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Anglophone and Afrikaans literary adaptations of |xam Bushman folklore: An annotated bibliography of texts in conversation with the Bleek and Lloyd archive

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Against the backdrop of calls for the Africanisation and decolonisation of literary studies in South African higher education, an annotated bibliography of adaptations of material from the Bleek and Lloyd archive of |xam folklore is presented as a critical index of the existing corpus of creative texts with this oral tradition as foundation. The archive represents one of the largest and most influential of its kind, with adaptations into English and Afrikaans being particularly popular in South African literature over the past century. Limited references to texts written in English by authors outside of South Africa, including from Britain and New Zealand, are included as well. The texts are discussed by genre: poetry, play, prose, creative non-fiction, and folkloric and children's literature. Beyond providing a brief description of these texts, academic scholarship that has been undertaken in relation to the specific adaptations is referenced as well, providing a succinct point of departure for scholars interested in this tradition of writing and the critique that has taken shape around it.

Contribution: This article provides the first comprehensive overview of Anglophone and Afrikaans literary texts that have been created in conversation with the Bleek and Lloyd archive of |xam Bushman folklore. In addition to discussions of the texts, available secondary sources are listed as reference points for future scholarship.

Keywords: |xam; Bleek and Lloyd archive; Anglophone literature; Afrikaans literature; South African literature; Africanisation and decolonisation; literary adaptation; folklore.

Introduction

Since South Africa's transition to post-apartheid democracy, the question of the democratisation of knowledge has been a prominent and continued debate within the academy (see, for example, the following studies relevant to the field of English studies: Cornwell [2006], Thurman [2007], Brown [2008], Chaka, Lephalala and Ngesi [2017], D'Abdon, Byrne and Newfield [2020]). Since #RhodesMustFall, however, this question has become even more prescient and urgent. This article can be seen as a small contribution to this discourse. However, rather than representing a reflection on and in the Africanisation and decolonisation debate, this piece can be categorised as an empirical wayfinder. It provides a comprehensive, annotated bibliography of English and Afrikaans literary adaptations of material from the Bleek and Lloyd archive – arguably one of the most famous archives in South Africa, and which has proven to be a particularly rich source of inspiration for writers across genre boundaries while also fulfilling a unique position within the South African national consciousness (see Staphorst 2025d). If the importance of the archive and its impact on the literary domain is considered, a comprehensive, annotated bibliography can be a useful point of departure for discussions of textual adaptation, cultural appropriation and appreciation, and the relevance of oral traditions within literary studies. After a brief overview of the archive, the adaptations of material are annotated according to genre: poetry, play, prose, creative non-fiction, and folklore and children's literature. Although some of the boundaries are more arbitrary than others – as will become clearer – they nevertheless provide a useful heuristic through which to classify the large body of literary texts that have been created.

I do not claim this list to be exhaustive, but it nevertheless includes all the texts known to me and reflects over a decade's engagement with this particular literary tradition. There are adaptations in other languages as well; however, English and Afrikaans have been identified

considering their relative power in South African literary production – at least in the 115 years since the first publication of *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* (eds. Bleek & Lloyd 1911; *Specimens*, hereafter) – and the sheer number of texts that have been created in these two languages. And, as will become clearer, these two languages were foundational to the creation of the archive. Besides providing a brief overview of the particular adaptation, secondary sources are referenced as well in the hope that they could lead researchers in the direction of the broader critical tradition that exists in relation to these texts. These secondary sources are not all focused on the question of the ǀxam in relation to the adaptation, but nevertheless point towards the scholarship that currently exists relevant to a particular text and can consequently be drawn upon in future research. In many ways, this article can be read as complementing a much earlier study by the folklorist Schmidt (1982), in which she provides a partly annotated bibliographical list of folkloric texts that were produced in relation to the archive. Her study includes texts written in languages other than English and Afrikaans – most notably German – which have not been included here. However, the relevant folkloric texts which she discussed and which were produced in English and Afrikaans are referenced here as well.

ǀxam folklore from the Bleek and Lloyd archive in context

ǀxam is one of the 29 identified Khoesan languages and currently has no known living speakers (for an overview of Khoesan languages, see Du Plessis [2019], Jones [2019]). The archive, which comprises the bulk of what is known of this language, was compiled primarily between 1870 and 1884, with two researchers – namely Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd – as the central driving force behind the project (see Bank 2006). Within their colonial manor home in Cape Town, Bleek and Lloyd recorded, transcribed and translated ǀxam folklore and family histories with the assistance of various ǀxam men and women. Most of these collaborators were imprisoned at the Breakwater for trespasses of various colonial laws and served out their sentences under Bleek's supervision. They were bilingual at the very least, with Afrikaans (or Cape Dutch as it was then known) being a prominent language they spoke in addition to ǀxam (see Staphorst 2020b, 2022a). Afrikaans was consequently an important aid in the mediation process of spoken ǀxam to the eventually translated English.

The initial publication of material from the archive was included in the anthologies *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* (eds. Bleek & Lloyd 1911) and *The Mantis and his Friends* (Bleek 1923). Between these two collections, the trajectory of textual adaptations from the archive as such can be summarised. *Specimens* is a highly technical collection with both the original ǀxam and English adaptation printed side by side. By contrast, *The Mantis and his Friends* contains edited versions of the English material and is subsequently presented as a more polished, curated anthology. This tension – between scientific authenticity and literary curatorship – is an undertone of the entire industry of textual adaptations from the archive. Alongside these literary responses, there exists a scholarly tradition – sometimes known as Bleek and Lloyd studies, sometimes as ǀxam studies, but often simply included under the more generic names of Bushman or Khoesan studies – which have seen academics principally working in history, anthropology and archaeology drawing on their disciplinary knowledges to comment on and further our understanding of both the ǀxam and the specific archive that houses their knowledges. As with the adaptations, a vast number of scholars have dabbled in this field – some with less commitment to the field's complexities and depth of knowledge than others (see Staphorst 2021a). Since the 1990s, literary scholars have sporadically engaged with the material, but only two – Helize van Vuuren and Michael Wessels – have written on the material in a sustained way. While these scholars (and others) have also commented on the adaptations and their position within this literary tradition, no expansive study on the corpus created in response to the archive has been completed to date. This bibliography can be seen as a first step towards such research; however, stimulating inquiry into a smaller dimension of this literary terrain is equally welcome.

