Witness to a Last Will of Man

by Laurens van der Post[1]

O, man remember.

UPANISHADS

I have told the story of the Bushman of southern Africa in books and films and talks to people in many parts of the world. I should have done more and done it better; but I have the melancholy justification that I did all I could do in my time and place. The Chinese have an ancient saying that the wise man speaks but once. I cannot claim the wisdom that this saying presupposes: but I have a feeling that it applies even to the not-so-wise, and perhaps most of all to the foolish. I have no temptation, therefore, to go back on my tracks. Unfinished as this history remains, its completion is best left to those whose business is history, and who have the relevant dedication, the love of the subject and the training, all of which are possessed by the author of the main book which precedes this essay. All that I can and should still do, perhaps, is to add to this tragic story of the Bushmen more of my experience of his being, and the role he has played in my imagination so that the horror of his elimination over the gruesome millennia behind us can be fully understood. I do not intend to write about it as a piece of historicity but as a profoundly significant event which points unerringly to a cruel imperviousness in our so-called civilization.

One of the most deceptive of popular half-truths is the saying that history repeats itself. Only unredeemed, unrecognized, misunderstood history, I believe, repeats itself, and remains a dark, negative and dangerous dominant on the scene of human affairs. Although the Bushman has gone, what he personified, the patterns of spirit made flesh and blood in him and all he evoked or provoked in us, lives on as a ghost within ourselves. This is no subjective illusion of mine evoked by the special relationship I have always had with him. Something like him, a first man, is dynamic in the underworld of the spirit of man, no matter of what race, creed or culture. I know this as an empiric fact because of all the books I have written and films I have made about the Bushman; his story has been translated into all languages except Chinese, travelled the world and been taken into the hearts of millions as if it were food in a universal famine of spirit. What this means for our own time depends in the first instance on our rediscovery of these patterns in ourselves and our readiness to

1. This appears as pages 121-170 of the 1984 book, *Testament to the Bushmen*, by Laurens van der Post and Jane Taylor. *Witness to a Last Will of Man* Copyright Sir Laurens van der Post, 1984.

cease being accessories after the fact of diminished consciousness, of which murder is the ultimate symbol. As Hamlet in his haunted fortress had it, when the time is out of joint, as ours certainly is, the readiness is all.

It has seemed increasingly urgent to me, therefore, to look into the causes of this imperviousness and reinterpret the Bushman's story in the light of my own day. Not only the present but the future depends on a constant reinterpretation of history and a re-examination of the state and nature of human consciousness. Both these processes are profoundly and mysteriously interdependent and doomed to failure without a continuous search after self-knowledge, since we and our awareness are inevitably the main instruments of the interpretation.

This for me is not as simple as it may sound. The obstacles encountered by all who try to serve the Word, whole as it was in the beginning, are always formidable but never more so than when they seek to throw light on areas of our aboriginal darkness where consciousness has left an infinity of meaning, unchosen and untransfigured like ghosts of the unborn in a night without moon, stars or end. Once launched on this voyage of exploration, it is significant how much easier it is to confine oneself to studying the external and visible reality, the mechanistics of archaic communities and the behaviour of man. There is a great deal of self-satisfaction and an almost tangible sense of achievement to be found in a demonstrable approach to life. I imagine this has a great deal to do with the absorption of anthropologists in the outward pattern of 'primitive' societies and their dutiful recording of aboriginal behaviour and ritual. This recording can hardly be done without condescension, and it is diminishing to both observer and observed when the latter is almost exclusively regarded as an object of study and the theme of yet another PhD thesis.

