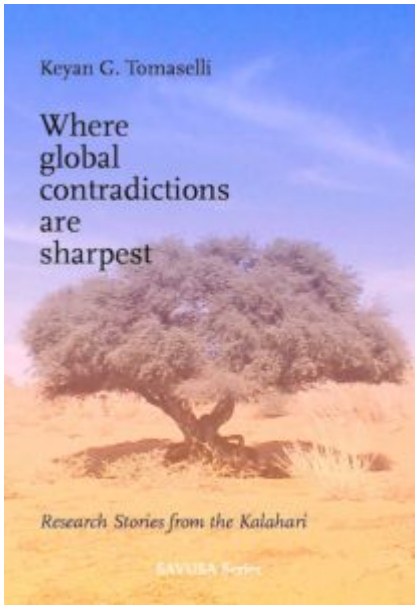
Where Global Contradictions Are Sharpest ~ Stories To Tell, Stories To Sell: Hidden Transcripts, Negotiating Texts



Post-Birmingham cultural studies have been severely criticised for offering little more than a '"white on white" textual orientation' (Giroux and McLaren 1994: x). Edward Said (1979: 93) writes of a 'textual attitude', which prefers 'the schematic tendency of a text to the disorientations of direct encounters with the human'. The mess and confusion found in everyday life, as well as the supernatural is 'bracketed out' because they obscure the clarity of the structure (Husserl 1969). Texts become walls that academics insert between 'us' and 'them' to protect 'us' from having to deal with the ambiguities, contradictions, and confusion of everyday life (Malan 1995; Conquergood 1998; Pollock 1998). Students often delight in the prospect of analysing oral literatures in typed translation, via the application of the usual post-structuralist French gurus. The result inevitably is a white, usually French-shaped Eurocentric reading of oral and other narratives in non-European regions.

Reverse cultural studies: Voices from the field

Academy-bound textualist scholarship claiming to be studying the 'popular', though often exquisitely analysed and written, tends to background quotidian empirical significance. Detail, immediacy, and self-reflexivity are as important as is texualised theory, in which human agency is described and recognised, and in which voices from the field, our 'subjects of observation', are engaged by researchers as their equals (in human dignity and thus as co-producers of knowledge).

The analytical textualist disjunction between distance and immediacy, separation and immersion, exploitation and collaboration, holds that 'there is nothing outside

the text' (Jackson 1989: 184). Textualism thus legitimately ignores the flux of human interrelationships and the ways in which meanings are intersubjectively integrated, embodied in gestures and performance, as well as in words (Jousse 1997; Bakhtin 1986: 6). De Saussure's semiological logic, for example, imprisons us in a nominalist world of linguistic structures. If semiology is itself one such structure, then trying to 'see through' it leaves nothing to which reference can be made, except possibly some prior structure in a potentially infinite regress (Shepperson and Tomaselli 1999).

One result of textualism, and especially binary assumptions in some studies and the popular imagination, is to assume the myth that the 'Bushmen' have 'disappeared' and that when they were 'living', they always only had one 'way of life'. Such analyses, which pepper much contemporary literature, lack historical periodisation, and assume that all San speak/spoke only one language (cf. Wilmsen 1986a for a critique of this position; also see Chapman 1996: 21-31). This homogenizing effect is the result of antecedent theorising about the indigenous other as an undifferentiated mass, an authorising of the textual over its relationship with the contextual, and of assumptions about history.

In the postmodern age of hyper-mediated realities and fractured development periodisations, the Other becomes a resource for discursive rearticulation, integration, and expropriation. The mythical images, sounds, and values offered by so-called First Peoples are appropriated by advertisers to expropriate long-lost mythical images to sell something (in South Africa, for example, cars [Mazda], telephone services [Telkom], toothpaste [Colgate], railways [Spoornet], an Internet book store [Kalahari.net], Game Parks [Kagga Kamma], a cut price airline [Kulula.com], and others). What is sold has nothing to do with the 'actors' (whether real or imagined), but with the imperative of capital, which integrates anything that communicates into messages that encourage consumption. Ironically, the very people used to retail such products are themselves largely unable to afford them. They remain materially isolated from the very texts they are promoting, de-linked from consumption despite their performance, and in spite of their textualisation and inter-textualisation. Nothing – not epistemology, not ways of seeing – is unsettled in the exchange. They remain 'them'; we remain 'us', secure in our distanced otherness.

*Being there: Pre-textual experienc*e

My studies in visual anthropology arose from my own often-extraordinary

experiences in the field as both filmmaker and researcher (cf. Tomaselli 1997: Preface). Students participating in field trips, whose academic growth was often previously confined within a discipline of detached textualism and theoretical hegemonies, more often than not returned to the university; dusty, tired, and homesick. They generally discover that the Text is indeed a prison-house of language. The immediacy of their interactions, the depth of their intercultural encounters, and the empathy which develops from their being touched by the experience, fundamentally changes not only their perception of who and what was previously the Other, but also of the way that textualism insists on the binary relationship of researcher and researched. Systematically delving beyond the text also locates students as participants in the encounter, inexorably *within* the community and system of relations being studied (McLennan-Dodd 2003; Lange 2003a; cf. also Brown 2001). These students come to realise that as necessary as abstraction is, that it can also be endistancing/alienating/reifying, if not for themselves, then most certainly for their subjects/hosts/collaborators, who constantly complain that they are unable to recognise themselves, their experiences and conditions in the written work of academics studying them. Some students are less sanguine about research outcomes. Belinda Jeursen, for example, counters with regard to inevitable self-interest: 'Perhaps part of what is being bought is "feeling good about ourselves", because we are helping the other instead of just exploiting them. We are also buying academic leverage/publishing power' (e-mail, 12 June 2002). Silikat van Wyk is well aware of this, but he, Belinda Kruiper, Vetkat, Dawid, and others point out the potential worth of academic studies for future generational knowledge on their community.