Annotated bibliography according to genre

Poetry

Cope, J. & Krige, U. (eds.), 1968, *The Penguin Book of South African Verse*, Penguin, London.

Gray, S. (ed.), 1989, *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*, Penguin, London.

Jack Cope and Uys Krige compiled one of the earliest anthologies of 'South African literature'. While the theoretical debate relative to this literary system was a particularly heated one from late apartheid to the early post-apartheid period, the Cope and Krige collection pre-empts this discussion by bringing texts from various South African languages together in one compendium. Alongside a selection of Anglophone poetry, a selection of translations from, *inter alia*, Afrikaans, Sotho and Xhosa is included. The ǀxam texts are labelled as 'traditional' and 'Bushman', which is not truly sensitive to the specifics of the texts as originating from a specific language and a particular milieu. Nevertheless, the inclusion of these texts is, in itself, a notable acknowledgement of their artistic nature. Rather than being represented as broadly constituting anthropological material, the selection of texts can be appreciated for their literary quality. The texts themselves have been altered slightly in line with the editor's poetic sensibilities. Rather than mere reprints, these texts can be described as adaptations of the archival versions.

In Stephen Gray's expanded edition of the anthology – which was published two decades later – only one ǀxam

text was included: 'The Broken String'. In contrast to the Cope and Krige version, Gray reprints both the original ǀxam language text and the published version of the English translation included in *Specimens*. While both editions open with a contextualising introduction, neither references the Bleek and Lloyd recordings explicitly (even though both attribute the texts to Bleek and Lloyd alongside the reprints and/or adaptations themselves). Finally, both anthologies include short biographical notes on the poets whose work is included in the collection. The Cope and Krige edition contains no entry related to the ǀxam material, while Gray includes a short note on Bleek as well as Xaa-ttin, the ǀxam man who sang 'The Song of the Broken String,' which was in turn relayed by his son, Diä!kwain, to Lloyd (Gagiano 1999).

Markowitz, A., 1956, *With Uplifted Tongue: Stories, Myths and Fables of the South African Bushmen Told in Their Manner*, Central News Agency, Cape Town.

Markowitz, A., 1971, *The Rebirth of the Ostrich: And Other Stories of the Kalahari Bushmen Told in Their Manner*, National Museum and Art Gallery, Gaborone.

Arthur Markowitz's two collections of Bushman-inspired writing contain mostly poetised versions of texts from *Specimens*, but also a small number of prose adaptations, which are included in the first of the two anthologies: *With Uplifted Tongue*. The work of Bleek and Lloyd is briefly referenced in the introduction, and a number of texts are attributed to the relevant ǀxam informant as reflected in *Specimens*. While not directly and unambiguously positioning the archive as a source, for the reader acquainted with the material, it is clear that *Specimens* served as the book's inspiration. Although Markowitz is not principally known for his poetry, his anthologies have proven important through effectively heralding in a particular poetic tradition in South African literature as it relates to engagement with ǀxam texts.

Fouché, A., 1967, *Weeskinders van die Hemelgod* [*Orphans of the Sky God*], Human & Rousseau, Cape Town.

Fouché, A., 1972, *Boesmanverse* [*Bushman Verses*], Tafelberg, Cape Town.

Abraham Fouché is primarily known as a minor Afrikaans writer of children's poetry and fiction. He also published two slim volumes of poetry, which represent an internalised perspective on Bushman themes and cultural rites. The poems are presented as original work, and there is no clear evidence that it was reworked from other sources. Some of the words that can be gleaned from the texts are also clearly from the Khoe extraction. I nevertheless include Fouché's collections, considering that a few of the texts could be regarded as either being written in response to texts from *Specimens* or alternatively constituting original works that rhyme conceptually and thematically with ǀxam texts. Secondary source: Van Vuuren (2003, 2016).

Sacks, P., 1986, *In These Mountains*, Collier Books, New York, NY.

The South African-born Harvard literary critic Peter Sacks's debut collection's long, titular poem, 'In These Mountains', presents a lamentation on the cultural extinction of the Drakensberg Bushmen and contemporary attempts at memorialisation. Sacks draws on a number of texts from the archive, most notably ǁkabbo's reflection on his desire to return to Bushmanland as published in *Specimens*. Secondary source: Watson (1990).

Müller, P., 1987, *My plek se naam is Waterval* [*My Place Is Called Waterfall*], Tafelberg, Cape Town.

One of Afrikaans poet Petra Müller's more experimental collections, *My plek se naam is Waterval*, draws inspiration from the style of particularly East Asian poetry traditions. While some texts are indirect translations of Mandarin and Japanese poems that she reworked, via English, into Afrikaans, other parts of the collection are original texts that draw on Eastern poetics. One other prominent influence is reflected in a short section, titled 'Volopkos', in which – as Müller makes clear in her introduction – she draws on texts from *Specimens* to create a narrative of Witbooi Tooren, which notably was the Afrikaans name for ǁkabbo's son. The poems in 'Volopkos' do not have direct antecedents in *Specimens*, but are nevertheless in conversation with a number of extracts. Secondary sources: Snyman (1988) and Van Vuuren (2003).

Watson, S., 1991, *Return of the Moon: Versions from the /Xam*, Carrefour, Cape Town.

