secret—a susurrus. It is in the wind's sibilant hiss over desolate dunes and the rustling sounds of heat-scorched grass. It is present when the hunter readies his bow and exhales with zen-like focus. The /Xam oral tradition tells tragic—often magical—tales documenting a gradual descent into redundancy. It acts as an intimate, primal mythology, a collection of survival testimonies describing man's precarious condition vis-à-vis the natural world order's relentless continuance.

/Xam tales are allegories on an operatic scale—animals and nature frequently act as metaphors, while the universe seems hellbent on perpetually testing the Bushmen. But the tales also dwell on inaction and paralysis in the face of adversity. Psychohistorian David Lotto suggests that

“along with the *kevell* (pride) of your people’s virtues and accomplishments, you should acknowledge the *shande* (shame) that is also yours” (Lewis). The /Xam oral tradition does all that. And then some.

/Xam folktales are rememories. Toni Morrison explains the rememory “[as] places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it’s gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there in the world” (Morrison). Similarly, a society subjugated, sanitized, and discarded on the fringes of humanity, are canaries in a coal mine of assimilation. They express alarm as they share intergenerational memories of memories that future generations may grasp their inherited pain. The /Xam rememory aspect behind the storytelling tradition became a fundamental motivation in processing realities such as accelerated die-off, dire replacement rates, extreme cultural fragmentation, imprisonment, and victimization by a militarized regime. It was further compounded by vivid memories and detailed stories of old loss and past displacements.

In her poetic adaptation of /Xam poetry, *The Stars Say Tsau!*, Antjie Krog says that “one is tempted to imagine that much of the recorded material could be the starting point for a South African epic poem such as the Greek *Odyssey* or the ancient English *Beowulf*.” She is right. The /Xam oral tradition comments on humanity viewed through a lens of self-effacing truth. It is a compelling story that starts with a curious researcher, his intrepid assistant, and a humble group of storytellers, crestfallen, and caught in a race against time, as they face their inevitable demise.

Bleek and Lloyd

Prussian philologist Dr. Wilhelm Bleek, a specialist in Hebrew and African languages, arrived in Cape Town in 1861 to act as the private librarian for Sir George Grey, then the consequential Governor of the Cape Colony. Bleek was the bookish Jekyll to Grey’s equally erudite Hyde: a man unwavering in his determination to bring civilization to the colony’s furthest corners, expanding its reach well beyond initial borders. Held in exceptionally high regard by white colonists, Grey forced the amaXhosa—the second largest ethnic group in South Africa after the amaZulu⁷, and like the

amaZulu, part of the Nguni group—into submission by commanding them to build extensive public works while establishing a wage system that barely met subsistence requirements. He expedited a selective education strategy, forming a buffer of intellectual elites while a proliferation of missionaries would convert the unwashed to faithful followers, willingly subjugated to the colony (Saho).

Bleek learned about the Bushmen's existence while working on compiling an amaZulu grammar in Natal, a South African province and bastion of British colonialism on the Indian Ocean. His curiosity was peaked by ongoing reports on the Bushmen, their villainous nature, and their determination to escape persecution by the colonial regime as well as Dutch settlers. After accepting Grey's library position, Bleek settled in Mowbray, a leafy Cape Town suburb in the shadow of Devil's Peak. Lloyd, a qualified teacher, had traveled to Cape Town for the wedding of her sister Jemima to Bleek and settled with the newlyweds in Mowbray, from where she would start recording the oral histories of the Bushmen. Bleek and Lloyd were part of an academic zeitgeist—fueled by scholarship and intellectual exploration—learning to acclimatize to Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. Ten years after the seminal Darwin publication, Bleek launched his *On the Origin of Language* in 1869, a work widely disregarded today in its efforts to graft aspects of philology onto evolutionary theory and establish a linguistic theory at the center of human history (Twiddle).

As part of Bleek's project to create a /Xam grammar, he arranged for a small group of /Xam-speakers from the Karoo region of the Western Cape to reside at the bottom of his Mowbray garden between 1870 and 1884. Recently incarcerated at the city's Breakwater Prison, the /Xam subjects were convicted for non-aggressive acts such as theft of livestock and reactionary incidents against the virulent spread of white settler land-gluttony with its penchant for annexing traditional grounds and converting it to pasture. The /Xam were compelled to accept their fate as laborers or retreat deeper into the malpais looking for hunting terrain. Many resorted to petty theft, and while jailed, were the subject of substantial research, and endlessly photographed in the anthropometric style of Thomas Huxley, a leading British anthropologist and evolutionary theorist of the time.

The fourteen-year project consisting of interviews and observations by Bleek and Lloyd, and eventually Bleek's daughter Dorothea, produced almost one hundred forty notebooks of transcripts and notes, supported by sketches, testimonies, and Bleek's record of the /Xam alphabet, the first time it had been captured. The Bleek and Lloyd output still forms the backbone of Bushman study, and the volume is held in three archives: the Iziko South African Museum, the National Library of South Africa (the modern incarnation of the Grey Collection), and the Archives of the University of Cape Town. Consisting of over twelve thousand verbal and artistic expressions, the collection goes beyond esoterica, representing a Gordian narrative knot braided with spirituality, eschewing temporal boundaries and verisimilitude.

Undoubtedly, Bleek's main task was to study indigenous Southern African languages and, fueled by the nineteenth-century spirit of discovery and he intended to uncover a universally shared linguistic genealogy that would act as a departure point for human connectedness. He would ultimately not find the lingua franca, but Bleek and his team did compile an ethnographic marvel of cultural significance. Besides being pivotal in the academic recognition of Bushman language and storytelling, Bleek has the distinction of being a pioneer in establishing the concept of race and racial classifications. He put what would become the trademark South African system of differentiation by racial preset, on the proverbial map.

Bleek also coined the term *Bantu*, a plural form of a word that means "person" in what he called "that great family" of languages, without actually naming them. Today the term includes Bantu-speakers of Nguni, Sotho-Tswana, Venda, and Tsonga. Consequently, he is held in extraordinarily high regard, and history has chosen to look favorably on his legacy, which still forms the backbone of /Xam study—albeit with greater interest today in the contributions by Lloyd as the more interpretive member of the team. Bleek was, however, pivotal in a tangible way. He was part of a group of authors who shifted our modern concept of race, and certainly South Africa's first systematic theorist of racial difference, his oeuvre of race-based opinion consisting of extensive

writings in the Cape Monthly Magazine from the 1850s through to the 1870s, an 1869 treatise *On the Origin of Language*, his *Comparative Grammar of Southern African Languages* and volumes of private correspondence. And through Bleek's theories, we see the genesis of formal race evaluation in South Africa. It is no overstatement to view him as the figure representing a shift in tone from the coarsened racial stereotyping of the early nineteenth century to the fully intellectualized racism that pockmarked South African history during the twentieth century (Bank). Yet, Bleek's obituary on August 25, 1875, exclaimed that "[a]s a comparative philologist he stood in the foremost rank, and as an investigator and authority on the South African languages, he was without peer."

A Short History Lesson

To put the /Xam as First People of South Africa in context, we need to move well beyond our understanding of the populations of the region as classified by Colonialist and Apartheid history. Early Homo Sapiens is believed to have first emerged in East Africa approximately 250,000 years ago. Research suggests that groups in Southern Africa may be genetically mapped, using shared DNA, to around 70,000 years ago. The /Xam and !Galne were concentrated in the broad expanse of the Cape, including the western, central, and eastern portion. At the same time, the Tshua and #Hōā San were found in the Kalahari and Limpopo regions to the north of South Africa.

Historical evidence indicates that San groups—the /Xam, †Khomani, and //Xegwi—migrated South after separating from what is believed to be the Sandawe of Tanzania who bears developmental and linguistic links to the San. The San have populated Southern Africa for at least 30,000 years, evidenced by a prolific spread of rock art as well as a wealth of artifacts, which include beads, jewelry, grinding stones, clothing, and tools made from stone, bone, or wood. The second group to migrate to Southern Africa were the Khoena consisting of the Nama, Kora, and Hessequa, who reached South Africa in 100 BC; they were followed by the Nguni, Sotho, Tswana, Tsonga, and Venda peoples in AD 300.

/Xam fighters joined forces with the Khoena by the late 1600s to fight the Dutch settlers, and by the 1770s, the Europeans had formed a coalition of sorts with the Khoena to help with inland expansion, considering that the Dutch were unprepared for the numbers of /Xam they would encounter as they pushed deeper into the wilderness. Initially, the /Xam held their own against Dutch-Khoena forces. These commandos were Dutch-led but 60% of the ranks consisted of pacified Khoena—the genocide slaughter of the “First People” /Xam had commenced. Khoena militia members were commanded to eradicate adult /Xam—a few /Xam children were spared, captured, and allotted to white farms where they would work as slaves with pacified Khoena. Khoena militia were encouraged to capture girls as concubines—records and artifacts show a European and Khoena custom to butcher the breasts of /Xam women to make leather tobacco pouches.

As a result of sustained attacks, much of the 30,000 /Xam community were wiped out. A few survivors moved to the Northern Cape where, by the mid-1800s, the British, Nama, Orlams, and the Griquas resumed the /Xam massacre. Even today, for the handful of surviving Bushmen, the tragedy of occupation and persecution lies in the collaborative element between the Dutch East India Company, the British—and the indigenous tribes. When a descendant of the Khoena inappropriately uses the word KhoiSan—a loaded “First People” term, made up by German explorer, zoologist, and anthropologist Leonhard Schultze-Jena in the 1930s—it is a bitter pill to swallow, not least because these groups who relentlessly pursued the /Xam gladly assume the title which rightfully belongs to the very people they hunted to extinction—the /Xam, the First People of the Cape.

The Last Voices

Lucy Lloyd was a stickler for detail. Her notebooks betray a structured approach and a curious mind. In her journals, right-hand columns on right-hand pages are filled with /Xam transcriptions, filling the rest of the page with English translations and copious annotations. Lloyd yielded to an

altogether more accommodating approach to /Xam oral patterns since the subjects did not tell stories chronologically, nor were they bound by any semblance of sequence, both qualities typical of the oral tradition. She frequently devotes the facing left-hand page to further excursions by her collaborators, who could expand the existing transcription with streams of consciousness.

The process transforms the stories and poems into creative meanderings that mirror the /Xam worldview. In the following example, a song about suicide, “the old woman killed herself by casting herself violently upon the pointed rock on which she had intended to cast the old Woman who was upon her back; but the old Woman sprang aside and saved herself” (Bleek, 229).

the old woman’s song

—as told by /Alkúnta, during September, 1871, transcribed by W.H.I. Bleek

the old woman sings

goes singing along

sings as she goes

the old woman sings as she goes along about the Hyena

“the old she hyena,

the old she hyena,

was carrying off the old Woman from the old hut

the old woman in this manner

she sprang aside

she arose

she beat the hyena

the hyena, herself

the hyena killed the hyena”

The contemporary reader senses Lloyd's indulging the storytellers, contrasting with Bleek's more conventional, rigorous delineations. Lloyd's notes clarify that the /Xam tradition is not a monolithic, neat oral history. From the collection of notebooks and stories, the emerging picture is one of shared experiences between distinct groups of Bushmen. Bleek and Lloyd's subjects revealed that several small clusters lived over geographically vast spaces yet were known to each other, belonging to a broader group who shared, traded, and married. Customs and habits may have differed from cluster to cluster, prescribed by the terrain and microclimate, but a sense of loyalty and adhesion to the expanded group identity connected them, contrasting sharply with their apprehension to black tribes and white settlers (Deacon).

The subjects of the study spoke some Dutch—their home language was /Xam—and it was through rudimentary Dutch that Bleek and Lloyd initiated conversations (Lewis-Williams). Bleek noted that the Bushmen were quick to act out unclear sentences, and learned a range of English words. He notes how the hunter-gatherer preset had shifted to reflect habits and accoutrements of white settlers, and they began to incorporate items like guns, iron cookware, and cutlery (Bleek).

Bleek and Lloyd's subjects came from two /Xam groups. The "Flat Bushmen," //Kabbo and his son in law /Han#kass'o, came from a region of majestic flatness in the Northern Cape—an expanse dotted with empty dams and barren rivers where years can pass without a drop of rain. It is a landscape where mirages play tricks on the eye, and arid flat soil occasionally convulses into arid dolerite boulders. The other group—/A!kunta, Diä!kwain, and his sister !Kweiten-ta-//ken—were "Grass Bushmen" from a grassy district further west with some water. Travelogues note that the /Xam used grass seeds as a food source. This annual seed crop was depleted when cattle and sheep belonging to white settlers saw to it that little grass remained, thereby prohibiting seed development.

In her book of /Xam poetry, Krog points out how the region tells its histories through names "like *Gifberg* (Poison Mountain), *Keelafsnylaagte* (Cut-Throat Flats), *Rugseer* (Backache), *Loerkop* (Spy Peak), *Putsonderwater* (Waterless Well), *Verneukpan* (Cheat Pan), and *Kulsberg* (Trick Mountain)."

In 1870, a small group of /Xam storytellers convened at Bleek's house in Mowbray where, for the next fourteen years, they would share tales and poems that cover themes as wide-ranging as consciousness, racism, the cosmos, group dissolution, cultural resentment, and gun ownership. Today, the /Xam output forms the bedrock of much of the South African oral tradition, where Black and Brown writers, due to the asymmetries in our economic and educational history, are still relatively under-represented.

For the most part, Bleek ensured that his subjects were reasonably comfortable. //Kabbo, for example, was particularly enamored of a tobacco pouch Bleek had given him. When the pouch vanished //Kabbo suspected Blom, a hungry dog belonging to fellow Mowbray resident, of running off with his tobacco pouch. Lloyd's empathetic nature is revealed in her side notes, which describe how //Kabbo, upon waking up in the middle of the night and not finding his tobacco pouch, had to lie down again and confront the fact that he was, indeed, not going to smoke. Lloyd further mentions that they were up early the next morning, searching everywhere, but could not find the pouch. While in the throes of nicotine withdrawal, //Kabbo composed a short elegy:

//Kabbo's song on the loss of his tobacco pouch

—as told by Han#kass'o during January, 1878, transcribed by Lucy Lloyd

tobacco-hunger is that which is here

tobacco-hunger is that which is here

tobacco-hunger is here

famine it is

famine it is

famine is here

3

/Xam Storytelling

Many /Xam storytellers were shamans, credited with experiencing out-of-body phenomena harnessing transcendental forces to fuel them on their quest to some Elysium where they would battle with diabolical specters, make rain, and heal the sick (Blundell). Their stories are chronicles of imperialism, sexuality, and violence. They comment on displacement from traditional land, and the resulting voluntary retreats further west into the barren backlands of the Karoo desert, in futile efforts to persevere peacefully. It sketches an outline of alienation—and loss—through metaphor, dynamically shifting from social commentary to personal confession, frequently in a single sentence.

the song of the star

—as told by Diä!kwain during December, 1875, transcribed by Lucy Lloyd

does the | |*garraken*⁸ flower open?

the #*ku-Yam*⁹ is the one which opens

Dost thou open?

The #*ku-Yam* is the one which opens

Nature or Nurture?

In 1864, Bleek published a collection of /Xam stories brimming with ritualism and delinquency under the title *Reynard the Fox in South Africa, or Hottentot Fables and Tales*. It was a defining literary moment, being “the first published book of indigenous literature” which scholars “rank as one of

South Africa's first published works of sustained narrative imaginative fiction, in a context where colonial literary production had long been dominated by the genres of diary and travel writing" (Wittenberg).

Bleek's quasi-Victorian translations attempted to realign the libertine/Xam output, with his view of Bushman languages as ancient, primitive relations of European ones. The fables he chose tried to create a link that proved "a much greater congeniality between the Hottentot and European mind than we find between the latter and any of the black races of Africa." Bleek simplified /Xam narratives to be understood as narratives of animals, allowing parallel moral lessons to be drawn.

Grimms' Fairy Tales by the Brothers Grimm—by themselves odd, old stories with weird characters—had reached European readers just a few decades before and as Grimm versions, contrasted with the /Xam stories. The Grimm tales reworked old tales, playing neatly up to Teutonic ideals that now seemed to square up with growing anti-assimilationist nationalist fervor on its march to eventual Aryanism (Snyder). These tales had little tolerance for disobedience, which it sharply rewarded with land forfeiture or loss of agency. Correspondingly, Bushman folktales were adjusted to appeal to a repressive Victorian palate. Bleek's orthodox approach to linguistics—and diversity—shows up when he editorializes his subjects, recasting the idiosyncratic /Xam characters of the narratives with noble, sanitized versions while still indulging the European reader with the spectacle of scantily civilized yet satisfyingly exotic people. Bleek scholar Michael Wessels ventures that "Bleek and Lloyd not only recorded the /Xam narratives; in a sense they created them."

One reason, cited by Hermann Wittenberg, for Bleek's "editorial interventions" may be viewed as an attempt "to elevate the figure of the "Hottentot" from its well-established negative associations in colonial Cape discourse with disorderliness, indolence and licentiousness." It's the kind of framing white settlers have always tried to make stick as J.M. Coetzee noted in his 1988 essay, "Idleness in South Africa," a work that inspires rigorous thinking about Calvinism, its work ethics, and its need to portray the indigenous (or brown, or Black populations) in disparaging terms.

Duncan Brown, dean of the Faculty of Arts and professor of English at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), feels that Bleek's views on South African orature are emblematic of the "processes of exclusion, occlusion, and effacement that have occurred in the construction of the cultural history of this country."

It is therefore small wonder that Bleek and Lloyd had insufficient appetite to indulge /Xam forays into profanity and sexual deviance and, unsurprisingly, "Bleek framed the stories as naive 'moral lessons' that were eminently suitable for the diversion and edification of children." Bleek sketched his subjects through acceptable nomenclature in a cultural straitjacket that sat at odds with anything resembling /Xam tastes for adult content and ribald humor. He admitted that "to make these Hottentot fables readable for the general public, a few slight omissions, and alterations of what would otherwise have been too naked for the English eye were necessary."

Over time, Bleek became entirely invested in portraying the /Xam as mystical beings who cantilever innocent, childlike outbursts on a bedrock of provocative spirituality. No sex and depravity, then. This infantilized view became so entrenched that even Professor Phillip Tobias¹⁰—acknowledged internationally as *the* expert on anatomy, evolution, and human fossils—writes in a foreword to Arthur Markowitz's *With Uplifted Tongue*¹¹—a 1956 volume of Bushman fables and stories—that the "Peter Pans of humanity they have been called and well do these babyfaced, pygmoid, yellow-skinned huntsmen deserve the title ... In their simplicity and their quaintness, these brief tales underline the child-like qualities of the little yellow people" (Markowitz).

Interpreting Bleek's transcriptions and subsequent adaptations of his work, one would be forgiven for assuming that the /Xam were indeed infantile and spiritually inclined with nary a thought wasted on carnal pleasures. In his book on the tension between the Bushman and the Victorian world, Andrew Bank ventures that Bleek was so uncomfortable with both concept and utterance of any sexual terminology that he turned to Latin in an effort to coax /Xam equivalents to phrases such as *exerceo coitum* (I have sex), and *exerceo coitum cum ea* (I have sex with her) while

“possibly pointing to Lucy or his wife Jemima” (Bank). Bleek was bound by the morality of the time, and his work needs to be contextualized as an example of a revisionist approach that coerces a sterilized connection between the storyteller and the reader (Wittenberg).

Awkwardly, it would turn out, Bleek and his team were but the first team doing research, annotating the stories and lives of the Bushmen. Leonard Schultze (1872-1955) was one such inter-disciplinarian working on ethnographic projects specifically in locations under German control such as German Southwest Africa and New Guinea. His eye was detail-inclined even at his most prosaic and scathing of German colonialist shortcomings mentioning in *Aus Namaland und Kalahari* (*From Namaland and The Kalahari*) that “[w]e have to admit openly by now that the Hottentot knows us better than we know him... He never loses interest in studying the white invader.” Schultze employed a radically different style when interviewing his subjects, compared with that of Bleek.

The Mowbray residence subjected the /Xam storytellers to yet another milieu of displacement in a suburban setting that even in the nineteenth century must have seemed oppressive and alienating to the Bushmen. The buttoned-down setting certainly put them at a disadvantage, almost guaranteeing a level of self-sanitation as a byproduct of what, by this stage, after imprisonment, resulted in a dialed-back version of their traditional stories.

Schultze transcribed his versions of the tradition by using a “fly on the wall” approach and immersing himself in the culture, observing his subjects in a relaxed state aided by their natural environment. The results could not be more revealing. Some stories appear in both Bleek’s and Schultze’s collections, with the latter consistently evidencing a natural, colloquial quality, displaying ribald earthiness and ease with bodily functions. Bleek’s versions are ambiguous, somewhat schoolmarmish, and vague (Wittenberg). Schultze concluded that “Bleek’s stories do not reveal to me the Hottentot whom I have gotten to know. Since I was able to tap into the very source of their lore, I will disregard his versions completely.” Compare the contrasting versions of a story from Bleek’s *Reynard*. The Schultze version, alongside it, appeared in his book, *Aus Namaland und Kalahari*:

the lion who took a woman's shape

—transcribed by Bleek

Some women, it is said, went out to seek roots and herbs and other wild food.

On their way home they sat down and said, "Let us taste the food of the field."

Now they found that the food picked by one of them was sweet, while that of the others bitter. The latter said to each other, "Look here! This woman's herbs are sweet." Then they said to the owner of the sweet food, "Throw it away and seek for other."

— sweet-tasting herbs being apparently unpalatable to the Hottentot [*sic*]. So she threw away the food, and went to gather more. When she had collected a sufficient supply, she returned to join the other women, but could not find them.

She went therefore down to the river where the Hare sat ladling water, and said to him, "Hare, give me some water that I may drink." But he replied, "This is the cup out of which my uncle (the lion) and I alone may drink." She asked again: "Hare, draw water for me that I may drink." But the hare made the same reply.

Then she snatched the cup from him and drank, but he ran home to tell his uncle of the outrage that had been committed.

Over the following pages, both versions describe the killing of the girl by a cantankerous lion who, after eating her, dresses up in her skin, which he made sure was kept whole—a Hannibal Lecter type of lion, if you will. Naturally, not a soul in the village recognizes anything amiss, except the girl's sister, with whom the lion/girl shares a bed. After the hut burns down, replete with the lion/girl, the deceased girl's heart leaps out of the ashes, and when the mother places the bouncing heart in a bowl of fresh milk from a fertile calve, the girl rematerializes. One can barely make up this stuff. The dominant, contemporary view of the Bushman imagination remains largely shaped by Bleek's editorial interventions, while Schultze's transcriptions veer towards a more substantive understanding of the richly chimeric, yet scatological imagination of the Bushman (Wittenberg).

Much had been said over the years about the hermeneutic aspect of the work. Hermeneutic simply means that the work benefits from interpretation. Taking the interpretive route is undoubtedly a convenient option, although not as easy as one would think since the stories do inspire wildly different emotions and thoughts of fancy in different readers. But, there is a certain beauty—a poetic justice—that a person thousands of miles away, two hundred years later, and with barely any comprehension of circumstances of the narrator or their knowledge of their language, can be inspired by the translated words of Bushman storytellers, conjuring up a set of meanings that

matter to them, at that point in their lives, wherever they may find themselves. And perhaps that is the essence of what the /Xam storytellers were aiming at while in the Mowbray house. That some narrations will be practical—the kinds of thing any young Bushman would have to know to survive. Others will be about struggle, while many will be about hope. It is this set of stories—the ones that spark thoughts, inspire action, or ignite the conscience—that we are going to look at more closely.

how the dancing rattles are prepared

—as told by Han#kass'o during January, 1878, transcribed by Lucy Lloyd

a woman takes off the skin of the springbok's ear
 and then, she sews the inner skin of the springbok's ear
 when she has laid aside the (hairy) skin of the springbok's ear
 for it is the inner skin of its ear which she sews
 and she sews it, and she scoops up with her hand
 putting soft earth into it
 and they dig, ladling in earth
 because they wish that the springbok ears may dry
 that they may put in //kerri berries¹² when they have taken out the earth
 and then they tie on a small piece of sinew at the tip of the springbok ear
 which was open, while they tie shutting in the //kerri berries
 so that the //kerri berries may not come out of the springbok ear
 and they pierce through the springbok ears
 and they put in little threads which the men are to tie
 fastening the springbok ears on their feet¹³

PART II

The Ten Bushman Susurrus

the bushmen's letters are in their bodies

the letters speak

they move

they make the Bushmen's bodies move

“bushman presentiments”

—as told by //Kabbo during February and March, 1873, transcribed by W.H.L. Bleek

4

The 1st Susurrus

the broken string

—as told by Diälkwain. December, 1875, transcribed by Lucy Lloyd

people were those who

broke for me the string

therefore,

the place became like this to me

on account of it

because the string was that which broke for me

therefore

the place does not feel to me

as the place used to feel to me

on account of it

for

the place feels as if it stood open before me

because the string has broken for me

therefore

the place does not feel pleasant to me

on account of it

People were those

Appearing on page 237 of Bleek and Lloyd's *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* is one of the most famous of all Bushman stories, a short narration by Diä!kwain. Lloyd lists "The Broken String" as a lament sung by Diä!kwain's father, Xaa-ttin, after the death of his friend, the magician and rainmaker !Nuing|kui-ten who died from the effects of a shot he received when going about, by night, in the form of a lion.

But "The Broken String" is much more than that. In some ways, it represents a minor literary event with a life of its own outside Bleek and Lloyd, growing in stature and appreciation as a heartbreaking expression of lost identity and displacement in a volatile environment. Irrespective of how the piece has been translated over the years, and adapted to various publications, the underlying pain and lived experience expressed by the work have proven indomitable.

The backstory to the narration is captivating on its own merit. Lloyd notes that !Nuin-|kuiten, a *!giten*—described as a sorcerer by Lloyd but nowadays more correctly understood to indicate a shaman—had killed an ox belonging to a Boer¹⁴ while on an out-of-body experience in the shape of a lion. The Boer was correspondingly incensed, immediately rounding up a commando which quickly found !Nuin-|kuiten, and shot him—mortally wounding the shaman. !Nuin-|kuiten made his way back to his people and, with his dying breath gave testimony on how the Boer commando had ruined his ability to commune with the water bull who lived in the sky. He urged Xaa-ttin to carry on with the rainmaking tradition, transferring his rainmaking power to Xaa-ttin and insisting that the old songs need to be continued so rain may be made in the old way and that since the string is broken, the ringing in the sky is unheard as it has been in his lifetime.