The real trouble began for me, as it has done for countless others, when I sought to understand imaginatively the primitive in ourselves, and in this search the Bushman has always been for me a kind of frontier guide. Imagination shifts and passes, as it were, through a strange customs post on the fateful frontier between being and unrealized self, between what is and what is to come. The questions that have to be answered before the imagination is allowed through are not new but have to be redefined because of their long neglect and the need for answers to be provided in the idiom of our own day. For instance, in what does man now find his greatest meaning? Indeed, what is meaning itself for him and where its source? What are the incentives and motivations of his life when they clearly have nothing to do with his struggle for physical survival? What is it in him that compels him, against all reason and all the prescriptions of law, order and morality, still to do repeatedly what he does not consciously want to do? What is this dark need in the life of the individual and society for tragedy and disaster? Since the two World Wars that have occurred in my own lifetime, disorder and violence have become increasingly common on the world scene. Surely these things are rooted in some undiscovered breach of cosmic law or they would be eminently resistible and would not be allowed to occur? Where indeed does one propose to find an explanation for the long history of human failure? How can one hope to understand this aspect of man and his societies, and comprehend a scene littered with ruins and piled high with dunes of time which mark the places where countless cultures have vanished because men would not look honestly, wholly and steadily into the face of their inadequacies? The answers to none of these questions are available unless one is prepared through profound self-knowledge to re-learn the grammar of a forgotten language of self-betrayal, and in so doing the meaning of tragedy and disaster. It is the ineluctable preliminary to our emancipation, especially for those priests and artists who have been subverting themselves and the societies which they are dedicated to preserve. Unless one is honestly prepared to do so, one is warned at this crepuscular immigration post that one had better not cross the frontier.

For the English-speaking world the most significant example of such an imagination shift is to be found, of course, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It was preceded by works in which Shakespeare celebrates the beauty, the potentials for happiness, the plausible attractions and surface patterns of the outer world. But suddenly it is as if the wind of time from some absolute frontier of the universe brings him a scent of the existence of a denied meaning that is far more than surface beauty, and so much greater than either the happiness or unhappiness encountered on the worldly scene. And at once it is as if, with Hamlet, man crosses not only for himself but for all men, this long shunned frontier of the spirit, and from there begins years of journeying of a new kind. The journey this time inevitably goes down into an underworld of mind and time, where man is confronted not only with all the inadequacies and consequences of his worldly consciousness but also faces alone and unsupported by a familiar pattern of living the stark necessity of making his own choice between good and evil, truth and untruth, before he is free to move on towards the wholeness that their opposition so paradoxically serves. Shakespeare, I believe, becomes, in his great phrase, one of ‘God’s spies’ and takes on himself ‘the mystery of things’ so ‘*utterly*’ (as the Bushmen would have it), that he could come to rest in the conclusion: ‘Men are such stuff as dreams are made on’. But even as dream material Shakespeare in *The Tempest* is still faced with an ending that would be despair, ‘unless I be relieved by prayer’. Why prayer? Because it is the symbol both of man’s recognition of the existence of, and his dependence on, a power of creation beyond his conscious understanding, and greater than life and time, that time which Einstein described not as a condition in which life exists so much as a state of mind. In prayer, there is an image of certain promise that through this recognition and this remembrance and surrender of the part to a sense of the whole, Shakespeare could summon help from the heart of the universe to live the final portion of the overall dream with which his art was invested and to which his flesh and blood was entrusted.

All this may seem as remote from the Bushmen and Stone-age culture as to be irrelevant. Yet in reality it has an *a priori* significance not only for understanding the nature of primitive being but for preventing the contraction of individual consciousness which is such an alarming symptom of our collectivist day and promoting the enlargement of individual consciousness into an expanding awareness on which the renewal of our societies depends. The collectivist and intellectual turned ‘intellectualist’, the promoter of ‘isms’ of the intellect that are to the sanity of being and spirit what viruses are to the body, will no doubt find it absurd but it is precisely because the Bushman has been a scout and frontier guide to me from infancy in the same dark labyrinthine underworld of human nature which Shakespeare entered precipitately with *Hamlet*, that I have been compelled to tell the world about him. From time to time during my life I try to reappraise what the Bushman has done for me and here I do so probably for the last time. I cannot disguise that for many years I lost conscious sight of him as I went my own wilful way but instinctively he was always there and bound never to mislead or fail. He could not fail, as I realized looking back on to the vortex of the movement which he started in my imagination, because I recognized with the clarity and precision of instinct of the child that he was still charged with magic and wonder. He was an example of a ‘spy of God’, to follow beyond the well-dug trenches of the aggressive Calvinist consciousness of our community into some no-man’s land of the spirit where he had taken upon him the mystery of things. He, too, was from the beginning ‘such stuff as dreams are made on’ and had soldiered on in the field where the prophetic soul of the wide world also dreamed of things to come.