Stephen Watson's *Return of the Moon* can be described as the first impactful literary engagement with the archive by a single author. Watson, himself an accomplished and respected poet, adapted both published and unpublished English language translations of ǀxam texts. Like Markowitz, he penned a contextualising introduction – but offered a much longer meditation on the ǀxam and his own relationship with their literary heritage. Unlike Markowitz, he does not present the material as somehow related to any contemporary Bushman traditions, such as those found in the Kalahari, and rather squarely situates the material as belonging to a traditional, extinct culture on the one hand, with the material reaching the contemporary reader through a colonial encounter on the other. Watson's adaptations should not be read in isolation. It formed part of a larger project instigated by Pippa Skotnes on the archive at the University of Cape Town during the 1990s (see Skotnes 1991) – a project which continues till this day. Some of Watson's adaptations were included in a prior edited publication, and other, later adaptations formed part of the influential *Claim to the Country* book. The texts ought therefore to be read in the Zeitgeist of the Bushman (re) discovery of the 1990s. In addition to the introduction, a short section at the end of the anthology provides contextual notes to individual texts. Secondary sources: Van Vuuren (1994), Gagiano (1999, 2006), Wessels (2007), Van Vuuren

(2008), Jenkins (2010), Wessels (2010), Twidle (2012), Solomon (2014), and Highman (2017).

James, A., 2001, *The First Bushman's Path: Stories, Songs and Testimonies of the /Xam of the Northern Cape*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg.

Similar to Watson's adaptations, Alan James's anthology includes poetised versions of both published and unpublished material from the archive. The book is equal parts creative and critical, providing a much more nuanced and in-depth engagement with the material than either Markowitz or Watson's anthologies. Besides the lengthy introduction, James provides copious discussion notes on each text, which draw on anthropological, historical and literary insights and provide entry points to the texts for further reflection. James also situates himself in a particular tradition of literary adaptations, explicitly mentioning how his work can be seen as following on from Markowitz and Watson. Secondary sources: Brown (2002) and Wylie (2007a, 2017).

Krog, A., 2002, *Met woorde soos met kerse: inheemse verse uitgesoek en vertaal deur Antjie Krog* [*With Words Like Candles: Indigenous Verses Selected and Translated by Antjie Krog*], Kwela, Cape Town.

Krog, A., 2003, *Liederen van de Blauwkraanvogel* [Songs of the Blue Crane], Podium, Amsterdam.

Krog, A., 2004a, *Die sterre sê 'tsau': /Xam-gedigte van Diä!kwain, Kweiten-ta-//ken, /A!kúnta, /Han≠kass'o en //Kabbo gekies en versorg deur Antjie Krog* [The Stars Say *'tsau': /Xam Poems by Diä!kwain, Kweiten-ta-//ken, /A!kúnta, /Han≠kass'o and //Kabbo selected and curated by Antjie Krog*], Kwela, Cape Town.

Krog, A., 2004b, The Stars Say *'tsau': /Xam poetry of Diä!kwain, Kweiten-ta-//ken, /A!kúnta, /Han≠kass'o and //Kabbo Selected and Adapted by Antjie Krog*, Kwela, Cape Town.

Alongside Watson's anthology, the adaptations and translations by Antjie Krog published in 2004 (with antecedent collections published in 2002 and 2003) are the most important literary engagements with the material to date. Krog has the highest profile among those writers who have grappled with the material. In addition, the publication of her versions led to a protracted and prominent debate on plagiarism and appropriation within South African literature. Krog's collection(s) can be summarised as closely resembling Watson's – which is also at the heart of the plagiarism debate instigated by Watson. Whereas Markowitz's poetry reflects an almost impressionistic encounter with the material, and James's is highly technical and academic, the Watson-Krog model is one that is both critically informed yet highly accessible. Krog, like those before her, includes a contextualising introduction, biographical notes on the ǀxam whose texts are included, and a short section with footnote-style discussions of a selection of the texts. The most prominent difference between Krog and her predecessors is her focus on Afrikaans. Whereas the other poets adapt the English source material – which could be labelled as intralingual translation – Krog is the only one whose translations from one language to another can be classified as 'translation proper' or interlingual translation. However, her English language anthology, which mirrors the Afrikaans one in content, can be classified as following in the approach to curating the material, established by those who came before her, such as Watson and James. The Afrikaans translations are furthermore relevant in situating the material in her own oeuvre. When Watson accused Krog of plagiarising the concept of her book from his own, he neglected to engage with her previous collection of Afrikaans translations from various South African languages (excluding English) 2 years prior to her ǀxam translations. Krog was not therefore purely interested in the ǀxam per se, but rather wanted to broaden the (non-Afrikaans) African language poetic presence within Afrikaans through translation. As she notes in her introduction, the relationship between Afrikaans and ǀxam – which becomes apparent for the close reader of the original archival manuscripts – was a central driving force behind the translations. Secondary sources: Watson (2005), Gagiano (2006), Krog (2006), Verstraete (2006), Viljoen (2006), Vosloo (2007), Van Coller and Odendaal (2007), Wessels (2007), Wylie (2007b), Van Vuuren (2008), Jenkins (2010), Twidle (2012), Highman (2017), Staphorst (2020a, 2020b, 2021b, 2022a), and Boehmer (2025).

Krog, A., 2006a, *Body Bereft*, Umuzi, Cape Town.

Krog, A., 2006b, *Verweerskrif*, Umuzi, Cape Town.

Krog, A., 2014a, *Mede-wete*, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town.

Krog, A., 2014b, *Synapse*, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town.

Since her original translation and adaptation of material from *Specimens*, the ǀxam and their heritage texts remained sources of inspiration for Krog's creative (and critical) oeuvre. In her 2006 and 2014 collections – *Verweerskrif*/*Body Bereft* and *Mede-wete*/*Synapse* – the ǀxam figure to varying degrees. In the first of these, the longest poem in the collection – within which the speaker reflects on Table Mountain in relation to their own mortality over a year-long period – is directly inspired, at least formally, by the Bleek and Lloyd transcription process. What is notable about this relationship is that while it is indicated as such in the English-language version of the collection, the Afrikaans version does not mention the ǀxam link. Krog's 2014 collection contains more direct references to the ǀxam and selected texts from *Specimens*. ǁkabbo, in particular, serves as a central figure with whom Krog engages throughout the collection in relation to both ethical and aesthetic discourses. Secondary sources: Nel (2008), Van Vuuren (2009), Weyer (2011), Botha (2012), Pretorius (2015), Visagie (2015), Smith (2016, 2022), Viljoen (2016, 2017), Voges (2019), Staphorst (2021b), Louw (2022), Richter and Pieterse (2024), Snyman (2024), and Taljard (2024).

