

Qing and the Animals of the Drakensberg-Maloti

Michael Wessels

INTRODUCTION

In 1873, Qing, a young man of San background, was hired by Joseph Orpen to guide a colonial force through the Maloti Mountains. The force hoped to intercept the Hlubi chief, Langalibalele, and his men who had taken refuge in the mountains rather than surrender their guns, legally purchased on the diamond fields, to the colonial authorities. At the time Orpen was the British resident of Nomansland, a region that today straddles the northwestern parts of the Eastern Cape and southeastern KwaZulu-Natal but which then still lay outside direct British administration. In response to Orpen's questions, Qing commented on some of the rock art the two men saw on their journey and also recounted a cycle of stories featuring Cagn, a mythological figure often described as the southern San trickster deity (Lewis-Williams 2000, p. 8). Orpen published Qing's comments and stories along with a short account of the journey in 1874 in *The Cape Monthly Magazine*. Appended to the article are remarks by Wilhelm Bleek, the celebrated linguist and collector

M. Wessels (✉)

University of the Western Cape, Bellville, South Africa

e-mail: mwessels@uwc.ac.za

of folklore of the /Xam-speaking San of the northern Cape Colony. Importantly, Bleek's remarks also contain interpretations of the rock art copies made by Orpen on the trip by Dia!kwain, one of the /Xam informants who lived in Bleek's household in Mowbray for several years. The Orpen-Qing article has come to occupy a seminal position in San studies, especially in rock art research. A valuable subsidiary source is the journal account of the journey through the Maloti kept by James Murray Grant, an officer in the Frontier Armed and Mounted Police and the leader of the expedition to intercept Langalibalele (Mitchell and Challis 2008).

The Qing-Orpen text is hybrid, combining a European travelogue, scholarship and analysis with San literature and San interpretation, albeit mediated in complex ways by translation and editing.¹ It is a document of human history (the Langalibalele rebellion), of human learning (European scholarship on rock art and folklore) and of human culture (San rock art and stories). But without animals it could not exist. Orpen could not have been in the Maloti in the first place without animals—he and his men were dependent on a variety of animals for transport and food. The San of the Drakensberg were probably less reliant on animals for their survival. Horses had only entered the region forty years before, enabling the San to become traders and raiders as well as foragers (Challis 2009; Swart 2010). While they were famed hunters who had always eaten meat, prizing the flesh of large 'game' animals, the eland in particular, wild plants rather than meat formed the bulk of the San diet; it is physically possible that the Drakensberg San might have lived as vegetarians. But practicalities aside, San culture is inconceivable without animals.

Animals of all shape, size and metaphysical standing form the imaginative, aesthetic and ontological core of both paintings and stories. People not only eat and wear parts of animals, but hunting, dance and storytelling all involve close identification, even merging, with animals. Horses and baboons carried particular significance as potent protectors (Challis 2009). Claude Levi-Strauss' (1964, p. 89) famous observation that certain animals are 'good to think' is certainly true of the Drakensberg San. It is also true to say that a person is not a person solely, or even primarily, by virtue of his or her relationship with other people—I am thinking here of the notion of Ubuntu²—but through participation in an intricate network of relations with animals as well as people, ancestors and other animate entities, including the moon, sun, wind and stars.

GRANT AND ORPEN

The colonial force was under the overall command of Inspector James Murray Grant of the Frontier Armed and Mounted Police. Orpen's detachment of African auxiliaries, mostly Basotho, joined up with the mounted police near today's Qacha's Nek. Most of the combined force was mounted on horseback. Grant's force alone had 200 horses. The animals struggled in the mountainous terrain: 'The country is very difficult and sharp for the horses', complains Grant (Mitchell and Challis 2008, p. 422). Orpen's men, either unmounted or mounted on ponies habituated to the terrain, were much more mobile. Grant grudgingly concedes that: 'Kafirs of course can travel faster in a country like this, than we can' (Mitchell and Challis 2008, p. 422).³ Some of the many tensions between the two men were directly related to the greater mobility of Orpen's force. Grant accuses Orpen of trying to take over command of the force from him when Orpen asks him to arrange for his men to bring supplies while his force pushes on ahead. This prompts Grant to accuse Orpen of trying to turn the mounted police into a support service 'to a lot of dirty Basutos' (Mitchell and Challis 2008, p. 425).

The combined force was too late to intercept the Hlubi. When it entered the Maloti area, the Hlubi leader Langalibalele and his men had already surrendered to the Basotho chief, Jonathan Molappo. The surrender involved animals as well as people. With the 500 or so Hlubi warriors were 7000 head of cattle, the sum total of the tribe's cattle (Mitchell and Challis 2008, p. 402).

Orpen supplies few details of the trip through the mountains, focusing almost entirely on his interactions with Qing. Grant's diary provides more details. Animals feature prominently. Grant was disappointed that his force received no share of the Hlubi cattle (Mitchell and Challis 2008, p. 402). Before this, he describes his difficulties in buying mielies (maize) to feed the horses and forcing the villagers to sell him sheep and oxen to sustain his men. He also describes the animals they saw along the way, starting with 'most audacious crabs' in a stream. He records species and numbers: the spoor of 'a large herd' of eland (Mitchell and Challis 2008, p. 427), 'three Rheebock' (Mitchell and Challis 2008, p. 428). He quarrels with Orpen who wishes to take men off to hunt 'Elands and Hartebeeste close to where he is' (Mitchell and Challis 2008, p. 436) just after Grant has had to discipline Acting Sergeant Major Birbeck for doing the same. The expedition later saw more hartebeest and lots

of eland spoor as well as a wild cat, which ‘one of the Basutos’ killed (Mitchell and Challis 2008, p. 439).