The essence of this is self-evident, I believe, and confirmed by the elements in the matter which first forced their way into my conscious imagination. I do not know how old I was when the first grit of external fact was placed in position and the pearl within began to form. All I know is that it was before the age of five when I first began to read by myself with an acceleration and absorption which surprised as well as somewhat alarmed the extrovert pioneering world into which I was born. It came in a way I still find significant, very soon after the visitation of the great comet in our star-sown sky, with months of earthquakes and great tremors of rock and ground and a terrible drought which still presides in my recollection as the greatest fear my being has ever encountered. Though the exact time cannot be determined, the moment itself is definite and clear.

I was being read to by my mother in the evening of one of the rare occasions she was at home. My father was still alive and a lawyer much in demand. As a politician and statesman he was away a great deal and she never failed to accompany him, because great and natural mother though she was, she knew that for all the assurance and authority with which he moved in the world, there was a neglected child in him that needed mothering, even more than her own children did. But when at home she gave us unendingly and impartially of herself with an unfailing abundance that still seems miraculous to me. One of her most precious ways of giving was through her love of stories and her gift of telling them with the capacity of total recall cultivated in her by the Hottentot and Bushman fragments of humanity who found asylum in my grandfather's home — 'Bushman's Spring'. She read superbly — so much so that the reading of the first of several books by Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, lives on so clearly in my mind that I have never been tempted to re-read the book or see vamped-up versions of it on stage and television because my memory holds an experience that cannot be bettered and in a sense is sacred. But on this first occasion she was reading a story particularly chosen for me because she knew that I shared her own love of the aboriginal people of Africa and their stories in a way that none of her other children did. She knew especially that through the presence and influence of my first Bushman nurse, who went under the European name 'Klara' because her own was too difficult for ordinary pioneering tongues, my imagination was involved as much with the world of the Bushman as of the European.

It is worth pausing to note how early the coincidences came to crowd in on the imagination of the child that I was, perhaps as the signs of confirmation that the classical age of China held them to be. They came as unsolicited messengers bearing the wonder so necessary for the enlargement of the human spirit, and a sense of a reality too strange, as T. S. Eliot had it, for misunderstanding. First of all, there was 'Bushman's Spring'. It was built in the heart of great Bushman earth and within sight of what was once a precious source of unfailing Bushman water. On the hills beyond the spring there were the circles of stone walls raised by that great branch of Stone-age civilization, the Bushman of the plains, to protect them against the frost and thin winds of ice from the Basuto Mountains of the Night. The stone shelters were unroofed because rain was never abundant or regular, and was always welcome. My grandfather who had built 'Bushman's Spring' had frequently fought against the Bushman. He had helped to organize the raid that eliminated the last of the Bushmen in the southern Free State, except for two little boys, whom he took back to his home and, as little old men, were to be my companions when I was a child. Above all, there was my Bushman nurse, Klara. She said her name meant 'light', and, for me, she was bathed in wonder: the light of rainbow morning, a crystal day and magic lantern evening, playing on the bright blue beads of glass of a heavy necklace around the smooth apricot skin of her throat. I remember her face as one of the most beautiful I have ever known; oval, with a slightly pointed chin, high cheek bones, wide, large and rather slanted eyes full of a dark, glowing light as of the amber of the first glow on earth shining through the brown of evening on man's first day. These features gave her an oddly Chinese appearance especially as I never saw the thick, short, matted hair which was always wrapped in cottons of the brightest colours. No one ever shone more brightly in my emotions. She remained at the deep centre of the love of the feminine which has given me so much. Not even my mother meant so much to me although I loved and admired my mother so that all she gave me can be measured only by imponderables. Although she died more than twenty years ago, not a day goes by without its outstanding events compelling the thought, 'I must write and tell mother about it.'