Patterson, A., 2008, *Africa: //Kabbo, Mantis and the Porcupine's Daughter*, Puriri Press, Auckland.

The only non-South African English language poetry collection which has drawn upon *Specimens* (as far as I have been able to establish) is the New Zealand poet Alistair Patterson's *Africa*. Acknowledging Neil Bennun's *The Broken*

String (2004) as his introduction to the ǀxam and consequent catalyst for the collection, Patterson's epic poem can be described as a semi-stream-of-consciousness exploration of Africa as humanity's primordial home, with the ǀxam being the primordial artists. Patterson is, to my knowledge, the first 'international' non-South African poet to have unambiguously drawn upon ǀxam folklore in their own creative work.

Aucamp, H., 2011, *Ghoera: Afrika-verse vir kinders* [*Ghoera: African Verses for Children*], Protea Boekhuis, Pretoria.

Hennie Aucamp is, alongside Antjie Krog, arguably the most authentic and sustained Afrikaans creative-critical interlocutor with the archive specifically and the Bushmen more generally. In numerous contributions on both popular and academic platforms, Aucamp reflected on Bushman traditions and their relationship with Afrikaans (Van Vuuren 2004). *Ghoera*, his collection of children's poetry, is, however, not mainly a ǀxam collection. Texts from numerous African oral traditions have been reworked in this anthology, and the Bushman texts were drawn from various collections and, by implication, linguistic and cultural groups, including ǀxam texts from *Specimens*. Secondary sources: Van Niekerk (2011), Bester (2014), and Van Zyl (2019).

Couzyn, J., 2016, *Creation of the World in /Xam Mythology*, Firelizard Press, Bristol.

Jeni Couzyn's anthology can be described as falling somewhere between the Watson-Krog and the James models. Like the former, Couzyn's collection includes a limited number of texts with a greater emphasis on their aesthetic quality, rather than their supposed cultural anthropological value. Through adapting some of the English language translations with the most potent visceral imagery and lyrical lines, Couzyn presents a snapshot of some of the most moving dimensions of ǀxam mythology. However, Couzyn, who also has a background in psychoanalysis, includes Jamesesque discussions of each text, referencing the symbols and latent tensions saturating the material. Although less sensitive to academic (specifically anthropological) discourse, Couzyn provides stimulating readings of the texts she includes in the collection – and subsequently offers more than a mere poetic recasting. Her anthology has another resonance with Krog's, as both include reprints of various artworks. In the case of Krog's collection, various sketches by the Ju|'hoansi children who took part in the latter years of Lloyd's research are interspersed alongside her adaptations and translations. Couzyn, on the other hand, includes prints of tapestries made by descendants of the ǀxam and other Khoesan peoples – tapestries that in many ways speak to the mythology reflected in the texts she has versified.

Rossouw, H., 2018, *Xamissa*, Fordham University Press, New York, NY.

This book-length poem explores the colonial history and postcolonial afterlives of multilingual Cape Town. Written by expatriate poet Henk Rossouw primarily in English, but with numerous words and phrases in Xhosa, Khoekhoegowab and Afrikaans, this experimental text draws on various archives in the shaping of its poetics. ǀxam appears briefly in the poem via the inclusion of a line by Diä!kwain on a warning not to throw stones at swallows. Secondary sources: Bancroft (2020) and Sedite (2020).

Sōls, L., 2022, *Moerstaāl* [*Mother Tongue*], Kwela, Cape Town.

Like Rossouw's recent experimental poem's exploration of Cape Town's multilingual past and present, Sōls grapples with the complex entanglement between Afrikaans and Khoesan languages, specifically Khoekhoegowab. The most direct way this conversation with Khoesan languages finds expression in the collection is the use of various diacritic signs, which are not part of the Standard Afrikaans writing tradition, but which are present within the alphabetic traditions of a number of Khoesan languages. Although Sōls does not directly draw on the archive in relation to his subject matter, he acknowledges it and the various ǀxam voices within it as 'wordsmiths' (94) who guided him in the writing process of the collection. Secondary source: De Wet (2024).

Wessels, M., 2023, *Alone in the House*, Modjadji Books, Cape Town.

As mentioned at the start of this article, Michael Wessels is one of the most important literary scholars to have engaged with the archive in a sustained manner. Shortly before his tragic passing in 2018, some of his creative writing in the form of poetry appeared in various literary journals. In 2023, 5 years after his passing, a collection of his original poetry housed on his laptop was published as *Alone in the House*. Although the collection addresses various themes, at least one poem explicitly engages with the archive. The poem in question, 'They Speak', is a reworking of one of the most commented upon narrations by ǁkabbo, namely 'Bushman Presentiments'.

Play

Botha, C., 2005, *//Kabbo op die ysterspoor* [*//Kabbo on the Iron Rail*], Protea, Pretoria.

The only published dramatic production which uses *Specimens* as a reference is Christiaan Botha's *//Kabbo op die ysterspoor* [//Kabbo on the iron path] – a play which on the cover is described as '*waarskynlik die eerste gepubliseerde Afrikaanse dramateks waarin die kollig volledig op die Boesman val*' [probably the first published Afrikaans drama text wherein the spotlight falls squarely on the Bushman]. Besides using the name and image of ǁkabbo, the text does not explicitly recycle or adapt themes from ǀxam folklore specifically or the archive more generally. The play is set within a contemporary milieu, with the figure of ǁkabbo being of Kalahari Bushman extraction rather than ǀxam. Secondary sources: Coetser (2010) and Keuris (2022).