The representation of animals in Grant’s diary provides a strong contrast with Qing’s stories in which, as we will see, animals are presented in an entirely different way. This is true too of the enigmatic rock paintings they passed. Grant’s animals are flesh and blood animals in the environment, not figures in stories or paintings. At one point, though, he does mention animals in the context of rock art, acknowledging that ‘The paintings, many of them capitally done—a Hartebeeste [sic], baboon, and Eland that I saw, were quite artistic’ (Mitchell and Challis 2008, p. 434). This comes as something as a surprise, for Grant generally has nothing good to say of anything native. He is impressed with the images’ verisimilitude, not concerned with their meaning, unlike Orpen, who asks Qing to explain the paintings.

Orpen notes that it had been impossible hitherto to find a San informant who was prepared to talk to Europeans about rock art, and Qing himself proved elusive. He was away hunting and mistrusted Orpen’s intentions in seeking him out since ‘he had never seen a white man but in fighting’ (Orpen 1874, p. 2). Orpen ‘had almost given him up’ when Qing unexpectedly ‘overtook’ him, indicative of his ability to move quickly on horseback in the mountains. From the first he made a strong impression on Orpen, not only in relation to his stories but also for his ability to move about the countryside like an agile animal. He ‘proved a diligent and useful guide, and became a favourite, he and his clever little mare, with which he dashed and doubled among the stones like a rabbit when his passion for hunting occasionally led him astray’ (Orpen 1874, p. 2). While Orpen condones Qing’s love of hunting, Grant would not have approved. He complains several times that Orpen’s own predilection for hunting got in the way of the objectives of the expedition (Mitchell and Challis 2008, pp. 402, 436, 438). It is notable that Qing and his mare in Orpen’s description are fused; together they move about the place with the familiarity, intelligence and facility of a single animal; a rabbit. Orpen must have been thinking of the wild hares he would have often seen in southern Africa. His comparison echoes tropes of the San as wild people, people of the bush, with the important difference that he goes on to portray Qing also as a man of culture, an informant about rock art and mythology.

It is interesting to pause briefly to consider how Qing might have seen horses and his relationship with them. Horses, as mentioned earlier,

only entered the area in the 1830s (Challis 2009). From the middle of the nineteenth century, highly mobile bands of mounted San or hybrid groups including San raided cattle across the region from strongholds in the mountains. But horses were not only ridden; they were also painted on the walls of shelters, especially by the amaTola, a group of people of disparate background, predominantly San, Nguni and Khoe, but there were also some coloureds and British deserters among them. Sam Challis has argued that the amaTola drew power from horses and baboons in a way that was similar to the way that the San had traditionally drawn power from rhebok and eland, two animals that are central to the Qing-Orpen text. Baboons and horses are often painted together in amaTola rock art. The baboon was the ‘most powerful and binding symbol’ of the amaTola since they were closely associated with the medicine plants that could ensure the success of a raid and were themselves successful raiders (Challis 2012, p. 270). Even more common in amaTola rock art, though, is the horse. Challis notes that the horse’s ‘socio-economic impact is evident in the rock art images of people harnessing the power of the horse...’ (Challis 2012, p. 277). Qing was not directly linked to the amaTola but it is likely that he knew about their rock art and their beliefs about the horse. It is likely, too, that both Qing’s San group and the Baphuthi, his adopted people, would have possessed ideas and beliefs about horses that reflected the importance of the animals in their lives. The amaTola after all, according to Challis, drew on similar complexes of belief and practice to the San of the area with regard to baboons and also to the eland /rhebok, which they transferred to some extent to the horse.

When Qing himself begins to speak in the text, prompted by Orpen’s questions about the rock art images they saw in the great shelters of Melikane and Sehonghong, animals move instantly from the background—from carriers of men and supplies or details in the landscape—to the fore. They become agents and characters, key elements in a social imaginary that is much less anthropocentric than the world from which Orpen and Grant come.

QING AND ROCK PAINTING

Orpen uses the rabbit as a metaphor for Qing’s ability to move quickly on horseback. A closer amalgamation of animal and human than that involved in metaphorical juxtaposition is involved in the question with

which Orpen elicits Qing's brief comments about rock painting: 'I commenced by asking him what the pictures of men with rhebok's heads meant' (Orpen 1874, p. 2). Here the relationship is not one of analogy or comparison but fusion. The rhebok is not standing in for humans but is joined to the human. Moreover, it provides the upper part of the composite creature, the head. Orpen's question refers, it would seem, to a painting that depicts therianthropes with heads that, according to Challis (2005), are more likely eland than rhebok. Orpen also copied a painting of people, some of whom wear rhebok caps, leading a large bovine-looking creature. Qing's comments about the rhebok-headed men refer to both paintings. Versions of both paintings were also published in the article in the *Cape Monthly Magazine* along with a painting of men with fishlike tails, but not before they had been inspected by Wilhelm Bleek and by the /Xam informant Dia!kwain, whose readings of the paintings are described in the 'remarks' Bleek appended to Orpen's article and which have been critical to the history of rock art interpretation. Qing identifies the rhebok-headed creatures as men, and associates them with eland:

'They were men who had died and now lived in rivers, and were *spoilt at the same time as the elands* and by the dances of which you have seen paintings.' I asked when were the elands spoilt and how. He began to explain, and mentioned *Cagn*. (Orpen 1874, p. 2)