Finding ways of overcoming the epistemological divide between researchers and researched has been my objective. Researchers, development agencies and filmmakers certainly do have the power to see, to search, and to seize (Conquergood 1998: 3). They sometimes claim ownership of individuals, whole communities, and most certainly of the texts that they have taken from them. This power is well understood and resented by many who are subject to this kind of compulsive extractive gaze (cf. Hurston 1990: 2). The dependency of indigenous peoples on other people's records, which hold their cultural history, breeds hostility. Suspicions about textual (cultural, linguistic, spiritual) theft become rife, and texts come to be seen as both the means to liberation *and* subjugation.

Yet even those scholars who are critical of the academic compulsion tend to write

in ways not easily accessible to those 'oppressed people everywhere [who] must watch their backs, cover their tracks, hide their feelings, and veil their meanings' (Conquergood 1998: 30). How to discuss these issues with our hosts/subjects/collaborators/co-researchers is a key element of our overall project. I am, of course, aware of the irony that this particular chapter may be just as opaque to our sources as any others. When theory is being enunciated, restricted codes are the usual means of communication.

Recovering experience

One mechanism by which to reduce the distance between our subjects and us is to restore E.P. Thompson's (1968) notion of 'experience'**[i]** to the analysis of structure and determination. Intersubjectival, observer-observed (both 'us' of 'them' and 'them' of 'us') interactions, and the nature of negotiations, which engage and lessen these kinds of separations, are constantly being explored. Our assumption is that in studying the 'other', we as researchers need to simultaneously interrogate our own subjectivities, identities, and motivations, as we ourselves negotiate and shape our encounters with our subjects. Jeursen, for example, concludes with regard to her own field experiences: 'Ethically, it was far too uncomfortable for me. "Otherness" was reinforced rather than reduced by my interactions. I became more aware of my "otherness" than theirs', uncomfortable with my own motivations' (Jeursen, e-mail, 12 June 2001). For most of us, however, sustained partnerships over the ten-year study period has returned both material and symbolic benefits to our hosts (for example, the publication of Bregin and Kruiper [2004], the exhibition of Vetkat's art nationally (see Tomaselli 2003; Lange forthcoming), Lange's large purchases of crafts, mainly from the Ngwatle community, and from specific ≠Khomani crafters for distribution to South African museums and schools, and visits by Belinda and Vetkat to work with students in Durban (piggy-backed on the exhibitions)). The making of videos on individual craftsmen for sale at their roadside stalls was negotiated in 2005, while a full-colour calendar of Vetkat's art was published in 2004 by an Italian environmental organisation. The funds raised from the sale of the calendar were donated to the establishment of a heritage and art centre at Welkom where Belinda and Vetkat took up residence in mid-2005. They are recipient of donations of various kinds. These are used at the centre and donated to the local school in Welkom. Professional TV-directors, on our recommendation, have been working with Belinda and Vetkat on documenting her book, his art, and broader community issues. The Protea Hotel in Upington bought scores of Vetkat's prints for display

and is promoting this model of social responsibility within the wider hotel group. The multiplier effect for local communities of aspects of our work has been considerable. Our work is distributed to organisations like WIMSA and SASI, and our video documentation on dispossession, land and human rights, and other pressing issues is circulated to appropriate organisations when requested by particular communities.

Apart from their micro-ethnographies and contributions to developmental outcomes, students discuss relationships between observers and observed in terms of agency and dependency, resistance and domination, inclusions/exclusions, of borders and othering. (cf. for example Boloka 2001; Simões 2001a; 2001b; McLennan-Dodd 2004). Some, however, cannot initially see the wood for the trees: the prior theoretical text, the idealised development model is determining irrespective of contrary conditions and concrete evidence which they both witness and experience on the ground. This is the theoretical version of 'Simple Simon says …'. In such cases, questions to be addressed need to relate to students' and our subjects' mimicry of textualism (Taussig 1993: 254-5). For example, the Ju/'hoansi in Nyae Nyae are among the most intensively studied of First Peoples and have learned the discourses of the academic traveller since they first interacted with the eight Marshall Expeditions in the 1950s. Contemporary cultural tourists are often told what they have come to hear – that which is already in the 'timeless' text. The text is up for sale, opportunistically dangled by the observed for purposes of exchange.

The Kruipers, in contrast to the !Xoo and Ju/'hoansi, have constituted an economy of organised begging, based on allegations of theft of indigenous knowledge, poverty, and entitlement. For example, our party went tracking with a new venture**[ii]** at Witdraai in June 2005, only to find themselves part of a marketing text/tactic recovering traditional stereotypes. A Canadian journalist, in addition, felt cajoled, harassed, and humiliated. The defining moment was when the driver barrelled up the dune in a *bakkie* sporting a bow and arrow. The tracker took the weapon and struck the classic crouching hunting pose. 'This is not real, it's put on for us, its phoney', complained Catherine Dunphy. 'It's disrespectful of tourists who are interested in, and compassionate of, their plight. We had just been commodified, much as 'we' have commodified them. I doubted the authenticity of the show; there was no intimate cultural connection or attempt to really communicate who they were to us. I did not want a phoney photo op'. (This 'op' is in stark contrast to Isak Kruiper's desire for a meaningful interaction (see

below)). The guide also demanded additional payment over and above the tracking/guide fee for the right of the tourists/students/the journalist to take photographs. Each and every shot was to be charged for, at the moment of exposure, with a surcharge added for video. 'If one has stop every few minutes to dig out money, it kills the intimacy of the aesthetic experience, because one is preoccupied with the transaction', observed Mashaya. Our group, however, negotiated a flat fee. Yes, the 'Bushmen' have stories to tell, but they also have stories to sell.