Prose

Van der Post, L., 1972, *A Story Like the Wind*, Hogarth Press, London.

Van der Post, L., 1974, *A Far-Off Place*, Hogarth Press, London.

Laurens van der Post's engagement with the Bushmen is better encapsulated in his ethnographic travel writing – texts that will be discussed later in this bibliography. However, two of his works of creative fiction, which can be classified as adventure Bildungsromans, are equally engaged with *Specimens*. Although he does not explicitly discuss, adapt or translate ǀxam myths or tales, a central key to the archive in these two novels is Xhabbo, whose name is a transliteration of ǁkabbo. This character is portrayed as a wise helper to the focal character, Francois Joubert, along the journey to self-discovery. As described on the book's dust jacket: 'Francois' meeting with an untamed Bushman, Xhabbo, whose intuitive teaching nourishes his spirit [… is one of the many] examples of African point and European counterpoint'. Although Van der Post does not work with ǁkabbo's original testimonies as included in *Specimens*, the overall disposition of the Xhabbo character reflects a sage-like quality that often underpins creative and critical discussions of the real ǁkabbo. Secondary sources: Barnard (1989), Wilmsen (1995), Lloyd (1999), Wilmsen (2002), Fike (2016), and Wylie (2021).

Harries, A., 1980, *The Sound of the Gora*, Heinemann, London.

Similar to Van der Post's novels, Ann Harries's *The Sound of the Gora* can be described partly as youth literature. A 'Cape Coloured' boy is the focal character, and through him the novel explores questions of identity, history and language. The archive is not referenced in the material; however, a number of poems in particular – which in the narrative are described as belonging to the Nama (i.e. Khoekhoegowab) language – appear to be lightly and not-so-lightly edited versions of the poems adapted by Cope and Krige. A number of ǀxam names from the archive, such as Diä!kwain, are included throughout the narrative – albeit often in diacritically insensitive representations. Secondary source: Jenkins (2010).

Slingsby, P., 1996, *The Joining*, Tafelberg, Cape Town.

Another specimen of youth literature, Peter Slingsby's *The Joining*, differs from the novels which have come before it by not incorporating material from the archive as such, but rather exploring the consciousness surrounding the ǀxam among white and black youth characters in the early post-apartheid period. The ǀxam therefore figure prominently within the narrative as objects of discussion for the other characters, but do not feature as characters unto themselves. The link with the archive, however, is the motto of the novel: a quote from Diä!kwain. Secondary source: Jenkins (2010).

Chapman, M., 2004, *A New Century of South African Short Stories*, A.D. Donker, Johannesburg.

The literary critic Michael Chapman's *A New Century of South African Short Stories* is a spiritual successor to Jean Marquard's earlier anthology, *A Century of South African Short Stories* (Marquard 1978). Chapman wrote the first post-apartheid literary history of South African literature (Chapman 1996), in which he positioned the ǀxam and their oral tradition as central to the 'origin' of this particular literary tradition. His collection of short stories follows in this vein of centring the ǀxam, and includes three texts from *Specimens* – two mythological narratives and one personal testimony by ǁkabbo. All three have been reworked by Elana Bregin, a scholar who has worked on the politics of the artistic representation of the Bushmen (see Bregin 2000, 2001). When one considers that this anthology appeared 10 years after South Africa's first democratic, non-racial election, and furthermore represents the first major collection of short stories that includes reworked material from the archive, it is notable how early the texts were poetised and included in anthologies such as those by Cope and Krige, whereas it was only much later that the storied elements thereof were acknowledged in equal measure.

Brink, A., 2005. *Bidsprinkaan* [*Praying Mantis*], Human & Rousseau, Cape Town.

Brink, A., 2005, *Praying Mantis*, Secker & Warburg, London.

The bilingual novelist André Brink does not traditionally form part of the group of South African creative writers who have engaged with the archive and the Bushmen. Rather, his oeuvre, like that of Jan Rabie, reflects a writerly concern for the Khoekhoen – a fact which *Bidsprinkaan* [Praying Mantis] affirms. In the novel's acknowledgement section, Brink does, however, note he drew upon the archive and various texts that were created in response to it to inform his representation of Khoesan traditions and ways of life broadly construed. There are no texts from the archive that Brink reworked for the novel, so far as I have been able to deduce. He nevertheless invokes the ǀxam trickster god ǀkaggen numerous times throughout the novel – a prominent figure in *Specimens* and *The Mantis and his Friends*. Secondary sources: Burger (2007), Anker (2008), Nagel (2009), Lourens (2010), Van Deventer (2012), De Roubaix (2014), December (2017), and Norton (2021).

Brynard, K., 2016, *Tuisland* [*Homeland*], Penguin, Cape Town.

Brynard, K., 2018, *Homeland*, Penguin, Cape Town.

The Afrikaans author of popular fiction Karin Brynard's most recent crime novel, *Tuisland*, explores various tensions in South Africa's Northern Cape and southern Botswana concerning relations both within and between groups. A prominent group featured throughout the novel is a fictionalised Kalahari Bushman community – which mirrors the factual community of the ǂKhomani Bushmen. A number of texts from *Specimens* have been reworked throughout the text, specifically in the context of Bushmen characters speaking from a first-person perspective. The only direct reference to *Specimens*, however, is included in the

bibliography of sources Brynard worked with, which is appended to the acknowledgement section at the end of the book. Brynard also consulted with various ǂKhomani Bushmen. Secondary source: Stuit (2020).

Scheepers, R., 2018, *Stormkind*, Tafelberg, Cape Town.