Qing's enigmatic words have exercised interpreters since he uttered them. He goes on to tell a cycle of stories about Cagn, but returns to the question of the rhebok-headed men later in the text, saying:

The men with rhebok's heads, Haqwé and Canaté, and the tailed men, Qweqweté live mostly under water; they tame elands [sic] snakes. That *animal* which the men are catching is a *snake* (!) They are holding out charms to it, and catching it with a long reim [sic] (see picture). They are all under water, and those strokes are things growing under water. They are people spoilt by the—dance, because their noses bleed. (Orpen 1874, p. 10)

The men are said to live below the water and to tame the snakes of the eland. Snakes, as we will see, are another animal that recurs in Qing's stories. Orpen signals his surprise at the identification of the animal by

italicising the word ‘snake’ and placing an exclamation mark after it; in the painting the animal is clearly a large hippo-like animal rather than a snake. Challis ingeniously attributes the confusion about the animal’s identity to Qing’s unsuccessful attempts to explain to Orpen that the animal in the picture is, like a snake, a ‘water thing’. Qing, it has been argued (McGranaghan et al. 2013), might in fact have had an image of a rain snake in a shelter across the Senqu river in mind which is also being led by men. There is a good chance that he is answering Orpen’s question sometime after the visit to Sehonghong. The river was too full to be crossed to view the snake image on Orpen’s visit to Sehonghong. If Challis (2005) is correct, Qing might also be using the image of the men with rhebok heads in the second extract to explain the concept of therianthropes more generally. Orpen had clearly been intrigued by the image of half-human, half-eland figures that he copied in the Melikane shelter a few days before the expedition reached Sehonghong. But more might be at play here.

Qing, Challis surmises, is using a distinctive sort of taxonomic logic in his explanation in terms of which he refers to the men with eland heads as possessing rhebok heads because of their role as ‘game’ shamans.

...I suggest that if Qing called them ‘men with rhebok’s heads’ then to him at least, they were. These therianthropes had what researchers now might analyse as eland heads, but what to Qing were rhebok heads: for Qing, men with rhebok’s heads were those who tamed elands and snakes. At that time, and in his understanding of Bushman cosmology and teaching, they were men with rhebok’s heads. (Challis 2005, 15)

In any case, Challis observes, ‘many of the diagnostic contexts in which eland are found are shared by the rhebok’ (Challis 2005, p. 12). A similar transposition is at play in the identification of the bovine-like rain bull with a snake. Whatever the precise nature of Qing’s thinking here, clearly a division among species familiar to European classification is collapsed. Again the blurring of these divisions does not seem to be metaphorical. In the worlds of spirit and myth, at least, the different creatures are ontologically interconnected.

Qing’s words about the rhebok-headed men suggest that the relationship between human and animal is intimate. In the paintings, this intimacy takes the form of composite animal-human beings. In the text, Qing moves swiftly from rhebok to eland—‘They [the men with rhebok

heads] were men who had died and now lived in rivers, and were *spoilt at the same time as the elands*—and, as we have seen, conflates bovine with snake: “That *animal* which the men are catching is a *snake*” (!)’. David Lewis-Williams reads these words as referring to the transformative experiences and visions that occur in trance.⁴ The transfiguring experience of trance, accomplished during the dance which Qing goes on to describe is figured in the references to dying, spoiling and going under water. Men take on the power of animals in trance; the transformations they experience are also figured in terms of becoming animal or part animal. Anne Solomon (2007, p. 157) relates the same imagery not to trance but to spirits of the dead, literally the ‘men who had died’ and who inhabit an underwater realm. The snake in Solomon’s view alludes to !Khwa, the /Xam word for the rain, who Solomon identifies as a ‘death deity’ (2007, p. 154), depicted in the painting not as an actual snake, as already mentioned, but as a bovine creature. Rainmaking, she argues, is performed by spirits of the dead to whom the living appeal rather than by living rain shamans. José De Prada-Samper tends more towards Solomon’s view but argues that the underwater realm is not only inhabited by spirits of the dead, which manifest as snakes, but by a large population of different kinds of water people (2016, pp. 96, 99–101).

Patricia Vinnicombe approaches the question of the rhebok-headed men differently, from what might be described as an ecological perspective, one that takes into account the habits and behaviour (even the culture perhaps) of rhebok (2009, pp. 187–189). She asks why rhebok are the second most commonly depicted animal in the rock art of Drakensberg-Maloti area after eland; in some areas, they actually predominate. Her consideration of the respective social structures and interactions of the two species leads her to conjecture that the Drakensberg San distinguished between them symbolically in important ways. Eland, Vinnicombe maintains, are identified with the wider human social group since, like the Drakensberg-Maloti San, they separate into small bands in the winter and aggregate in large groups in the summer months, while rhebok signify the smaller family unit and practices of nurture. They are the only animal that is sometimes depicted as suckling its young in the rock art. The conjunction of the rhebok and human in the form of the imagery of therianthropes signifies this close association. There appears to be a metaphorical logic at work in Vinnicombe’s hypothesis: the social organisation of the rhebok is comparable to the human family while the eland can be compared to the larger social group beyond the family. But

again, it could be argued, on the basis of a reading of the role of animals in rock art and Qing's stories, that the relationship is more accurately one of identification and extension than comparison. Rhebok are not simply enlisted in a human sign system to elucidate human qualities or attributes; they share something ontologically with humans.