In research transactions, academics and filmmakers pay for what they already know, sometimes erroneously thinking that they are the only owners of new 'information' presented, now in the form of mimicry, which is then simply repackaged and resold to the next visitor. The Kruipers have re-presented themselves in terms of the Western image of 'all' Bushmen. Any informal interaction between them and casual travellers passing through the area is conducted as a transaction to be paid for. As Dawid Kruiper told us:
I've realised that people just take photos. And then all of a sudden they're on brochures … I saw this child sitting on the front page … My child's child, Ladytjie, sits on the front page. And if you look at the thing like that, it's a brochure, then they just sell the brochure at the airport again to tourists. That's what I saw. He makes money easily, makes money out of my people. That's why I decided on a price (Dawid Kruiper, interview, 29 September 2000).

Thus even the most marginalized people have responded to the reach of commodification by placing a value on previously uncommodified relations.**[iii]**The question confronting students is to be able to determine when informal chats are just that, and when exchange relations are at play. Dawid Kruiper wants to know how the information he is asked about will be used so that he can determine a value: 'R500? If I had to say, "what did I give? What did I give?" Now, "what did I do?" And the interview that was conducted is flat on the table. Does it just stay here or does it go further? Does the interview go further or does the interview just die on the table?' (Dawid Kruiper, interview, 29 September 2000). As understood by Dawid, an interview is an oral form, intangible, it is what it is, and it exists in and of itself. It is however the *tangible* application of the story which finds additional circulation beyond his control and earning power which is of concern to him. He and some of his kin sometimes promote an interview or photograph's exchange value, but then at a later stage

they object to its use value for the purchaser. The purchaser is thereby positioned by the seller as 'exploiter' and then required to make restitution for a legitimate purchase. Interviewers or photographers always find themselves in a double bind.

As individuals and communities have come to trust us, to open up to us, and to consider us as possible allies in their discursive struggles with other, perhaps less sensitive researchers, development agencies, journalists etc., the immediate pressure for commodification lessens, though bantering about what we are told we 'owe' for 'taking' indigenous knowledge sometimes reaches stratospheric proportions. Key to a less mercantile relationship is our willingness to include *verbatim* quotes via which our informants believe – and can see their positions – to be situationally reflected. This approach means that the words still belong to our sources, while the argument belongs to the writer/s. They no longer inexorably use their (oral) texts/speech/(hard luck) stories as decoys to protect themselves from 'the white man' or 'the black man' whose hegemony they have to rely on/negate for survival. Such hidden texts are themselves negotiated and struggled over as researchers and researched try to find common ground. Sometimes they manifest as symbolic games (cf. Dyll 2003), and at other times blunt resentment is articulated. Unless the researcher can distinguish between which texts are being offered as red herrings and which are not, they will be deliberately misled, and in addition have paid for the privilege (cf. Grosskurth 1988). However, there remains the myth that one interview results in students being empowered with a whole degree, or better still, with automatic well-paying jobs, suggesting little understanding of how the knowledge industry – or exchange relations – actually work.

Negotiating exchange relations

The question of power relations arises: who exactly is in control during the research encounter? Common sense suggests that the researcher is the dominant partner: they have the funds, the choice and the wherewithal. Researcher-researched negotiations, however, are often a lot more complex – the explicit level of appearance often conceals submerged processes at work. On our first arrival among the ≠Khomani at Witdraai in early 2000, first-time student researchers reported feelings of being controlled, circumscribed, and commodified by those they had come to get to know and interview. They were alienated by this discomforting experience of reversal (Von Strauss 2000). While interviewing Dawid Kruiper, we took four days to negotiate an affordable payment

for his interview via his personal assistant, Anna Festus, and then four hours to crack his attempts to feed us his 'anthro-tourist text' – to get into questions of context and previously concealed meanings, the 'hidden transcript' deployed by marginalized people as a tactic of evasion and camouflage (Scott 1990). As Belinda Kruiper revealed, 'we're just making up the story because *ai, tog,* the people they want to know! … Ninety percent of the time they do not really say truthfully to a so-called white person what their hearts feel. They're still intimidated by the very past, the white thing' (Belinda Kruiper, interview, 23 October 2001). We try to examine the said (the text) in relation to the unsaid (performative – mobility, action, agency) (Conquergood 1998: 31). The said is relatively easy to get – one just has to buy it. The unsaid takes a lot longer; it takes trust, empathy, and immediacy. It takes time, participation, and experience; it assumes an acknowledgement of the noumenal (unknowable/spiritual) world, and it privileges knowing through feeling and participation (De Certeau 1988: 235) over comprehending via containment, inscription, abstraction, and closure (Ricoeur 1971). There is also a sense of investment felt by our sources in my students and myself. In June 2005, Silikat wanted to know why Vanessa and Caleb, with whom he had previously worked, no longer visited. I explained that Vanessa had emigrated to Australia and did not yet have a job, but that Caleb was working in Durban as a para-medic; that he and his fiancé had done a month's voluntary work for the Trust at Ngwatle after his graduation. Silikat sent Vanessa a text message via Mary's cell phone. Long-term relations are part of community expectations, but the issue of client-patron relations is never far below the surface.

Community reassurance emerges in the face of insecurities wrought by the academics' recurring mobility, extraction of knowledge, and its valorisation elsewhere. The tendency to commodify relationships then fades. '*Praat is werk*' (Afrikaans – 'talking is our profession'), Anna Festus told us in April 2000. The relationship changes significantly when talking is no longer automatically equated with 'work' or income. The observers are now allies, friends, and family – at least until allegiances change. Such new relationships can be a whole lot more complicated – and unsettling for researchers. Our subjects build up an entire set of relations and recognitions, a consciousness of who is 'in' and who is 'out' in a given environment, anchoring the idea of identity to that of 'community'. Being not a stranger somewhere entails some level of public conduct and commitment to a 'community'. Which community (political, alcoholic, temperate,

‘western/pastoral’, urban, rural, peri-urban, insider/outsider, modern/traditional, ethic, familial) of the many that criss-cross our subjects’ lives and social networks is never quite clear. Manipulation often finds an alibi in participation: how do ‘we’ keep our guard?