Diä!kwain, like //Kabbo, knew rainmakers and their skills. //Kabbo refers to Diä!kwain as a Brinkkopman which indicates that Diä!kwain had some training and induction into becoming a shaman. !Nuin-|kuiten who features prominently in the background to "The Broken String" was at

one time referred to by Bleek as Diä!kwain's paternal great-grandfather, yet in his backstory to the narration, Diä!kwain claims that !Nuin-|kuiten was a friend of his father's.

A dilemma has always existed over how such an ephemeral work should be understood. Some researchers have looked at structural anthropology and rock art noting the composite nature of it, combining real and surreal elements. Others have considered that /Xam cosmology could hold clues while others have simply designated it to be a “great and complex web of signs that wrote themselves across the landscape and into the lives and bodies of those capable of understanding them” (Bennun, *Broken String*, p. 234).

Yet for all the potential that the text has and its overlap into various disciplines around /Xam culture, a fragmentary work such as “The Broken String” cannot help but scream the obvious: a mortal breakage had occurred and that a breached environment has now been entered into. Lloyd's notes and careful transcription reveal contours and delineations within the text—that expose the challenges faced by the /Xam while presenting the reader with the challenge of interpretation.

Diä!kwain draws complex, subtle metaphors: loss is one aspect—desolation, voicelessness, loss of agency, and displacement are some of the others. The structure is deceptive. It appears simple. But within the work lies potent symbolism. The otherworldliness of the text is strangely expressive, and one cannot help but feel slo-mo sorrow reaching deep across the work and out at the reader. And even though the catalyst to the composition—the killing of the shaman—is not covered by the poem itself, it is pervasive. It is the great unsaid, in itself the perfect metaphor for the slow, silent onset of colonial oppression that eventually became Apartheid.

Quite a bit of meaning and context hinge on what Diä!kwain refers to as “people” and “place.” //Kabbo uses the same words in his equally contemplative “//Kabbo's Intended Return Home” (discussed in Chapter 7 as the Fourth Susurrus), when he says,

people of another place are here
 they do not possess my stories
 they do not talk my language

Because of these “people,” the “place” has been lost. The string—the tether—has been broken, and in both Diä!kwain and //Kabbo’s stories, a silence has replaced what once had been music or stories. This sense of silence and loss shows up in every /Xam story, in one form or another. But the pain expressed by Diä!kwain is the most poignant—the most affecting—when read against the bigotry and entitlement of colonialism.

Scholars have chosen divergent paths on “The Broken String” with some regarding the work as an unfussy reflection on the death of a friend while others look more intently at the rainmaking aspects and rituals implied by the text. We can be certain, however, that the central component of any analysis remains the act of mourning, irrespective of overlay. Part of the challenge is that in hindsight, it is virtually impossible to unring the Apartheid bell, or to not see the effects of colonialism on the /Xam, and to understand this piece as an expression of that pain. It is especially magnetic as it gives an almost non-existent view from the perspective of the people being colonized.

The symbol of the broken string—the silencing of the shaman and the broken society it implies—and the desolation of the changed place indicates that nothing will ever be the same for the /Xam. It acts as a warning to others, identifying the “people” whose arrival and presence have irrevocably changed the course of South African history. But, for me, the most moving part is how Diä!kwain foreshadows and anticipates what would become Apartheid.

Prisoner 4434

Seldom veering into ephemera, Diä!kwain is one of the most enigmatic of the /Xam storytellers. Blessed with a silver tongue and persuasive personality, he had once shot and killed a farmer and

managed to convince the judge that he was merely defending himself. Dorothea Bleek refers to Diä!kwain as her father's "favorite murderer" due to his gentle nature and observational style.

Standing fairly tall among the /Xam at nearly 5 foot, 3 inches, the Bleek sisters recalled that he was unfailingly gentle, yet his prison records show that he was often cited for insubordination and punished for smoking marijuana. Explaining the large scar on his face, he told Lloyd in one narration how he fended off a man who attempted to steal spoons from his mother. After spending four months at the Bleek house at the end of 1873, Diä!kwain returned home to fetch his sister and brother-in-law and ended up staying until at least the end of March, 1876. It was during the second stay that Bleek passed away on August 17, 1875, and once the dust settled—and a month of mourning—Diä!kwain and Lloyd proceeded with interviews until March 5, 1876.

Diä!kwain was also listed as David Hoesar—his European last name reflected in a farm in the vicinity of his home. He was 25 years old when he entered the Breakwater Prison. Diä!kwain, his sister, !Kweiten-ta-//ken, and her husband =Kásin were Grass Bushmen, so-called because in their home territory, pans of standing water are dotted over the landscape compared with the eastern districts, explaining why area had such prolific grass growth and seemed greener for longer. The Grass Bushmen have settled the area since the 1700s with travel writers mentioning their presence since the late 1770s. Even in this less harsh landscape, the Bushmen struggled to survive, relying on the grass to provide seeds, a welcome addition to their diet.

We know a fair amount about Diä!kwain and his family, compared with other storytellers such as /Han=kass'o who divulged little about his family or history. We know that his mother, =Kamme-an, loved telling stories—most of Diä!kwain's narrations are attributed to her. Diä!kwain's mother had disappeared—he suspected that she was murdered by the Boers. He had three sisters and a brother and they were a close family. Diä!kwain tells of the day he buried his first wife, when he, after the burial and surrounded his sisters, believed they had seen the sorcerers take his wife's spirit—still wearing her favorite cap—away.

concerning two apparitions

—as told by Diä!kwain during January, 1876, transcribed by Lucy Lloyd

we buried my wife in the afternoon

when we had finished burying her, we returned to the home of my sister

Whai-ttu and the other people whence they had come forth

they had come to bury my wife with me and we went away crossing over the salt pan

and we perceived a thing which looked like a little child

as it sat upon the salt pan seeming as if it sat with its legs crossed over each other

and my sister Whai-ttu spoke

she questioned us:

“look ye! what thing sits yonder upon the salt pan?

it is like a little child.”

and !Kweiten-ta-||ken spoke, she asked us:

“look ye! why is it that this thing is truly like a person?

it seems as if it had on the cap which Diä!kwain's wife used to wear.”

and my sister, Whai-ttu, spoke, she answered: “Yes, O my younger sister!

the thing truly resembles that which brother's wife was like.”

it did thus as we went along

it seemed as if it sat looking towards the place from which we came out

and ||Ku-ang spoke, she said:

"the old people used to tell me that the angry people were wont to act thus

at the time when they took a person away

they used to allow the person to be in front of us so that we might see it

ye know that she really had a very little child

therefore ye should allow us to look at the thing which sits upon this salt pan
it strongly resembles a person its head is there like a person.”

and I spoke

I said: “Wait! I will do thus as I return to my home

I will see whether I shall again perceive it as it sits.”

and we went to their home

and we talked there for a little while

and I spoke

I said to them that they appeared to think that I did not wish to return home

for the sun was setting and I returned on account of it

I thought that I would go in the same manner as we had come

that I might going along look whether I should again perceive it as it sat

going along I looked at the place where it had sat

because of thought that it might have been a bush

I saw that I did not perceive it at the place where it had sat

and I agreed that it must have been a different kind of thing

for my mothers used to tell me that when the sorcerers are those who take us away

at the time when they intend to take us quite away

that is the time when our friend is in front of us

while he desires that we may perceive him

because he feels that he still thinks of us

therefore his outer skin still looks at us

because he feels that he does not want to go away and leave us

for he insists upon coming to us

therefore we still perceive him on account of it

Informal Colonization

A discussion on colonization in South Africa has to pause at how the country got that way and the things that developed as result. While colonization is normally placed squarely at Europe's door, some interesting details show up when you look closely enough. As a result, we can split the process of colonization into three easily digestible sections: formal, informal, and localized. Just over 2,000 years ago, pastoralists migrated south, leaving North Africa and passing through East Africa, developing substantial farming-based settlements with some smaller groups migrating south, eventually settling in today's far-northern regions of South Africa. We still find evidence of ancient kingdoms in places like Mapungubwe on the Limpopo river, which forms a border with Zimbabwe—these kingdoms (ancestors of today's Venda people) existed as recently as a thousand years ago and already then, excavated gold and fashioning jewelry. Some groups went further south, but not too far—settling in the north-east, east and central parts of the country—and by doing so, became the origin of the Bantu-speaking groups. These groups consisted of the Nguni; Sotho, and Tswana (spreading as far as Botswana); Tsonga (also reaching Mozambique); and Shona (settling in Zimbabwe). Smaller groups like the Lemba, who consider themselves a lost tribe of Israel and observe laws and customs in line with the Talmud and Torah, also settled in the north. It's interesting to note that the Sotho and Tswana originated in Tanzania while the Nguni tribes are from East Africa's Great Lakes. The Nguni consists of several groups and tribes, besides Northern and Southern Nguni, and some prominent groups include the Mpondo and amaXhosa.

Added to the list is the Ndebele, who found themselves in the lower sections of the north. At the same time the Matabele left KwaZulu-Natal during the 19th century, as part of Shaka's Mfecane expansion under the leadership of Matabele warrior, Mzilikazi. It is a complex web of tribes and groups, with some distinguished and differentiated according to specific unifying group factors, and others choosing to create distance between tribes because of social standing and sheer economic weight (Giliomee & Mbenga).

The Bushmen existed, on this land, before any of this. They witnessed a steady stream of arrivals as Black tribes migrated south, invading Bushman territories and forming new tribes and bigger groups over time. All at the expense of the Bushman. The Fokeng, for example, was a group—originally Nguni—but eventually a subgroup as the product of blending new with old invaders. Entire chiefdoms sprang up on new old land, forming strongholds over many years and several wars. Nguni groups on the eastern side of South Africa eventually formed the kingdoms of the amaZulu, amaXhosa, Swazi, Mpondo, and Thembu. Between 1818 and 1828, Shaka ruled, establishing a Zulu kingdom in KwaZulu–Natal between the Tugela and Pongola Rivers—he incorporated all the chiefdoms in that area into his kingdom.

These were the fruits of soft colonization—seen as soft since, when the Dutch landed at the Cape in 1652 and claimed the land—it gave rise to what we now consider hard colonization, contrasting with the soft migrations which had mostly occurred before 1652. It created the impression that there was nothing to see here, folks. It looked—to record-keeping types—as if this was just how it's always been. And that image stuck. But we have to appreciate that the indigenous Bushman never claimed official ownership of their land—they did not think it was needed or that it would ever be required, given their nomadic lifestyle. Some Black tribes did, however, claim land as they occupied it, creating kingdoms and setting up areas of potential conflict and battle. Some of these Black tribes expanded rapidly, claiming additional land commensurate with their growing numbers.

We see an unfortunate pattern emerge. White settlers arrived in the southwest and moved aggressively east and north, leading to a confrontation with the amaXhosa in 1770. Afrikaner expansions were going even further east, and deeper into the undiscovered north as far as the Limpopo River, finding themselves perpetually locked in battle with Black tribes, capturing their land. The south was, therefore—for most of the pre-19th century—mostly occupied by European colonizers while the rest of the country was inhabited by migrating and expanding tribes, groups, and subgroups. After 1852, however, most of the country was won by white colonizers. The result

was the Bushmen were forced out by everyone. It saw them seeking peace and refuge in the far western regions while a few of them were incorporated into the amaXhosa group, their children becoming amaXhosa, and lending click sounds to the Xhosa language (Giliomee & Mbenga).

A Scramble for Africa: A Potted History on the Big British Invasion.

With the arrival of the British in Africa, between 1750 and 1914, the continent went from independence to virtually complete colonial dominance, and Britain, for most of that period, focused on coastal areas to facilitate its immense slave trade. By 1870, Europe controlled only 10% of Africa. The most notable of the colonial holdings were Algeria—an 1830s French conquest despite fierce resistance—and, of course, the Cape Colony, held by the United Kingdom since the 1750s. Angola, held by Portugal, was somewhat significant as well. Thirty years later, Europe controlled 90% of Africa.

The “Scramble for Africa” occurred during Europe’s New Imperialism period, sandwiched neatly between the 1880s and the outbreak of the First World War. Africa was ripe for taking. And plundering. Naturally, Europeans felt that the process of colonization was good for the continent and to them, colonization was akin to civilization and nowhere on earth needed to be saved from sheer backwardness more than the “Dark Continent.” This stewardship of Africa was randomly viewed as a responsibility—an act of benevolence, acting as trustees until Africans could do it for themselves. But beneath the veneer, obscured by ersatz goodwill and caring, European action was motivated by commerce. Explorer David Livingston veiled the scramble on behalf of the British as an excuse to end slavery through application of the Three Cs: commerce, civilization, and Christianity. Convened by Otto von Bismarck, the Berlin Conference of 1884 acted as a sales event between European nations, eager not to antagonize each other while dividing the pie that was Africa. Europe would benefit immensely from the large-scale exploitation, the extent of which would only be apparent when decolonization happened. Africans were never trained,

empowered, or equipped to lead or manage their countries or their industry. Their land and resources were appropriated and plundered.

Great Britain was not happy. It desperately wanted to keep a direct line to India while establishing a Cape-to-Cairo railway system and, of course, collecting minerals along the way. To facilitate this they secured Egypt and then annexed or occupied: Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, British Somaliland, Botswana, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, and Malawi. In total, almost thirty percent of Africa. But it was South Africa they desired most: because diamonds. Until 1857, when diamonds were discovered, South Africa was mainly agricultural and consequently of little use to the British. By 1935, nearly 50% of Africa's total export was gold, and most of that gold came from South Africa. The British presence in the country was always closely linked to the fortunes and ambitions of others and a large influx of forces in 1795 secured the region from possible Napoleonic advances. In 1820, the British encouraged 5,000 of its citizens to settle in South Africa—their influence can still be felt with large numbers of English-speaking South Africans having links to these settlers and cities like Port Elizabeth, East London, and many more serving to remind settlers of the crown and where they came from.

All was not well in the colonies though, and in 1877, Lord Carnarvon, Secretary of State for the Colonies, wanted to extend imperial influence by establishing a federation of British colonies and Boer Republics. Carnarvon's policy required control over amaZulu land, a warrior kingdom bordering Natal and what was then the Transvaal. King Cetshwayo refused any demands to join any federation, or to disband his amaZulu army, as that would mean losing his power. War began in January 1879, when a British force invaded amaZulu land to enforce British demands. Not to be outdone, by 1880 the Anglo-Boer war broke out. Discord turned violent which led to a victory for the Boers, and in turn, saw the establishment of the South African Republic. Violence flared up again, and 1899 saw a second Anglo-Boer War—this time between the British colonies of the Cape and Natal, and the Boer Republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The war was devastating

however: the Boer's attacked first and did so by using guerrilla warfare. The British responded with a "Scorched Earth" policy, literally burning Boer farms and crops and putting the women and children in concentration camps. By 1902 the Treaty of Vereeniging ended the war, setting the stage for South Africa to declare the Cape Colony, Natal, Transvaal, and the Orange Free State as the Union of South Africa on May 31, 1910, under the British crown, but ruled by the Boers.

The situation was not easy to live with however. The British desperately wanted English to be the only official language of the Union, while the Mine and Works Act of 1911 essentially relegated Black workers to menial tasks and the Native Land Act of 1913 made sure that only 7% of land was reserved for Black ownership, eliminating the right of Black people to buy land anywhere outside that small percentage—and lastly, the British gave Black South Africans no voting rights. Most of these acts were fertile soil for the Apartheid regime, and conditions worsened until 1994 when the African National Congress (ANC) won power during the country's first democratic election, seeing Nelson Mandela elected as president.

Humiliation. And loss.

Underpinning much of the /Xam output is the group's precarious position on the edge of extinction at the hands of white settlers acting as an overture to what would become the wholesale subjugation exercise called Apartheid. Growing up under that regime and raised within an illusion of white supremacy, it was always strange to me that few wondered where this entitled worldview started. The Afrikaner was, to me, an enigma. A construct. At once proud and robust—yet fearful and filled with something akin to schoolyard bully bravado. They were Biff—a quasi-*Back to the Future* lunkhead who got what they did through intimidation, cajoling, or swindling. But how did they end up landing on the idea of separation? And why was this promising to be a winning formula? At its core was shame. Added to that was the lure of revenge as a mechanism to regain

self-esteem while replacing at least *some* lost dignity. And where this stems from, and how this shaped itself into Apartheid, is an interesting story.

South Africa has a history almost entirely constructed out of cycles of shame and upheaval. The Dutch were routinely shamed by the British since their occupation of the Cape in 1795, effectively ending the role of the Dutch East India Company in the region. The Cape became a prime British base prior to the Suez Canal's opening in 1869, and the Cape's economy was entirely entwined with that of Britain. To escape the British yoke, the Dutch (not quite ready to become Afrikaners) embarked on the Great Trek during 1839, which saw massive expansion north. That worked for roughly 50 years until the Anglo-Boer War—an indescribable horror for the by-now-Afrikaners seeing thousands of women and children die in concentration camps, and Boer fighters sent to prisoner-of-war camps on islands such as St Helena, and some as far as Ceylon, Bermuda, and India. Livelihoods were destroyed through a Scorched Earth policy leaving the cattle dead and grazing land salted—laying fallow—and houses were burnt to the ground. Families were destroyed, broken up, and plunged into extreme poverty—all while subjected to daily scorn under the English and the glory of Crown and Commonwealth.

On May 8, 1925, the Afrikaner took a tentative step toward gaining self-confidence and rebuilding some lost self-esteem. Twenty-three years after the Anglo Boer war, the Official Languages of the Union Act was passed—due to sustained efforts by the Afrikaans Language Movement—at a joint sitting of the House of Assembly and the Senate, declaring Afrikaans a variety of Dutch. It was a massive step forward. By 1939, still raw from the war and processing the collective grief it caused, the Afrikaner people organized an *Eenfees*—Century Festival—to celebrate that Great Trek, undertaken by men and women who represented something of an idealized version of the Afrikaner. A group that acted with courage—displaying pride—as they defied the British and showed an independent streak. It was nothing new or groundbreaking. It is—according to trauma specialists such as Dr. Vamik Volkan—what traumatized groups do. They revisit the past, exorcise their demons, and emerge stronger—

consolidated in their new-found unity. It's the origin story for every nationalistic utterance of "never again" (Volkan). To the Afrikaner, only they could drag themselves out of despair given their Germanic genes and no-nonsense attitude, and now they were developing a razor-focused determination to overcome and prevail. It came to a head in 1939, when South Africa was expected to fight alongside Britain in the Second World War with many Afrikaners refusing to do this, still raw from their previous war. The Afrikaner was enraged at Britain, its money, and its crown—and that they were expected to stand shoulder to shoulder with the enemy. A division in Afrikaner ranks was imminent—some openly supported Germany—and by 1948, Apartheid was born.

But white racism wasn't—isn't—an exclusively Afrikaner thing. It didn't suddenly manifest in 1948, out of nothing. And it's not endemic to South Africa. When the British arrived, they brought with them a brand of superiority that encapsulated race, but also showed up in social divisions. The hidden nature of British covert racism was harder to confront and more difficult to detect, and all the more insidious for it as, in the absence of proof or tangible examples, denialism was rampant and rendered the victim of discrimination silent and their plight, unacknowledged. For all its evils and wrongs, at least Afrikaner racism was overt—like Maya Angelou observed, "when someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time." The Apartheid policy showed everyone who the Afrikaner was and their signs spelled it out: "Slegs Blankes/Whites Only."

It could not be denied in the way that covert discrimination could be. Even today, among South Africans of English descent, confessions of racism are far and few between, primarily because to them, racism is overt. What is often overlooked is that formal Apartheid—separation—was introduced to the country by Cecil John Rhodes (of Rhodes Scholarship fame) in 1894 with the Glen Grey Act of 1948, and the official birth of Apartheid was merely the consolidation of Rhodes's 1894 Act. But the trauma, the scars, and the deep resentment would act as the backdrop to the tremendous violence that would soon follow.

The Role of Trauma

The stuff of trauma shapes us. It makes us *us*. The consequences and machinations of trauma reveal piecemeal, grinding unremittingly at collective consciousness. The adversity we are compelled to process is handed down as generational recipients of trauma: the line of succession carries on. Apartheid worked in the same, nefarious way: South Africans are made of the stuff of Apartheid. All of us are still shaped by it. We are resigned to the fact that we will not outlast Apartheid's legacy, and in lieu, we endeavor to manage the consequences. Our ancestors made a habitable segregated environment out of decaying trauma, which, in turn, still manipulates us as its recipients. We are, however, more than this. We are the cradle of humankind—the origin of Mrs. Ples and *Homo Naledi* (Cradle). We live by Ubuntu, the philosophy of being who we are because of each other (Metz). And yes, we gave the world Apartheid. Amid temporal shifts and evolved ideologies, however, fault lines have manifested, indicating a denial of past humiliation while extending beyond mere “history repeating.” George Santayana of the “Golden Age of the Harvard Philosophy Department” said that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (Mink). We selectively remember our past while humiliated by Nongqawuse¹⁵, Marikana¹⁶, the *Mfçane*¹⁷, the violent People's War¹⁸, and xenophobia. These events are part of a prism that attempts to understand our textured past.

Due to the insidious nature of Apartheid, there will always be trace elements of it in aspects of South African life. It is corrosive, prevailing in the torpidity of restorative economic equality. The Apartheid stain still shows up in comments by arch-conservatives like the Afriforum movement of chauvinist whites, unrepentantly prone to protecting white minority privilege at the expense of majority rights. Hankering for healing, while reapplying the a Band-Aid on the same hemorrhaging humiliation while losing hope, is not a strategy for sustainable success. A 2012 article in *The Atlantic* explains that “the narrative of South African exceptionalism has limited our analysis by making it difficult to see it as anything other than further evidence of the failure of South African liberation” (Magaziner).

The Soweto Uprising of June 16, 1976 was symptomatic of the rise of a new political consciousness that actively rebelled against the newly minted Bantu Education Act (Baker). The man associated most with Apartheid, HF Verwoerd, justified the Act by saying, “There is no place for [the African] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. It is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim, absorption in the European community” (NGO). The Apartheid government had just released various school textbooks using African tribal mythology in Afrikaans, instead of one of the other twelve recognized languages, resulting in a ferocious backlash and riots (Baker). There can be no doubt that the school system, which was segregated at its core with understaffed black schools surviving on meager funds and substandard syllabi, were a direct expression of an Apartheid regime ideology. However, the school system was segregated long before Apartheid started, while still under British rule, and a 1936 investigation into the issue had already diagnosed the problem. In his 2009 investigation of African colonial history, *The Pluralist*, TJ Curry notes that the “disposition toward blacks was firmly rooted in a colonial and assimilationist logic that ultimately sought the cultural destruction of African-descended people” (Curry).

Marikana: When Massacre Tests Democracy

When hasty analogies need to be made with the Apartheid regime, Marikana resurfaces. On August 16, 2012, the South African Police Service (SAPS) opened fire on platinum mineworkers at Marikana, a town in South Africa’s North West Province. The miners were striking for better wages and improved conditions. The police shot thirty-four, leaving seventy-eight seriously injured. Following the assault, 250 miners were arrested. As Charlayne Hunter-Gault reported a week later in *The New Yorker*: “The bloody episode in this eighteen-year-old Black-majority democracy takes many back to the days of white-minority rule, when policemen routinely fired on and killed thousands of South Africans fighting for their freedom. Now, the question many are asking is, Freedom for whom?”

The Marikana tragedy is so frequently misappropriated that it has all but lost political potency, becoming a reduced version of itself, in the same way that Benghazi became catnip for anti-Hillary propagandists during the run-up to the 2016 US Presidential election. The Marikana Massacre and Apartheid are not synonymic. Apartheid pre-ordained people of color to be disadvantaged by electoral inequality and disproportionately affected by a cumulative poverty problem. It is rooted in the country's Dutch and British colonial history, specifically as it pertains to land ownership and mineral rights. By contrast, the Marikana mineworkers were downing tools because they were exploited with scant support at board level. The politically motivated execution of the miners, who were striking in accordance with the constitution, was actioned by a post-Apartheid South African police force. The police acted on directives by the democratically elected president, Jacob Zuma. The slaughter proceeded with the tacit endorsement of Cyril Ramaphosa¹⁹, a non-executive director of the mining group, and Jacob Zuma's 2019 replacement as president of South Africa. Not Apartheid then. The point must be stressed that the fingerprint of Apartheid can be detected on all these actions, even on extreme perimeters. It is noteworthy, however, that in the South African context, Apartheid's fingerprints are frequently accompanied by those of new nationalism, nativism, and Afrophobia (Mbolo).

Since the fall of Apartheid, the African National Congress (ANC) has continued to expand on its language, which roots itself in elements of their chosen trauma. The expanded concept is prone to bloat. Once parameters are tested and deemed permissive, the extent to which additional instances and events can be accommodated are limitless. Within the South African context, the expanded version has accommodated the act of Apartheid, as well as actions perpetrated by rogue agents on the periphery of the political system. Frequently the actions fall outside the definition of Apartheid, but because of the malleable nature of segregationist doctrine, a confluence of ideologies may redefine the concept. William Gumede, associate professor at the University of the Witwatersrand School of Governance, writes that "the ANC in the past could use the bogeyman of

the continuing legacy of Apartheid to generate support, accusing opposition parties, whether white or black, of being linked to Apartheid, of accusing black opposition parties of being too inexperienced to govern and emphasizing its role as the defender of black interests. The scale of corruption, mismanagement, and incompetence of the ANC in government, have made these arguments increasingly unconvincing” (Gumede).

Nongqawuse and the Killing of the Cattle

There are flash points in South African history of such cataclysm that it solidifies as bedrock our collective trauma. One of the most contentious is a story of mass hysteria, fueled by superstition and fear. It parallels Salem, Massachusetts, with the exception that instead of now residing neatly in the pages of a play, the African version thrives as unprocessed trauma with contemporary political consequences.

The tale of Nongqawuse concerns a young girl, a prophet, who received a vision from the gods: “The whole community will rise from the dead; and all cattle now living must be slaughtered, for they have been reared by contaminated hands. There should be no cultivation.” The ancestors promised a return with new livestock, and the amaXhosa were instructed to prepare for their arrival, by slaughtering all their cattle and setting fire to their crops. The prophecy turned into reality as the amaXhosa commenced with the systematic slaughter of hundreds of thousands of cattle (Dall).

It was a critical time for the amaXhosa as the British were increasingly encroaching on amaXhosa land, introducing Christianity to the population as they made inroads into the territory. Despite the ancestors’ failure to intervene and increasing advances by the British, the amaXhosa continued with the destruction of their livelihood. The amaXhosa found themselves starving and living with the rancid stench of decay. Some of them had to survive by eating mimosa tree bark, and cases of cannibalism were reported, while several were forced to abandon their children. English

settlers were compensated for burying the corpses of the deceased, and some farmers were able to buy starving refugees as farm laborers (Davies).