QING'S ANIMAL STORIES

Qing soon turns from the discussion of the paintings to storytelling. He clearly was more comfortable telling stories than offering explanations. The stories flow apparently unsolicited, an impression reinforced by Orpen's editing; he tells us how he 'string[s] together Qing's fragmentary stories' and 'make[s] them consecutive' (Orpen 1874, p. 6). By contrast the explanations of the paintings were extracted through a series of questions and involved a struggle for intercultural translation. The cycle of stories Qing tells feature Cagn, and all of them are populated by animals. Cagn is undoubtedly the same figure as the /Xam /Kággen. Apart from the similarity of their names, they play similar roles in the stories, several of which exhibit a family resemblance. Few readers come to Qing's stories without some knowledge of the /Xam narratives so it is inevitable that this knowledge should enrich and enhance the way that Qing's stories and Cagn himself have been understood. Even the identification of Cagn as the mantis relies on this prior knowledge since Cagn is never identified as a mantis in Orpen's text. The only evidence from the Drakensberg-Maloti area of Cagn's association with this insect comes from brief comments made by the missionary D.F. Ellenberger who mentions that he was told once by a Basotho man that 'their god (*molimo-oo-Baroa*) was the praying Mantis, this green grasshopper that jumps (*gotoma*) and that has the attitude of being at prayer' (Mitchell 2006, pp. 15–16).

The first story gives an account of the creation of the first eland and, with it, of the beginning of hunting and perhaps, as Sigrid Schmidt maintains, of 'game' animals more generally (Schmidt 2013, p. 78). More precisely, the story describes not the beginning of hunting so much as how the animals to be hunted went wild, making hunting an exacting activity. The first eland, it should be noted, is literally of the same flesh and blood as Cagn's family. He is, in some sense, Cagn's son and the brother of Cagn's oldest son, Gcwi, who kills him (De Prada-Samper 2016, pp. 49, 53). This is important when considering the

relationship between animal and human more generally in Qing's stories and in the related /Xam narratives. Animals are also people but become their animal species in the course of the stories of the first times. Humans and animals share a common ancestry. They do not belong to a separate existential order. Animals are hunted as part of an ecological order, not because they are less than human. On the contrary, as evidenced by their presence in the rock art and by their place in ritual and mythology, they possess great value; transformation into an animal signifies power and entry into the realm of the extraordinary.

After Coti ruins her husband's knife by using it to sharpen a digging stick, Cagn scolds her and tells her that 'evil should come to her' (Orpen 1874, p. 3). Evil, we should not forget, is a translated term—there is very little evidence of a concept of pure or essential evil in Qing's stories or in the /Xam materials. Here it takes the form of a pregnancy. Coti conceives and gives birth to an eland calf, the first eland in the world. Interestingly, even Cagn does not know the identity of the animal that results from his curse. He has to identify the unknown animal with the help of charms, which he sprinkles on it. He names a number of species before guessing the right one. The process involves hailing the unknown, which is paradoxically already in some sense known because it can be named. Importantly it is the eland that responds to and recognises its name. The name of the animal's species pre-exists its existence, but it has to confirm and assent to it.

Cagn raises the eland in a 'secluded kloof' with maternal care (Orpen 1874, p. 4). The contiguity between human and animal is striking at this point. By the end of the tale the relationship changes, though, and the story traces how this shift occurs. The animal is not only born from a human body but is also protected and nurtured by a human. Of course, Cagn and his family members should not be understood as altogether human themselves. Transposing our knowledge of the /Xam stories to Qing's we can say with some certainty that Cagn's family belong to the early race in which people and animals had not yet been properly separated. Both baboons and snakes are said by Qing to have once been men. Nevertheless, despite Cagn's association with the Mantis and a possible connection between the other members of his family and specific animals—Bleek suggests that Coti might be a dassie like /Kággen's wife—Cagn and his family behave primarily as humans, and the story inaugurates one of the most distinctive of human activities, hunting, and

with it a greater, but not an absolute, differentiation between human and animal. The story tells of a relationship of affinity and difference between eland and people. The eland comes from a human body but it is not human. It is placed outside human society, in the kloof, but also has a role in human society as a 'game' animal and as an agent of transformation. Cagn intends eland (and indeed other animals) to be closer to humans, more domestic, than they actually become. His plans go awry partly as a result of the eland's own efforts to escape, being speared by Cagn, and partly because a group of young men led by Cagn's oldest son, Gcwi, kill the animal while Cagn himself is away trying to acquire better weapons with which to hunt the young eland (Orpen 1874, p. 4). It seems that this act has to be performed by Cagn himself or, at least, be sanctioned by him.

The eland's 'training' is part of a larger project: 'He [Cagn] was at that time making all animals and things, and making them fit for the use of men, and making snares and weapons' (Orpen 1874, p. 4). It has consequences, however, that do not attend the 'making fit' of other animals and things. The murdered eland's churned blood gives rise to legions of bull elands and then to female elands.⁵ Cagn sends Gcwi to hunt these eland, but sets him up for failure; the antelope escape because 'Cagn was in their bones'. It is only when Cogaz, Cagn's younger son, empowered by his father's blessing manages to kill two eland, that game were given to men to eat, and this is the way they were spoilt and became wild. Cagn said he must punish them for trying to kill the thing he made which they did not know, and he must make them feel sore. (Orpen 1874, p. 5)

Here we can see the ambivalence in the relationship between people and 'game' animals. Cagn allows people to hunt them, but makes it difficult to do so. It is notable that in the /Xam materials, /Kággen does his best to prevent eland from being killed at all.⁶

All Qing's stories concern an interplay between the human like beings in Cagn's family and animals. Sometimes they describe the passage from a state in which animals are more like people to one in which they gain the distinctive attributes of their species. Two of these narratives concern baboons. In both cases the fixing of baboon identity takes the form of a punishment. In the first a baboon wishes to take a young girl as his wife (Orpen 1874, pp. 6–8). This actually occurs at first in another woman's dream but enters waking life when the baboon pursues the girl.