Textualism, in contrast, offers a defence against incorporation, manipulation, empathy, and alienation. It may be oblivious to unwitting collaboration in hidden texts, beguiling strategies of co-optation, and the deployment of performance to decentre from the text – ploys known only to the subject community (cf. Conquergood 1998: 26). Textualism offers a way of maintaining difference, distance, and differentiation. It relies on other texts for context. It does not impose researcher loyalty to the community, or require responsibility towards those about whom one is writing. Decentring mechanisms are assumed to find their traces in linguistic structure irrespective of performativity. The quotidian cultural clutter and institutional forms of oppression in which so many marginalized human beings live, love, and die, remain bracketed out of that to be studied. Fieldwork is not considered necessary in this approach. Those excluded, the subjects of fieldwork, however, cannot be easily understood ‘on the basis of what books – texts – say’ (Said 1979: 93). My students and collaborators from literary studies tell me something similar every time we go to the Kalahari. As Nelia Oets puts it:
Although text-bound research (or textualism) may (or may not) change one’s view of and insight into the world around you, it often includes not only personal isolation during your research, but also detachment from, and unawareness of, the real lived experiences of real, marginalized people. It becomes the analysis of structures and power relations … in words and through words only. It does not prepare you for the people you are writing about. These encounters open up unexplored spaces of one’s own subjectivity and generate a whole new set of problems and questions regarding the way that we make meaning, the way that power relations operate and are being used in these encounters (e-mail, 11 June 2002) (cf. also Oets 2003).

Texts tend to conceal their contexts; they provide processed signification instead of spontaneous organic experience, and they interpret in advance of the encounter. Being there, however, as Oets remarks, leads to respect, not only in the sense of their different culture, but for them as individuals.

In stark contrast to the privileging of the Text, autoethnography, reflexivity and

participatory methods are unsettling, confusing, and require one to take a stand. They raise our subjects' expectations, sometimes unrealistically so. Closure is almost impossible to attain, as indicated in recurring questions about the whereabouts and career paths of previous students. Subjects insist on responsibility and emotional energy, they demand political allegiance, and they bring their own sets of inclusions and exclusions, responsibilities and obligations. This new relationship is long-term, unsettling, and unpredictable. Belinda Kruiper indicated to us that the fact that we regularly return to the community, and send back interview transcriptions, letters, and papers that relate to our interactions with them, indicates that they are respected and not exploited. The next time we met Dawid Kruiper in 2002 (and thereafter), no lengthy negotiations and large payments had to occur, even though the interviewer was new to him. During our first visit in 2000 we had to pre-negotiate every interview, pay for every photograph snapped, and painstakingly haggle over conditions of exchange. We felt trapped and controlled, used and abused. Now we have easier access, no longer commodified at each and every level of each and every interaction, except for formal tours such as the one on tracking mentioned above. I wonder about our use-value for the ≠Khomani.

In September 2004 a new gatekeeper attempted to isolate Dawid from us. I was required to pay him R20 for dope by his new personal assistant (PA), a divisive outsider from the Cape, who blatantly controlled access and our initial discussion, telling us that the 'old' (SASI, WIMSA, CPA), and the road side sellers were 'out', and that the 'new' was 'in' (a new San traditional house [council], //Makai, established by herself). Certain of the CCMS-party were included 'in', but I was informed that I was to be excommunicated because my University had published the Bregin and Kruiper (2004) book, Belinda and Vetket being 'out'. I was held personally responsible for the book's unacceptable content, which the PA claimed promoted 'lies' and negativity, though I'd had nothing to do with Belinda's interpretations or the book itself.**[iv]** (At the time, Belinda, Vetkat and Isak were US guests of *Journey into the heart*, a shamanistic group.) The next day Dawid and I chatted amiably on the roadside, much to PA's dismay, who was unable to re-insert the barrier of the previous night. Having sewn confusion in ≠Khomani politics, she was herself excommunicated before even a year had passed. Such is the bewildering complexity of shifting alliances amongst Kalahari communities.

We continue to work with our sources who are as concerned as are we about the

‘new’ politics. In June 2005, Silikat engaged Mary at length on her co-authored article, ‘Meeting points’ (2003), discussing the geometric patterns and the narrative she and her contributors wrote on them. In this context, Belinda Kruiper commented: ‘So you see your own voice going out there linked with words like methodology and stuff, only in contexts because you’ve been partaking … you almost understand what is being said’ (interview, 23 October 2001). They have an original typed record of what they told us, and copies of the resulting publications. The record is in itself a form of memory, and therefore available for mobilisation in a variety of conditions. Silikat indicated that he recognised this value in our work, and then suggested that I donate my Sani to him, as it was now part of Kalahari folklore.

The incessant requests/demands for money, gifts, and sometimes the parading by drunken parents of their dirty kids to manipulate white liberal guilt largely gave way to co-operation, to interest, and to a greater sense of involvement. This accessibility occurred because we had as a team, if of constantly changing researchers, possibly succeeded over the years in establishing our collective *bona fides* that have been able to withstand attempts by mischievous individuals like the PA to undermine them. Campfire dissemination and discussion of our work, feedback on our unpublished articles from the individuals/communities concerned, via scribbled letters, scratchy cell phone conversations, and invitations to Belinda and Vetkat to work with our students on campus in Durban, suggested to sections of the traditional ≠Khomani that we are listening, absorbing, perhaps in solidarity with their plight. We can facilitate in getting their own points of view across to other academics, development workers, agencies, and the state, which they perceive as not listening, not caring, not delivering: Whether they can identify with our analysis, is another matter.