The Nongqawuse tale is imprinted in the collective memory of many South Africans and has richly informed prevailing political mythology. Most recently, the venerated politician and writer Moeletsi Mbeki added his voice, when he said that the country is in the throes of what he termed a “Nongqawuse Syndrome” (Ncube). The transparency of this syndrome is so blithely homogenized with politically myopic values, that galvanized political parties like the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and the virulent Black Land First (BLF) utilize any blur to gaslight societal gains made since the halcyon days of 1994 and the Mandela democracy.

A prime example of this rhetoric was a 2018 comment by BLF president Andile Mngxitama when he suggested that “you kill one of us, we will kill five of you. We will kill their children, we will kill their women, we will kill anything that we find on our way” (Gous). This view, rooted in the humiliations of both Nongqawuse and Apartheid, led writer and philosopher Achile Bembe to say that the “Nongqawuse Syndrome is a populist rhetoric and a millenarian form of politics which advocates, uses, and legitimizes self-destruction or national suicide, as a means of salvation” (Mbolo).

Fairchance Ncube described how “If you don’t find this ‘Nongqawuse Syndrome’ in the utterances of the ANC, South African Communist Party (SACP), the EFF you haven’t been listening closely to their prophecies of economic freedom and promises of ushering the downtrodden masses to a ‘better life for all’ or dreams of establishing a ‘classless society’ and borderless South Africa among other lies” (Ncube). He continued that there is an appetite “to appeal to narratives of nativism and indigeneity as an indispensable basis for certain entitlements, particularly the land and its natural resources.”

The Crushing

Illustrating the effect of entitlement ideology is the *Mfane*, also known as the crushing. In simplest terms, Shaka kaSenzangakhona—founder of the Zulu empire—forced a mass migration leading to the death of an estimated two million people between 1820 and 1840. Some historians believe that the Shaka *Mfane* is exaggerated due to the Apartheid government's overstating black-on-black ruination as a mechanism to advance its agenda (Cobbing). Shaka did, however, move aggressively into the northern territories against the Swazi while expanding the Gaza Empire, paving the way for the Ndebele, a branch of the Zulu tribe under the leadership Mzilikazi Khumalo, to annex what is now south-western Zimbabwe. Undeniably, Shaka left a wasteland in his wake.

Dr. Vamik Volkan calls the tendency to selectively interpret history, “entitlement ideologies.” He connects it with the difficulty a dominant group faces in mourning physical loss or prestige, at the hands of an enemy. Bereavement is an obligatory human psychobiological response to a significant loss. He also points to the fact that soft diplomacy becomes increasingly harder to manage due to past fears, disillusionment, mythology, and fantasy colliding under microscopes of contemporary conflict (Volkan and Zintl).

A 1998 lecture by Dr. Volkan explains the process of acquiring “chosen trauma”—pointing out that the word “chosen” should not be interpreted as willful adoption or random appropriation. According to Volkan, the word indicates a subconscious process by which a group identifies with past injustice, grafting legitimate unresolved trauma onto collective consciousness, echoing in language like “We will never forget.” Dominant societies seldom dwell on chosen trauma, instead accusing smaller groups of deliberate cherry-picking, and “not getting over it.” Volkan notes that “while groups may have experienced any number of traumas in their history, only certain ones remain alive over centuries.” He goes on to explain that group mythology reflects undigested events and humiliations, with increased risks of the unprocessed humiliation, starting to define the group (Volkan and Itzkowitz). In simple terms, entitlement ideologies actualize into revenge philosophies

with debts to be recompensed. The terms of liability could comprise political bribery, economic advancement, or claiming innocence while condoning violence under a banner of chosen trauma.

Sparks of Real Terror

The People's War, which raged between 1984 and 1994, nearly brought South Africa to its knees in trying to establish the ANC as the single ruling party. Emboldened by Russian training, resultant eruptions of violence relied on a dual strategy: the first was a conviction that advancements can only be made through a combination of military and political tactics with a commitment to randomized guerrilla maneuvers (Jeffery). The second was an understanding of the enemy as multifaceted and, besides the Apartheid regime, included rival political and tribal factions who needed to be neutralized. The mechanisms to achieve desired levels of fear and confusion were extreme, and Jeffery writes: "It is the rising incidence of necklace executions that has sparked real terror." Jeffery writes about the murder of suspected Apartheid government mole Tansanqa Kinikini's eldest son in 1985, who was hacked to death and set alight. Kinikini saved his younger son from brutal murder by shooting him before the crowd could get to him. It launched a period that would see the ANC armed wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, necklace thousands as part of a war strategy with rival tribes, especially the amaamaZulu. Gumede controversially ventures that the constant inter-tribal guerrilla war was of potential benefit to the white National Party (NP), who could justifiably go to black residents and point at the violence espoused by a malevolent ANC government while ginning up some ersatz benefits of keeping the Apartheid status quo (Gordin). Gumede makes a textural point by affirming possible unintended consequences of violence, which is unacknowledged by the Apartheid Museum. It forms part of unresolved trauma's expansive causation challenge and what Volkan interprets as unprocessed generational humiliation, which defines the group while identifying shared enemies, resulting in disastrously nativist consequences (Volkan).

Modern South African nativist nationalism is hard to reconcile with the ethos of Nelson Mandela and the promise of the Rainbow Nation of 1994 as a place of inclusion and acceptance. I had the opportunity to talk with Zimbabwean artist Ronald Muchatuta, well regarded for *Xenophobia*, his series of paintings about his experience of attacks on African foreign nationals in South Africa. When entering South Africa, Muchatuta escaped a rabid mob who wanted to restrain and execute him for being a “Shona job stealer.” In *Xenophobia* he portrays the immolation of a young Zimbabwean woman by necklacing. The series follows her journey as she progresses from relaxing on a blanket; to her feet bound by a tire; then a match lit by elongated fingers; and finally, her upper body burning brightly. Her skin is covered in a “China bag” pattern, the bag used by fleeing refugees to carry what belongings they have left. Muchatuta did the same when leaving Bulawayo. I asked why the skin is patterned. He responded: “We *are* the bag. It defines us. When people see a China bag, they see a criminal—even President Ramaphosa believes that” (Muchatuta). Ronald is referring to a comment made by Ramaphosa that there is a link between refugees and criminality (Pressly). It is what journalist Achille Mbembe calls “the absurdity of this logic of insularity that is turning the country into yet another killing field for the darker people, ‘these foreigners.’ But it would not be absurd, since the government of South Africa is either unable or unwilling to protect those who are here legally from the ire of its people, to appeal to a higher authority.” Mbembe makes a point that “we should all be making sure that we rebuild this continent and bring to an end a long and painful history—that which, for too long, has dictated that to be black (it does not matter where or when), is a liability.”

how the approach of a commando is foretold by the fog

—as told by Diälkwain on August 11, 1875, transcribed by Lucy Lloyd

in the time before we are attacked

when they are still only planning to attach us

there is a fog in the morning which is sitting over there
it is our fog

when they start shooting at us in the fog
when we make clouds
our blood starts to smoke
it feels as if people are shooting at us in the fog
that is why we make clouds even before they reach us
that is why some of us say: a battle is coming

my father told it to me:
that a fog rises when a battle is coming
then the others have to fight us in the fog
after the battle in the fog, they go away

this is what the fog does
it makes them leave
it makes them leave us alone
only when the fog lifts
because it feels our blood has flown
this is why the fog leaves
it feels that our blood which made so many clouds
has finished flowing

5

The 2nd Susurrus

the young man and the lion

as told by !Kweiten-ta-//ken, on January 4 and 5, 1875, adapted by Antjie Krog

while hunting the young man becomes sleepy

he lies down and falls asleep under a bush

in the heat of the day lion comes

the lion drags the man near a blackthorn tree

the lion is thirsty, it leaves to drink water

the lion does not want to be thirsty when it eats a man

the man in the blackthorn tree turns his head

at that moment the lion turns around

is the man moving? Is he still alive?

the lion trots back, because it is the lion that makes the man sleepy

the lion moves the man so that his head is more comfortable amongst the branches

it licks the tears from the young man's face

the young man looks the lion in the eye

the lion looks the young man steadfastly in the eye licking the tears

the lion trots back to the water

when the lion disappears over the hill

the young man leaps up and runs home

his mother wraps him in hartebees skins
his mother wraps him in mats
she burns herbs so that the lion won't smell him
she covers him with branches

but suddenly the lion appears on the ridge
the people grab their quivers
they run forward to challenge the lion
they let loose their arrows but nothing happens to the lion
the lion keeps coming

'we have to throw a child to the lion so that it'll leave us alone'
they throw a child in front of the lion
but the lion says: 'I do not want a child
I want the young man whose tears I have licked'
the people throw more children
but the lion ignores them
the people throw assegais
but the lion keeps coming
it claws the huts, it tears them asunder

'we have to throw a girl to the lion so that it leaves us alone'
they throw a girl in front of the lion
but the lion says: 'I do not want a girl
I want the young man whose tears I've licked'

the people stab the lion, but nothing happens
the lion keeps coming
then they call the mother of the young man
'you will have to give your son to the lion, even though he is the child of your heart
or the lion will never leave us, it insists on having your son'

the mother of the young man says:

'I will give my child to the lion
but you will not allow the lion to eat my child
and then let it walk about
you will kill it when it kills my child
so that it will die when my child dies.'

then they take the young man from the hartebees skins
and give him to the lion
and the lion places his big paws on the shoulders of the young man
and the young man the neck
and the people stab the lion, they stab and stab
while the lion bites the young man in his neck

then the lion says: 'now I can die
because I have found the young man I was searching for
I found him'
and the lion dies while lying on the man
the dying young man

Brusque Expressions of Melancholy the girls who picked gara berries

One of the few female voices in the /Xam story—transcribed by Schultzea-//ken, also known as Rachel, was a “Grass Bushman,” from the moSome girls went out to pick gara berries, Cape. Not having spent time at the Breakwater Prison anand they all went there and picked anthropometric measurements, little is known about her them. But all the others picked sourpometry and its counterpart disciplines, biological anthropology aberries and only one of the girls picked Darwinian concept of racial hierarchy. Unsurprisingly, thsweet berries. And when it got late they “scientific evidence” of “racial differences” and have lonall went home. As the sun went down colonialism) to justify oppression. These sciences justifiethy spoke to each other: “Let us taste the l in some cases, biblical and moral. And to make matters wberries.” And they tasted the berries and all variety stewed up on the margins of society; they were dtheir berries were sour. Then they said to the institutions²⁰ of higher learning. Viewed like this, racism girl who had sweet berries: “Your berries are at the core of philosophy and anthropology, as opposed not good, go back and go pick where we had

WH Bleek’s notes mention that !Kweiten-ta-//kpicked!” So she turned around and went back tempered. Her feet were so tiny that the outgrown bootto pick more. As it was getting dark they shat for her” (Bleek & Bleek). Lucy Lloyd was exceptionally some shit in the place [to help her find home]. change, who could provide more information on female customs, rituals, and experiences.

!Kweiten-ta-//ken lodged at the Mowbray housWhen she came back to that place where the 1875, her dictations taking place over a remarkably abrtothers had left her, she called for them.ary 1875 (Skotnes). Bleek scholars have noted that !KweiterThen the heap of shit answered: “Here!” drama of //Kabbo’s work, and she frequently interrupso it answered, but she could not see anybody end of the story too early or veering off-course, possibl and walked past.ional style of storytelling not squaring up well with the ever-meticulous Lloyd’s ethnographic technique, which saw sidenotes and explanations taking up more space on paper than the narration itself. Dorothea Bleek recalled how !Kweiten-ta-//ken longed to go home and that the thought of being stuck in Mowbray without her

children was unthinkable to her. Based on his notes and Then she came to the place where the hare Bleek grew due to his reticence at bearing sustenance esat ladling water, and she said: “Pour me 1g children, who resided with her at the house, and resultsome!” But the hare answered: “This Tellingly, Lloyd did not invite !Kweiten-ta-//ken back ttortoise shell cup is my grandfather’s and it, indicating that the two women also had a less than stellmine, and only meant for us.” But she

In her collection of /Xam poetry, Antjie Krog grabbed the cup away from the hare and metaphoric take on dominant tribalism suddenly threatdrank. The hare ran to the one with the ort. The inexpressible “otherness” causes societal hysteria rgreat mane and told him everything:ible cultural decimation, and it leads where good African tales frequently do: a sacrifice. Throughout her narration, !Kweiten-ta-//ken remains somewhat aloof, devoid of emotion, resigned to the inevitability of it all. Her tale centers on magnetic energy between the young man and the lion, and their brief interactions have a quiet intensity. Reading the text, a homoerotic overtone emerges, aided somewhat by Krog’s arrangement:

the lion moves the man so that his head is more comfortable amongst the branches
 it licks the tears from the young man’s face
 the young man looks the lion in the eye
 the lion looks the young man steadfastly in the eye licking the tears

!Kweiten-ta-//ken drives her narrative by limiting descriptions and, instead, relying on actions that steer clear of ephemera or flights of imagination as the /Xam men are prone to do in their tales. Her tone remains realistic—bordering on hard—underlining the lion’s calculated nature. A notable feature is her repetition of certain words and phrases. The result is dramatic and hypnotic.

tin the heat of the day lion comes
 the lion drags the man nor a blackthorn tree
 the lion is thirsty, it leaves to drink water
 the lion does not want to be thirsty when it eats a man

!Kweiten-ta-//ken's tales are among the most succinct in the Bleek and Lloyd collection, often appearing visceral and violent. Her jagged style and the occasional hardness in her tone reflects a daily reality of extreme economic uncertainty as the pragmatic matriarch of a nomadic household. She deals with the female Bushman experience in a frank manner. Another of Kweiten-ta-//ken's tales, "What the Man did with his Pregnant Wife," tells of a man who accuses his wife of eating all the meat because of her visibly swollen belly (Krog). When he cuts her open with a knife to check, he cries as he sees her "filled with child" before exclaiming:

my wife! my wife!
 I thought you had stuffed yourself with meat
 but you have stuffed yourself with child
 he sharpens a stick and sews her up.

But what about the Lion?

Among the Bushmen, threading its way through folklore is the ambiguous lion. An imposing, fear-inducing goofball who is "everywhere the vanquished party . . . His strength does not make him the equal of cleverer, more gifted animals" (D. Bleek 1929, 304). A lion is occasionally referenced as "father"—not necessarily indicating any familial connections—because the /Xam word *!koin* is listed in Bleek's *The Bushman Dictionary* as "grandfather, uncle, old man" (D. Bleek 1956, 440)—there's a feel-good factor to the word. The lion also happens to be any sorcerer or trance dancer's favorite incarnation, and malevolent spirits—often those of dead trance dancers—were believed to prowl around in lion form. Diä!kwain's version of "The Young Man and the Lion" points to the lion as a sorcerer having assumed the guise.

And the (other) people speaking, said: "In what manner were ye shooting at the lion that ye could not manage to kill the lion?" And another old man spoke, he said: "Can

ye not see that (it) must be a sorcerer? It will not die when we are shooting at it; for, it insists upon (having) the man whom it carried off.” (Bleek and Lloyd. 1911, 187)

Sorcerers have somewhat of a reputation when it comes to young Bushmen and their sexuality. They are known to prowl and spy, especially on young men who—woozy after initiation rites—make willing prey, and they have been known to present in the shape of a beautiful young maiden only to change back post-coitally into sorcerer form, to the surprise of the duped young man.

Some naysayers prefer lions to be potent political forces, while some contemporary interpreters insist we view /Xam texts in strict historical context. To that end, we may assume that on violence-ridden colonial borders a lion will symbolize a white settler. The Nama Bushman oral tradition tells of growing resistance to colonial encroachment and an emerging lion-as-trickster template reflects this, updated from the earlier jackal trickster. In Nama stories, the word for “Boer” or “settler” is frequently substituted with the word “lion” a figure associated with aggression and predatory behavior in /Xam and Khoi cultures. In his 1778 travel diary, Robert Gordon records a Sunei Bushmen opinion, that “they say we [colonists] are evil and come in the night like wolves [hyenas], and have hair like lions” (McGranaghan). The similarities don’t end there. Colonist commandos mostly attacked Bushman settlements at dawn and these nocturnal strikes by heavily bearded men played up to the lion caricature. The image of hirsute settler as hairy lion is embedded in the Bushman imagination. During 2007 negotiations between the †Khomani Bushman group and South Africa’s National Parks Council (SANParks) over access to ancestral hunting grounds in the Kalahari, Jan van der Westhuizen used jackal and lion symbology to illustrate an unequal power structure:

“We have also had a tremendous struggle with the Parks. We call them the young male lion as he is a rich gentleman and we are the small jackals that just get a small bit of bread, or just wait for a small piece here and there of the bones or to scratch open the

stomach contents once the young male lion is finished. And we ask that they ... give back to the people what was lost to them over all the centuries” (Dyll-Myklebust).

It is therefore no surprise that Bushmen valued the lion as a figure of power with skillsets far exceeding mere physical strength or hunting prowess or the ability to work cooperatively with the pride. In the Bushman worldview, lions understand human language. They send flies on missions to eavesdrop on humans. Lions recruit crows to spy on their behalf and get owls to speed up the setting sun, thereby depriving victims of the light needed to make their way home—much easier to catch. Add demon-like powers with shamanistic cunning and you have a veritable nightmare on your hands. Finally, from a purely practical point of view, lions have a reputation for payback. *Diä!kwain* explains it by mentioning:

Our parents used to say that if the lion did not find food at the place of the kill, he would be angry and say to himself, ‘Just you wait a bit; because you seem to have carried off all my food, I will do as you have done to me, I will follow your footprints, I will go and seize one of your men in his sleep and eat him. For you seem to have forgotten that I, too, am hungry (Hollman).

A key factor, however, separating “The Young Man and the Lion” from the settler/Boer/Lion as bumbling fool trope, is found in the title of the work—specifically *Diä!kwain*’s version: “The Young Man of the Ancient Race, Who Was Carried off by a Lion, when Asleep in the Field.” *Ancient race*—meaning *early race*.

/Xam narrations, especially those about the Early Race appear removed from reality—social and cultural—as opposed to being informed by them, as is the case with stories set in the later period—especially stories about direct confrontation with settlers. Early Race characters seem to hover over proceedings instead of “dwelling” in the moment. Realities shift as animals start to exhibit human

qualities, while the people in the stories frequently display fragility, and the narration comes across as somewhat slippery, shifting course or indicating transformation at a moment's notice.

Throughout their narration, Bleek and Lloyd's storytellers refer to a Primal Time or First Order inhabited by the Early Race. It is in this place, remote in both distance and temporality, that most of their stories take place. During the First Order, people were animals and animals were people, but the First Order is not necessarily removed from the current period. It's this conflation—of past and present; fantasy and reality—that gives the /Xam storytelling tradition its ambiguity (Guenther). Maintaining this sense of ambiguity is vital to their storytelling tradition—expressing itself in ways not entirely anticipated—challenging readers who may have expected recognizable structures or predictable outcomes. Take for example, the elaborate rituals before the hunt and the empathic exchanges between the hunter and hunted which rely heavily on presentiments and guidance by ancestors and the humanity afforded some animals. Guenther finds that the trance dancers shift states between spirit and animal, and between life and death, and “before the moment of collapse, they stand on the threshold of both realms, in full view of the spectators and participants, who witness the dancer's intense experience of dissociation (Guenther). Reading tales as collected by Bleek and Lloyd, it is not always immediately apparent if the story is set in Primal Time or the current time. Professor JD Williams of the University of the Witwatersrand suggests that the informants did not specify at the time of narration—possibly because they assumed the ethnographers would know. But in some stories, the narrator leaves no doubt—they include the Prime Order reference in the title, and “The Young Man of the Ancient Race, Who Was Carried off by a Lion, when Asleep in the Field” is one of those.

A recurring theme in Bushman mythology is the relationship between shaman and lion. Not all lions are created equal—mythologically speaking or otherwise. Good shamans can be lions too, but as a rule of thumb, a shaman in lion form is probably up to no good, as pointed out in the 1982 ethnographic study on the Kgalagadi !Kung by the appropriately named Richard Katz. Fellow

Crimson scholar Elizabeth Marshall Thomas who, as part of the Harvard Peabody Southwest Africa excursions, lived among the Kgalagadi Ju/'hoan during the 1950s, realized that each Bushman group develops a unique relationship with the local pride. In some instances, as with many volatile relationships, a live-and-let-live arrangement prevails—a certain acceptance of the shared environment, accompanied by a high level of avoidance. Truth be told, leopards are considered more dangerous—and less predictable.

Both leopard and lion belong to a higher group of predators, which generally compete with the Bushmen, thereby forcing bushmen to forgo specific food options. Lion, leopard, hyena, African wild dog, and jackal are White Meat Animals. They show a strong preference for Red Meat Animals—kudu, eland, springbok, gemsbok, and giraffe—while also displaying an appetite for Great Meat Animals—Roan and Sable. Lastly, Black Meat Animals comprise warthog and wildebeest. Great and Red Meat Animals are considered most potent by Bushmen and, coincidentally, by the White Meat Animals, thereby setting up a clash in the wild over prey. Complicating matters somewhat, White Meat Animals have also over time developed a taste for the domesticated animals kept by the Bushmen: cattle, sheep, dogs—nothing is safe from predatory White Meat Animals. Neither are humans. Given this tense relationship, the Bushmen developed fear-based mythologies, especially around lions. Marshall Thomas mentions in her study notes that the Ju/'hoansi viewed lions in much the same way as evil marauding spirits:

As during trance-dances, trancing people would confront the //gauasi (spirits of the dead), so too would they confront lions, running out into the darkness while in trance for the purpose of encountering lions whom they would then vilify verbally. It was my strong impression that on these occasions lions were not actually present, or not very often, but were believed to be aware of the trancers, just the same (Marshall Thomas).

Undaunted—and perhaps emboldened—some Bushman tales take a satirical turn directed at settler proliferation and frequently does so in extreme forms. A story of a “magic flute” sees Jackal sell a flute to a settler claiming that the flute has the power to resurrect the dead. The duped Boer/settler kills his wife, tries to wake her, fails, and realizes that the flute is useless. One story sees Jackal setting fire to a farmhouse with the explicit purpose to become lord over the white children; while in another—a cross-dressing narrative—Jackal shows up as a woman and gains employment as a maid in the Boer household, using the opportunity to sleep with the Boer’s daughter. Unfortunately, she falls pregnant and the cajoled Boer tries to kill Jackal, who has a narrow escape (Schmidt). In these frequently ribald stories, anti-establishment resistance is palpable, and by substituting the Boer and Lion, naïve, everyday fables about lions and jackals become shorthand for a lived experience, where a perpetually outwitted lion is a handy metaphor for an easily-fooled Boer.

Illinois-born Bradford Keeney, considered a *n/om-kxao* (healer) by the Kalahari Bushmen, describes the shaman’s transformation into lion shape: “Their ears change shape and they grow lion’s fur. Their hands become identical to a lion’s paws and they roar mightily” (Keeney). But these changes are not visible to everybody, and “[w]hen a healer [shaman] changes into a lion, only other healers can see him.

To ordinary people, he is invisible” (Katz). On these grounds, we may well surmise that !Kweiten-ta-//ken’s lion is a malevolent shaman trying to take advantage of a young man’s innocence—and carelessness—having fallen asleep while out hunting and squarely behind the man’s sleepiness, whether by potion or spell.

And he turned about, he lay down because the lion was the one who make him sleepy. And, he slept, slept, lying upon the hill. And he lion come as he lay; and he saw the lion, that a lion it was.

Crimes of Otherness

Against a background of symbols and social commentary, “The Lion and The Young Man” is a deceptively simple story of /Xam fear about value systems, and their security in what has become a colonial country—and how that security is compromised by actions that go against the group and its doctrines. It bears remembering that this fear of “otherness” is not unique to the /Xam, nor exclusively related to sexual expressions, and is frequently found where diversity clashes with society. It’s a “don’t rock the boat” kind of thing.

A central message in “The Lion and The Young Man” revolves around a rights issue that unfolds when behaviors have to be modified, and self-expression is better left unexpressed, if not completely hidden. Concealing the young man in skins, mats, and branches speaks directly to how society regulates what we wear and how much of ourselves we are allowed to reveal. By regulating the individual’s clothes, hierarchy is maintained while removing—disguising—aspects of the person considered less acceptable (Robson). Carl Wittman describes this challenge in his *Refugees from Amerika* when he reflects that “we’ve lived in these institutions all our lives. Naturally, we mimic the roles. For too long, we mimicked these roles to protect ourselves—a survival mechanism. Now we are becoming free enough to shed the roles which we’ve picked up from the institutions which have imprisoned us.” But society does not lightly bury a hate hatchet. And nor do all individuals.

Central to the contemporary LGBTQ+ movement in Africa is a die-hard belief that Africanism and queerness do not mix—a constant refrain from African conservatives and a central component in understanding the pressures on Africans to modify their behavior. Noel Kututwa of Amnesty International explains that “in Africa homosexuality is nothing new. In fact, there are cave paintings which have been found in Zimbabwe which are more than two thousand years old of male-to-male sex.” Kututwa continues by pointing out that we “find that in most African languages there are terms for homosexuality and those who have studied culture will say that once you find a

term in a particular language that's indicative of the fact that [the] phenomenon is there and is accepted.”

Kututwa's view notwithstanding, it still leaves us with the unaddressed dilemma of contemporary homophobia among African leaders. Thirty-four out of fifty-four African states prohibit same-sex relationships—punishable by death in some. Rampant African homophobia led human rights campaigner, Peter Tachell, to say that “the real import into Africa was not homosexuality but homophobia” (Smith).

But it is essential to know that colonialism isn't neat and exclusively British or Dutch. It didn't end on a specific date, and it doesn't serve as a catch-all term for “heavens-to-Betsy we don't do that around these parts” kind of stuff. Certain Christian evangelical groups based in the United States are continuously attempting cultural colonization of Africa, and the boogymen of the moment are, still, homosexuality and abortion. Televangelist Pat Robertson's American Centre for Law and Justice (ACLJ), together with the Catholic Human Life International, and Mormon activist Sharon Slater's Family Watch International, have all expanded their attempts at fanning the flames of the culture wars in Africa (Smith).