She takes refuge with Qwanciqutshaa, a reclusive chief associated with the higher reaches of the mountains. All the young women, including this one, have previously refused to marry him. Qwanciqutshaa is first mentioned in the text as one of three powerful chiefs, along with Cagn's two sons. Unlike the other two he exists outside a community. The girl escapes the baboon by burrowing, an indication that she might still possess some animal attributes. The baboon is angry with the girl because he mistakenly thinks that she has mocked the crookedness of his tail rather than because she rejects him as such. Baboons and other animals, such as lions, are sensitive to being ridiculed and stereotyped by humans in the /Xam stories as well.

The baboon fights Qwanciqutshaa for the girl, but is defeated:

Qwanciqutshaa got it down and stuck it through with his own keerie, and Qwanciqutshaa banished it to the mountains, saying, 'Go, eat scorpions and roots as a baboon should,' and it went screaming away; and the screams were heard by the women at the place it came from, and all the baboons were banished. (Orpen 1874, p. 7)

The problem it seems is not the animality or otherness of baboons but their closeness to human beings.⁷ While the marriage between the baboon and the human girl fails to materialise, it is, for a time, a possibility. Indeed, Qwanciqutshaa describes the baboon as the girl's husband who comes from her 'place', unlike Qwanciqutshaa himself, who lives in another place. The baboon's different identity becomes fixed in terms of its different physique and its diet, its culture we might say, rather than its animality. Only a page later Cagn himself delivers a similar punishment to the baboons after they murder his son, Cogaz, and tie his corpse to a tree:

He [Cagn] went and fetched a bag full of pegs, and he went behind each of them as they were dancing and making a great dust, and he drove a peg into each one's back, and gave it a crack, and sent them off to the mountains to live on roots, beetles, and scorpions, as a punishment. Before that baboons were men, but since that they have tails and their tails hang crooked. (Orpen 1874, p. 8)

That the same storyteller gives two varying accounts of the separation of baboons from humans so close together should alert us to the fact that

these are not simple tales of origin. They simultaneously reiterate and problematise difference rather than explain physical facts. The baboons kill Cogaz in self-defence. He is cutting sticks which they suspect will be made into arrows to hunt them. Interestingly they contest Cagn's claim to superior intelligence, the recurring basis of the assertion of human exceptionalism: 'Your father thinks himself more clever than we are; he wants those bows to kill us, so we'll kill you' (ibid.) They mockingly sing the words, 'Cagn thinks he is clever', while killing Cogaz. There is a movement from person to animal in these two narratives. Several stories involving snakes chart a contrary passage from creature to person. Baboons, it would appear, are too much like people—they have to be separated from them—while snakes are too different and have to be brought closer to the human. De Prada-Samper (2016, p. 96), though, argues that snakes are, in some sense, already human. At least some of the snakes in Qing's stories are actually spirits of the dead that are brought back to life and regain their human form. Snakes, in this reading, are dead people who clearly possess the potential to transform, an attribute, no doubt, linked to their capacity to shed their skins.

After rescuing the girl from the baboons Qwanciqutshaa is attacked by young men from the girl's band who wish to retrieve and marry her. They are incensed that the girl refuses them and now claims to 'love none but Qwanciqutshaa, who saved me from the baboon' (Orpen 1874, p. 7). They hate Qwanciqutshaa as a result and put snake poison on his meat. He throws himself into the river but is pursued by a gang of young women. While he was repellent to women at the beginning of the story, now he cannot escape their attentions. Complaining that 'it is through women I was killed' he turns into a snake and eludes them (Orpen 1874, p. 7). He cannot escape the first woman's love, however. Over a series of days, she lures him from the river, force feeds him charms, holds him fast, smothers him in his kaross (an animal skin cloak), and eventually turns him back into a man, her man.

We have already encountered snakes in the discussion of the rain animal. They occur regularly in Qing's stories as well in a variety of contexts. Like eland and rhebok, they carry multiple significations: there is 'a dynamic assemblage of extant associations between snakes, rain, water, fertility, blood, fat, transformation, dance and healing' (Sullivan and Low 2014, p. 215). In another of Qing's stories involving metamorphosis from snake to man, one of Cagn's daughters runs away after her father 'scolds' her. She throws herself among the snakes to 'destroy herself' but, 'The snakes

were also men, and their chief married her' (Orpen 1874, p. 5). Cagn sends Cogaz to recover his sister. There is a chase and a fight but the snakes are divided among themselves. The chief himself advises the snakes not to get angry for it is natural for people to reclaim 'their child.' In this story, snakes can become kin through marriage and also show an ability to understand human feelings. At the end of the story the snakes become people through Cagn's agency:

Cagn sent Cogaz for them to come and turn from being snakes, and he told them to lie down, and he struck them with his stick, and as he struck each the body of a person came out, and the skin of a snake was left on the ground, and he sprinkled the skins with cannā, and the snakes turned from being snakes and became his people. (Orpen 1874, p. 5)

Cagn himself sometimes turns into an animal, as does his counterpart in the /Xam materials. In one of Qing's stories he turns into a bull eland in order to lure and kill a giant eagle that had earlier trapped him by offering to share its honey with him (Orpen 1874, p. 9). In another tale he is said to have turned 'his kaross and sandals into dogs and wild dogs, and set[s] them at the Qobé giants and destroyed them' (Orpen 1874, p. 6).