In discussing our work and videos (shown on portable TV-screens and on laptops with DVDs when we visit), sitting around campfires, our hosts tell us that they feel (relatively) empowered in that they can recognise themselves in these forms of representation:
Suddenly a big envelope comes from the University of Natal, and [our] names are in academic circles. And they’re seeing it. Before that the people come and talk and take photos, but they see nothing. Just seeing your name there brings out a new thing (Belinda Kruiper, interview, 23 October 2001).

Our subjects/hosts know that their voices have not been reconstituted into often

incomprehensible abstractions from which they are now absent and, in fact, request that we translate more of our work more often into Afrikaans (cf. for example Tomaselli and Oets 2004). Our research teams are multi-ethnic, multiracial, multigendered, and multilinguistic. We are not just 'white' [or 'black'] men or women trying to know somebody else's business (Conquergood 1998: 30), even if that is how we were initially seen on arrival at Kagga Kamma in April 1999, and Witdraai in 2000.

Our 'being there', camping instead of always staying in the adjacent Molopo Lodge, was particularly significant. Belinda Kruiper said that in their experience with other researchers:

There was never just the human, just hanging out. That's why I always believe … they're too quick, they fly into Upington, they pick up the people, and they start recording data. They haven't had time to necessarily sit at the home and just enjoy the fire first or sleep over. You can't just make assumptions on flying in or spending three hours and sitting in an air-conditioned vehicle and a hotel in the evening chatting … (interview, 24 July 2001).

This, we all agreed, was the methodology of 'hanging out', and an important element in our practice. Things happen, we go with the flow, nothing is set in stone. Paradigm fundamentalism recedes as we try to make sense of often incomprehensible situations, encounters and stories.

Searching for methods: Semiotics from below

How to find a method, which does not impose regimes of theory and interpretation, mimicry, or Western imaginaries on our subjects, is the task we are addressing. My own approach is a visual anthropological semiotics, which proceeds from C.S. Peirce (Hartshorne and Weiss 1931-1935; 1958).**[v]** Peirce's phaneron permits the study of mental interpretants by interpreters in contexts, providing a conceptual starting point within which to accommodate the potential indeterminacies of translation (Quine 1969) that exist between tourists/observers/filmmakers/researchers/missionaries on the one hand, and performers and their indigenous communities on the other. The phaneron contains the conditions for signification given the presence of a subject: all that is present to the mind during any encounter is its content. Different interacting minds may have different contents, different interpretations, and different expectations of the same encounters, and therefore, any encounter contains infinite conditions for potential misunderstanding and conflict. Any situation in

space and time can contain a great many simultaneous phanerons. It is this phaneroscopic method, not theory, which is our starting point. The theory – in which the concerns of our subjects/hosts are inscribed – emerges from application of method.

Semiotics finds its origins in Peirce's attempt to *replace* Kant's systematic philosophy, and not in the projects possible within it. Although Peirce acknowledged a kind of 'unknowable' material reality, he accepted that this reality could not be utterly divorced from experience. (In June 2005, for example, Belinda Kruiper told me that she gave the *Bushman shaman* book her hundred per cent seal of approval, even as I contemplated its misleading cover, questioned whether the spiritual is 'real' or not, and pondered on its mildly New Age appearance.)**[vi]** Signs, such as the relation between reality and experience, also had to be conceived of as fitting into Peirce's philosophy. Peirce saw the causal action of concepts not in the arbitrary will of an abstract agent, but in the general conduct of a community of people who seek to find something out about their worlds. Peirce's work, thus, is more relevant, especially with regard to understanding African ontologies, than that which has emerged from the European tradition after Kant.

Peirceian semiotics begins from the essence of the human pragmatic relation with nature, the environment, and the noumenal world. Signification has substance in practice, within the common habits that evolve and change as practices become elaborated through time. By virtue of the connection between a sign and a habit in the formation of the interpretant, any phaneron will be defined by the pragmatic capacities of the signifying subject present at the time of the phaneron's realisation. For example, for filmmaker/anthropologist Jean Rouch, surrealism offers filmmakers a means of escaping the formal constraints of conventional film and observation. Via *ciné-trance*, and the handheld cameras that make this possible, one can detect Rouch's method for a freeing-up of the constraints of consciousness – a desire to 'write with the body', to dream, to tap the unexplored power of the unconscious in its overturning of 'reality', of system, of convention (Young 1995: 191; see also Stoller 1992). Healing follows these kinds of rules also (cf. Biesele 1993; Katz 1982; Keeney 2005). For me and Jake Homiak, however, we wonder what role marijuana plays in all this 'boiling energy'. The substance is rarely mentioned in anthropological studies on trance-dancing, healing, and shamanism. Dope is a ubiquitous commodity in the

Kalahari.

Rouch's use of surreality in film aimed to document the scientifically unexplainable, the immense experiential overload of ritual possession: *ciné-trance* offers a method to visualise, in the movement between observation and participation and across disjunctive points of view; the crossings-over into the unconscious world, much as we experienced it during the fire dance at Ngwatle (cf. also Sætre 2003; Reinhardt 2003; Lange *et al*. 2003: 87-90). Subject and Object are reconnected in the phaneron, which can include the noumenal – the possession – which is itself unknowable within normal scientific categories. By these means Rouch believed it to be possible to at least represent the noumenal even if science could not explain the phenomenon as such. Perhaps this is what the film *Dancing at the future*, was attempting to document.