Interactions with and reworkings of oral traditions are a prominent feature in Riana Scheepers's oeuvre. *Stormkind*, however, represents her first direct engagement with the Bushmen, and specifically the ǀxam through the Bleek and Lloyd archive. Set in the context of the Western Cape's Boland region – an area within which the figure of the Bushmen is not at all a prominent fixture in South African letters – the novel follows a young girl who forms a bond with !X'uri, who is of Bushman descent, and who has an almost magical presence throughout the novel. Scheepers acknowledges at the end of the novel the influence that Pippa Skotnes's *Claim to the Country* (ed. 2007) had on the writing of the text, and that she in particular reworked various ǀxam myths and fables referenced in the essay collection.

Creative non-fiction

Krige, U., 1990, *Na die* Maluti's [*After the Malutis*], Human & Rousseau, Cape Town.

Uys Krige's *Na die Maluti's* is a collection of articles reflecting on a trip to the Maluti mountains, which Krige undertook – alongside such figures as Walter Battiss – in 1939, on the eve of the Second World War. The entries were originally published as a series of essays in the Afrikaans magazine, *Die Brandwag*, and eventually published in a single volume in 1990. Although mostly a reflection on a trek up the Maluti mountains, the conversations Krige had in particular with Battiss against the literal backdrop of Bushman cave art lead some of the essays to reference the archive. Beyond discussions of rock art, Krige discusses and, in some cases, includes his translations into Afrikaans of various texts from *Specimens*, one of which would eventually be included in his poetry debut. The prominence of the Bushmen and their art traditions – both verbal and visual – for Krige leads to the conclusion that this collection can be read as important literary contextualisation for the translations included in the Cope-Krige poetry anthology. Secondary source: Van Vuuren (2003, 2016).

Van der Post, L., 1958, *The Lost World of the Kalahari*, Morrow and Company, New York, NY.

Van der Post, L., 1961, *The Heart of the Hunter*, Hogarth, London.

Similar to his twinned novels, Van der Post's *The Lost World of the Kalahari* and *The Heart of the Hunter* constitute complementary texts: with the first chronicling a journey into the Kalahari and the second the journey back alongside more reflective analyses of Bushman folklore. These two works of creative non-fiction (with the first tying in with a television documentary series) preceded his more overtly creative engagements with the Bushmen, and in many ways introduced him as an 'expert' on the Bushmen to the (British) public. Although focused on the Kalahari Bushmen, these two works draw heavily on the archive – with Van der Post going so far as to describe *Specimens* as a 'stone-age Bible' – in interpreting and providing a snapshot of 'Bushman culture'. Secondary sources: Barnard (1989), Wilmsen (1995, 2002), Klopper (2008), and Staphorst (2025a).

Breytenbach, B., 1998, *Dog Heart*, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town.

The Afrikaans author Breyten Breytenbach is known, within his mother tongue, as a poet, painter, playwright, short-story writer and essayist. Within English, he is known primarily for his autobiographical prose, specifically his three-part 'personal chronicle' of South Africa: *A Season in Paradise, True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* and *Return to Paradise*. His memoir, *Dog Heart*, in many ways continues the themes he explores in this triptych, but is notably written and published in the post-apartheid period. The Bushman as figure and the Bleek and Lloyd archive as source are prominent in this text, in which he searches for an ethic, an image and a frame of reference through which the South African past and future can be understood. Quotations from ǁkabbo are prominent once again, and Breytenbach draws on those testimonies to reflect on a nomadic disposition. Although Breytenbach was a Buddhist – and this is also reflected within the memoir – the ǀxam and their worldview are positioned within the text as inspiration for an ethos that is both reminiscent of Buddhism, yet unambiguously South African. Secondary sources: Coetzee (2001), Roux (2002), Jacobs (2003), Jones (2004), Moth (2006), Saayman (2007), Anker (2009), Sundy (2010), and Davis (2015).

Krog, A., 2009, *Begging to Be Black*, Random House, Cape Town.

Published between Antjie Krog's adaptations and translations on the one hand, and her creative response in *Mede-wete/Synapse* on the other, her *Begging to be Black* includes a number of references to ǀxam philosophy and ethics. The book is a complex interplay among memoir, historical work and academic dialogue, and it is in her dialogues with a traditional continental philosopher that Krog makes the argument for the acknowledgement of and grappling with the meta-ethical frameworks of the ǀxam, which she suggests is latent within their oral tradition. Secondary sources: Chapman (2010), Motha (2010), Wessels (2012), Kossew (2014), Rodrigues (2014), Hogg (2015), De Kock (2016), Sanders (2016), Upton (2016), Van Niekerk (2016a, 2016b, 2017), Scott (2018, 2019), Voges (2019), Staphorst (2020a, 2021b), and Pujolràs-Noguer (2024).

Vollenhoven, S., 2016, *The Keeper of the Kumm: Ancestral Longing and Belonging of a Boesmankind*, Tafelberg, Cape Town.

Sylvia Vollenhoven's *The Keeper of the Kumm* is a memoir that positions ǂǂkabbo in particular, and the rest of the ǂxam informants to Bleek and Lloyd in general, as ancestral voices with whom Vollenhoven engages in dialogue about identity, belonging, and the role and positionality of Khoesan descendants in 21st-century South Africa. Various extracts from *Specimens* – as well as material which has found its way through citation in other printed collections of works on the archive – are referenced and/or reworked by Vollenhoven throughout the book. Secondary sources: Verbuyst (2023) and Staphorst (2024).

Blackburn, J., 2022, *Dreaming the Karoo: A People Called the /Xam*, Jonathan Cape, London.

Another interpretation of ǂxam folklore and history as written for a British audience, Julia Blackburn's *Dreaming the Karoo,* blends travel writing, memoir and historical reimagination against the backdrop of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Whereas the book would have had a much sharper focus on Blackburn's travels into South Africa's arid interior, the realities of the pandemic meant her book is mostly an armchair exploration of the history, lifeways and lore of the ǂxam. At the same time, it draws on the archive in order to think through the pandemic and the trauma and loss it unleashed upon the world. Secondary source: Solomon (2022).