As a result, this still, high-veld evening when Klara had put me to bed and held my hand while she listened as intently as I to my mother's reading, is near and alive, in spite of the more than seventy years that separates me from it. This shrill, brittle, self-important life of today is by comparison a graveyard where the living are dead and the dead are alive and talking in the still, small, clear voice of a love and trust in life that we have for the moment lost. She was reading to me the Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd account of one of the greatest Bushman stories, 'The Lynx, the Hyena and the Morning Star'. This story had appeared in some learned journal in the Cape and I think it is so much a key Bushman story that I have retold it and assayed some of the riches it holds for me in *The Heart of the Hunter*. No detailed retelling of it is therefore necessary now. All I need as a frame for the portrait of the occasion is to define its theme as one of primordial jealousy. It is a story of the irresistible envy the ignoble are compelled always to have for the noble, the deprived for the enriched, the evil for the good and all that results from what my French grandmother called *nostalgie de la boue*. As such it is an orchestration in its own primitive counterpoint of the same pattern which sees Iago undo all that is brave in Othello and extinguish the beauty and innocence that is Desdemona.

The shape of the story is from beginning to end pure and true. It is of a perfect proportion of beauty that is for me always as alarming as it is enchanting. The Morning Star, the 'Foot of the Day' as Klara also called it, has chosen a female lynx as a bride. It was still the time before the coming of Mantis and his fire that frightened all natural things away and left man for the first time alone in the dark by his glowing coal. All on earth and in the universe were still members and family of the early race seeking comfort and warmth through the long, cold night before the dawning of individual consciousness in a togetherness which still gnaws like an unappeasable homesickness at the base of the human heart. No match of the masculine and feminine could have been more precise, or have a greater potential of harmony. Just as the Morning Star was the brightest and greatest hunter among the hunting stars of that hemisphere, the lynx, for the Bushman as for me, was the most star-like of animals on earth. The temptations for the Morning Star to make the wrong choice in the animal kingdom of Africa must have been almost overwhelming. There has never been another such kingdom to equal it in the numbers, wealth, variety, power, glory, beauty, tenderness and forcefulness of its natural subjects. Among the aristocratic cat families of Africa alone competition for the Morning Star's hand must have been formidable, and one considers the claims of the cats first because they walked alone in the forests of the night of Africa as the Morning Star hunted alone in the great plain of heaven on the rim between night and day. In such a position, with his experience of the power of the night and privileged vision into the heart of the light, the Morning Star caught the imagination of the first people of Africa in the meaningful and precise way which all the world's star-conscious mythologies have had a knack of doing.

Such an exalted element of heaven inevitably demanded to be joined to an equal and opposite life on earth. Only a cat who walked alone could be suitable for so fateful a joining of the most illuminated masculine transfiguration in heaven to the love of creation instinctive in the feminine earth. The claims of the lion in this regard must have been most powerful, plausible and eloquent because it too was a cat that went a way of its own and tended to be individual and specific among the crowds and herds of natural life in Africa. Moreover the lion combined such a formidable complex of talents, spirit and energies that he was universally accepted as the King of beasts of Africa and no feminine being could have ever been more fierce, urgent and triumphant in the cause of procreation of the natural life in Africa than the lioness.