/Kággen, argues Mathias Guenther (1999), figures the openness of /Xam belief, which in turn reflects an ability to work with uncertainty, a prerequisite in a foraging economy. He also represents the loose boundaries between the animal, the human and the divine. He is at once an insect and a man and also a supernatural being.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE /XAM MATERIALS

The /Xam stories are contemporary with those collected by Orpen from Qing. As mentioned earlier, Bleek commented on Qing's stories and on the rock paintings copied by Orpen as did the important /Xam informant Dia!kwain. Unsurprisingly, therefore, comparisons between the two archives have been made from the beginning. Bleek notes correspondences but also differences. No two stories are exactly the same. Cagn has more authority than /Kággen; he is less of a trickster:

But whether the stories given by *!(k)ing* are only tribal compositions, or form part of the common national property of the Bushmen, a slightly different character is attributed in them to the Mantis (*Cagn* = */kággen*)

who, according to the myths told by our Bushman informants, is very far from being represented as a “beneficient” [sic] being, but, on the contrary, is a fellow full of tricks, and continually getting into scrapes, and even doing purely mischievous things. (Orpen 1874, p. 12)

Qing tells Orpen that ‘Cagn made all things, and we pray to him’ (Orpen 1874, p. 2). The /Xam Bushmen by contrast, observes Bleek, ‘seem to know nothing of any worship of the Mantis’ (Orpen 1874, p. 12).

Cagn and his family act in more humanlike ways than they do in the /Xam stories. As we have seen, Cagn is introduced in the first story as busy ‘making all animals and things, and making them fit for the use of men, and making snares and weapons.’ /Kággen’s closest family members in the /Xam archive are referred to as animals: Dassie, Ichneumon, Porcupine and Blue crane. We do not know whether the names of members of Cagn’s family refer to animals, although Bleek conjectures that Cagn’s wife’s name, Coti, resonates with the /Xam word for Dassie, the /Xam /Kággen’s wife (Orpen 1874, p. 11).

The animal species that occur in the two sets of stories are often different; the stories, after all, originate in (and have been mediated by) two very different environments. There are no springbok or gemsbok in the mountains although eland, hartebeest, and baboons occur in both the northern Cape and the Maloti-Drakensberg and are important to both the /Xam and Qing’s stories. Lions and elephants are absent from Qing’s stories too, while snakes occur much more frequently than they do in the /Xam stories. It is notable that both Drakensberg stories and rock paintings mostly feature animals that occur in the mountains even though the people would also have been familiar with the animals that populated the plains below.

In many ways comparisons are difficult given the brevity of the Orpen-Qing archive and the context in which they were collected: a three-week military expedition through the mountains. Orpen could not speak Qing’s language. There was only one informant, whereas Bleek and Lloyd had three major informants who stayed with them for years as well as several less important ones. Clearly, though, there is a relationship between the two traditions. The equivalence of Cagn’s name is especially striking, as is the closeness of the stories about eland and baboons. It is also remarkable that Dia!kwain was able to comment on the rock paintings in a way that sheds light on their meaning even though he was not

familiar with this cultural form. He came from an area in which there are rock engravings rather than paintings. The engravings, which generally depict a single species of animal, do not provide a close parallel with the complex scenes found in the rock panels of the Drakensberg. As Andrew Bank (2006, pp. 309–314) shows, Dial!kwain made guesses about the paintings, and some of these were off the mark, but his guesses proved to be better and much more productive for subsequent scholars than those of the European commentators of the time.

The different environments, with their animals, are so powerfully present in the two bodies of stories that they constitute much more than setting or background. The atmosphere and mood of the Drakensberg and the northern Cape stories differ largely because of the different landscapes that are present in them: mist, snow, rivers, steep green slopes, on the one hand, and dry scrub, koppies (hills), ant heaps and water holes, on the other. The two environments are integral to the signifying economies of the stories. Lewis-Williams (2010) has argued that the topography of the mountains in Qing's stories replicates the phases of consciousness during trance. Solomon (1997) has emphasised the relationship between spirits of the dead and waterholes in the arid Northern Cape. De Prada-Samper (2016, p. 99) relates beliefs in an underwater world to high rainfall areas of the region, such as the Drakensberg-Maloti, rather than to the sort of dry areas in which the /Xam lived. It is clear that the two environments are not simply reflected in the stories but are constitutive of them.

Despite the differences identified above, it is probably safe to assume that the extensive /Xam corpus can be used as the basis for understanding animal representation among the southern San more generally, including the Drakensberg-Maloti area. The /Xam materials include a great many stories that could be described as animal tales, in which the characters are animals as distinct from people of the early race that exhibit some of the characteristics of the animals they will become. The Drakensberg-Maloti area must have contained stories of this type too. It is notable that the animals in these stories are not speaking humans but animals that speak. Their animal characteristics would have been accentuated in oral performance in which the animals were mimicked. Special vocabularies were developed for specific animals as well as different forms of enunciation that were related to the shape of the animal's mouth (Hewitt 1986, pp. 51–53). Another notable feature of the /Xam narratives is the sheer range of animals present in them—the much shorter sample of Drakensberg stories lacks this variety. Small animals are not

accorded less importance than larger, more powerful ones. The world figured in the stories is not hierarchical. Particular species are named as well, like long-nosed mice, for example, rather than generic mice.