Prominent Anglican priest, Zambia's Rev. Dr. Kapya Kaoma writes that “the nuclear family that Western conservatives promote is foreign to Africans. Traditional African communities did not beat or abuse their LGBT members. Some even believed they had extraordinary powers.” Kaoma insists in his seminal *Exporting the Anti-Gay Movement* that “it is homophobia, not homosexuality, that is being imported to the continent by neocolonialists with an agenda: to spread U.S. culture wars worldwide.” He concludes by saying that the continued, weaponized, and increasingly dangerous attempt at demonizing LGBTQ+ Africans “is the actual manifestation of neocolonialism on the continent” (Kaoma).

The Gambia's Yahya Jammeh has gone as far as to announce that “we will fight these vermins called homosexuals or gays the same way we are fighting malaria-causing mosquitoes, if not more

aggressively” (Saine). Notably, this was the kind of language used in the 1994 Rwandan genocide when eight hundred thousand Tutsis were slaughtered over one hundred days by Hutu extremists.

Uganda has, since 2019, been threatening to reinstate its 2014 “Kill the Gays” bill, which effectively stepped up the penalty for homosexuality from life imprisonment to death. The Ugandan Minister of Ethics and Integrity, Simon Lokodo, has publicly floated an idea that gay proliferation is due to what he terms “massive recruitment” among the youth and schools. While some, like Human Rights Watch, feel that views like those held by Lokodo represent efforts to gain political traction in their flailing careers, the effects of these pronouncements are profound. Local newspapers have been known to publish lists of “top homos,” ordinary citizens are routinely murdered for being suspected of being gay, and LGBTQ+ Ugandans are advised to flee the country and seek asylum in more progressive counties (Fitzsimons).

Homosexuality has never been criminalized in Benin, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, or Rwanda—state intimidation is another story. Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, and Seychelles have decriminalized homosexuality. Gay travelers to Africa are routinely warned to put a lid on PDAs and keep their consulates on speed dial, although in reality, this advice is meted out to heterosexual couples as well.

South Africa is by far the most gay-friendly African state with same-sex marriage legal since 2006. Cape Town is home to the Masjid Ul-Umam mosque, Africa’s first gay-friendly place of worship for LGBTQ+ Muslims, where Muhsin Hendricks acts as imam over a safe space that has developed organically over twenty-three years, started by a predominantly Muslim LGBTQ+ rights group (Lazareva). Neighboring Namibia now grudgingly accepts gay-married South Africans, while Mauritius is considering legalizing same-sex unions.

Illustrating the uncomfortable standoff is neighboring Zimbabwe. Reverend Canaan Banana was the country’s first head of state after independence from Great Britain in 1980. In a story that

makes other political sex scandals appear parish pump, by comparison, Rev. Banana became embroiled in a sex scandal when in 1997, Jefta Dube, Banana's bodyguard, shot and killed a man for calling him "Banana's wife," an accusation based on the fact that Dube had been forced into a sexual relationship with Banana for three years. It bears noting that Banana passed a law in 1980 forbidding jokes about his name.

By the time of the court case and allegations, Robert Mugabe—Banana's erstwhile Prime Minister since 1980 and now President—had to walk back years of anti-gay vitriol accusing Britain of a plot to spread gayness through the Commonwealth saying among other things, that "we as chiefs should fight against western practices," and continuing that "British homosexuals are worse than dogs and pigs." Ultimately, Banana was convicted on 11 counts of assault—he had forced himself, among others, also on other bodyguards, gardeners, and cooks (Steyn).

Amnesty International's Kututwa stresses the fact that "when colonialism came, and with it the laws that governed colonialism, anti-gay laws came in" (Eyewitness). He is correct—the draconian laws and punishments for sexual diversity, commonly held by despotic African leaders, are Victorian leftovers. The thought process is a congested one seeing how their second favorite hate-subject is Victorian colonialism itself.

During the period of imperial diversification, the African body and its methods of expression were a prime focus of endeavors to redeem a graceless barbarian. Victorians, including Bleek, viewed the African definition of sexuality as nymphomaniacal and the people as ribald über-fornicators with a penchant for bestiality (Van den Heever). This fetishized and objectified view persists in various guises, not least of which linguistically with words like Mandingo—the name of a tribe in Sierra Leone since 1623—also referring to generously endowed African men.

Several African languages have pre-colonial words for post-colonial taboos, and the Elizabethan adventurer Andrew Battell, described the Imbangala (of what is now Angola) as "bestly in their living, for they have men in women's apparel, whom they keepe among their wives."

Battell is near-apoplectic when he loses all English restraint and divulges that “women witches ... [who] use unlawfull lusts betweene themselves in mutuall filthinesse” (Burton).

Closer to !Kweiten-ta-//ken, the eighteenth century Khoikhoi used the term koetsire to describe sex between men and even had a word, soregus, for their version of friends with benefits (Evaristo). Another Bushman group, the San, were hunter-gatherers, spread across Southern Africa, inhabiting the region north of the Limpopo for at least one hundred thousand years. The San left a wealth of artifacts and cave paintings behind as a result of the Bantu expansion two thousand years ago. One cave painting dating back to 8000 BCE shows several couples engaged in same-sex sexual activities (Reid-Smith). The depiction is essential to our understanding of ancient Bushman culture, as well as the amnesiac results of contact with the outside world which succeeded in putting the kibosh on some indigenous Africans’ sexual proclivities.

But it’s Not Just an African Thing

But this is hardly an exclusively African problem. Africa does not exist in isolation, and more frequently than not, it emulates what the United States does and listens to what Britain says. A 2013 study Ruthann Robson on the U.S. Constitution and how it has affected dress and dress codes caught my eye. It seems that notwithstanding temporal and distance divides, expressions of sexual otherness and the reaction it elicits are universal. Robson pauses at the 2000 US Supreme Court decision, *Boy Scouts of America v Dale*, when the Court sided with the Boy Scouts. The private organization revoked former Eagle Scout and assistant scoutmaster James Dale’s adult membership when they learned that Dale was gay and a gay rights activist.

The Supreme Court essentially delivered a tit for tat: if Dale flaunted his sexual expression, citing his First Amendment right, the Scouts could discriminate against him, citing their First Amendment right. In his dissent, Justice Stevens sharply criticized the ruling by stating that the judgment rendered Dale’s sexual expression an inferiority symbol while placing group identity and its

symbols in a superior position. Stevens quoted the Court decision verbatim, sharply criticizing those who viewed Dale's sexual identity as "a banner around his neck," ensuring that Dale "can't take that banner off" (93).

The LGBTQ+ community is vulnerable when crossing the line between sexual orientation and hierarchy. In *We've Been Here All Along*, Richard Wagner pauses at the Lavender Scare of 1952, which promised that a Republican victory in November of that year would ensure the expulsion of "lavender lads" from the State Department. The toxic-for-gays combination of McCarthy, Eisenhower, and Hoover led to Executive Order 10450, which barred gays from federal employment, including private contracting, and the military.

A fractured version of Executive Order 10450 remained in play until President Bill Clinton signed the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy of 1995. What Carl Wittman referred to as "institutionalized conformism and self-denial within social constructs," frequently, and with astonishing dexterity, leads to a Potemkin village constructed on "love the sinner" bigotry. It is a volatile beast, which at its worst, condones basic human rights violations and, in some cases, worse.

In 1988 Matthew Shepard was pistol-whipped by two homophobic men who tied him to a fence in freezing weather before setting him on fire. They left him to die. Wyoming law at the time did not accommodate that the two men may be charged with a hate crime. Ironically, things do get better, and the Matthew Shepard Act signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2009 allows acts of violence motivated by the victim's identity to be tried as hate crimes (Bindel). Shepard's ashes were only interred in October 2018 at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. It took that long for his family to feel that his remains would not be desecrated (Simon).

The struggle continues. Internet celebrity Coach Dave Daubenmire, a 2020 keynote speaker for Ohio's Harrison County Republican Party, proclaimed that "we need to make homosexuality unthinkable again," referring to Pete Buttigieg's sexual orientation. Fellow Republicans quickly hailed

the fundraiser a success, with executive committee member Chuck Harrah saying the event brought together “like-minded people” who “believe in Christian values” (Parsons).

Currently, the Gay and Trans Panic Defense legitimizes and excuses violent and lethal behavior against members of the LGBTQ+ community. The defense is defined by the LGBT Bar as “a legal strategy which asks a jury to find that a victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity is to blame for the defendant’s violent reaction, including murder.” This legally sanctioned discrimination against sexual orientation and gender identity is legal across most of the United States. Only California, Illinois, Rhode Island, Nevada, Connecticut, Maine, Hawaii, and New York, have passed legislative bans on gay/trans panic as legal defense.

There is no new misappropriation of ideology here: a sizable chunk of straight whiteness has tried, and succeeded, to demonize the otherness of “sexual deviancy.” It’s in the vocabulary when Justice Amy Coney Barrett, in her 2020 Supreme Court confirmation hearing, evasively pleaded ignorance after dog-whistling that she has “never discriminated on the basis of sexual preference and would not discriminate on the basis of sexual preference” (Ring).

And so we arrive at the place where “The Lion and The Young Man” meets a turn of phrase that has always been archaic and offensive. A place where willful use of “sexual preference” or “homosexual conduct” is used as a mechanism in “protecting themselves and their families from a lifestyle that they believe to be immoral and destructive” (Scalia). It aims, once more, to put the young man, already insecure within his orientation, on notice.

Seduction

When I first read the section on the “covering up of the young man” it made little impression. As a young man, the idea of presenting an image of yourself as more acceptable or more conspicuous, depending on the need, was really just Saturday night. Now, years later and living in the USA— with the added wisdom and greater empathy—I re-read the section, reminded of

African masks used in tribal ceremonies representing ancestors, harnessing good spirits against forces of evil. While allowing some entities to come to life, the masks do not represent specific people or animals—even when taking on the appearance of an individual or animal. Instead, it is a spirit—a force—that enters the mask, and whatever the wearer does or says will be attributed to the mask’s spirit. In some cases, the mask takes on an elaborate form, covering the entire body, rendering the wear unidentifiable. Keeping the mask on is vital, as prematurely removing it will cause great offense to the mask’s spirit, forcing it to embark on a quest for revenge. These wearers of the mask—hidden and camouflaged—act as a kind of social conscience, a reminder to the people of their fallibilities and moral inadequacy.

In her pared-down style, !Kweiten-ta-//ken describes the young man in generic terms. She starts from a basic position that lions are going to do what lions do, especially when considering the text as a gnarly metaphor. /Xam texts frequently have a choreographed quality. The first twelve lines comment on the certainty of predatory behavior. !Kweiten-ta-//ken knows—part of a justified collective Bushman paranoia—that power exchanges are consequential at least, and catastrophic at worst. The story pivots on a few short lines, which form a *cri de coeur* *within* the story. The young man assumes a closeted stance—camouflaged and muted. His mother insists that he changes his appearance. How they react to the lion and whatever it represents, the decisions they make over the next few lines will affect the story’s outcome.

his mother wraps him in hartebees²¹ skins

his mother wraps him in mats

she burns herbs so that the lion won’t smell him

she covers him with branches

The young man’s state is unacceptable—compromised—and has manifested by piquing the attention of an alpha figure. The man hides his shape, changes his form, and !Kweiten-ta-//ken’s version mentions that “he burns !kui-sse root²² to hide his smell.” Krog’s adaptation simply

mentions that the mother burns herbs while !Kweiten-ta-//ken's original naming of the wild grassy herb gives the section greater immediacy. The young man emerges transfigured, modulated, and after his mother girdles him with branches, he has become undetectable. His personality, shape, smell, and presence have been recalibrated into something that effectively silences him.

Besides a homo-erotic undercurrent, the text suggests that beyond conjecture, the lion is a force of nature, representing iterations of fundamentally challenging expressions of "otherness," whether that be colonialism, white settler spread, foreign custom, smallpox, or sexual identity. Irrespective of content, the cleansing rituals undertaken by the young man and his mother, the matriarch, are frantic. When the negotiations with the villagers and the lion commence the young man is neutralized—stripped down to a reset position.

A contemporary take on the tribal mask and its social relevancy are found in the work of Chicago-based artist Nick Cave, a gay Black man, who created his the first Soundsuit—a sensory construction of adornments, sticks, and twigs that rustle when they move—in reaction to the 1991 beating of the unarmed Rodney King by four white police officers in Los Angeles. Cave felt the need for a layer of protection, imagining a suit as a kind of "second skin, or a suit of armor" which "erases gender, race, and class." At the time, Cave said that "I remember thinking that my identity is really only protected in the privacy of my own home. That the moment I leave this space, I could be just another profile." Over time, Cave's words ring with even more urgency. His Soundsuits are elegant, extravagant sculptures, evoking shamanistic or tribal costume. The performative aspect of the Soundsuit is essential to their meaning and value; Cave regards them as transformative objects with life-affirming potential when they are worn. The work creates visual tension. With his work, Cave ponders "the role identity, being racial profiled, feeling devalued, less than, dismissed." Each Soundsuit confronts discrimination both as sculpture and costume. As with tribal masks—or indeed like the young man concealed and dressed in skins, twigs, and screens—being concealed eliminates

knowledge of the wearer's identity, gender, sexual orientation, or class. This obfuscation of identity proves liberating, life-affirming, and some cases, life-saving. The frequency by which society jumps to broad-brushed value judgment—assigning superiority or desirability based on nothing more than a visual cue—explains why concealing identity is invigorating, and at worse, needed. Concealment of the young man is designed to hide his identity, to have him go unnoticed and force a shift in his social worth. The young man as wearer of his “suit” is unidentifiable—a reminder of fallibility and moral inadequacy.

!Kweiten-ta-//ken follows the concealment of the young man's identity by setting up a vivid, structured confrontation between the village's tribalism and its adversary. She positions a phalanx of community members who evolve during their negotiations with the mother before setting their sights on the ominous, obvious threat. She makes them appear in cycles and their continued—at times frenetic—actions are not extreme given the setting. It's a negotiated settlement. And it resembles life.

“we have to throw a child to the lion so that it'll leave us alone”

they throw a child in front of the lion

but the lion says: “I do not want a child

I want the young man whose tears I have licked”...(29-32)

Emotions rise. The confrontation between the establishment and its ingrained bias against what the lion represents leads to a tense standoff.

“we have to throw a girl to the lion so that it leaves us alone”

they throw a girl in front of the lion

but the lion says: “I do not want a girl

I want the young man whose tears I've licked”...(38-41)

The mother responds with a monologue that stands as a *pietà* to denial, rejection, and sacrifice in the face of the slash-and-burn plague that was AIDS in the 80s.

“I will give my child to the lion
 but you will not allow the lion to eat my child
 and them let it walk about
 you will kill it when it kills my child
 so that it will die when my child dies”... (48-52)

She reminds me of a Bible Belt parent who, high on Jerry Falwell²³ and Jesus, lives a pernicious version of truth, and delivers a coup de grâce when declining her son's life partner the dignity of equal opportunity bereavement (Jones). She channels the stigmatized dead of Hart Island's burial trenches in New York City²⁴ where scores of unclaimed AIDS victims, including babies in sealed bags, were buried in mass graves by prisoners at Rikers (Kilgannon). The act of hiding the young man, disguising the stench that is the shame which has been foisted on him, will come at some expense. Silence = Death.

As a response to protest the silence being forced around the disease, ACT UP became a leading force in civil disobedience to inform, educate, and destigmatize. By the time then-president Ronald Reagan mentioned AIDS in public, 59,572 cases of the disease had been reported. Enforced silence and futile negotiations within a silence/death paradigm have repercussions. In the United States, the stigma attached to HIV and AIDS initially perpetuated social rejection, leading to suicide and even physical violence against victims.

An example of death as the wage of silence and the challenge of standing up, resisting, and bearing the consequences is Still/Here, a ballet produced by ACT UP in 1994 as part of the AIDS protest movement which is rooted in Reagan's inaction in the face of a growing epidemic during the mid-1980s. It was as an eloquent artistic assertion of social legitimacy in the context of bureaucratic dismissal counterpointed by a slow-footed limousine liberal riposte.

AIDS in Africa

The American lack of response during the 1980s matters because it so desperately wanted to be the leader of the free world, and when it dragged its heels, the rest of the world followed suit. The inaction of the Reagan and then the Bush administrations meant that in a place like South Africa, the virus ran amok. The country is still home to the largest HIV seropositive group worldwide, with that number standing at 7.2 million. South Africa diagnosed its first case in 1982, but misguided leadership and international examples of denialism to emulate exacerbated the crisis. At the start of 2000, then-President Thabo Mbeki penned a note to fellow world leaders stipulating that he had severe doubts that HIV causes AIDS, and he argued hard for the cause of the virus to be socioeconomic. The result was that the world focussed more on Mbeki and his brand of denialism than what was turning into a crisis. Mbeki questioned everything: AIDS statistics, poverty's role in immune deficiency, antiretroviral effects, and efficacy of certain drugs (Cohen).

Mbeki and his cronies reduced the issue to an oversimplified dualism. You were either for or against the argument of a viral cause of AIDS. You were either for or against the president. If anything, the dualism in the rise of AIDS in South Africa was between the objective causations—the massive social inequalities—and subjective theories on causation. Three factors made South Africa the hotbed of the epidemic. One aspect was low income and low levels of employment leading to greater exposure to unprotected sex due to lack of access to health information and significantly delaying diagnosis and treatment. The second factor relates to mobility—a familiar epidemic determinant—and its particular effect on the virus in South Africa, where Apartheid demanded resettlement and caused displacement, further complicated by seasonal labor, a refugee influx, and mass concentration in large trade centers. Then, there was sex. More specifically, sexual violence by known and unknown perpetrators in both conjugal and commercial settings. In a country where sexual violence has long been the companion of political force and social aggression, the combination of the three factors has been identified as coagulating into a toxic blend of survival sex

whereby “young women in the townships, often migrants from impoverished rural areas, use their bodies as an ordinary economic resource outside the context of prostitution but within the culture of male violence” (Wojcicki). These factors: inequality, mobility, and violence, are the legacy of South Africa’s colonial past. It’s what caused the extinction of the /Xam, and epidemiologically it caused asymmetric spreading of HIV.

All of this falls woefully short of explaining the orthodoxy of disease and here we need to consider complicated “us and them” structures. By 1996 the South African government was criticized within the country for investing in musicals—singing-dancing spectacles—designed to preach the power of prevention. Famously, these shows featured elaborate scenes where condom use was explained, often by unwrapping the condom over a turgid cucumber or banana, but not clarifying that cucumbers and bananas do not cause HIV infections. As South African satirist and AIDS activist Pieter Dirk Uys wrote, “The children scream with laughter. Some can't believe their ears. Some can't believe their eyes when a banana is used in a safe-sex demonstration and then is replaced by a rubber penis because men and boys don't have bananas between their legs. A condom on a banana on the bedside table is not going to protect you!” (Uys). By 1997, the South African government was backing a bogus treatment, Virodene, that was nonetheless supported by the minister of health, Dr. Nkosazana Zuma. Virodene consisted largely of industrial solvent and was said by South Africa's drug regulatory authority, the Medicines Control Council, to likely be more lethal to patients than AIDS itself (Sidley).

And so from 1998 onwards, the South African government rearranged the deck chairs as the ship sank. It blocked the use of antiretrovirals—blaming the treatment’s side effects. Critics of the government stance was accused of being racist, and even more nefariously, the growing public demand for antiretrovirals was viewed as a white-conservative thing, both ideas rooted in an underlying belief that AIDS and its treatment were a plot to diminish the black population.

Racial accusation and conspiracy have a long history in South Africa. Cape Town's brush with bubonic plague in 1900 was used to justify—under a newly minted Public Health Act of 1883—the mass removal of Africans from their traditional homes in favor of segregationist “native locations” (Swanson)²⁵. When AIDS was diagnosed in South Africa the racist view followed immediately with the Apartheid regime of the day pointing the finger at Black promiscuity—a reworking of the old tropes on the “danger that Blacks posed”—and some actively worked on spreading the AIDS virus among the Black population, claiming that the disease may be eradicated by the disease, as Apartheid operative claims in the 2019 documentary *Cold Case Hammarskjöld*, “Black people have got no rights, they need medical treatment. There is a white ‘philanthropist’ coming in and saying, ‘You know, I will open up these clinics and I will treat you.’ And meantime [he is] actually the wolf in sheep’s clothing” (Ankomah). Inexplicably overlooked during South Africa’s reconciliation process, this period of history and how it intersected with disease, still forms the bedrock of mistrust towards Western medicine and science in general. Defiance of public health services and government messaging is at the heart of what some think of as denial (Schneider). But denial is composed of two components: denial of reality—that something cannot possibly be true and cannot truly be possible—and denial of the unacceptable, a reaction against abnormality—that although something *may* exist, it really should not (Cottreau). Both elements are part of AIDS denialism. And both underpin homophobia.

then they take the young man from the hartebees skins
 and give him to the lion
 and the lion places his big paws on the shoulders of the young man
 and bites the young man in his neck
 and the people stab the lion, they stab and stab
 while the lion bites the young man in his neck
 then the lion says: “now I can die

because I have found the young man I was searching for
I found him”
and the lion dies while lying on the man
the dying young man (53-63)

In the December 26, 1994, issue of *New Yorker*, noted American dance critic Arlene Croce, while not having seen *Still/Here*, slated the ethos of the production and took the time to coin the term “Victim Art.” Croce claimed that “the thing that *Still/Here* makes immediately apparent, whether you see it or not, is that victimhood is a kind of mass delusion that has taken hold of previously responsible sectors of our culture. The preferred medium of victimhood ... is videotape, ... but the cultivation of victimhood by institutions devoted to the care of art is a menace to all art forms, particularly performing-art forms.” Croce’s opinion is notable in that it furthers our understanding of otherness and the ways it may be suppressed, and why some feel empowered—entitled—to shove it back in the closet. She deploys a neoconservative tactic, avoiding mindful commenting and dismissive of any connections between art and social engagement; she goads the reader by complaining about art’s power to stir the audience. Croce expects “others” within society to have less voice, and she underscores that by bullying the artist, inventing a term which is as insulting as it is a warmed-up undercooked version of Reagan’s doctrine of ignorance. Hers is an opinion—a version of both forms of denialism—that the LGBTQ+ community have had to hear, and deal with, their entire lives. That somehow, what decimates their ranks, is less critical—not worth the show and fuss. And whether the AIDS survivor is American and gay or South African and Black, Croce would probably have blown her nose in the AIDS quilt, either way.

Once, We Were Here

Even when viewed narrowly as an uncomplicated expression, “The Young Man and the Lion” sends the reader some clear social, political, and morality signals. One of which is the less-than-symbolic efforts by the mother to reject the young man’s attempts at self-expression, motivating her to frantically camouflage him, leading to his eventual sacrifice for the greater good. Krog’s interpretation places the mother in the central role here—while the original by !Kweiten-ta-//ken sees the young man camouflaged by the community.

Kweiten-ta-//ken describes the covering up of the young man like this:

And, the man ran to another place, and the man spoke,
 he called out, while was yet coming to the house,
 that the people should over him up in two hartebeest (sic) skins,
 that the people should hide him in,
 that the lion should not perceive him, on account of it.

Diä!kwain’s version of events takes a characteristically more descriptive route:

Therefore, when he came out at the top of the hill,
 he called out to the people at home about it,
 that he had just been “lifted up” while the sun stood high,
 he had been “lifted up”;
 therefore, they must look out many hartebeest-skins,
 that they might roll him up in them;
 for, he had just been “lifted up”, while the sun was high
 Therefore, he thought that the lion would
 when it came out from the place to which it had gone,

it would come (and) miss him; it would resolve to seek (and) track him out.

Therefore, he wanted the people to roll him up in many hartebeest-skins,
so that the Lion should not come (and) get him.

For, they were those who knew that the lion is a thing

which acts thus to the thing which it has killed,

it does not leave it, when it has not eaten it.

Therefore, the people must do thus with the hartebeest-skins,

the people must roll him up in them;

and also (in) mats; these (are) things which the people must roll him up in,

(in order) that the lion should not get him.

There is a desperation in the hiding of the young man. On a literal level a threat is posed by the lion—the man may be eaten alive. But on a metaphoric level—the one I’m inspired by—many of us are closeted by family, society, or career, and most of us have to choose to fling open the door and live, to hell with consequences. Having discussed issues around he coming out experience with LGBTQ+ individual for years—and most groups of gay friends at some point share coming out stories—I am frequently shocked by just how harrowing the quest for validation and acceptance can be. For every happy story, where dads hug gay sons telling them they’re a champ; that they could not care less or love them more—for every mother of an LGBTQ+ person, who “always knew” and beams with delight, there is a story that ends in rejection, blame, and often, a life lived away from family. We don’t make the distinction of “chosen family” for nothing after all. Some have no choice. And some of us—I’m one—never tell our parents, because it’s none of their fucking business. I never had to. They knew. My mom routinely prepared the guest bedroom for me and my “friend” when we would visit for Christmas, birthdays, or when my dad would call for me to come home so he can add antifreeze to he car radiator before a severe cold spell in Johannesburg—one of things we do in a warm climate, being utterly unprepared for cold weather. I was fortunate.

Traditional /Xam storytelling moves seamlessly from weird fireside stories into tales of great truths as they flirt with issues such as man's higher purpose and social ethics, while firmly rooted in the idea that actions have consequences. The stories are propelled through small episodes, braided together into much larger works describing a group increasingly removed from a workable survival strategy and frequently at the behest of wild nature. Sacrifice of group identity, loss of language, and constant threats of displacement are by the 1800s definitive of /Xam survival instinct. There are no allowances for "otherness" in this place, and threats never cease. The end of "The Young Man and the Lion," as with most Bushman stories, is a mental pause button before we move onto the next tale.

Unorthodox

But it's in the real world, meeting real people, that stories such as "The Young Man and the Lion" take on an urgency and renewed meaning. And a relevance outside anything the author could have intended, but in a way, that celebrates /Xam mythology.

Outed by a nosey neighbor who could not explain why she had the urge to expose his shrouded existence, Shimmy Braun knew that his methodically starched life was over. Married in 2001, a mere twelve days after meeting his Orthodox bride within the parochial atmosphere of his ultra-conservative Jewish community in Brooklyn, he would go on to father four children. After sixteen years of self-denial and compelled conformity, however, he was no longer camouflaged. Some things are unsayable. In those moments, a whispered sigh—a susurrus—has to suffice.

I met Shimmy over drinks at a busy Chicago bar frequented by bears and cubs—if you're not familiar with LGBTQ+ naming protocols—Google it. Shimmy shared his story with me: forced conformity, familial pressure, negotiated status quo, religious expectations of the Orthodoxy, and the ease with which one runs scared. In fine Stockholm form, he kicked against the pricks, allowing himself to be altered and camouflaged, sacrificing his happiness and sexual identity.