De Prada-Samper, J.M., 2025, *Fading Footprints: In Search of South Africa's First People*, Jonathan Ball, Cape Town.

Similar to Julia Blackburn's *Dreaming the Karoo*, José Manuel de Prada-Samper's *Fading Footprints* represents mostly the experience of both a cultural and a national outsider's interest in the ǂxam. Where the books differ starkly, however, is De Prada-Samper's familiarity with the history, culture and lore of the ǂxam, as his book in fact testifies. De Prada-Samper, a folklorist and storyteller, has long been fascinated by the material in the archive, and this has led to the publication of various journal articles, book chapters, and edited collections on the ǂxam and their oral tradition (see, for example, De Prada-Samper 2014a, 2014b, ed. 2016). The book recounts how he first became aware of the ǂxam, his initial contact with South Africa and the eventual fieldwork he conducted among the historical ǂxam's now mostly Afrikaans-speaking descendants.

Folklore and children's literature

Metelerkamp, S., 1914, *Outa Karel's Stories: South African Folk-Lore Tales*, Macmillan, London.

Sanni Metelerkamp's *Outa Karel's Stories* appeared merely 3 years after the publication of *Specimens*, yet attributes inspiration for a select number of stories contained in it to the anthology. The remainder of the material Metelerkamp describes as having been conveyed to her by an aged storyteller, Outa Karel, who is represented in a sketch included in the book. Some scholars have questioned this version and argue that her material is a fabrication which primarily draws on *Specimens*. Secondary sources: MacKenzie (1998), Aucamp (2009), and Gray (2013).

Von Wielligh, G.R., 1919, *Boesman-Stories: Deel I. Mitologie en legends* [*Bushman Stories: Part I. Mythology and Legends*], Nationale Pers, Cape Town.

Von Wielligh, G.R., 1920, *Boesman-Stories: Deel II. Dierstories en ander verhale* [*Bushman Stories: Part Ii. Animal Stories and Other Tales*], Nationale Pers, Cape Town.

Von Wielligh, G.R., 1921a, *Boesman-stories: Deel III. Die boesman self, sy sedes, gewoontes en bekwaamhede* [*Bushman Stories: Part III. The Bushman Himself, His Morals, Habits and Abilities*], Nationale Pers, Cape Town.

Von Wielligh, G.R., 1921b, *Boesman-stories: Deel IV. Gemengde vertellings, mees van 'n awontuurlike aard* [*Bushman Stories: Part IV. Mixed Stories, Mostly of an Adventurous Nature*], Nationale Pers, Cape Town.

Von Wielligh, G.R. (ed.), 2009, *Versamelde Boesmanstories 1* [*Collected Bushman Stories 1*], Protea, Pretoria.

Von Wielligh, G.R. (ed.), 2010, *Versamelde Boesmanstories 2* [*Collected Bushman Stories 2*], Protea, Pretoria.

Von Wielligh, G.R. (ed.), 2017a, *Boesmanstories Deel 1–2* [*Bushman Stories Part 1–2*], !Khwa ttu en Mantis Books, Cape Town.

Von Wielligh, G.R. (ed.), 2017b, *Bushman Stories: Collected Volumes 1–4*, !Khwa ttu and Mantis Books, Cape Town.

Alongside the Watson-Krog debate, the Von Wielligh collection is the most contested of ǂxam material, albeit mostly in the halls of academia and not, as was the case with Watson and Krog, spilling over into the realm of popular discourse. This contestation surrounds Von Wielligh's claim that he collected primary material in Bushmanland in the late-19th century, with some scholars questioning this and suggesting he plagiarised the archive. I do not hold this view (see Staphorst 2022a, 2022b, 2025b), but nevertheless include his collection in this bibliography of texts in conversation with the archive. Besides referencing *Specimens* in one of the later prefaces, Von Wielligh translated a number of texts – mostly related to the life history of ǂǂkabbo – into Afrikaans and identifies those texts as such. This represents the first literary engagement with the archive in Afrikaans. Secondary sources: Grobbelaar (1989), Van Vuuren (1995), Botha and Van Vuuren (2003), Aucamp (2009), Willemse (2009), Van Coller (2010), Van Vuuren (2010, 2011), Schmidt (2013a, 2013b), Lombard (2014), Van Vuuren (2016), De Prada-Samper (2017), Staphorst (2020a, 2020b, 2022a, 2022b, 2023, 2025b, 2025c), and Parson and Lombard (2025).

Marais, E.N., 1927, *Dwaalstories* [*Wandering Stories*], Nasionale Pers, Cape Town.

Another controversial collection, Eugène Marais's anthology of Afrikaans folktales, has been the subject of debate since publication. Like Von Wielligh, Marais discusses his material in relation to contact with Bushmen storytellers – specifically one Outa Hendrik – in the context of an Afrikaner farm setting of the early 20th century. And

again, like that of Von Wielligh, this attribution has been contested, with many literary scholars opting to believe the material to be his own creations, and Hendrik a fabrication. Others see him as truthful in his description of his sources – a position I subscribe to following Hein Willemse's (2008) convincing arguments in favour of Outa Hendrik's authenticity. The texts do not share overarching narrative commonalities with material from the archive. Marais does, however, acknowledge the influence of the archive in his introduction – he specifically draws on Bleek's thinking in commenting on the nature of his Afrikaans-language recordings. Secondary sources: Du Toit (1940), Van Melle (1953), Du Randt (1965, 1969), Rousseau (1974, 1982), Jooste (1990, 1991a, 1991b), Cloete (1992), Gilfillan (1996), Swart (2003), Van Vuuren (2008), Willemse (2008), Gray (2013), Gagiano (2014), Van Niekerk (2020, 2022), and Staphorst (In press).

Helfman, E.S., 1971, *The Bushmen and Their Stories*, Seabury, New York, NY.