The necessity for praxis is what makes the phaneron an ideal vehicle within which to conceptualise the idea of a context, since the difficulty associated with the real situation of crucial contexts generating conflicting actions is hard to theorise in the usual textual environment. As long as there is an insistence on all parties in a single juncture having to signify in an identical manner, as Rorty (1980) suggests is the case in the 'epistemological' tradition of the West, then the need for uniformity of subjectivities will persist. This uniformity, in turn, can only be conceived of where subjectivity is a disembodied non-material ghost in the machine, not subject to the concrete constraints of the real world within which signs are both generated and propagated. The noumenal is a discourse partly adopted by Belinda Kruiper in her comments about 'truth' and 'from the heart', as she mobilises essentialism as explanation in her interactions with all manor of visitors, including ourselves.

The phaneron of signification in Africa, then, necessarily includes some degree of indeterminacy in the way expected interpretants will be generated. This would be the case because, if Frans Tempels (1959) was correct, there will be always one subject seeing a whole undissociated 'common sense' textualised object, and at least one other experiencing a dynamic relation of force. The point is that without a sympathetic intellectual approach to what Bushmen might experience, there is no way of telling whether a programme *affecting* them is *intelligible* to them. This situation is something of a limiting case, in that for the most part the people in question have a history of getting by, irrespective of how the requirements of the political centre (before, during, or after colonisation) have changed in translation.

Africans have become accustomed to seeing well-meaning development agencies, engineers, and sociologists traipsing across their fields and squatter camps. They have become equally accustomed to seeing their efforts fail abjectly. A shift in the ground of the West's common sense, which will loosen the hegemonic grip of Cartesian objectivity on the activity of intercultural engagement, is one of the requirements of our method. I tell students that dreams are as important to their analyses as any other form of knowing: They are required to be in research mode 24 hours a day. In June 2005, Belinda Kruiper reminded me of a nightmare I had had when we first stayed over at Blinkwater in 2002. Her advice was for me to de-stress, hang out, and let things happen.

The utility of the Peirceian approach is its sensitivity to the material, spiritual, and cultural needs of peoples in worlds where modernity remains both a problem and a goal. Such peoples transcend at least three periodisations: the pre-modern, modern, and postmodern. The problem is that the totalising conception of individuality inherent in post-structuralist thought is rarely found in the field where the tyranny of community sustains some degree of social cohesion in otherwise embattled and often alcohol-driven disintegrating social structures. Self-serving individuality, however, does break out every now and again, mainly in the scramble for scarce resources, political positioning and, on occasion, the need to get intoxicated.

The task, for me if not for all my students, remains the democratic empowerment of those whose marginalization is often exacerbated by theories that condemn people to predetermined speaking positions on account of suspicious theories of culture. Power relations cannot be negated. Like ideology, we can engage them, try to tame them, and negotiate mutual benefit to the best ability of all parties to the encounter. They exist at all levels, enveloping everyone and everything, both explicitly and implicitly. As development worker Fiona Archer points out, the problem is that academic subtexts are often written alongside development texts – the latter are negotiated with sources, but the academic texts which often derive from development texts, often (re)appear in journalism, photo books, TV, and dissertations without warning, approval, or the initial understanding of the subjects. That's why, she argued, Belinda felt exploited: 'She had applied herself fully to the development text that was written for the Kalahari – only to find later that she had been part of two texts, unknowingly and unnegotiated with her' (Fiona Archer, e-mail, 18 June 2002).

In phaneroscopic terms, the twin texts – development, academic/journalism – form the often-ambiguous transtextual location where our sources frequently find themselves positioned by researchers. Researchers/writers, however, rarely make epistemological distinctions between the different texts – outcomes are basically different genres of the same text: Field report, research article, media release, white paper, video production, web entry, etc. This disagreement over category of discourse/genre is a prime example of indeterminacy of translation: the academics' phaneron, in which everything is interconnected, here becomes an unwitting transgression of the ≠Khomani's separation of the respective texts into: a) developmental ('helpful to us'); b) research ('helpful to "them" in their careers'); and c) extraction/export ('money making' by often unknown pictorial and known alleged information thieves.) In a world where most of the Same will do anything to get themselves in the media to secure their 15 minutes of fame, this resistance by the Other to 'being represented' has more to do with the consequences of inappropriate development and strategies than it does with not wanting to become famous.

Absorbing exclusion/surviving through structuralism

Third and Fourth World-peoples are argued to be 'Other' to the historical 'Same' of Europe (Mudimbe 1988). This relationship was predicated upon the differences assumed to define Europeans (the Same) in contradistinction to Africans (the Other). As argued in Chapter 5, two mutually exclusive avenues emerged when the victorious 'scientific' order of knowledge was faced with cultures predicated on other kinds of world views: the world view and behaviour of the Other was treated as 'priest-craft' (Rorty 1980: 328), and was consequently in need of vanquishment.

Conversely, 'science' tried to 'conserve' the Other in museums, media, mummification, body moulding for dioramas, and cultural tourism. Saartjie Baartman, a late 17th Century Khoi, for example, was taken to Europe, exhibited at freak shows, forced into prostitution, and even in death suffered further indignity as pathologists cut up and studied her 'exotic' genitals, brain, and buttocks. Having been dismembered, she was then resurrected and again put on public/pubic display at a Paris Museum. (Baartman's body was returned to South Africa in 2002 to a hero's welcome, where competing constituencies within the Khoisan community contested ownership over her remains.)