Shimmy patiently, and without a hint of bitterness, explained to me how within fundamentalist groups, certain expressions of identity are automatic triggers. How family and social circles radiate outward, each predictably setting up the next. How personal articulations—sexual or otherwise—that fall outside the benchmarks associated with each circle are reason enough for excommunication through shunning, intimidation, and, in extreme cases, threats of violence. He’s experienced it all. And then chose to go from *frumm* to fabulous.

Growing up in South Africa meant growing up on a steady stream of stories about dangerous lions, wily jackals—and old tales about meerkats and Mantises. We lived right at the place where young maidens, prior to their wedding day, undertake a 30-mile walk through a gorge called the Tradauw—the way of the women—linking the arid Little Karoo on the inland side of the pass, with the lush vegetation and sea breezes of the coastal side of the pass. A walk for some, but to other eyes, a spiritual process—a shedding of old family and emerging, ready to be married and join a new group.

And so, growing up on a steady stream of folktales, collected and retold by many South Africans, I quickly realized that all were not as it seemed. A cigar, in other words, is not always a cigar, and what you get out of a story may change considerably over a lifetime.

“The Lion and the Young Man,” a /Xam tale narrated by !Kweiten-ta-//ken, arranged by acclaimed poet and writer Antjie Krog, reminds me of Shimmy and our conversation as well as my experiences dealing with homophobia—the looks and the comments because some don’t see love=love. The story makes me think about hope in the struggle for acceptance and lessening the burden of “otherness.” But it also reminded me of those we lost to HIV and AIDS since the 80s—the stigma, the language around the virus, and denialism. Some may accuse me of overreaching—looking for something where there’s nothing—and I concede that neither !Kweiten-ta-//ken, her brother Diä!kwain, or their mother ≠Kamme-an, from whom both heard the story as kids, would have intended it to be about queerness or its expressions. But still. Why not?

I think we can learn something about acceptance and homophobia from a story in Africa. And while !Kweiten-ta-//ken's tale of an alpha lion and a young man of the ancient people invites us to think about her culture and its decimation, and although the story is a perfect springboard from which to discover the entire volume of /Xam tales, !Kweiten-ta-//ken's story also feels familiar to me and relevant to my life and that, maybe, even those who don't count themselves as friends of Dorothy, may also get something out of it.

Reinvented in Chicago sixteen years after stepping on the glass under the *chuppab*²⁶, Shimmy is living his best life, having defied the dynamics of his situation. Shimmy attended a men's support group for queer men in heterosexual marriages. He confronted his annihilation anxiety by spending years in therapy, allowing him to develop an amicable rapport with his ex-wife, and gaining full custody of his four children (Hansen-Bundy). Losing his community-based client network in Brooklyn, when the door got blown off his closet, forced him to reevaluate. He decided to focus on mortgage origination for the Chicago LGBTQ community. Driving around the city's gayborhood, North Halsted, his beaming face is on billboards everywhere. While researching this project, I asked Braun if he would have chosen to liberate himself if he was not forced by his suspicious neighbor (Braun). After a long pause, he shrugged and softly replied: "I don't think so. The answers were made for us. Everybody sacrifices something, after all."

Although subdominant at the outset of !Kweiten-ta-//ken's tale, the group sanctions a sacrifice to distract and appease the threat of annihilation, represented by the lion. After deploying a *deus ex machina* by hiding under the sacrificial young man and killing the lion, power shifts back to the people, but even within the spirit of the text, the victory is bittersweet. There is no joy to be detected anywhere. The /Xam tradition allows various interpretations—any of their stories could be part of a handbook on human rights. Some see the tradition as an African *Odyssey* of sorts, as Krog has frequently pointed out—but occasionally, it also wants to be seen as a simple love story: an African *Tristan and Iseult* of mesmerizing love and overwhelming circumstance in this case. You can

almost hear Wagner's "Liebestod" from *Tristan und Isolde*,²⁷ as the lion himself dies on the dead body of the young man.

and the lion places his big paws on the shoulders of the young man

and the young man the neck

and the people stab the lion, they stab and stab

while the lion bites the young man in his neck

then the lion says: 'now I can die

because I have found the young man I was searching for

I found him

Reading "The Young Man and the Lion" as metaphor for LGBTQ+ love and life is not for everyone. It's not meant to be—not everyone can relate. But some of us can. And why not? Few, if any, fairytales (don't go there) or mythology exists with an LGBTQ+ individual as core character. It seems only fitting that in a far-from-post-AIDS world, after gaining the right to marry, parent, and work in more and more countries, we still need to collect and compile LGBTQ+ tales, hail LGBTQ+ heroes, and credit LGBTQ+ achievers. And while we're at it, Africa has the right to provide stories and mythologies that may inspire the world—even on issues such as sexuality and gender.

I wonder if !Kweiten-ta-//ken considered that the lion and young man might have been happy, might have survived, and thrived in domestic bliss—their version of a picket fence and a Golden-doodle. Her story reveals an outcome in which acceptance is cantilevered on the needs of the many as opposed to those of one. I detect a sense of resignation in !Kweiten-ta-//ken's words to the fact that she is one of the last of her people. Her last few lines emerge as her regretful susurrus, reminding the reader that, once, they were here.

and the lion dies while lying on the man

the dying young man

6

the 3rd susurrus**an accidental killing while hunting**

—as told by //Kabbo, between April 13, and May 3, 1872, transcribed by Lucy Lloyd

13 April

while out shooting springbok, a man shoots another man

the man is wounded and folk leave the springbok,

they run to him, as he is sitting in pain

they cry and they say to man:

“what thing is this here, which shot our brother here?”

the man says:

“I did not shoot our brother—I was shooting springbok,

our brother is wounded, as he was behind here

15 April

I did not shoot our brother

I was shooting springbok and the arrow went in the springbok’s dust

our brother was near and he did not see

he did not perceive the arrow so that he might avoid the arrow

because he was looking at the springbok

I cry about our brother because he is a friend

a stranger who is different he is not because he is our friend

I think of our brother and my heart cries for our brother.

my heart is not happy about our brother”

a man then says to him:

“it seems to me you did not think of our brother’s children

you shot him among the springbok while he could not see though the dust

because you did not wait until the springbok had passed by his side

so that you may shoot the springbok

I saw him coming to you and I saw you come near to our brother

I saw our our brother and I saw you as you were meeting each other both stooping

together approaching each other while the springbok ran through between you

16 Apr

you did not seem to see our brother

the man who was shot said to him:

“I did not see our brother,

I did not see our brother coming for the springbok dust had shut in

because the springbok were many so I did not see”

the wounded man says “our brother is angry at you

I did not see well for the dust was great and the springbok many so I am wounded

I was looking at the springbok

I did not look to that side and I could have avoided the arrow

but you scold our brother as if the arrow did not come in the dust

I did not perceive the arrow

for I may have avoided it and prevented our brother’s hurt

I could have avoided the arrow well I should not have avoided it boldly

lift me up and carry me to the house

I do not feel that I could walk for I am in great pain so you must carry me

I must go to lie in pain in the house by myself

you must leave the springbok be

you shall again shoot another day

my blood is out because I was wounded early and I cannot see well

although it is very early and the tree's shade is great

the springbok's dust closed my eyes and we did not see each other"

the other man said:

17 April

"we are right we think so we are going to talk

we are right we talk to each other and we say

the man is sitting like he is wounded and the other man runs to him because he sits

they beckon us that we may go see for the wound is great indeed it seems

let us see

18 April

we must run very quickly and go because our brother seems to be shot

we must be right when we talk to the house folk and when the women question us

for the women will not speak nicely

and they will ask if we were not near our brother;

if we ourselves have look at him if he is writhing about on account of his skin

because the wound seems to be great

and the arrow is on the stick and so the world is deep"

the other man says

“the wound is so and we must run fast so that we may quickly go to see
we shall speak nicely to the women as we speak making their hearts stand”

19 April

they run strong

they run fast

the other folk look at the man who is wounded

the other man holds on to the wounded man who sits writhing and moaning

the other man holds him fast and another man lays down his bow

he says to the other man “the wound is great”

the wounded man shows them:

“the wound goes in here where the wound stands

where the arrow point did stand where I draw out the arrow

here is the pain and it hurts in here

the mouth of the wound mouth is in pain and the pain is almost killing me

the blood appears as it could not clench

the blood is still flowing”

and the other man says: “the blood is still flowing you must bind up the wound;

that we may carry and lift our brother for if the wind came into the wound

the wound would be cold and the wound will swell”

The wounded man says to him: “the wound is aching

we know not when I get the house and I smell the fire I feel it myself”

the wounded man tells the others to speak gently

not angrily to the man who shot him:

“you must know that the mistake was the arrow’s
and it was the arrow’s own doing
the arrow of itself hit me while our brother did not see me
for if I should have seen our brother
I should have said to you that I did see our brother and our brother also saw me
I could have said to you that our brother himself shot me
but our brother seeks truly and he did not shoot me
for we say truly we did not see each other

20 April

I might have seen him coming
then I could have stooped and sat for we approach each other in a direct line
the springbok ran between us
the dust was great
because the springbok were many so we could not see to shoot
I sat holding fast the bow and pulling out the string and I was still and waited
I did not shoot”

Folk then carry him and set him down in his house
his wife cries and the other women cry
they ask them: “you fellows seemed to be fighting and shot your friend”
the men say to the women:
“we did not for it was a false-shooting and a false arrow it was”
if children play away from the house and not on the man’s bed the man shoots well
but if he thinks that they are running and playing on his bed

he frowns and he is angry and shoots badly

22 April

this man here, he misshot the other man

“my wife is stupid and seems not to hear as I talk to her and she acts stupidly too
she does not act as if she understood what her father had did taught her for
she is still stupid”

the other man said of his wife:

“My wife does foolish things but I want her to see that it was a false shot
it happened so it is ugly and then wound makes people afraid

I might also be wounded for her not saying to my boys to go out of the house
for when I returned dust was on my bed

my house is as if my wife had gone away and not nice”

the old woman says: “a false shot’s wound is just like this”

24 April

“my son’s wife understand not what I say to her
she ought to chase away the children from the house

they resemble the man which shoots another man

and they resemble a shooting wound

they stab a wound like this and it resembles a shooting wound”

26 Apr

“I feel that I shall die

for the wound is large

and the pain of the wound is great
the wound's pain is killing me
I shall die
for I do not feel that I shall sleep well
I want my wife to fetch much firewood
make a fire for me
I shall sit writhing by the fire
I shall not sleep tonight
for she herself sees the blood flow
I do not feel as if I shall sleep tonight
I do not know about another night
whether I shall still be here
for I think I shall not see another daybreak
and I think I shall die in the night
the people will cry here at night for my heart will have fallen
the folk will cry early on the morrow
my heart does want to smell dry springbok flesh,
my heart feels as if I could die of the scent of flesh.
that is what I think
for my name is great
I am not a child
when my pain is like this
you will know when the sun sets
you must know in the night

27 *Apr*

I who am grown—I speak and let you know
 the day will break quickly for I feel all my flesh
 I burn with pain because the wound greatly swells
 I am bloated
 the swelling throbs.
 therefore my heart is falling”

his wife says: “I see the swelling with my eye, you are right”
 the man says: “you may do well to the boys and the girls who must fetch you water
 the boys must seek vulture scent
 when people shoot springbok, they follow
 they ought to look for tortoises and they must bring it to you
 they must act sensibly because I die, leaving them
 I who bring them meat, will die
 I do not return to live in pain for I will die and will go
 you must make the fire well that the fire may not go out
 that the cold may not kill the children
 and the cold may not kill you, a grown-up
 I know when I die I shall think of you
 your brothers must do well for you
 you must eat good things
 they must give you fat so you can to rub your body
 a woman’s skin must be handsome
 this night I die

I speak to you

I shall not again speak

you must make fire and you must sit and you must look at me

for the hour of death has come

29 April

I shall not again see you

the time to talk is over

I am still

I shall not speak in the darkness

I speak holding up your heart

so that you may truly know what I have said

you may not forget any of the children

you must keep all the children

you must look after the children and you must act well toward them

you must not give the children to stranger folk

you must keep all the children by your body

your father is the one that you must take away the children to

your brothers will be there with the children

I am dying

leaving you

I not shall again come back alive

I who gave you food

you must lift me up

that you may lay me down at the place and I shall lie

you must make a bed and lay me in the old *kaross* which the blood covered
that is what I must lie on”
the other man makes a bed of the old *kaross*
his wife says to the other man “you must call the others
that they come that you may lift the sick man
he just spoke with me and I shall not listen to him again
for he told me his death time draws near
his night is here”

1 May

another woman says to her: “we all see the wound is deep”
another woman says “a great wound it is.”
the dying man’s wife says:
“you come to listen, you will wrap the sick man, in the old *kaross*
because the day may break
that you may find a place with soft earth
that you may bury the man deep in the earth
so that the hyena not scratch him out
for my heart thinks: my husband is not a little handsome
with a white forehead who dies while a young man
who my heart not a little thinks of him
my heart is not a little afraid
you may close in the man with great stones that the hyena may not roll him
for my heart stands over the man
he is eyebrowed

his face is handsome with white skin
he dies while he is not yet bearded
for he is still a young man
he dies from me while his children are small
he did not run gently
therefore my heart trembles and my heart startled
when he said to me his death was near
I'm not married to make my heart stand on account of him
for I do still love him
we married each other while we were both young
so I do cry much over of him
he is not yet bearded
and he died from me
I do not want to eat on account of thinking of the man
that I may cry and die myself
while I'm not fat"
her mother-in-law says to her: "you must eat, that you may not hunger
that your flesh may be still handsome
and the children who are small do not call in hunger
for you cannot cry and bring back your husband, for he has indeed died, leaving us"

2 May

her mother-in-law asserts:
"you must go and look at your husband
that you may see him

then although you will cry
 you will sit by the grave
 you will cry with thy thoughts.

Truth. And Reconciliation.

Traditionally the stormiest of months at the aptly-named Cape of Storms, the end of August often makes way for a sunny day. On one such afternoon in 1993, there was a tentative knock at the door.

“I have something to talk to you about. I don’t know what to do and I don’t know who to talk to.”

“What’s wrong? Did you have an accident? Oh God. You’re not pregnant, right?”

I immediately regretted even speaking—Nonthando’s eyes were like saucers.

“You know that girl that was killed in Gugs? The white girl—the American?”

I nodded silently.

“I found this.” She held up a little blue book, too small to be a reader and too formal to be a notepad. It looked suspiciously like a passport.

“It’s a passport. It’s hers. That girl.”

Nonthando handed me a little blue book. I opened it, and there it was: Amy Elizabeth Biehl.

“Someone threw it over the wall into my backyard. I found it the next day, after she was killed. I have been scared shitless. What must I do? What if the cops think it was me? Or that I had anything to do with it?”

I convinced Nonthando to take the passport to the police office in Gugulethu, where Biehl was killed just blocks from where Nonthando lived. But even in a country where violence was our symbiont, and our obsessive transaction with it—the stories and evidence of our crippling vigilance,

the elaborate security systems, and carjacking anecdotes—added a certain frisson to dinner parties, this murder was different.

And not for reasons I could have anticipated.

Biehl arrived as a Fulbright exchange student in Cape Town at the end of 1992 to continue her Ph.D. in political science at the University of the Western Cape. A Stanford graduate, she came to South Africa with clear political objectives, wanting to fight Apartheid and accordingly, spent her days registering Black voters to participate in what was to be the country's first democratic elections, scheduled for April 27, 1994.

On the night of August 25, 1993—the night Amy Biehl died—a grey fog from thousands of coal stoves and open fires had settled over Gugulethu, reminding folks that winter was far from over. The twenty-six-year-old had been in the country for ten months and was scheduled to leave the next day—back, for the time being at least, to her parent's home in La Quinta, California, a secluded suburb near Palm Springs, a world away from the escalating tensions and increasing expression of politically-motivated violence that by now had come to define the Cape Town township. Biehl offered to drive three companions home to Gugulethu, amaXhosa for “our pride.” The Black township on the outskirts of Cape Town was established in the 60s by the Apartheid government to accommodate migrant workers who migrated to the city from their homes in more rural Transkei and Eastern Cape. It has always had a reputation as a colorful and vibrant place, with an immense capacity for violence. Infamously, on March 3, 1986, at the height of Apartheid's death squads' reign, seven young men, suspected of being *Umkhonto we Sizwe* terrorists were murdered by members of the South African police in Gugulethu, claiming that the “terrorists” were so heavily armed that normal arrest would have been impossible. A witness, however, testified that at least one of the murdered men had his hands up—surrendering—a central component to what would

become another milestone case considered by the post-Apartheid government's Truth & Reconciliation Commission in November 1996.

As her little beige Mazda was zipping through the township, a brick suddenly smashed through the window, hitting Biehl on the head. Bleeding profusely, she tried to run away. A group of angry young men, riled up after attending a raucous Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) meeting, had attacked her car by pelting it with rocks and bricks—shouting “One settler, one bullet” while smashing the Mazda’s windows. During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) amnesty hearings one of Biehl’s alleged killers, Mongesi Manqina—who was found guilty along with Mzikhona 'Easy' Nofemela, Vusumzi Ntamo, and Ntobeko Peni—said:

“A beige Mazda 323 was also being stoned. The car stopped and the driver, Amy Biehl, stumbled out of the car and started running towards the Caltex petrol station. We chased after her and I tripped her and she fell down next to a box with the name "Caltex" inscribed on it. I asked one of the persons in the crowd for a knife. I got the knife and moved towards Amy Biehl as she was sitting down in front of the box facing us. I sat in front of her, probably a foot or two away, I took the knife and stabbed her once in front on her left-hand side. I only stabbed her once. Seven or eight others armed with knives also stabbed at her” (Manqina).

Transcripts from the same TRC hearing has Ntobeko Peni confess that,

“I feel sorry and very down-hearted especially today realising the contribution Amy Biehl played in the struggle. When I look closely at what I did I realise that it was bad. I took part in killing someone that we could have used to achieve our own aims. Amy was one of the people who could have, in an international sense, worked for our country so that the world knows what's going on in South Africa, so that the government of the day would not get support, sanctions so-to-speak. I ask Amy's

parents, Amy's friends and relatives, I ask them to forgive me. Just to hear that they have forgiven me would mean a great deal to me. For me it would be starting a new life. I have led an abnormal life under the struggle in South Africa. I do not think I would commit such an act again because right now the situation in South Africa is different. I ask for forgiveness and I am sorry” (Manqina).

A statement by Amy Biehl’s father, Peter Biehl read:

“You face a challenging and extraordinarily difficult decision. How do you value a committed life? What value do you place on Amy and her legacy in South Africa? How do you exercise responsibility to the community in granting forgiveness in the granting of amnesty? How are we preparing prisoners, such as these young men before us, to re-enter the community as a benefit to the community, acknowledging that the vast majority of South Africa's prisoners are under 30 years of age? Acknowledging as we do that there's massive unemployment in the marginalised community; acknowledging that the recidivism rate is roughly 95%. So how do we, as friends, link arms and do something? There are clear needs for prisoner rehabilitation in our country as well as here. There are clear needs for literacy training and education, and there are clear needs for the development of targeted job skill training. We, as the Amy Biehl Foundation are willing to do our part as catalysts for social progress. All anyone need do is ask” (Biehl)

But the story does not end there. After Biehl’s killers confessed and displayed deep remorse and after a superhuman display of forgiveness by the Biehl family—a minor miracle occurred. Easy Nofemela and Ntobeko Peni developed a close relationship with Linda Biehl, Amy’s mother, who had launched The Amy Biehl Foundation in 1996, a project focused squarely on getting her daughter’s killers pardoned by Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

At their hearing, the men admitted complicity in Biehl's murder and contextualized the act within their struggle to achieve freedom in a country that they had believed to be unlikely to relinquish any power to the Black majority. Biehl's killing then, to them, represented an opportunity to render South Africa impotent.

Today, both Nofemela and Peni work for the Biehl Foundation. During a 2008 interview, Peni said, "I felt I had contributed to a new South Africa and that what I did was done for a political reason," He continued that when I thought of Amy. . . . One has to find peace within in order to live. It's odd, but sometimes people who offer forgiveness are so disappointed when the people they forgive cannot forgive themselves. This foundation helped me forgive myself" (Kraft).

I speak holding up your heart

Even within the total output of the /Xam, a collection of stories so rich in detail and description, not to mention wisdom and searing truth, the story of the man who shot another while out hunting is an extraordinary tale of death, culpability, atonement, and forgiveness. The swiftness with which //Kabbo vacillates between varying states of raw emotion is bewildering and he naturally approaches a heightened naturalism through drama. The fact that the story was told over more than two weeks adds to an epic feel. As with all /Xam stories the lives of Bushmen are intertwined with natural occurrences, shaped by circumstances, and frequently determined by environmental forces. The reality of death—of facing mortality—is dealt with in a measured and transactional way, in no way diminishing the pathos yet resolutely, firmly, treating it as an intimate exchange of sorts, as opposed to something more overt.

Lloyd directly translates the /Xam but makes stylistic decisions regarding choice of words, syntax, and style. Roger Hewitt notes that the translated texts employ a language infused with epistemic verbs—Lloyd's Jacobean English translation piles on awkwardness yet achieves a luminous quality nonetheless. It's quite a challenge to decipher what it is that we are receiving: Lloyd's lyrical

waxing, or a particularly chimeric /Xam expression working through Lloyd as medium. I like to think it's both.

The springbok (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) is a signifier with many meanings. While out hunting, some Bushmen wore animal headdresses. Cave drawings show examples of hunters wearing antelope headdresses with the intention of luring a buck to follow what it perceives as just one of them. The /Xam were possibly drawing on the power of the animal it was assuming—presentiments come to mind again. While featuring heavily in the oral tradition, cave drawings of the springbok are rare. Springbok body parts were prized with bone and desiccated springbok ears used to make necklaces and rattles for dancing—the acute vision and aural exceptionalism of the springbok being highly prized by the /Xam.

It is not outside the realm of possibility that the /Xam identified so closely with the springbok since, in many ways, they resembled each other. Both the /Xam and springbok had to adapt to their environments—which were arid and hostile to begin with—and develop mechanisms and collective reasoning that could outwit, outrun, and outlast the weather and the plethora of predators. The ability of springbok to survive drought—some never drinking water over the course of their lives, instead siphoning what moisture they can from sap-rich plants—was much admired by the Bushmen (Van Vuuren).

Diäلكwain learned a lot about correct hunting procedures from his mother, ≠Kamme-an. During a September 1875 session with Lloyd, he explains that a sympathy bond that exists between /Xam and antelope—that it would be improper to eat meat that resembles the quality of animal that is pursued and that while hunting springbok, a hunter should refrain from eating meat from jumpy, lithe, horned antelope for example.

certain hunting observances, called !nanna-sse

—as told by Diä!kwain during September, 1875, transcribed by Lucy Lloyd

when we show respect to the game, we act in this manner

because we wish that the game may die

for the game would not die if we did not show respect to it

we do as follows

a thing which does not run fast is that which we eat when we have shot game

because we desire that the game should also do as it does

for the game is used to do thus

if we eat the flesh of a thing which is fleet

the thing arises

it does like that thing of whose flesh we did eat

the thing also acts like that thing the flesh of which we had eaten

doing that which it does.

therefore the old people are accustomed to give us the flesh of a thing which is not fleet

they do not give us all kinds of food

for they only give us food which they know that it will strengthen the poison

that the poison may kill the game.

the people do thus when we have shot a gemsbok

they do not give us springbok flesh for they feel that the springbok does not a little go

for it is used to act thus even if it be night

it is used to walk about

day breaks while it is still walking about

therefore the old people do not give us springbok meat

while they feel that the game if we ate springbok meat
would also do like the springbok
it would not go to a place near at hand while it felt that we ate springbok which does not sleep
even though it be night
therefore the old people fear to give us springbok's meat
because they feel that the gemsbok would not be willing to go to sleep even at night
for it would, travelling in the darkness, let the day break, while it did not sleep
the old people also do not allow us to take hold of springbok meat with our hands
because our hands with which we hold the bow
and the arrows are those with which we are taking hold of the thing's flesh
we shot the thing and our hands also are as if we had smelt the springbok's scent
because our hands are those which held the arrows when we shot the thing
therefore if we take hold of springbok's meat
the thing is as if we ate springbok's meat
because our hands are those which (make) the thing seem as if we had eaten
springbok's meat with them
we have not eaten springbok's meat
for it is our hands
we think, "How can it be? I have not smelt the things which I am (now) smelling?"
another man who is clever, he thus speaks
"thou must have taken hold of springbok's flesh
it must be that which has acted in this manner
for I feel that thou dost not seem to have smelt other things"
therefore the people are used to act thus with regard to the man who shot the thing
they do not allow him to carry the springbok

they let him sit down at a little distance
 while he is not near to the place where the people are cutting up the springbok
 for he sits at a little distance
 because he fears lest he should smell the scent of the springbok's viscera
 that is why he sits at a little distance
 because he wishes that he may not smell the scent of the springbok's viscera

But perhaps most of all, the story with its heartfelt pleas for forgiveness and the sincere questioning quality of the words reminds me of the time of healing we embarked on in the aftermath of Apartheid and our first democratic election in 1994. Still flush with joy after the birth of the rainbow nation as we would now call ourselves, we had to drag ourselves away from the honeymoon and ask tough questions on South Africa's original sin—what we could do about that. And how we could learn to forgive.

“Just file them . . . or get rid of them”

Having permanently relocated to the United States in 2015, and then becoming a citizen in 2019, forced me to re-evaluate my place in society somewhat. Interacting with Americans of all ages, one of the most reliable topics that come up is my South Africanness and what we had been through as a country. I am always impressed by the level of knowledge on South Africa and its goings-on, the average American possesses. Well...nearly always. Some non-Africans earnestly believe we live in shit-hole conditions on a dark continent, and that lions roam the streets, but I digress. A surprising number of US citizens have read Mandela's autobiography, *A long road home*, and some even think it's useful to point out that the South African anthem, “Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika”²⁸ sounds like “Itsy Bitsy Spider,”—originally a 1920s commonwealth nursery rhyme about perseverance. The opening lines do sound vaguely alike.

But two things invariably happen during these discussions: we talk about Nelson Mandela, as well as his not-inconsiderable virtues, and then the conversation segues into Eeyore territory. It has become clear to me that the average American believes that some form of Truth Commission at certain flash-points during the country's history would have provided a much-needed platform for healing and that, depending on whom you talk to, a reckoning of sorts is past overdue. But it's not as if some haven't tried valiantly to get that ball rolling. And at least one notable commission convened specifically to be transformative in its goals of dialogue and reconciliation, had come tantalizingly close, only to be shelved.