In the Bleek and Lloyd archive the Bushmen are said by /Han#kass'o at one point to be descended from springbok (L VIII.-4. 6365 rev.).⁸ The fact that this observation occurs only in passing in order to make the point that present day /Xam people are not descended from the people of the early race could be incidental—chance might have resulted in a story about this event not being told at greater length. Its relegation to a footnote,⁹ though, is suggestive of the way in which San stories generally do not accord humans an inordinately exceptional place in the process of becoming that has produced the present order of things. The human is given primacy to the extent that the animals possess human characteristics and lose them in the process of differentiation. This separation sometimes takes the form of a punishment. On the other hand, the animals often seem to fulfil their true potential during the process: the loss of human characteristics is not necessarily a fall. It should be remembered too that the mythical period of formation has resonances with transformations from human to animal and animal to human in the present world as well.

Species in the /Xam stories of the people of the early race undergo a process of differentiation, creating a world in which relationships of difference and affinity and their interplay produce not only endless possibilities but also establish boundaries, albeit porous and fluid ones. This state of affairs is exemplified in the mercurial figure of /Kággen. He spans the everyday and the mythological, featuring in both narratives of the first times and in accounts of the hunting practices that involve a sympathetic identification with the animal a hunter shoots. /Kággen especially protects the eland and the hartebeest (also Drakensberg animals) and the gemsbok, quagga and springbok (animals absent from the Drakensberg) from the hunters' poisoned arrows. With respect to the now-extinct quagga, especially, we might wish that /Kággen had had some power over the settlers' bullets as well. /Kággen possesses both male and female characteristics; he is sometimes protector but more often trickster; he commands respect and invites ridicule; he is a childlike bumbler with superhuman powers; he is an insect, who speaks and acts like a human and a human with some attributes of an insect.

CONCLUSION

In San stories, we have seen, animals are good to think with. But this formulation could be too instrumentalist. It is not that animals are used by humans to think with so much that human life, thought and culture are impossible without animals. In certain sorts of stories—those that are closest to myths as traditionally conceived perhaps—it is often the animals that are best to eat that are also best to think with; in the Northern Cape these are the eland, hartebeest, springbok, gemsbok and quagga that belong to Cagn. In the Drakensberg, the eland and hartebeest are joined by the rhebok. Drawing on ideas of ‘new animisms’, Mark McGranaghan (2014, p. 674) notes that the way communities like the /Xam ‘commonly assign ‘personhood’ status to a range of non-human groups’ enables them to make ‘[e]valuations of appropriate and inappropriate forms of behaviour... [that] incorporate interactions not only with other (human) people, but also shape encounters with non-human species’. This provides the basis of a behavioural ethos, often enacted in stories, that draws on a human-animal continuum in which ‘physical descriptions and personal traits’ are ‘linked to positive and negative assessments of personhood’ (McGranaghan 2014, p. 673).

Animals in both Qing’s and the /Xam narratives do not merely serve as metaphorical substitutes for human attributes and relationships. Animals as represented in the stories are flesh and blood beings with consciousness. They respond to human beings but are also different from humans. The first eland in Qing’s story already possesses agency; it resists its creator’s attempts to control its behaviour. The distance between humans and animals is bridged by the hunter’s arrow; the hunter and animal enter a relationship of sympathetic identification, from the time the arrow strikes the animal until it dies. The divide is also crossed in art and storytelling. San storytellers today in the Kalahari and Namibia, become in part, the animals of which they tell. Metamorphosis and other sorts of interplay between human and animal are central to the protean signifying capacity of the stories. Artists do not only paint animals but use animal ingredients in their paint, some of these for magical reasons. In trance in the Kalahari (and beyond, if Lewis-Williams is correct), San people harness the energy and power of animals, a force that is both spiritual and physical. This experience is figured in paintings and also, according to Lewis-Williams, in the stories as well, which he reads for the most part as allegories for trance journeys. In death, if we follow

Solomon (2007) instead, humans after a time as stars become fused with animals in an underwater realm from where they continue to interact with the living in ways that can be malign or benign. They can help heal, hunt and make rain but can also harm and kill. Clearly the differences and similarities between human and animal are aesthetically, epistemologically and metaphysically generative.

However we read San rock art and narrative, the differences between Qing's representations of animals and those of the animals in Grant's accounts of the journey are striking. The animals mentioned by Grant in the journey through the Maloti stand apart from humans. They are counted, eaten, hunted, ridden and used to carry. In Qing's stories, they speak to humans, trick them, fight with them, help them and turn into them. It is likely also that the humans in the story, Cagn and his family primarily, are in some sense also animal and that their supernatural powers are attributable to this indeterminacy. The world of Qing's stories is a world in which the boundaries between animal and human are fluid; they are continually subject to revision and negotiation. In one sense, these are stories of transition and becoming. They tell of a process of greater differentiation and separation as the order of the first times gives way to the order of the present. But they are also reminders of the fluid nature of being animal in the present.