Elizabeth Helfman's *The Bushmen and their Stories* represents perhaps the first in a line of adaptations that recast material from the archive as 'stories' – that is, not truly prose fiction as such, nor pure folkloric texts. The collection, nevertheless, includes a quasi-anthropological introduction situating the material within the context of the (Kalahari) Bushmen, and is also accompanied by an endnote which indicates the archive as a source. Secondary source: Jenkins (2010).

Grobbelaar, P.W., 1974a, *Die wit pyl* [*The White Arrow*], Tafelberg, Cape Town.

Grobbelaar, P.W., 1974b, *The White Arrow*, Tafelberg, Cape Town.

Pieter Grobbelaar is one of Afrikaans's, and South Africa's, most prolific authors of children's literature, adaptors of folkloric texts and scholars of oral traditions. While most of his Bushman texts have the Von Wielligh collection as source, his original prose work *The White Arrow* has a main character called Khabbo – with the real ǁkabbo and *Specimens* referenced as inspiration on the back cover page. Besides this reference, however, the work remains an original text on the origin of the south wind. Secondary source: Jenkins (2010).

Seed, J., 1974, *The Bushman's Dream*, Hamish Hamilton, London.

Seed, J., 1992, *Old Grandfather Mantis: Tales of the San*, Tafelberg, Cape Town.

Similar to Helfman's collection, the material in Jenny Seed's two books is described as 'stories' and presented as quasi-anthropological and quasi-children's literature. In contrast to Helfman, Seed was a South African author who wrote numerous works drawing on indigenous sources – in this case, the Bleek and Lloyd archive. *The Bushman's Dream* can be read as a type of novel, as various myths of origin are strung together into a single narrative. It lacks, however, focal characters and dramatic tension typical of novelistic literature. It is this quality of the text – alongside the reference to 'tales' in the book's subtitle – that leads me to describe it as a collection of stories. The second book, *Old Grandfather Mantis*, is closer to the style of Helfman. Secondary source: Jenkins (2010).

Poland, M., 1979, *The Mantis and the Moon: Stories for the Children of Africa*, Ravan, Johannesburg.

Poland, M., 1983, *The Wood-Ash Stars*, David Philip, Cape Town.

Poland, M., 1986a, *Shadow of the Wild Hare*, David Philip, Cape Town.

Poland, M., 1986b, *The Small Clay Bull*, David Philip, Cape Town.

Poland, M., 1989, *Sambane's Dream*, Penguin, London.

Marguerite Poland's creative engagement with Bushman folklore is more in line with Seed's prosaic recastings than with the Helfman texts, and yet also reflects her own creative impulse. Across various collections of original texts that have been written in the style of folklore, Poland has imbibed both Bushman and non-Bushman sources. Although she does not specifically highlight the archive in relation to her Bushman stories, the 'songs' that she frequently cites as mottoes clearly originate from *Specimens*. Secondary source: Jenkins (2010).

Van Straten, C., 1991, 'Xhabbo and the Honey-Guide', in J. Heale (ed.), *Storyland*, pp. 63–70, Tafelberg, Cape Town.

This story is written in the vein of the narratives in the Poland collections. The focal character is called Xhabbo (clearly a reference to ǁkabbo), but the rest of the narrative content is original and set within the context of the Drakensberg and rock art traditions. Secondary source: Jenkins (2010).

Lilly, M., 1998, *Kwian and the Lazy Sun: A San Myth*, Rourke Press, Vero Beach.

This short children's book is an adaptation of a narrative from *Specimens*, with both ǁkabbo, the narrator of the source text, and *Specimens* itself recognised as inspiration. References to the ǂxam are, however, not included – and the author erroneously refers to ǂxam as the 'Khoisan', pp. 32, language spoken by the Bushmen.

McNamee, G., 2001, *The Girl Who Made Stars and Other Bushman Stories*, Daimon Verlag, Einsiedlen.

The closest of all the texts included in this bibliography to the originally published *Specimens* is Gregory McNamee's *The Girl who made Stars and other Bushman Stories*. This collection includes modernised versions of ǂxam texts with a contextualising introduction that situates the material within anthropological knowledge of the ǂxam and highlights the difference between it and *Specimens*.

Donne, R.D., 2007, *San Tales from Africa*, Struik, Cape Town.

Another collection of tales, which mirrors the tried and tested method of adapting material from extant sources, this collection is nevertheless unique in its unambiguous acknowledgement of those sources. Every tale is prefaced by the relevant collection and compiler – with two tales originating from *The Mantis and his Friends*. Secondary source: Jenkins (2010).

Skotnes, P., 2025, *When the World Was*, Tafelberg, Cape Town.

Pippa Skotnes is, in many ways, synonymous with the Bleek and Lloyd archive – at least in art historical and academic discourses (see Skotnes 1991, 1996, 1999, ed. 2007). This book, aimed at children, is an imaginative and fresh approach to the representation of the ǂxam cosmology. Rather than interpret and adapt existing texts, the book includes an impressionistic account of some of the main themes, characters and events chronicled through texts scattered across the archive. The book does not therefore include typically discrete and self-contained stories, but rather moves somewhere between poetry and prose – accompanied by rich illustrations by Skotnes herself.

Conclusion

Through this article, I set out to offer other researchers an entry point into the tradition of literary adaptations from *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* – which is, as this extended bibliography illustrates, one of the most consequential anthologies of any genre published in South Africa to date. The inclusion of secondary sources also provides interested scholars with an up-to-date index of critical work performed on the relevant text. What these secondary sources point to – and this will be my concluding thought – is that there are clearly genres of writing which receive much more attention than others. In this instance, it is poetry and creative non-fiction, which dominate critical discussion. This situation is ironic, considering texts labelled 'folkloric' or belonging to 'children's literature' being the most popular genre within which authors have engaged with the archive. This fact, together with the absence of critical scholarship on a great many texts, points towards potentially fruitful areas of inquiry for future research.

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Luan Staphorst: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Visualisation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. The author confirms that this work is entirely their own, has reviewed the article, approved the final version for submission and publication, and takes full responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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