The Kerner Report, although set in the late 60s, reads like it was written yesterday. And it reads as particularly familiar through African eyes.

The Kerner Report

When President Lyndon Johnson took the podium in July 1967 to announce the creation of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (NACCD), the United States was still raw from the recent Newark and Detroit riots that seemed to be the dernier cri of four summers of racial turbulence. Johnson appointed then-Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, to lead an eleven-member bipartisan commission mostly in an effort to show that he was doing something. Anything.

With the increased stature of a post-World War II American presidency, the pressure to hit a sweet spot right between expectation and delivery was immense. Commissions were the perfect solution, satisfying the public's rabid obsession with policy wonks while offering a possibility of unbiased findings dealing with multifaceted civil challenges. LBJ wanted to know three answers to three simple questions:

What happened?

Why did it happen?

What can be done to prevent it from happening again and again?

The Commission lead by Kerner was supposed to stick to a plot and deliver an innocuous report, an outcome (on paper at least) almost guaranteed by the makeup of the commission, consisting of only two Black members, Roy Wilkins and Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts. Neither were exactly radicals and *Time* magazine famously wrote that Brooke was looked upon as what might be described as a “NASP”—the Negro equivalent of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant.” But when the report was released in March 1968, Black activists like Stokely Carmichael felt vindicated while Johnson was somewhat knocked sideways by its findings (*Nation*).

The Kerner Report was breathtaking by any standards, and especially so for its time. It found that the racial unrest and Black resentment were caused by inadequate conditions in Black neighborhoods, while the labor outlooks for the Black population were severely limited, resulting in prejudice, racism, and discrimination:

Our investigation of the 1967 riot cities establishes that virtually every major episode of violence was foreshadowed by an accumulation of unresolved grievances and by wide-spread dissatisfaction among Negroes with the unwillingness or inability of local government to respond.

The report explained that it had consulted the communities plagued by riots and that it had heard testimony from witnesses while seeking “the counsel of experts across the country.” Its findings were damning and reading sections of it today, *déjà vu* is inevitable:

Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal. Reaction to last summer's disorders has quickened the movement and deepened the division. Discrimination and segregation have long permeated much of American life; they now threaten the future of every American. This deepening racial division is not inevitable. The movement apart can be reversed. Choice is still possible. Our principal task is to define that choice and to press for a national resolution.

What white Americans have never fully understood but what the Negro can never forget--is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.

The Kerner Report presents a singularly effective vantage point from which to survey the issue of truth and reconciliation. It was for sure an establishment finger-wagging at white racism. It was confrontational and even incendiary, if the shoe fitted, but unremitting in its goal: whiteness had to wake from privileged slumber in a bed built by Black hands. LBJ was incensed. A younger version of the man, who a few years prior had pushed through the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, may have been willing to engage with the findings, but by '68, he was spent and by January '73, dead.

One month after the release of the report Martin Luther King, Jr was assassinated and rioting broke out in over one hundred cities. Plagued by protests over the United States' participation in Vietnam, LBJ announced that he would not seek re-election. He could not bring himself to sign letters of gratitude to the members of the Commission

“I’d be a hypocrite,” he said, “just file them . . . or get rid of them” (Lepore).

Worse still, the genealogy of discrimination runs directly from the conditions described by the report—only the Fair Housing Act of 1968 bears a faint resemblance to the report as a result of any action taken—straight through the Nixon administration and landed with a thud nearly fifty years later at the feet of the Trump administration where in 2020 the exact same issues were again exposed, this time by COVID-19, and the Black Lives Matter movement in protests over police brutality and social inequality. In fact, the Kerner Report reads as if it was written in 2020 barring unfortunate word choices—unforgivable, but expected for the time.

The Kerner is enduring as somber recognition of rampant inequality while identifying key steps that may be taken in the process of restoring justice and addressing wildly disproportional

wealth distribution. More than that, however, the Kerner Report illustrates clearly that “at least twelve deeply held grievances can be identified and ranked into three levels of relative intensity.” The various grievances include police practices; inadequate housing, education, and employment opportunities; and various forms of discrimination and disrespect, from white attitudes to federal programs. The conclusion of the report takes a personal tone:

One of the first witnesses to be invited to appear before this Commission was Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, a distinguished and perceptive scholar. Referring to the reports of earlier riot commissions, he said: “I read that report. . . of the 1919 riot in Chicago, and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '35, the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '43, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot. I must again in candor say to you members of this Commission—it is a kind of *Alice in Wonderland*—with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction.”

A resigned tone pervades throughout the final paragraph, and even in 1968, this conclusion could not have inspired confidence in the possibility of a solution to what was by then, a recurring cycle of white insouciance and Black outrage at white arrogance.

These words come to our minds as we conclude this report. We have provided an honest beginning. We have learned much. But we have uncovered no startling truths, no unique insights, no simple solutions. The destruction and the bitterness of racial disorder, the harsh polemics of Black revolt and white repression have been seen and heard before in this country. It is time now to end the destruction and the violence, not only in the streets of the ghetto but in the lives of people.

Is That All There Is?

A question emerges when taking stock of what the Kerner Report identified. Especially viewed in context of fifty years of inaction and increased aggression on the side of the police leaning to ever-widening societal schisms over race and racial injustice. But if a report such as the Kerner is not enough, what is?

Getting the information right is a good start, and not blaming the victim is another. In the “Rejection and Protest” section, Kerner was skittish around the role of Black Power in the larger community and alluded to a disconnect within the movement which identifies as “the most militant group” which nonetheless “have retreated from a direct confrontation with American society” before continuing that they “by preaching separatism, unconsciously function as an accommodation to white racism.”

Daniel Geary of *Boston Review* sums up some of the frustration by pointing out the “radicals mainly criticized the Kerner report for portraying “riots” as spontaneous outbursts arising from underlying social conditions, rather than “rebellions” against injustice—in other words, as a form of political speech” (Geary).

But all things considered, the Kerner report was ineffective at fostering transformation and the idea of a commission for and of itself seems to have had little effect outside of its function as historical chronicle of sorts, which is dubious at best, seeing as bias frequently pervades the well-intentioned dominant group. A logical place may be to investigate the role of far-reaching commissions—ones with reasonable legacies and recognizable rubrics for ease of duplication and application.

Not as easy as it would first seem, however, since incarcerations of “truth commissions” have proliferated since the 1970s with no less than fifteen taking place between 1974 and 1994—most of these commissions mandated to take stock and chronicle events, with accompanying anecdotal evidence. The commissions have sought to cover extended periods of intense conflict

such as that in Rwanda, El Salvador, Peru, Guatemala, and Sierra Leon, while also providing a platform in cases of foreign occupation as was the case with East Timor (Landman).

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)—most likely the best known of the truth tribunals—made careful documentation of more than 2,100 deaths during the Apartheid years. By comparison, the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (PTRC) of 2001 found that as many as 77,552 human rights abuses were committed in Peru by state forces and insurgents between 1980 and 2000 with armed forces, police, and peasant civil defense patrols carrying out a counterinsurgency that lasted until the collapse of Alberto Fujimori's authoritarian regime in 2000.

Questions around the lexicon of reconciliation arise when considering the concept of any Truth and Reconciliation Commission as opposed to war crimes tribunals. For the sake of brevity with maximum clarity, suffice to say that Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are not courts of law. They operate at the center of the healing process, providing and encouraging documentation of events, motivations, and actions, establishing truth and confession at the core of collective national history, underpinning a process of reconciliation.

The forum format of the commission facilitates storytelling, sometimes leading to emotional outpourings as victims and perpetrators, in the cold light of retrospection, aim to find common ground within their shared humanity. By contrast, the war crimes tribunal is fundamentally a judicial body tasked with investigation and prosecution, specifically in the context of crimes against humanity.

Where the truth commission achieves a satisfying result for the injured party through dialogue and forgiveness, the tribunal has a stronger focus on the need for justice—both, however, are invested in the process of reconciliation.

Rwanda, 2005. Justice in the Grass

When considering the scope and function of a truth commission or an international tribunal convened to consider war crimes and genocide, Rwanda is the first to come to mind. The country is a textbook-case on the foundational evils of colonialism and the far-reaching consequences of European imperialism. Rwanda's main ethnic groups are the Hutus, Tutsis, and Twa. Groups who have, since the earliest days of European exploration, been described as racially diverse tribes with a textured social order.

While the Tutsi minority perpetuated an origin story of celestial provenance, believing that they brought superior civilization to the country and that their king was ordained by god, broader Rwandan society saw itself as unified through language, tradition, religion, and culture. It did not prevent elite Tutsis from hoarding land and cattle, leaving the Hutu to do mostly manual labor with serf status, cementing a hierarchical pyramid with Tutsis on top. Although the two groups are distinct and segmented in context of each other, the lines between the two are blurred with upward social mobility a distinct option. In other words, a previously marginalized Hutu could shed their Hutuness and, through the acquisition of wealth, could elevate in status to become Tutsi.

When Rwanda conquered bordering peoples, they were summarily called "Hutu," with that assigned identity becoming a byword for subjugation. European occupiers with typical colonial swagger sought to weaponize these distinctions. German occupation in 1884 established Tutsi domination as a strategy to maintain order, while an intrusive 1918 post-Treaty of Versailles Belgian occupation amped up the divisive rhetoric, floating that the Tutsi line is descended from the Hamites, thereby ethnically closer to Europeans instantly establishing a superiority/oppression structure that would define much of the country's history.

It is important to note that the colonial playbook relies heavily on the construction of racial differences, ensconced in stratified social systems, with the intention of restricting possible dominance by certain groups in favor of a fractured society. Favored groups would be encouraged

to cement a bond with the ruling power through preferential treatment, tax benefits, upward mobility, or economic prosperity in return for loyalty and occasional proxy dominance of lesser favored groups.

When the Belgians left Rwanda during the early 1960s, resentment was simmering among the oppressed Hutu majority, who by 1990 held the majority in the Rwandan government. Following the assassination of Rwandan President Habyarimana and Cyprien Ntaryamira—Hutu president of Burundi—on April 6, 1994, when his airplane was shot down as it prepared for landing at Kigali, the genocide began.

The Presidential Guard, youth militias, and gendarmerie undertook mass slaughter of Tutsi with between 500,000 and one million deaths reported. That figure amounted to 70% of the Tutsis—20% of Rwanda's population. The Tutsi "final solution" was merciless. Each person stopped at a roadblock was required to show an identity card and Tutsis were slaughtered immediately. Even those at the Congolese border, mere yards from freedom of persecution, were summarily shot (Power). Hutus were not immune from the genocide and many were killed for showing sympathy to the Tutsi, the crime of journalism, or physically resembling Tutsi.

The scope and nefariousness of the Rwandan genocide, even with benefit of academic hindsight and the passing of time, is hard to fathom. At commencement, the extermination is estimated to be five times higher than the German Holocaust—the explicit goal, to move through the landscape obliterating Tutsi with little resistance to slow the killing machine (Prunier). Close proximity, few barriers, and vast social networks guaranteed that Hutus could target—and exterminate—Tutsi neighbors. As a result, the judicial system weakened by the genocide, and not surprisingly, subsequent trials fell on the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and Rwandan national courts.

Both these structures were wholly inefficient in the face of such vast numbers of perpetrators awaiting trial. Conventional judicial systems were unable to meet victims' needs and

unfamiliar with restorative justice practices that facilitate dialogue between survivors and antagonists. Instead, in line with traditional justice, the aim was “to attain a guilty verdict, not to assist the victims in their recovery process” (Sarkin).

Western law standards, with its unemotional—and muted—nature leading to considered retribution according to state policy, was not compatible with the Rwandan post-genocide psyche, which demanded a unique application. In response to the hobbled judicial system, the government passed a law expanding the traditional court system—more attuned to dealing with community conflict—and adapting it to deal with genocide. This participatory judicial process, commenced in 2005, was known as *Gacaca*, meaning “justice in the grass.” A concern around *Gacaca* was its continued modification, leading to its discontinuation in 2012 over accusations of favoritism—several judges resigned, accused of participation in the genocide, while the accused had little access to either defense counsel or protections. Intimidation was rife.

Rwanda is significant. The scale of the genocide, international inaction and several big actors’ aversion to even mild entanglement. France, for example, assisted by the Belgian military, evacuated ex-pats from Rwanda but did not allow Tutsis on these missions. “Operation Turquoise” separated ex-pats from their Tutsi spouses and children, condemning them to certain death. Although Radio France’s PR machine peddled that “Operation Turquoise” saved 15 000 lives, a French parliamentary postwar commission stopped short of accusing France of responsibility *for* the genocide through its significant errors in judgment. The 2008 Mucyo Commission report went further, accusing France of assisting with the training of Hutu soldiers while fully aware of the genocide (Wallis).

Fears over the 1993 Somali “Battle of Mogadishu” kept the United States of America from intervening in Rwanda and Washington was mostly concerned with evacuating US citizens from Kigali while not doing much to halt the violence. It was a failure to act that would haunt President Clinton as one of his most significant foreign policy failings while in office (Lynch).

In a PBS interview, Helen Cobban, author of “Amnesty after Atrocity?” points out that Rwanda represents an “Orwellian situation where everybody knows, who is inside the society, who is a Hutu and who is a Tutsi and who is connected to whom. It’s a fairly small country. But the “H” and “T” words are never mentioned.”

She continues that “in South Africa, where you had had a minority group in power, there's no way to hide who has white skin and who has Black skin. There’s this coffee-colored gray area in between, but by and large, you can’t hide it, and it continues to be openly spoken of. That has helped, in a sense, the reconciliation process, after the ending of the minority regime there” (Cobban).

Mozambique, 1992: Mass Amnesia as Healing Mechanism

In 1992, former Mozambican president, Joaquim Chissano, proclaimed that it was the responsibility of all citizens to participate in the spirit of the General Peace Agreement and just a few years later, reconciliation was not merely assumed to have been achieved, but lauded as a triumph. The successful formula seemed to hinge on widespread, generous amnesty—a process designed to keep the past exactly there, where it belonged, and performance of ritualistic cleansing rituals signifying new beginnings and social reintroduction of those affected by the civil war into their communities, as everyday citizens.

But it was all too easy and all too mild for a war that collapsed from sheer exhaustion after having caused massive destruction and widespread suffering. The Mozambican civil war saw over one million casualties over a period of fifteen years between May 30, 1977, and October 4, 1992, and it was one of the bloodiest in African history, with UNICEF estimating that sixty percent of the population was living in abject poverty by the 1990s (Emerson).

What had started as an internal civil problem had turned into a proxy war, fought between the United States and the Soviet Union. Starting two years after gaining independence from Portugal, President Samora Machel’s Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO)—backed by an

uneasy Soviet, French and British coalition—declared hostilities against the militant rebel resistance group Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO), led by André Matsangaissa and covertly backed by the United States and its allies including Rhodesia, Kenya, and South Africa. Matsangaissa was killed during an attack on a regional center in 1979, and Afonso Dhlakama became the new leader of RENAMO (Rupiya).

RENAMO actively recruited civilians into its militia—often abducting children to become soldiers—and orchestrated raids on rural towns. It embarked on a program called *Gamdira*, requiring ordinary people in small towns to feed the militia and assist with the transport of weapons and provisions—and to provide village women to act as sex slaves.

To complicate matters and not to be left out of a good skirmish, the Rhodesian Central Intelligence and the South African Military Intelligence Directorate openly backed RENAMO and its first recruits were of dissatisfied dissident elites who had broken away from FRELIMO as part of a protest against its steadily more puritanical socialist ideologies around development. Most notably, their primary source of discontent was the government policy to persecute those that sought to profit from Portuguese colonial rule (Emerson).

FRELIMO was fighting a losing battle—barely holding on to urban areas while surrendering much of the rural territory. As the civil war raged on, both sides resorted to brutality and wanton acts of mass destruction, deploying land mines across the region. RENAMO desperately wanted to break the economy—it saw a path to victory through the destruction of confidence in the FRELIMO-led government.

This last point was no mere Pretoria peccadillo, and South Africa was determined for no-one to set precedence in an area that thrived—demanded—toadyism. The South Africans were particularly galled by Machel's socialism and his support of liberation movements. It openly supported a violent anti-FRELIMO campaign, which saw RENAMO destroy new schools and hospitals—their sabotage germinating a civil war that would last into 1990s.

Upon leaving for official business in Lusaka in October 1986, President Samora Machel announced that he had survived an attempt on his life, accusing the South African government and issuing instructions in case a second attempt would be successful. Machel was killed on October 19, 1986, when his small plane returned from that Lusaka meeting when it crashed near the South African border. The presidential plane took an inexplicable—and fatal—37-degree turn into the Lebombo mountain range between South Africa and Swaziland (Schmemmann).

The cause of the crash was never determined and the no-one claimed responsibility, although common opinion holds that a covert RENAMO/South African joint operation was responsible. It was unclear how and why the plane crashed or whether RENAMO or even South Africa was responsible. South Africa's TRC published a report supporting an assassination theory. Graça Machel, Samora's widow and then-current wife of President Nelson Mandela, testified that she believed Machel to have been assassinated (Commey).

Joaquim Alberto Chissano succeeded Machel as president. The stubborn bloodstain which would continue to shape dialogue around Mozambique was RENAMO's brutal role in the country's civil war. And the 1992 elections, following the Chissano peace agreement, saw RENAMO coming in second leading them to continue maintaining an armed force, despite an agreement to disarm, claiming that FRELIMO has also walked back much of the agreements.

Chissano and the General Peace Agreement's strategy to employ mass amnesia as a healing mechanism has had its drawbacks. When Mozambican and Portuguese media broke news in April 2016 of fresh mass graves and bodies in Central Mozambique, a harsh truth descended in the country—that it had not entirely escaped the scourge of conflict.

And so, with cautious hope and a flimsy peace settlement in place, the agreement for peace held together until 2013, when fresh violence broke out. In the central areas. Where the media crew had uncovered the mass graves and dead bodies. But this was different. Increasingly reports from UNHCR, Doctors Without Borders and the Human Rights Watch indicated that the government

itself had been complicit in violence—which includes rape, executions, and the burning down of villages. It led to mass fleeing to neighboring countries while the government peddles a narrative that puts the blame for the violence squarely on RENAMO (Jentzsch).

Indeed, a 2014 report by Mozambique's Human Rights League found evidence of rape and murder by government soldiers. The obscured and much-denied civil war is a cautionary tale of near-catastrophic civil unrest, and underwhelming efforts to effect restorative justice merely serve to kick the can of extreme violence down the road, leaving the younger generations to become increasingly disillusioned and the society at large deeply fractured. But did South Africa do any better with its process of healing?

South Africa, 1996: We Are Right—We Think So—We Are Going To Talk

When South Africa voted overwhelmingly for its first democratically elected president in 1994, it was the official birth of a new era in African politics and specifically in how the dynamic between white occupiers and the formerly-subjugated Black majority would play out. A nation founded on astounding human rights violations—steeped in willful re-authoring and re-invention of its very history, is bound to be predictably clumsy on the new moral foundations required by the mechanisms of transitional justice. It is however implausible to get a firm grip on the textured realities around the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and their decidedly mixed bag of results without understanding the prevailing politics around its establishment (James).

From 1996 until 2001, over twenty-one-thousand South Africans—some perpetrators and some victims—shared recollections of what they had seen, what they had done, and in some cases, what had been done to them under the banner of the Apartheid regime. Two thousand of these testimonies took place in open hearings. It led to more than seven thousand perpetrators applying for amnesty with fewer than a thousand getting it. The ones who achieved amnesty showed unbridled contrition. Their lives had been diminished, first by the necrotic reach of the Apartheid

regime, and then by the heinous actions they were duped into committing (James). Biehl's killers fell into this category.

The TRC's *raison d'être* lies in the friendly negotiated settlement, which concluded a prolonged transition from authoritarian state to democracy founded on a well-conceived constitution. Immediately following the first free and fair South African election of 1994, Dullah Omar, the newly installed minister of Justice—joined by key figures in the human rights arena—embarked on the process of balancing the need for amnesty in certain cases, with the demand for restorative justice, a solution that would not blindly favor perpetrators of heinous crimes while the country was in its honeymoon haze. Instead, Omar was convinced that national healing and reconciliation could only be attempted when the needs of victims of racially-charged violence and politically motivated terror were adequately addressed (Ibhawoh).

Foundational to the thinking was that a lateral commitment to full disclosure of motivations and corresponding actions was vital in the rehabilitation of victims—and the country. In doing so, the seething resentment that could follow from an amnesiac approach to reconciliation would lead to informal acts of retribution on a collective level and more importantly, serve to escalate violence in a county already besieged by bloodshed.

A textural detail existed in that the TRC was committed to a version of “future self” by actively inserting a vision of the new democracy at the centre of reconciliation as opposed to grounding the entire exercise in a constant evaluative process where the historical aspects alone would be of any importance. This idea of balance was heavily favored by not just the outgoing government and its hordes of employees (many of them white) now having to work in a wholly new dispensation relishing in the spoils that have gone to the elected victors. To this end, the TRC was motivated by documenting human rights abuses committed under the Apartheid regime and equally geared towards the prevalence of individual dignity—the goal was to build the South African democracy on transparency and a culture of human rights (Tuazon).

But to view the TRC as a restorative justice panacea—an isolated one at that—would have been to set it up to fail. It was one of many initiatives to achieve justice in retrospect and establish fertile ground for a meaningful détente. The Human Rights Commission assisted in redressing a fuller range of human rights issues while the Gender Commission focussed on various legacy issues surrounding gender expression and inequality in South Africa.

The Youth Commission engendered a shift in tone from its confrontational style of engagement, used effectively since the 1950s, to one of lower volume, reflective of its political power. The Land Claims Court was saddled with the process of land reform and specifically rectifying years of land annexation by white settlers and occupiers, often without any financial compensation.

But, the TRC was not without tension and strife. Traditionally rightwing parties—including the ousted last white government—viewed the reconciliation process as a thinly veiled “Nazi-hunting party,” hellbent on prosecuting and alienating whites, while the Inkatha Freedom Party, longtime amaZulu adversaries of the amaXhosa, was sustained in its accusing the TRC of bias, frequently taking it to court to inhabit its work. Consequently, an Achilles heel—possibly a failure—of the TRC was its natural inclination to appease critics for the sake of securing their commitment to the process.

So fraught with acrimony was the process that the TRC failed in its vigor to deal with the previous regime that it failed in getting the National Party to admit complicity as the prime architect of Apartheid, especially viewed through the lens of crimes against humanity (Villa-Vicencio).

The strength of the TRC was in its committee—the people who had to make moral, ethical, and political distinctions that took into account the scope and directionality of the victims and perpetrators on every side of every conflict. Testimony was given, not just to the Committee, but via live television to the citizens of South Africa and the impact of the public proceedings had a perceptible influence on the nation. It still does. No TRC ever works in isolation by necessity proceeds within a political context that cannot be undermined or ignored (James). To this end, the

South African iteration of the reconciliation process while actively engaging in a seismic transitional shift was a notable success.

Possibly the most vital lesson from the South African TRC is the importance of letting victims tell their stories. Away from judicial chambers and political corridors, the process of recovering and documenting a concealed record of conflict provides a forum for public acknowledgment. Policymakers, lawyers, and politicians are not needed or wanted—leaving the victims' voices be delivered clearly, in their own words.

By having counsel or surrogates speak on their behalf, the victim is left silent. This point becomes even more sharply in focus when considering that the process of reconciliation depends heavily on the victim's immense propensity for forgiveness and the need for visible contrition on the side of the perpetrator.

In one exchange given by Dirk Coetzee—a commander at Vlakplaas, headquarters of the police anti-insurgent unit, Coetzee ordered the deaths of many activists, including Griffiths Mxenge, a human rights lawyer who was stabbed 40 times—he describes the mortuary after the Soweto uprisings of 1976.

Coetzee remained unapologetic—and arrogant—throughout his testimony, refusing to take responsibility for his actions, saying he had obeyed orders from senior officers in the South African Police, government ministers, the State Security Council and even then-President de Klerk.

Coetzee: “Mr. Chairman, as an instructor in the Police College I had to go there with some of my junior personnel and a lot of students, and we were based in John Vorster Square in the gymnasium, where we slept and ate. And we had to visit key points, which involved the bus depot, the mortuary in Hillbrow, and five other points. I know that—I think that they called it the Bantu Commissioner's Office in those days, or something like that, and the Magistrate's Court, et cetera.”

Chairman: "And during that time what observations did you make that related to the uprising?"

Coetzee: "I beg your pardon, Sir?"

Chairman: "What observations at any of these key points did you make?"

Coetzee: "Well, one of the worst ones was of course the mortuary, where corpses were, more than 200 at a time, stacked all over the place of young people that was killed in the unrest situation, and family members queuing outside, crying and trying to identify their beloved ones, or find out whether they were in fact at that mortuary and to identify them."

Chairman: "At that time what was your personal feelings or attitude towards, for instance, what you saw at the mortuary?"

Coetzee: "A question of that they got what they deserved. They were involved in riots, they were...clashed...with the police, and as a result of that was shot because they didn't want to listen."

Among the thousands of pages that recount the confessions and discussions about South Africa's darkest days are harrowing details on the murder of one of the country's greatest political figures, Steve Biko, the ex-cop turned Black Consciousness leader. Major Harold Snyman, one of the five policemen seeking amnesty for Biko's death while in custody told that Biko had, in fact, accidentally knocked his head during a scuffle, which led to his sustaining head injuries that would leave him unresponsive, and ultimately lead to his death: "I feel badly about these actions - that we acted in this manner against this person," he told the amnesty committee. "We never intended to kill him . . . I feel remorse and beg for forgiveness." The cover-up, Snyman claimed, was to protect the security police and the Apartheid regime from embarrassment, and a fear that should be facts have been made known, foreign investment in South Africa may have been adversely affected.

Snyman stuck mostly to the 1977 script but admitted that he had lied to the 1977 inquest about the date of the “scuffle,” altering the date to September 7th, 1977, rather than September 6th. This deviation from truth, he claimed, to smudge the details since medical staff were not summoned until two days later, on September 8th.

On September 11 1977, Dr. Benjamin Tucker found Steve Biko (31), still kept in his cell, hyperventilating, unable to move his left arm, and foaming at the mouth. He was transferred to a Pretoria prison hospital—naked and shackled—six hundred miles away. Biko died in that Pretoria police cell on September 12th, 1977.