Africans have, since colonialism, often absorbed and applied to themselves the

categories and methodologies of the European tradition. In a reverse/perverse kind of way, the 'traditional' ≠Khomani and some Ju/'hoansi villagers have internalised the Western discourse on 'Bushmen', and now represent themselves to the world in terms of this mythical image. (The !Xoo at Ngwatle do perform for cameras and the odd tourist party, but theirs is an organic enactment, not based on media images of 'the Bushmen'.) For the Kruipers especially, the result is multiple dependencies – economic, cultural and social – which exacerbate Kruiper (and Ju/'hoansi) interactions in a world which now voraciously consumes images of cultural myths re-enacted by supposedly pre-modern peoples who realise that their very 'primitiveness' may well be their prime developmental resource in a postmodern economy. 'Ostri-San: Pink ostriches and real Bushmen', the title of an unpublished article by Elana Bregin, provides some indication of how such images are constructed:

The name did not bode well, conjuring up disturbing visions of 'farmed' Bushmen penned up alongside commercial ostriches … But despite all my misgivings, the chance to meet 'real' Bushmen in the flesh was too enticing to resist. So I'd needed little persuading to leap into the battered Sani and head off into the hot blue yonder: destination, to check out Ostri-San, North West Province's newest 'cultural' attraction, described in the brochure as 'Ostrich Show Farm and Working Bushmen'.

Situated in the scenic heart of the Magaliesberg tourist Mecca … Ostri-San is a unique combination of commercial farming venture, cultural village, museum and exotic spectacle. Turning in past the sign with flying pink Ostrich and bow-wielding Bushmen, we are greeted by the cheerful welcome of Ndebele-design flower boxes and pots in full bloom … we are very glad of the chance to cool off and unwind at the outdoor tables of The Bushman's Cove Restaurant and Coffee Shop. The décor is, appropriately, Bushman theme … we are not surprised to find a menu heavily weighted on the side of Ostrich cuisine.

… The venture is partly Danie Jacobs' brainchild … He explains that San and ostriches both inhabit the Kalahari. Both fit uneasily into the conventional categories of nature. And ostriches have always featured large in San survival. So for him, no other name would do.

He shepherds us off to the appropriately named 'White House'. The long, thatch-roof building is divided into the Ostrich Production Unit, where hatching

machines incubate up to a 1,000 eggs at a time; and a section devoted to the Bushman display.

I'm not sorry to leave the clinical environs of the ostrich production unit behind us and wander across to the adjacent Bushman section. Here, the walls are hung with sandstone slabs of Rock Art – facsimiles of the genuine articles found in the sandstone caves of the Cape Cedarberg Mountains and Natal Drakensberg. These are … the work of Danie himself, who has reproduced actual scenes from the caves …

Standing beside a tepee-shaped *skerm* woven from the thatch of Kalahari dune grass, Danie takes us through an engrossing demonstration of 'Bushman life as it was' … One can't help being awe-struck by the amazing knowledge, skill and enterprise of the Bushmen people, their complete attunement to the environment in which they lived. Everything had its use and nothing was wasted. They epitomised economy, balance, and respect for their environment, belonging without ownership. Ironically, it was these very qualities that spelt their doom. There was no place for them in a mercenary world that saw accumulation, possession, and ambition as the hallmarks of human value.**[vii]**

Danie leads the way energetically up the gravel path, past the ostrich pens full of long-necked, long-toed, long-lashed birds doing their high-stepping ballet trots or kneeling; stubby wings fanned out in graceful swaying courtship dance. At the top of the slope, is the Bushman 'village', where, beside thatch *skerms*, the people wait around their fire, clad in the expected traditional skins, the younger boys in beaded *gxais* or loincloths, the women bare-breasted and sporting ostrich skin skirts …

The adults are hard at work, making their popular crafts to sell to the tourists. With great precision, they burn their delicate animal, insect, and human figures onto bone shards and stone slabs; or string necklaces and bracelets from seedpods and eggshell beads …

The Bushmen (the term they themselves prefer to San) … say they enjoy meeting people from other cultures and are eager for the chance to talk to them face to face, so that they can explain what they are about and clear up some of the misconceptions. It hurts them that they are continually talked about and written about by others, without any idea of what is being said. 'The words never come

back to us', says group leader Isak Kruiper, whose Nama name !Gnoap means Porcupine. 'People don't always write the truth about us. But we don't know what they say, so we have no chance to correct the wrong impressions'. They appreciate it when visitors take the trouble to try and converse with them – even if through an interpreter, so that they have the chance to answer their questions themselves. How is it here for them at Ostri-San? It is not home, they say, and their hearts long for the red dunes of their beloved Kalahari, where every plant, animal, bird, and insect is known to them. But here is where survival is. They have a plentiful supply of Ostrich eggs to paint on, all the Ostrich meat they can eat, and the opportunity to sell their crafts to tourists …

Although not everyone in the party shared my feelings, I found my encounter with the First People a truly unforgettable experience. I felt as though I took a little bit of desert magic home with me.

The magic, however, was short-lived. A few years later we learned that Danie had left Ostri-San, and that in 2005 Coetzee was investigated by social services for exploiting the children who were on display for tourists when they should have been at school. Yet another example of the endless exploitation by white showmen of the Bushmen? Isak, Lys, Silikat, and some others moved back to Witdraai in late 2004.

Being represented is not in itself the issue. Representation is both income-generating and offers the promise of power. Dawid, for example, told us that he wants the Cape Town Museum to make a mould of him, for public display, when he dies. This diorama, previously located in a Museum of Natural History, sparked in the mid-1980s and beyond, intense ideological struggles on the part of the Khoi/San who argued that apart from the negative image of Khoi primitivity being perpetuated, that this kind of museumological representation is sacrilegious. Kruiper, however, sees a financial opportunity, and the possibility of his continued posthumous appeal to protect 'traditionalism', by joining his publicly displayed forebears in moulded form. It seems that most of the pressure to ban the diorama came from the urban, Christianised, Cape Khoi community, whereas the San interviewed by anthropologist Frans Prins, are proud to be associated with the diorama and would like it to be reassembled at the !Khwa ttu San Culture and Education Centre just outside Cape Town (e-mail, 14 June 2002). In Baartman's case, the Western scientific objectifying gaze destroyed the subject. On her 'liberation', the subject was again objectified, this time in a struggle between

political discourses and constituencies, being fought out by specific claimants of the mantle of First People status. The central issue here is that of ownership (ideological, of origins, and of control of representation).