NOTES

1. See de Prada-Samper's (2016) detailed examination of the genesis of Orpen's article in which he compares the final article with the submitted manuscript.
2. *Ubuntu* is an eastern and southern African concept that has been used as the basis for an argument for a distinctively African humanism. Since the 1990s in South Africa it has frequently been conflated with the Nguni proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*—a person is a person through other persons (see Gade 2012).
3. The term 'Kafir' was used by Europeans to refer to speakers of Sotho and Nguni languages in southern Africa in the nineteenth century. It has since assumed an extremely derogatory denotation.
4. See, for example, Lewis-Williams (2003).
5. De Prada-Samper (2016) links the churning of the blood to the preparation of paint and recalls Patricia Vinnicombe's (2009, 172) hypothesis that painting eland could have been a way to bring back to life the eland killed in hunting.

6. This means, Vinnicombe (2009) points out, that ‘every time a hunter killed one of these animals especially loved and protected by Kággen, he incurred the displeasure of his deity.’ De Prada-Samper (2016) argues that in the Drakensberg the chief Qwanciqutshaa, rather than Cagn himself, assumes the role of ‘the keeper and protector’ of the eland.
7. Dorothea Bleek remarks intriguingly in a letter in 1930, in relation to the popular misconstrual of Darwin’s theory that humans are descended from apes, that ‘For the Bushman himself the idea would not be unfamiliar or repulsive’ (Weintroub 2015).
8. The reference here is to one of Lucy Lloyd’s unpublished notebooks.
9. It occurs on one of the reverse pages of the notebooks used mainly for explication of the main text.

WORKS CITED

- Bank, A. 2006. *Bushmen in a Victorian world: The remarkable story of the Bleek-Lloyd collection of Bushman folklore*. Cape Town: Double Storey.
- Challis, S. 2005. ‘The men with rhebok’s heads; they tame elands and snakes’: Incorporating the rhebok antelope in the understanding of southern African rock art. *South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series* 9: 11–20.
- Challis, S. 2009. The impact of the horse on the Amatola ‘Bushmen’: New identity in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains of southern Africa. *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 44 (1): 156–157.
- . 2012. Creolisation on the nineteenth-century frontiers of southern Africa: A case study of the Amatola ‘bushmen’ in the Maloti-Drakensberg. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38 (2): 265–280.
- De Prada-Samper, J. 2016. ‘A partial clue’: The genesis and context of Qing and Orpen’s conversations. In *On the trail of Qing and Orpen*, ed. M. de Prada-Samper, M. du Plessis, J. Hollmann, J. Weintroub, J. Wintjes, and J. Wright, 29–102. Johannesburg: Standard Bank.
- Gade, C. 2012. What is Ubuntu? Different interpretations among South Africans of African descent. *South African Journal of Philosophy* 31 (3): 484–503.
- Guenther, M. 1999. *Tricksters and trancers: Bushman religion and society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hewitt, R. 1986. *Structure, meaning and ritual in the narratives of the southern San*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1964. *Totemism*. London: Merlin Press.
- Lewis-Williams, D. (ed.). 2000. *Stories that float from afar: Ancestral folklore of the San of southern Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- . 2003. *Images of mystery: Rock art of the Drakensberg*. Cape Town: Double Storey.

- . 2010. The imagistic web of San myth, art and landscape. *Southern African Humanities* 22: 1–18.
- McGranahan, M. 2014. ‘Different people’ coming together: Representations of alterity in /Xam Bushman (San) narrative. *Critical Arts* 28 (4): 670–688.
- McGranahan, M., S. Challis, and D. Lewis-Williams. 2013. Joseph Millerd Orpen’s ‘A glimpse into the mythology of the Maluti Bushmen’: A contextual introduction and republished text. *Southern African Humanities* 25: 137–166.
- Mitchell, P. 2006. Remembering the Mountain Bushmen: Observation of nineteenth century hunter-gatherers in Lesotho as recorded by Victor Ellenberger. *Southern African Field Archaeology* 15–16: 3–11.
- Mitchell, P., and S. Challis. 2008. A ‘first’ glimpse into the Maloti Mountains: The diary of James Murray Grant’s expedition of 1873–1874, *Southern African Humanities* 20 (2): 399–461.
- Orpen, J. 1874. A glimpse into the mythology of the Maluti Bushmen. *Cape Monthly Magazine* 9: 1–13.
- Schmidt, S. 2013. *South African /Xam Bushman traditions and their relationships to further Khoisan folklore*. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag.
- Solomon, A. 1997. The myth of ritual origins? Ethnography, mythology and interpretation of San rock art. *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 52: 3–13.
- . 2007. Images, words and worlds: The /Xam testimonies and the rock arts of the southern San. In *Claim to the country: The archive of Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd* ed. P. Skotnes, 149–159. Johannesburg: Jacana.
- Sullivan, S., and C. Low. 2014. Shades of the rainbow serpent? A Khoesan animal between myth and landscape in Southern Africa—Ethnographic contextualisations of rock art representations. *Arts* 3 (2): 215–244.
- Swart, S. 2010. *Riding high: Horses, humans and history in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Vinnicombe, P. 2009. *People of the eland: Rock paintings of the Drakensberg Bushmen as a reflection of their life and thought*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Weintroub, J. 2015. *Dorothea Bleek: A life of scholarship*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Michael Wessels teaches English literature at the University of the Western Cape. His research interests include San narrative, indigeneity, oral literature, South African literature and Indian literature. He is the author of *Bushman Letters* (2010) and co-editor of *San Representation: Politics, Practice and Possibilities* (2015).

Indigenous Creatures, Native Knowledges, and the Arts

Animal Studies in Modern Worlds

Woodward, W.; McHugh, S. (Eds.)

2017, XIV, 275 p. 22 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-56873-7