During his TRC testimony, Major Snyman reported that at the time of their first interview, Steven Bantu Biko,

“was extremely arrogant, went berserk, took one of the chairs in the office and threw it at Snyman. With his fists, he then stormed at the other members and the other members overwhelmed him. After a violent struggle, he fell with his head against the wall and with his body on the floor and in this process he received injuries on the lip and body. Warrant-Officer Beneke received an elbow injury and nonetheless did not go off duty. The district surgeon was informed and visited the detainee.”

Mr Booyens: Was it ever the intention to kill Mr Biko?

Mr Snyman: No, your Honour, it had never been the intention.

Mr Booyens: It is know and I have summarise for you what you had done to in fact violate his human rights; with regard to your description of the shuffle or fight; were there any further assaults? Was he beaten or was there any other such actions?

Mr Snyman: No, your Honour.

Mr Booyens: What would the political purpose have been? In your personal view, what political purpose did you attempt to achieve while interrogating Mr Biko, while

violating his human rights and while deceiving the court subsequently?

Why did you do this? What would the political purpose, if any, have been?

Mr Snyman: The political purpose had been in the first place, not to bring the security branch or the Government of the day into a position of embarrassment.

It was intended to protect the Government and the security branch.

That is why the facts were concealed.

Mr Booyens: With regard to the violation of Biko, his interrogation, what political purpose were you attempting to achieve through those actions?

Mr Snyman: Certainly, since he was striving to subvert the status quo it was our intention to obtain information from him in order to develop a case against him and to have him prosecuted in a court of law.

Mr Booyens: His intentions, to the best of your knowledge, was to subvert the status quo? If you had done nothing with regard to him, if for instance you simply left him alone; what would you imagine might have happened amongst others?

Mr Snyman: The country would have been brought into further anarchy.

— *TRC Reconciliation Commission, Amnesty Hearings, September 1010, 1997*

When all is said

But what do the rituals of reconciliation look like? Especially in context of generationalized trauma? Rwanda set itself apart, having opted for a criminal justice solution and doing so with a combination of international justice options with The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and a tame national strategy. Mozambique opted for a national strategy and limited international input. South Africa took an exclusively nationalist approach, offering conditional amnesty when the perpetrator had satisfied the committee with their confession.

Essentially, rewarding truth with amnesty, the TRC uncovered significant testimony steeped in contrition and confession. This approach, with its approach rooted in the experiences of the victim and the distress endured, lifted the veil on the wider and long-term effects of trauma, some of which we still see the effects of in the shape of unresolved, generational trauma. By contrast, the ICTR was not trauma-centered in the context of the victim at all. It followed a structure that was instantly recognizable for its criminal justice emulations and being preoccupied with whether the accused was an active participant in the violence that characterized the Rwandan genocide. The victim was purely in the room to endure hostile inquisition as a witness (Cobban).

Notwithstanding flaws, the Rwandan *Gacaca* had something in common with the South African TRC, at least in terms of its views on reconciliation and how that intersected with the victim experience, but the addition of extensive community engagement and community service for the perpetrators. It contrasts with the TRC, which had the process end somewhat bluntly once the confession met the requirements and expectations of the committee. In South Africa, the perpetrator of atrocity was not required to confront the victims or their families by way of apology with no condition of remorse or stipulations that they ask for some semblance of pardon. This is not to say that profound contrition and heartfelt pleas for forgiveness did not occur voluntarily.

The TRC was naive when it assumed the people of the new democracy would be inspired and compelled to be involved in the process—in the positive way the TRC had envisioned anyway—and that the committee would be viewed, organically, as a ministry of national transformation. The committee also assumed that everyone would want to tell their story and that the entire nation would want to hear, and even more, that the stories themselves would be unique. The possibility that “confession fatigue” could be a thing was never considered—itsself a testament to the single-minded conviction in the power and redemption of the process. Public saturation was not helped by the fact that media became immune to anything less than shocking, with an “if it bleeds, it leads” approach bombarding the viewers with sensationalized accounts of the most gruesome events. Finally,

embedding truth/forgiveness structures in national education was not considered and therefore not implemented (Villa-Vicencio).

And so, after the televised events and hours of confessions leaving a nation shell-shocked and fatigued, reaching a qualified conclusion on the success and legacy of an event such as the TRC is harder than it should be. Certainly, the die-hard fans and armchair enthusiasts pontificating from far away need this process of contrition and self-flagellation to be definitive. It's just too good a story—a parable—complete with a previously downtrodden, now victorious, population; and stock villains, with hollow eyes and bleeding hearts. But calculating the successes of a body such as the TRC amounts to more than a feel-good end-product; rather, it is about the process itself as the natural culmination of a thirty-five-year reign of white supremacy, where the broader collective had come to realize, from various standpoints, that the status quo was not tenable. Anyone hoping to introduce a reconciliation process would therefore be wise to eschew the seduction of recording sanitized versions of hard truths, which may only be exorcised through vivid recollections of entrenched anger and seething resentment and may benefit from honest expressions of the need for vengeance, decontamination of a mutually agreed lexicon, and confessions relating to the role of violence and intimidation.

A negative element rears its head when cherry-picked recollections and confessions make up a confection that rewrites history by underplaying the sustained effects of marginalization, oppression, and exploitation. In South Africa, the abstraction of a utopian society living freely in a post-conflict environment failed to take into account a profound economic asymmetry and lack of economic justice, that had become endemic to the county. It was also beyond the narrow mandate allowed by the TRC. The challenge still lies in the fact that, hiding in plain sight alongside tales of violence and conflict, is a necrotic cause too much of South Africa's bloodied past: fundamental economic inequality. And as the country seamlessly slid from one political dynamic to another and maneuvered from politically-motivated violence to economically-fueled confrontations, we need to

pause at the realization that only the directionality, focus, and expression of conflict had pivoted. The disillusionment and anger; the resentment and hopelessness—it's still there.

Black Voices Don't Matter (and aren't Heard)

//Kabbo makes an important point on the nature and directionality of confession and blame. One may read “an accidental killing while hunting” and conclude that with the endless back-and-forth style, and through many variations on the theme, //Kabbo is illustrating a blame-shift. The reader may very well find that within his story, blame is mercurial, shifting from self-flagellation and chest-beating to recrimination and denial. It is uncanny how liability is manipulated and appropriated throughout the story—pausing at the most dominant in the group before settling on a mea culpa. And this way of thinking—that the victim somehow elicited the act, or asked for it, is more doggedly entrenched in our collective psyche than expected. It shows up when we wonder if the victim of a tragedy or accident did something wrong—were they drunk?/did they dress like a harlot?/did they not read the label? And this kind of blaming doesn't have to blatantly accuse—it is also there when we make “mental notes” to drink less/dress appropriately/read the instructions. Because if someone stumbles into bad luck or untimely demise, it fundamentally shakes our comfort levels, leading to a psychological severance of sorts (Lerner).

UMass Amherst Professor Emerita Ronnie Janoff-Bulman draws attention to something she calls the “positive assumptive worldview,” which hinges on the idea that we think of the world as a benign place—that good people attract good things. Until something bad happens. But that aside, on a daily basis, given the news cycle, the only way to sustain a degree of sanity is to turn a blind eye to atrocity—the whole gamut: from school shootings, murders, and genocides, to illness, dread, and disease. Sure, shit happens, but maybe it won't happen to me. And we have, Janoff-Bulman suggests, the proverbs to prove it. Think “what goes around...” and “chickens coming home...” while not forgetting the evergreen “reap what you sow.” Blame all round (Janoff-Bulman).

And where all this intersects where //Kabbo's tale of blame and forgiveness; and the contemporary need for truth and reconciliation meets empathy. And that the empathetic response can be developed—it's not a new thing either. A 1966 experiment had seventy-two undergraduates observe a peer who appeared to receive severe and painful electric shocks, forcing them to make decisions regarding their compassion or their rejection of the suffering victim. Rejection reaction was strongest among those who saw the victim as suffering for a cause—a martyr condition. Furthermore, the results underlined the hypothesis that rejection of a suffering victim is primarily founded on a need to believe in a just world—the end justifying the means (Lerner).

The Bushman concept of spirituality combined with their cosmologically-influenced Weltanschauung can be viewed not as a shift in blame between strata in society but perhaps rather as an attempt at dissemination, illustrating their foundational belief in the interconnectedness of everything. In effect, //Kabbo's story about a hunter dying at the hands of a friend, and the process of confession and contrition, followed by forgiveness, is a precursor of what we would come to know as Ubuntu. And Ubuntu is the prime spiritual building block of truth and reconciliation.

What the TRC achieved was to place equal value on lives. It was founded on the idea that in the purest of senses, Black lives, and Black deaths, mattered. And that some Black violence can be contextualized. That victims are victims—even if they don't sit on the same side of the political debate. The mother of a son, killed in his fight to *sustain* Apartheid, can stand next to a mother whose son died fighting *against* Apartheid. And that what mattered here—what could make the difference and end up the teachable moment—was that grace and forgiveness were foundational in arresting the relentless continuation of violence.

But, we have to face the fact that although in an eye-for-an-eye kind of world, the TRC had proposed a viable alternative. A new way of ending hate. A replicable formula for restorative justice. But not quite worth emulating by the developed world. The USA, for example, retaliated

immediately after 9/11 while donating millions to the TRC in South Africa. It does beg the question of why some countries, fraught with double standards, are so enthusiastic about a place such as South Africa embarking on a process of confession and forgiveness? Antjie Krog wondered the same thing when she ventures that “[h]ow else can one read it but that it smells of racism? Blacks ought to forgive, but whites should take revenge? Forgiveness is for the ‘inferior’ nations, revenge for the ‘real’ nations” (Krog).

South African journalist and poet Sandile Dikeni referred to the asymmetry of Black opinion and value when he wrote, “what Blacks say has no value, because we are Black. The philosophy which Africans put forward are treated like exotic African masks—to be hung in houses or photographed for brochures, but never to be treated with the same amount of respect as the philosophies of the West” (Marks).

7

the 4th susurrus

//Kabbo's intended return home

—as told by //Kabbo during July and August, 1873, transcribed by W.H.L. Bleek

thou knowest that I sit waiting
for the moon to turn back for me
that I may return to my place
that I may listen to all the people's stories when I visit them
that I may sit in the sun and listen to the stories which come from yonder
I shall get hold of a story from them
because their stories float out from a distance
I feel that I must altogether visit
that I may be talking with them, my fellow men

For I do work here
women's household work
I do not obtain stories because I do not visit
people of another place are here
they do not possess my stories
They do not talk my language
for they visit their like

those who work keeping houses in order.

food is grown for them that they should get new food which is good

the Flat Bushmen go to each other's huts

that they may smoking sit in front of them

therefore they obtain stories at them

they are used to visit, for smoking's people they are

as regards myself, I am waiting that the moon may turn back for me

that I may set my feet forward in the path.

that I may tell my Master that I feel this is the time

when I should sit among my fellow men

I ought to talk with my fellow men for, I work here, together with women

and I do not talk with them for they merely send me to work.

I must first sit a little, cooling my arms

that the fatigue may go out of them, because I sit

I merely listen, watching for a story, which I want to hear

while I sit waiting for it, that it may float into my ear

these are those to which I am listening with all my ears while I sit silent

I must wait, listening behind me, while I listen along the road

while I feel that my name floats along the road

my three names²⁹ float along to my place

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

our names pass through people while they do not perceive our bodies
our names are those which, floating, reach a different place
a man's name passes behind the mountain's back
the people who dwell at another place go to meet the returning man's names
those names with which he returns
I will examine the place
for, the trees of the place seem handsome because they have grown tall
while I have not seen them that I might walk among them
for, I came to live at a different place
my place it is not
For, it was so with me that people were those who brought me to the people's place
that I should first come to work for a little while at it

I await the return of the moon
that I may return home
that I may examine the water pits
those at which I drank
I will work, putting the old hut in order
while I feel that I have gathered my children together
that they may work, putting the water in order for me
for I did go away, leaving the place,
while strangers were those who walked at my place
their place it was not
for //Kabbo's father's father's place it was
And then //Kabbo's father did possess it when //Kabbo's father's father died

//Kabbo's father was the one who possessed it
And when //Kabbo's father died,
//Kabbo's elder brother was the one who possessed the place
//Kabbo's elder brother died, //Kabbo possessed the place
and then //Kabbo married when he was grown up
bringing //kabba-ang to the place because he felt that he was alone
therefore, he grew old with his wife at the place
my children's children talked
they, by themselves, fed themselves
while they felt that they talked with understanding

therefore I must sit waiting for the Sundays on which I remain here
on which I continue to teach thee
I do not again await another moon for this moon is the one about which I told thee
therefore I desired that it should do thus
that it should return for me
for I have sat waiting for the boots that I must put on to walk in
which are strong for the road
for the sun will go along burning strongly
and then the earth becomes hot while I still am going along halfway
I must go together with the warm sun while the ground is hot
for a little road it is not
for it is a great road
I should reach my place when the trees are dry
for I shall walk letting the flowers become dry while I still follow the path

autumn will quickly be upon us there when I am sitting at my place

for I shall not go to other places

for I must remain at my place

the name of which I have told, thou, Master

Thou knowest it

Thou knowest, having put it down

And thus my name is plain beside it

it is there that I sit waiting for the gun

and then he will send the gun to me there

while he sends the gun in a cart

that which running, takes me the gun

while he thinks that I have not forgotten

that my body may be quiet as it was when I was with him

while I feel that I shoot feeding myself

for starvation was that on account of which I was bound

starvation's food when I starving turned back from following the sheep

therefore I lived with him

that I might get a gun from him

that I might possess it

that I might myself shoot

feeding myself while I do not eat my companions' food

for I eat my own game

a gun is that which takes care of an old man

it is that with which we kill the springbok which go through the cold wind
 we go to eat, in the cold wind
 and, satisfied with food, we lie down in our huts in the cold wind
 the gun is strong against the wind
 it satisfies a man with food in the very middle of the cold

The Hottentot Venus

On August 9, 2002, Hankey, a village so small that is indicated by the most modest of dots on Eastern Cape maps, witnessed a remarkable funeral. One of its most famous daughters was being laid to rest more than two-hundred years after her birth. She was only twenty-six at the time of her death—caused by either pneumonia, syphilis, or alcoholism—in Paris.

Since the 1940s, petitions to repatriate her remains had fallen on deaf French ears, her brain, skeleton, and genitals in a jar, being far too much of a draw for the Musée de l'Homme, an institution with more than just a slight reputation as a cabinet of racist curiosities. It's where Picasso got plenty of Cubist inspiration from, studying the collection of plundered African masks, viewing them not as artistically inferior as was the view of the time, but rather as powerful, intense—even fearful.

When Nelson Mandela, after his election as President of South Africa, finally joined the chorus of demand for the return of the remains and a life-size plaster cast of the deceased, the French relented. In March 2002, the “Hottentot Venus” finally came home.

Her name was Sarah (Saartjie) Baartman.

With a supporting cast resembling a Hollywood script of villains and scoundrels, the young Khoekhoen Bushman woman was first employed as a wet nurse—read handmaid—to the family of Henrik Cesars, a mixed-race entrepreneur who, along with British ship surgeon William Dunlop,

concocted a contract of employment for Baartman. With Cesars as companion, Saartjie would travel to the United Kingdom. And she would become a star of the stage.

Night after night, Baartman, taking center stage at a Piccadilly vaudeville venue, brought the house down. In her skin-tone figure-hugging costume, complete with an ostrich-worth of feathers and a panoply of beads, her near-naked display left precious little to the imagination.

Baartman's exploitation did not hinge on her beauty, her voice, or her dance moves. The public came to gawk at her protuberant posterior, the result of a condition called "steatopygia"—a fat build-up—but one that was essential to the persona constructed around her as "Hottentot Venus." That persona of fulsomeness became just the latest incarnation of an ideology of representation—the figure of the black woman in art through much of art history. Baartman achieved fame as the subject of a version of the much-maligned "gaze," which bell hooks describes as "a site of resistance for colonized black people globally." (hooks).

Baartman's employment is a complicated issue—we simply don't know for sure to what degree she performed out of her own free will. Returning to South Africa was certainly not a viable solution as she would have little in the way of income and be assured of settling for a life of servitude. Piccadilly blaxploitation at least paid something, and she had achieved a level of self-determination.

But fashions come and go, and today's hit-show eventually ends up tarnished and discarded. By 1840 Baartman upped and left for Paris, Cesars still in tow, where she found a new lease on fame at the Cafe de Paris and where she would meet two more unsavory characters, a nebulous showman called Réaux—which in early 19th century French that translates as "Realness"—and famed naturalist, Georges Cuvier, a man who was wrong about the continental drift, elephants, and evolution—but had a few good ideas on dinosaurs.

Cuvier would eventually make a plaster cast of Baartman and dissect her—placing her brains and genitals in jars for display at the Musée—and write articles posing that "the form of her labia was evidence of the primitive sexual appetite of African women" (Carroll). We cannot underplay the

tension, the sheer sickness, of the colonial preoccupation subjugation and sexuality. Baartman's genitalia, barely distinguishable as such suspended in Cuvier's jar, resembled some exotic sea creature—"an exsanguinated polyp, drifting in a pale, topaz sea," as Carmel Schire describes it. Schire continues that Baartman's "chief, and most obvious asset, was her large, steatopygous, buttocks. Her hidden asset, was her genitalia, which were assumed to include uncommonly long labia, dangling down to form what scientists called the 'Hottentot apron' or *tablier*" (Skotnes).

The colonial obsession with the *tablier* and its links to what they viewed as the "inferior race" and its habit to mutilate genitals was preceded, and matched, by their obsession with Bushman monorchids—a physical condition where a man possesses only one testicle. Opinions around this condition, too, ranged from the esoteric to the ridiculous with many believing that it was a case of semi-castration—learned from visiting Jews, as a sort of super-circumcision—resulting in a lopsided, but fine, warrior, "particularly skilled in throwing stones" (Skotnes).

Sarah Baartman is a symbol of humiliation. She epitomizes the way the indigenous people of South Africa were used by theorists to illustrate European superiority. Baartman in death has done what very little Bushman culture, art, or storytelling could: she inserted the history and displacement of the various groups that make up the Bushmen at the center of a political debate—one that resonates beyond South Africa as we deal with the implications of the retention, and display of human remains, as well the display and publication of sensitive material.¹⁷

Baartman has become the face of displacement, exploitation, and unwelcome scrutiny. And the need to return home.

An Elegy on Displacement

"//Kabbo's intended return home" unfolds—slowly and deliberately— as the declaration of intent from an elderly convict, who wishes to achieve *some* level of self-determination while reminding his interlocutors just how much the /Xam landscape had changed in his absence. The

story reveals //Kabbo as a master-storyteller who deftly weaves a personal account of /Xam extinction while simultaneously drifting into utopian daydreams of a world that simply is not there anymore. His narration delivers a personal footnote to Bleek and Lloyd, putting the team on notice, reminding them that he is owed a pair of boots. And a gun.

//Kabbo spent a relatively short time at the Bleek household. Between February 16, 1871, and October 15, 1873, he delivered moving accounts of his arrest and subsequent imprisonment, while revealing himself as a shaman through stories on presentiments, and rainmaking (Skotnes). Also known as “Dream,” he contributed fifteen stories, and Lloyd recalls in 1911 that //Kabbo “was an excellent narrator, and patiently watched until a sentence had been written down, before proceeding with what he was telling” (Bleek). Lloyd also mentions that /Kabbo was particularly taken with the thought that Bushman stories would survive through the written word. “He intended to return, later, to help us at Mowbray, but, died before he could do so,” she writes.

Reading //Kabbo’s stories, a melancholy undertone is quickly detected, balanced by his unassuming, yet unquestionable, wisdom. When describing his need to return to his home, however, he adds layers of personal comments and memories. Anthropologist Megan Biesele writes about the Ju/’hoan Bushmen of the Kalahari, that the storytelling tradition functions as more than random cultural note-keeping, instead forming a quasi-evolutionary role as collective repository of knowledge (Biesele). It is a mechanism for genealogy and the interconnectedness of community as much as it is a running commentary on life. And it’s not for nothing that “//Kabbo’s intended return home” is catalogued under the “Personal History” section of *Specimens of Bushmen Folklore*.

By the time of //Kabbo’s incarceration, the /Xam had been victims of murderous colonial and settler commandos for nearly a hundred years. Thousands of /Xam men had been hunted—and executed—on sight since 1754, while the women and children were rounded up and dispersed across the colony to work as slaves on white farms. Bushmen who chose to align themselves with the commandos as informants or trackers were given some of these displaced women as wives—gifts for a

job well done. As a result, /Xam communities were destroyed along with any hope of nurturing and continuing their language (Elphick). And if settlers weren't enough, illness soon followed.

Some discrepancy exists around the level to which Bushmen were affected by diseases such as smallpox, something that up to the early 1700s was non-existent in the colony. All that changed when on February 13, 1713, a Dutch ship landed in Table Bay harbour, stopping, as was the custom, on its way to The Netherlands from Ceylon. A load of dirty smallpox-infected laundry was sent to the Slave Lodge to be washed and by May, nearly half of the slaves at the lodge had died of the disease. Although population figures from that era are in short supply, it is estimated that at least 25% of settlers succumbed to smallpox.

Anecdotal accounts claim that in rural areas by February 1714, as much as 90% of Bushmen were infected and wiped out, having no resistance to the virus and living in small insular groups. In the Oxford History, Monica Wilson writes that “the smallpox epidemics of 1713, 1755 and 1767 so decimated the Khoikhoi that the very names of some hordes were forgotten.” The Dagh Register³⁰, kept by the Dutch colonial government of the Cape Colony gives a revealing breakdown of the spread of the smallpox virus in the Bushman community (Ross).

On May 6, 1713, the diarist wrote:

Even the poor Hottentots are not free, but disastrously do not know the disease and have never seen it and, in consequence of this medical ignorance are thus very disastrously smitten.

A day later he wrote that:

The government has had buried nine Hottentot corpses, which were lying stinking in their huts, to avoid further bad air.

On May 19, he recorded that:

Today the news was received that some of the surviving Cape Hottentots, who wished to escape the sickness by fleeing over the mountains to another tribe have been mostly killed by the latter - with the exception of a few who escaped—for fear that the pox should break out among them: a rigorous policy.

By November, 28:

Was heard more to bewail about the smallpox which recently reigned here (although it has not totally ceased; in Drakenstein Colony people are still afflicted). Corn reaping is at hand and the majority of the Hottentots who used to serve the farmers have been carried off, so that some of them [the farmers] are helping with scything, something here outside normal usage.

Bushman survivors were weak and demoralized—ripe for takeover, capture, and murder. The Colony was brought to its knees, first by the 1713 epidemic and then by a two-year drought from 1715 until 1716. An insightful study on the state of the Bushman leading up to 1828, by Elphick and Malherbe, found that the Bushman decline was slow and sustained—their social fabric unraveling as a result of the drought, disease, loss of cattle to disease, and ongoing loss of herding land. Healthy Bushmen needed healthy cattle to survive which, in turn, implies lush vegetation—and suddenly, due to the unraveling, most of this was in short shrift (Elphick).

A Family Tree

From his descriptions, it is evident that //Kabbo traced his genealogy back to his grandparents and he mentions an uncle—his father’s brother—//A/khain yan (or Oud Bastard), who lived at the Blaauwputs just south of the Bitterpits, the “home” //Kabbo intended to return to (Deacon).

//Kabbo's father was Goa/ya. His mother was !Kwi-an. She, too, was a storyteller and source of "The Girl of the Early Race, Who Made Stars," a tale that drifts into early-race creationism and vivid descriptions of the Milky Way (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:73):

the wood ashes which are here,
 they must altogether become the Milky Way
 they must white lie along in the sky
 that the stars may stand outside the Milky Way
 while the Milky Way is the Milky Way
 while it used to be good ashes.

!Kwi-an's mother, ≠Giri, was killed by a lion while her first husband, and Goa/ya's father, /Torrano, was trampled by a rhinoceros. !Kwi-an's second husband, /To/na, died of starvation. Lloyd mentions that ≠Giri was a *!gixa* or sorceress and notes that ≠Giri and /Torrano were not only //Kabbo's maternal grandparents, but also paternal grandparents to !Kwabba-an, //Kabbo's wife. //Kabbo and his wife were therefore first cousins. They had two children; Suobba-//kein, who married /Han≠kass'o but died a year after her mother; and //Goo-ka-!kui, "Smoke's Man" also known as Witbooi Tooren.

//Kabbo and !Kwabba-an also adopted his brother's daughter, Betje, under exceptional circumstances. //Kabbo's brother, =Xhuru-!kwa, had spent five nights "visiting" at someone else's house. An unnamed man was looking after =Xhuru-!kwa's "deserted" wife and helping to look after Betje, who was crying for her absent father. The mystery man was incensed. =Xhuru-!kwa returned home after five adulterous nights—falling asleep beside his wife—but early the next morning, the mystery man entered the hut and stabbed =Xhuru-!kwa in his sleep with a Xhosa assegai. On the advice of the assassin, who remains unnamed—but we assume he may be amaXhosa—the family deserted the hut.

Not long after the murder, =Xhuru-!kwa's wife died from an undisclosed illness. She could not be buried as her sister, her closest living relative, suffered from the same illness. After recovering, the sister wanted to take Betje to a relative's hut but decided to take her to //Kabbo who was significantly closer. From his house, //Kabbo could see that the dead mother's bones had been stripped of meat by marauding jackals. Knowing that the surviving sister was also ill, he rushed over to collect Betje, which unattended, was easy prey for a bold jackal. He returned home with Betje (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:309).

//Kabbo's household had grown exponentially over time and !Kwabba-an's sister and her child also joined them at their home near the Hartebeest River in the Kenhardt district. Despite the death of his brother, the summer of 1846 was a happy one, with many mouths to feed. He describes a scene of domestic bliss:

I used to run (and) catch a hare, I brought it to my home, while it was in my bag, while the sun was hot. [...] I used to shoot, sending up a bustard. I put it in (to the bag) and brought it home. My wife would come to pluck it, at home. She boiled it in the pot; that we might drink soup. On the morrow I would hunt the hare, I would be peeping about in the shade of the bushes. I would shoot it up, that the children might eat (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:311).

Travel journals kept by traders such as Nicholson during 1858 found relatively robust numbers of /Xam along the Hartebeest River in the Northern Cape, only to return a year later and find only a handful /Xam, seemingly hunted into extinction by settlers, Koranna, amaXhosa, and *basters*.