Postmodernism collapses the distinctions between science and priest-craft. Ethnography is here commodified via the language of cultural tourism, and is thinly dressed up in discourses of 'conservation', 'development', and 'eco-tourism'. The 'Bushmen' need to be preserved because 'we' can learn from (and exploit) their indigenous knowledge. The subject is the living custodian of an object: A science currently unknown to the Western world. The subject/object is then objectified in a scientific (mainly zoological) discourse in order to valorise new forms of knowledge. This new psychospiritual paradigm can be empowering to both observers and observed, though for different reasons (Sehume 2001). It can also be exploitative as modernist science and TV again plunder the knowledge of the indigenous Other (Chapter 5).

Methods we have developed to bridge the difference with our hosts provide a way for our informants to develop and relate to, and develop, written accounts to impact both wider perception and policy via their own record-in-the-making (for example, Bregin and Kruiper 2004). In other words, they have learned to play the scripto-centric game via: a) subverting the textual epistemologies of outside chroniclers and agents; and b) the power and status conferred upon specific members/leaders of the community who have allied themselves to particular textual epistemologies encoded, for example, in the work of development and other agencies. In resisting writers/TV-producers and their texts about them (especially if they claim not to have been paid, or underpaid, for their cooperation), the traditional ≠Khomani – for all their complaining – work with us partially, I suspect, because our own texts are encouraged to document perceived instances of indigenous knowledge theft, inequitable power relations, and other transgressions, whether external, internal, or domestic, to the cooperating community.

Political economy: Negotiating differentiation

Our research has revealed how even marginalized and dependent communities negotiate global processes and structures in pre-modern, modern and postmodern contexts, even in the face of globally determining structures, discourses, and processes (Boloka 2001; Simões 2001b). This work opens up previously unelaborated analytical spaces that account for the nature of social and cultural

action between the global and the local, and between often-isolated communities and globalising structures. They provide ways of understanding local communal and individual intersubjective negotiations of global processes, and also suggest strategies for continuing this inter-interstitial research in which ordinary, often marginalized communities' experiences and statements can be actively included into explanations provided by the political economy-paradigm. Human agency is thereby returned to the analysis, and previously hostile subject-communities begin to appreciate the symbolic value of being included in someone else's story. Perhaps the outcome is this: The (San) Other now has a vehicle by means of which to respond to and engage the (researchers') Same. This has very real policy implications.

It also has serious implications for the ways in which we as cultural studies-scholars go about our work. The question is, do we have the capacity to decentre the field's whiteness, its Eurocentricism and its growing textualist hegemony? If so, this requires that we consider, in this case, our sometimes literate, sometimes a-literate and more usually illiterate subjects, as co-producers of knowledge. They know where they stand in this uneasy relationship, but do we? Reversing the power relations, the intellectual gaze, and the value of our research is not just an intellectual exercise. It's an ethical one too.

NOTES

[i] Allied concepts are Raymond Williams' (1958) 'structures of feeling', and Richard Hoggart's (1979) contention that literature is a way of knowing. These concepts are especially useful where historical analysis is concerned and where it is impossible for researcher to experience conditions first-hand.

[ii] Sponsored by the BBC Comic Relief group, most of whom had visited the project.

[iii] Perhaps Kruiper has a point. A recently published book, *Bushman Shaman* by Bradford Keeney (2005), based on research conducted in Botswana, carries a picture of the Kruipers conducting a dance by firelight in a cave at the Kagga Kamma Park, in the Western Cape, South Africa. The picture is copyrighted to a photographic agency, and its performers were not the subjects of the research. This disjuncture between the community photographed on the cover and those studied is not explained in the book.

[iv] Elana had joined us on a visit to Ostri-San in September 2001, discussed below, and had generated media publicity for Vetkat's art exhibitions in Durban,

where she met Belinda and formed a relationship with her. Oets later drove Elana to Blinkwater in May 2003 where the genesis of the book took shape. The UKZN-Press is an independent organisation.

[v] Students have different ways of relating to their host communities: auto-ethnography (McLennan-Dodd 2003), surrealism (Lange 2003b), via travel writing (Jeursen and Tomaselli 2002), more formal 'textual' theories like Pro Poor Tourism (Wang 2002), self-reflexive identity analysis (Ndlela 2002) to comparative identity analysis (Simões 2001a), the psychospiritual (Sehume 2002), and so on.

[vi] I had not been able to secure a copy of this book prior to publication, but the website blurb from New Age Eric Utne of *The UTNE Reader* states: 'Keeney's vision is leading the vanguard in defining and articulating the territory between psychology and the spirit'.

[vii] Danie Jacobs' association with the Kruiper family goes back many years; a relationship he built up as a youngster during his frequent family holiday visits to the Kalahari. A stint as a tour guide on the Kagga Kama private game farm in the northeastern Cape, where the Kruiper family were ensconced as tourist attractions – cemented the relationship. He still maintained the connection with his old friends the Kruipers, however, most of whom subsequently left Kagga Kama to move onto government-allocated land, where, with no income, infrastructure or development prospects, they were fighting a losing battle for survival in conditions of extreme poverty, degradation, and despair. When the opportunity came to join forces with André Coetzee and his commercial Ostrich Farming enterprise, Danie immediately saw the potential for involving the Bushmen in a sustainable income-generating venture (Bregin).