One of the last of the /Xam in the Hartebeest River area was //Kabbo (Skotnes). Fourteen years after the Hartebeest River genocide, //Kabbo would narrate that:

I await the return of the moon
 that I may return home
 that I may examine the water pits
 those at which I drank
 I will work, putting the old hut in order
 while I feel that I have gathered my children together
 that they may work, putting the water in order for me
 for I did go away, leaving the place,
 while strangers were those who walked at my place
 their place it was not
 for //Kabbo's father's father's place it was (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:305)

By the time Bleek and Lloyd played host to the /Xam narrators, their worlds had all but imploded. //Kabbo was pining for a family that had been exterminated, and a place that was fundamentally changed. The “strangers were those who walked at my place” were the settlers to whom Nicholson had referred.

//Kabbo’s genealogy confirms that the area had historically been exclusively inhabited by /Xam. There is quiet resignation to his words. He instinctively knew that the life he once knew—that of his father, and his father’s father before him—was lost to aggression and subsequent settlements as the area had increasingly become a buffer zone between the settlers, the local black tribes, and the /Xam.

Fellow Mowbray resident, /Alkúnta, during a session with Bleek, elaborates on the /Xam’s volatile relationship with the settlers, and two of his narrated lines stand out as sharp illustration of the asymmetric reciprocal justice standards of the time.

the bushmen eat the boers’ cattle
 the boers catch the children of the bushmen

/A!kúnta's words serve as a key of sorts to appreciate the incommensurate nature of the interaction between the Bushmen and the settlers/Boers. The products of a diminished society because of drought and disease—and the effects of demonization at the hands of the settlers—the Bushmen had experienced the second wave of commando aggression around the 1850s.

Further genealogical descriptions reveal that many of //Kabbo's relations had been bought by Dutch settlers, while others had “been taken,” the standard euphemism used by //Kabbo when describing the harsh actions (Bank). His aunt was shot by farmers—her daughter, /Xamme-an, and four of her children were killed at the same time. A single bullet is said to have killed them, all in a row. Their father was shot and killed, as well. Their only remaining child, Kka-//kein, was abducted by the Dutch.

It is therefore remarkable that throughout his testimony and prolific storytelling //Kabbo remains resolutely free of bitterness. By 1867, however, //Kabbo had become a somewhat infamous cattle thief, on one occasion stealing as many as nineteen head of cattle from the Dutch farmers who urgently petitioned the Cape Parliament to round up the thieves as a matter of urgency. //Kabbo was arrested, along with his son and son-in-law and transported to Victoria West by wagon while their wives and children followed on foot. After being tried and sentenced, they were eventually transferred to a prison on Beaufort West, before again being transferred to Wellington. Finally they were transported to Cape Town's Breakwater Prison, where //Kabbo was catalogued:

4628 Jantje Tooren, Hottentot, 55,

Labourer, B'Land, 5.0 3/4, (Hair) Bro Dark Woolly, Bro small eyes,

wrinkled face & forehead, small wart on the left side of the brow,

(religion) None, (can read or write) Neither, Married.

During November 1870 //Kabbo met Bleek and Lloyd, who were at the prison to photograph the prisoner. It was a meeting that would change—and define—their lives.

For a little road it is not

The “how” of the relationship with the /Xam narrators is touched on by Lucy Lloyd when, in her Preface to *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*, she refers to the /Xam as “givers of native literature.” It is a far cry from the more clinical term “informant” of future anthropological conventions—a term which still stands today when scholars debate the /Xam output. Lloyd spent much time making notes, contextualizing the narrators—she draws direct links between the storyteller, their stories, and the things that they care about when they are not being recorded. She notes that //Kabbo is interested in the work—we know that he was aware of the potential of the recorded word and its potential for preservation. Lloyd also mentions that Dilkwain takes particular pleasure in being asked about /Xam paintings, while /Han≠kass’o was extraordinarily concerned about weather patterns in Mowbray.

Lloyd creates the impression of a team. A small group brought together by shared, serious dedication. Her language in the Preface is sympathetic, expanding on significant genealogical details. Her words contrast starkly with those of McCall Theal in his Introduction to *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. Canadian-born Theal, never one to miss an opportunity to wax lyrical about the colonial experience and its role in the emergence of a “new society” of white civilizing settlements, held high regard for contact that lead to conquest. Theal ultimately subscribed to a worldview of “colonial nationalism,” a confection of white settler assertiveness, precariously balanced on cultural colonist cohesion, and its place in the broader Empire structure.

For Theal, the end-game has to be the domination of white nationalism. To this end, Theal rallied the colonists—placating and flattering them in equal measure—by extolling the virtues of their brand of nation-building and their God-given role as world civilizers. In a moment of wishful thinking, Theal imagined a convergence of the English and Dutch, united in their efforts as a governing “white master-caste.” The Great Trek north, as well as two Anglo Boer wars, would ensure that the “caste” never got off the ground in quite the neat way he envisioned, but Theal correctly imagined what resembled an eventual building block of Apartheid (Schreuder).

Theal was never a great choice to write the Introduction to *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*—and his words cast a pall over the rest of work with passages claiming that the Bushmen were “savages, though having the passions and the bodily strengths of men, are children in mind . . .” before ruminating the lack of intelligent “minds . . . like those of little children in all matters not connected with their immediate bodily wants,” and that Bushmen “verbs were almost, if not quite, as complete and expressive as our own.” In a final statement of utter pomposity, Theal declares: “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” (Bleek).

But if there is a tangible difference between the words of Lloyd and Theal on the /Xam, their narrations, and their precarious position in the Colony, the variations in Bleek and Lloyd’s views of the Bushmen find a way of clouding what we know about the “givers of native literature” themselves.

Most of the /Xam started out as prisoners near the end of their sentences and given a reprieve of sorts and allowed to stay at the Mowbray residence with Bleek and his extended family. Important to note that at first, a constable was present—to keep an eye out. Just in case. Equally important is that the prisoners stayed on in the residence after completing their incarceration, and some returned. That is not to say they were happy. Far from it.

Bleek detected recognized that the men missed their families and immediately planned to bring at least the wives to Cape Town—not out of sheer benevolence, it must be said, but as a form of payment for services rendered. His agreement—to keep them in the house and bring their wives—was predicated on his determination to get the research done.

The first /Xam storyteller to stay in the Mowbray household was the 18-year-old /A!Kunta, who had been arrested along with //Kabbo. /A!Kunta was chosen for the Bleek project by prison chaplain, G.H.R. Fisk, to comply with Bleek’s request for storytellers and although /A!Kunta stayed

at Mowbray until October 1873, two years past the end of his prison sentence, Bleek considered his contributions of limited value. On the one hand, /A!Kunta's isolation from his companions was suspected as having compromised his language use, but more importantly, his age would possibly have hampered his knowledge of folklore. As a result, /A!Kunta contributed only two stories to the archive.

To make up for /A!Kunta's lack of usefulness Bleek requested that a second Bushman prisoner join them at Mowbray. On February 16, 1871, //Kabbo joined the household. Working with Bleek and, increasingly, with Lloyd, //Kabbo assumed the role of /Xam language teacher to his hosts and contributed the bulk of the folklore output. Everyone in the household knew that the extinction of the Bushmen people was imminent and a shared sense of urgency drew the team into an unusually close relationship.

Naturally, given the time, and place, no friendship on equal terms was even vaguely possible, but Bleek described //Kabbo as "most intelligent" and "an excellent narrator" referring to him as "our elder Bushman" (Bleek 1873a:5). Bleek was evidently concerned that //Kabbo returned safely to the northern Cape.

We gain some insight into the nuts and bolts of the Mowbray operation from two notes to the Colonial Office in Cape Town, in which Bleek gave some account of expenses incurred by having /A!Kunta and //Kabbo stay with him. Bleek claimed one shilling and sixpence per day per Bushman for maintenance, and because he was swamped at the Grey Library, and because he was somewhat feeble in health, he could devote no more than an hour per day in the direct transcriptions and study with their subjects. Most of the language and narration work was handled by Lloyd. In the Supplement to this submission dated April 9, 1872, Bleek mentioned the need for warm winter clothes, noting expenses incurred when the Bushmen fell ill. He further writes:

"It was also necessary to make them fairly comfortable, so that they should be less anxious to return to their own country and friends; and we were obliged to keep

them particularly clean and tidy, as they had to be for hours in the sitting room, when giving us instruction in their language.”

He noted that he could not alleviate some costs by having the Bushmen do housework because, “It was also found necessary to keep the Bushmen tolerably fresh for the hours (sometimes four in the day) in which they taught us their language.”

But a shift was underway. Under instruction of his patron, Sir George Grey, Bleek made up a set of the photographs taken in Huxley’s style. He had previously sent a collection of images to London, but this was different. No photographs of //Kabbo were included.

The Huxley style was harsh and based on the rules for the visual mapping of human body anthropometric photography developed the Harvard professor, Louis Agassiz in the 1850s and 1860s, and the system proposed by John Lamprey earlier in 1869. The standards of anthropometric photography were adapted and further developed by Huxley, who, in a letter to Lord Granville of the colonial Office, argued that: “Great numbers of ethnological photographs already exist but they lose much of their value from not being taken upon a uniform and well-considered plan. The result is that they are rarely either measurable or comparable with one another and that they fail to give that precise information respecting the proportions and the confirmation of the body which alone are of any considerable worth to the ethnologist.”

Huxley’s ethnological photographs were produced with Bleek, and note the ethnicity, names, age, as well as the prison registry numbers of the subjects. As proposed by Huxley, the Bushmen stood on a carpet in front of a neutral light background: naked, full face and profile. Then seated up to the waist, and a close-up mug-shot. The subject is obliged to hold a measuring device—in the close-up it is a measuring tape, drawn from above, wrapped around his armpit. The subjects look into the camera critically, but submissive.

It could be that the //Kabbo images got lost at sea. It cannot be taken as a certainty that they have been deliberately excluded. But it is tempting to speculate that Bleek removed the humiliating images of a man he had come to respect. This benign act of suppression may be read as the first step in Bleek's creating a humane image of //Kabbo and his family.

The image of //Kabbo that Bleek chose for the Ethnological Album for the Grey Library in Cape Town was a variation on a full-face ethnological study, screened within an oval frame. With the superimposition of the oval, the image is rendered close to photographic portraiture conventions of the time, both in terms of its softening a certain scientific linearity detected in the original but, most tellingly, in its masking all measuring instruments. Among the ten photographs in Huxley's style, this treatment was applied only to //Kabbo.

At some point in the relationship between //Kabbo and Bleek, one more break with convention arrived with a chromolithograph that eventually served as frontispiece for the 1911 edition of *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* by Bleek & Lloyd 1911. It was a reproduction of an earlier painting by William Schroeder (1852–92) and designed as a portrait in the European tradition, affording dignity and status to the sitter. In the image, //Kabbo is presented with a full head of hair—the shaved heads of ethnological photographs were handy for cranial study, while also suited to the prison environment, which enabled the taking of the images, to begin with.

No photograph exists that could have been used by watercolorist Schroeder, and while it is impossible to prove that he painted //Kabbo from life, the dress style and expression are certainly life-like. This image of //Kabbo, the man who more than any other had shared the soul of the Bushman with Bleek, presented with natural hair and a gold earring not seen in Huxley's ethnological photographs, shows quiet confidence. It's a display accommodating some dignity.

The /Xam willingly traded their freedom—their ability to go back home—in exchange for their stories to be recorded by Bleek and Lloyd. When Lloyd introduces us to //Kabbo in the Preface to *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*, she noted that:

He was an excellent narrator, and patiently watched until a sentence had been written down, before proceeding with what he was telling. He much enjoyed the thought that the Bushman stories would become known by means of books. He was with Dr. Bleek from February 16th, 1871, to October 15th, 1873. He intended to return, later, to help us at Mowbray, but, died before he could do so. (Lloyd 1911:x–xi)

By the same token, the other narrators, /Alkunta, Di!kwain, ≠Ksin, !Kweiten ta//ken and /Han≠kass'o were not passive participants or hopeless victims of the hegemony of the colony. Each of them had a specific task. They wanted to be in that place, at that time, telling the stories of their people. They knew that, at any point, they could leave. In some fucked up way, they were empowered. Lloyd's relentlessly peppy notes and Bleek's endless scribbling of linguistic references furnished the storytellers with some agency in a country where ordinarily they had none. And when they had enough, the Kenhard/Prieska group asked a policeman for directions, before walking home to Bushmanland (Bleek 1936b).

When//Kabbo speaks

//Kabbo or “Dream,” also known as Oud Jantje Tooren, was estimated to have been about 55 to 60 years old at the time of his arrival at Mowbray. His stay was short—arriving on February 16, 1871, and leaving on October 15, 1873. From the start, Bleek and Lloyd tried to secure the longest possible stay for //Kabbo by promising to find his wife, !Kwabba-an (or Oud Lies), which would end up as an exercise in futility. After the jail sentence part of his stay ended, Bleek promised //Kabbo a much-desired reward—a gun.

He exceeded the storytelling abilities of /Alkunta as his tales were consistently lively and entertaining. Perhaps more revealing, //Kabbo's narratives were informed by his lived experience. Defined by his need to belong //Kabbo frequently spoke to Lloyd and Bleek of his home and how much he longed to return but that “he much enjoyed the thought that the Bushman stories would

become known by means of books,” (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:x). The great role that storytelling played in his life radiates throughout his narration, “//Kabbo’s Intended Return Home,” given during July and August 1873, just months before his mid-October departure from Mowbray. In a sidetone to the piece, //Kabbo explains to Bleek that a story,

is like the wind, it comes from a far-off quarter, and we feel it

He continues that :

the Flat Bushmen go to each other's huts

that they may smoking sit in front of them

therefore they obtain stories at them

they are used to visit, for smoking's people they are (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:301–3)

His narrative comments give us a firm idea of how he and Bleek forged a working relationship and of his position in the Mowbray household—

I ought to talk with my fellow men for, I work here, together with women

and I do not talk with them for they merely send me to work (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:303)

And perhaps most interesting of all are the expectations //Kabbo held in terms of his reward for his continued narration, which ties in with his sense of pride. He gently, yet firmly, reminds Bleek of their agreement and how vital this reward, a gun, is to self-determination.

for I shall not go to other places

for I must remain at my place

the name of which I have told, thou, Master

Thou knowest it

Thou knowest, having put it down

And thus my name is plain beside it

it is there that I sit waiting for the gun

and then he will send the gun to me there
 while he sends the gun in a cart
 that which running, takes me the gun
 while he thinks that I have not forgotten
 that my body may be quiet as it was when I was with him
 while I feel that I shoot feeding myself
 for starvation was that on account of which I was bound
 starvation's food when I starving turned back from following the sheep
 therefore I lived with him
 that I might get a gun from him
 that I might possess it
 that I might myself shoot
 feeding myself while I do not eat my companions' food
 for I eat my own game (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:316–17)

“Kabbo’s Intended Return Home” evokes a universality—the sheer drive to narrate. It sets //Kabbo’s confinement, stuck in a colonial household, against the fluidity of storytelling, “because their stories float out from a distance” rendered in the starchy Jacobean English of Bleek and Lloyd’s translation (Bushman Folklore, p. 301)

...I must remain at my place
 the name of which I have told, thou, Master
 Thou knowest it
 Thou knowest, having put it down

The juxtaposition of //Kabbo’s free thought and Bleek’s formal style gives the text a seductive tone. One that hints at the different mechanisms deployed by Bleek and Lloyd in their

attempts to connect with—and look after—the storyteller-prisoners and their families, albeit to varying degrees of success.

Bleek acted in a studious and distant manner, notating and occasionally making observations on the context in a purely explanatory, capacity while Lloyd clearly encouraged a collaborative effort with the /Xam. Her many notes, some personal and deeply reflexive, reveal an interest in the storytellers that encourages their menschy side to flourish. It's easy to determine why //Kabbo was so valuable to the Bleek team since he played a significant role in teaching them the /Xam alphabet and vocabulary. //Kabbo also took great care to ensure that the right tone was struck when vacillating between /Xam, Dutch, and English, a quality especially evident from Lloyd's sidenotes.

//Kabbo is a master of the *kukummi*, a /Xam word that roughly translates as a story, while hinting at other forms of storytelling, including poetry and historical narratives. When he speaks, the words take on a Delphic quality as he makes telegraphic statements, often repeated, while building a circuitous storyline. Taking several days to tell, //Kabbo would dispense with tradition when telling stories, flouting any semblance of linearity or temporal restraint. Lloyd appears remarkably in sync with his method. More than any of the Mowbray storytellers, //Kabbo grasped the importance of the moment—that he is witnessing the genocide of his people, something that he has been acutely aware of for the duration of his life.

Besides being a skilled storyteller with a gift for repetition and stacking tension, //Kabbo uses unique stylistic mechanisms to convey various points of view. He frequently situates various characters buttressing the crux of the story using near-identical language while indulging in ductile diversions lending a textured interpretation of events.

Lloyd notated the story between February 18, and March 20, 1873. She notes, with her usual attention to peripheral and situational detail, that she was delayed in notating the narration due to Bleek being on holiday and // Kabbo being in poor health (Bleek). It is useful to bear in mind that Lloyd and Bleek preferred a seamless representation of the narration, an important fact to bear in

mind since the oral tradition is rendered without discernible paragraphs. The paragraphs in the published versions adding structure purely for ease of reading. When updating or even mildly editing the narration, several factors have to be adhered to, not least of which the placement of punctuation and the syntax, which is made challenging by the workshopped nature of the transcriptions—in several cases, the word order only makes sense when translating the sentence back to Afrikaans. Upon re-reading the Lloyd and Bleek English versions, with the Afrikaans translation fresh in mind, the syntax and word flow suddenly shift into clear focus. Another wrinkle appears when the reader encounters the liberal temporal and character shifts, sometimes lending a surreal quality to the reading which is alleviated somewhat by the dramatic effect of the shifts (Lewis-Wiliams)

So determined was Bleek to not lose /Kabbo that he lured him to stay longer with a promise of a “greatly longed-for reward.” The reward would be a journey to Victoria West undertaken with his friend from Bitterpits, /Alkúnta, to find their wife and belongings, whom both men missed dearly. Experiencing a presentiment of his own, it is clear from Bleek’s “Brief Account of Bushman Folk-lore,” prepared for the Houses of Parliament in Cape Town, that he was concerned that the men won’t return to Mowbray. Eventually, Bleek was notified that //Kabbo would return to Mowbray without his wife and son, but he was disappointed with the fact that !Kwabba-an was too frail for the journey back to the Cape, and he notes that “she would have given us a great deal of the information known only by the elder people, and especially by the old women.”

!Kwabba-an would have made a great asset to Bleek, especially considering that !Kweiten-ta-//ken’s contributions “as that of the first Bushmanwoman accessible to us, was, of course, very desirable.” She would, of course, not stay, partly because the “maintenance of so large a family entailed a much increased expenditure, which was, however, unavoidable for the purpose of retaining for a time !Kweiten-ta-//ken, who would not stay without her whole family.” Bleek was comforted by the fact that !Kweiten-ta-//ken’s brother, Diä!kwain, “promised to stay here some time longer, and whom we hope soon to see joined by //Kabbo.”

Bleek and Lloyd would not see //Kabbo again. He left Mowbray on October 15, 1873, and found his wife and children in Victoria West. Together they traveled to Calvinia to visit family, and he did indeed plan to return to Mowbray. Lucy Lloyd tried to get in contact with //Kabbo, who was expected back in Cape Town, and she was rightly concerned not having heard from him—perhaps she had a presentiment of her own. Lloyd got word that //Kabbo had passed away in Vanwyksvlei on January 1876. !Kwabba-an passed away the following year, also in Vanwyksvlei.

bushman presentiments

—as told by //Kabbo during February and March, 1873, transcribed by W.H.L. Bleek

the bushmen's letters are in their bodies

the letters speak

they move

they make the Bushmen's bodies move

they order the others to be silent

a man is altogether still

when he feels that his body is tapping inside

a dream speaks falsely

it is a thing which deceives

the presentiment is that which speaks the truth

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Notes

- ¹ Hottentot was historically used by the Dutch and English when referring to the Bushmen. Use of the term is now considered offensive.
- ² Operating between 1602 and 1800, The *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*—VOC, was one of the first and most successful international corporations. It monopolized the spice trade, had semi-governmental powers, able to begin wars, prosecute convicts, negotiate treaties and establish colonies.
- ³ The official languages of the Republic of South Africa are Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu.
- ⁴ The Tricameral Parliament, a three-tiered assembly presiding over the last decade of Apartheid, was formed to allow parliamentary representation for Brown South African and Indians in one of three separate chambers, a supposed reform and improvement of Apartheid-era Whites-only representation. The attempt excluded Black Africans, and was meant to dislodge the Brown and Indians groups from an alliance with African nationalists and other anti-Apartheid forces that were demanding authentic democracy and equal rights for all. Analysts have seen the ‘reform’ process as a move from the politics of control to a politics of co-option.
- ⁵ Between 1658 and 1807, slaves at the Cape colony were from Africa, Madagascar, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Two ships with West African slaves moored at the Cape in 1685. The Cape slave trading ceased in 1807, and the practice of slavery was ended in 1834.
- ⁶ The Xhosa people (amaXhosa) refer to their language as isiXhosa, a Nguni Bantu language and spoken as a first language by approximately 8.2 million people and by another 11 million as a second language in South Africa. The amaXhosa migrated to the east coast of Africa and came across Khoisan-speaking people, borrowing some Khoisan words and pronunciations, such as the click sound. The Bantu ancestor of Xhosa did not have clicks, which attests to a strong historical contact with a San language that did. An estimated 15% of Xhosa vocabulary is of San origin. In the modern period, it has also borrowed, slightly, from both Afrikaans and English.
- ⁷ The Zulu people (amaZulu) refer to their language as isiZulu, part of the Nguni language group. The word Zulu means “Sky” and according to oral history, Zulu was the name of the ancestor who founded the Zulu royal line around 1670.

- ⁸ A lily bulb, which Bushmen dig out.
- ⁹ A daisy.
- ¹⁰ Tobias undertook postgraduate research at Cambridge University and Chicago. He garnered five degrees, including a DSc for work on hominid evolution. In 1959 he succeeded Raymond Dart as department head of anatomy and human biology at the University of the Witwatersrand. South Africans saw Tobias as their Indiana Jones: dapper and mustachioed, he looked like a 1940s film star. He loved tea, chocolate, teasing TV directors—“I’m glad I put my teeth in”—having sing-alongs and braais (barbecues). One of his favorite stories concerned Dart's wife once forgetting the fossilized Taung skull in a London taxi.
- ¹¹ *With Uplifted Tongue* is possibly more interesting due to the illustrations by Arthur Goldreich, whose abstract figures and sketchy outlines are a unique accompaniment to this collection, his style clearly evoking Bushmen rock art. Goldreich, winner of South Africa's Best Young Painter Award in 1955, was a key figure in the anti-Apartheid movement and he purchased Liliesleaf Farm, the safe-house of the ANC throughout the 60s. Goldreich was arrested at Liliesleaf Farm during the 1963 Rivonia Raid that led to Nelson Mandela's imprisonment.
- ¹² The top of this plant is described as being like that of a pumpkin. The root is roasted and eaten, as are the black seeds.
- ¹³ Han#kass’o explained in sidenotes that prepared and filled springbok ears are tied, in fours or fives, to the top of each foot, letting the men's toes appear below them.
- ¹⁴ Dutch and Afrikaans for “farmer.”
- ¹⁵ Nongqawuse was the amaXhosa cattle-killing movement and famine of 1856-7.
- ¹⁶ Site of the 2012 massacre of striking mineworkers by the South African Police Service.
- ¹⁷ amaZulu expansionist aggression under leadership of Shaka.
- ¹⁸ Attacks between the amaXhosa and amaZulu at the end of the Apartheid era, 1984-94
- ¹⁹ Besides several directorships in various companies, in August 2012, Cyril Ramaphosa was also a non-executive board member for Lonmin, the mining company at the heart of the Marikana massacre. In December 2012 Ramaphosa was elected as ANC deputy president and on February 3, 2013, he resigned from his position at Lonmin. In 2015, the Marikana Commission of Inquiry cleared Ramaphosa of any responsibility. On 18 December 2017 he was elected to the position of president of the ANC, and president of South Africa.

- ²⁰ 1850s Harvard professor Louis Agassiz commissioned a study in scientific racism. The images of slaves of African descent in South Carolina, from the Zealy Daguerreotypes—critical artifacts in the study of enslavement and racism in American history, specifically in the antebellum north. The images were first discovered by the staff of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in the mid-1970s.
- ²¹ The Hartebeest or hartebees in Afrikaans (*Alcelaphus buselaphus*) is a large African antelope with an elongated head, unusual bracket-shaped horns, and high forequarters sloping to lower hindquarters.
- ²² An edible root that is heated within a covered hole in the ground. Lloyd's notes explain that “the old woman's fire will be on top of the hole that contains the baking *!keui-sse*.” (L V.-7. 4457-4525)
- ²³ Jerry Falwell Sr, 1933-2007, founder of the Moral Majority and Baptist preacher obsessed over queerness famously said: “AIDS is not just God's punishment for homosexuals, it is God's punishment for the society that tolerates homosexuals” (Press).
- ²⁴ Hart Island has long been used for the grim task of interring the poor, stillborn or unidentified; usually buried with little ceremony. The island was bought by the city in 1868 and contains the remains of civil war soldiers, the homeless, as well as victims of tuberculosis, the Spanish Flu and the AIDS epidemic—more than a million bodies in total.
- ²⁵ The term “location” usually refers to often underdeveloped racially segregated urban areas that, from the late 19th century until the end of Apartheid, were reserved for Indians, Africans and so-called Coloureds (mixed race—a group that remaining Bushmen also fall under).
- ²⁶ A chuppah, also huppah, chipe, chupah, or chuppa, is a canopy under which a Jewish couple stand during their wedding ceremony. It consists of a cloth or sheet, stretched or supported over four poles, or sometimes manually held up by attendants to the ceremony.
- ²⁷ The “Liebestod” German for “love death,” the final aria from Wagner's 1859 opera is the climax of the work, finding Isolde singing over Tristan's dead body.
- ²⁸ Before South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, the country had two anthems. The official anthem was *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika* (*The Call of South Africa*). *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* composed by Enoch Sontanga in 1899, was a symbol of independence and Apartheid resistance, sung by the majority of the population at anti-Apartheid gatherings. The official anthem of democratic South Africa, saw shortened versions of the two anthems merged into one as stipulated in Section 4 of the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, and following a proclamation in the *Government Gazette No. 18341* dated October 10, 1997 (Bangura).

²⁹ //Kabbo was also known as Jantjie, or /uhi-ddoro

³⁰ The complete texts are still on view at the Den Haag State Archives in The Netherlands.