But somehow such a marriage would have been disproportionate. The lion was too big, too physical, proud, domineering and self-sufficient and would have unbalanced any closer relationship with so sensitive and finely poised a being as the Morning Star. The leopard, too, had its own matchless qualities but again there were basic disproportions of size and hubris of appetite and aggression to make it unsuitable, not least of all in the matter of its spots. Who could imagine, as

Klara explained after my mother's reading, making us laugh with relief at the clarity and authority of her interpretation, the Morning Star — unstained and clear cut as the diamond in my mother's ring presented to my father by de Beers on their engagement — going about with a fudged and spotty bride? No, it could only be the lynx.

I remember how this conclusion quickened my pulse and warmed me through because, young as I was, I had seen the lynx already and knew him well. We had a couple breeding happily as pets on our farm but even more, in a remote complex of the hills which cut across the centre of it, one of which was high enough to earn it the title of mountain, several families still lived unthreatened in their natural state. I had been taken many times by senior members of a family of nature worshippers just to observe them. There was one favourite place where trellises and lattices of shade plaited in thick screens of bright green broom and blue brushes, dark wild olives and touch-me-not shrubs were presided over by some giant Euphorbia, like candelabra in a Byzantine church. The intense shadow thrown by an immense overhang of rock going grey with time, rippled like a wind on the water of a deep pond. There, repeatedly, I had seen how bright with flame and quick with light and colour the lynx was, so that his movement in that dark surround was like the flicker and flame of a vestal lamp. It explained why no pioneer ever spoke of him by any other name than red-cat.

But no sooner had the fateful logic and harmony of the union of Morning Star and lynx been established than all was darkened by the intrusion of the shadow of shadows. The female hyena appeared out of the night that was native to the carrion of which it was the dark, dishonoured royalty and without presence or shame walked into the scene, naked with jealousy of the lynx. The turmoil and heightening of drama implicit in this shadowy entry were immediate.

I knew the hyena as well as the Morning Star and the lynx. The mountain of which I have spoken was not for nothing called the Mountain of the Wolves. The wolf was the pioneering name for the large, striped, powerfully shouldered hyena which could deprive a cow of its udder with one snap of its jaws. Our mountain was full of them. I had come to know the hyena so well already that in the half-light of an early morning on a long journey by carriage and horse with my mother, I had looked one in the eyes from some two yards away as it stood among the bushes beside the road where we had stopped to give our horses a breather. Its eyes, made for the dark, were already blurred and it held its head still so that it could examine with its nose the air between us. That look was one of my most unnerving experiences. It was especially frightening, because of a profound melancholy in the hyena's eye, beyond reason and resolution, deepened with a knowledge that it could never walk openly as do all other animals in a world of light. It was frightening, too, because it revealed a terrible insecurity, a suspicion and sense of irrevocable exile unrelieved by any hint of trust in life. It could trust nothing except its unsleeping cunning and deviousness and there was thus no discernible centre of integrity around which it could weave, like other animals, a permanent pattern of vivid being and doing. Indeed, it was so utterly aboriginal that it was like chaos and old night made flesh and blood, and forced me to turn away and hide my face in my mother's lap, full of a fear which had no name. Many years later I was to encounter a summing up of the experience in a Bushman expression, 'the time of the hyena', used the day I heard it to describe a state of madness which unbearable tragedy had imposed upon a young Bushman woman; and again still later for describing moments when not only the light of the mind was invaded by darkness, but life itself was overcast with the approach of the goodnight of death. To add to my heightening apprehension, I recognized the dread power of jealousy.

However much the grown-up world might pretend to be immune to such primordial urges, we children knew better. However angelic the best of us may have looked, we were not in danger of thinking of ourselves as 'only babies small, dropped from the sky'. This embarrassing euphemism featured in a song popular among 'respectable' young women of the day who had been shamed into using it by Calvinist indoctrination. Exposed to all the processes of birth, procreation and death that went on around us in the natural world from the moment we ourselves were born, we had a more realistic view of life. We, therefore, instantly recognized, feared and were perpetually perplexed by adult hypocrisy and prejudices in primordial things. We knew and both gloried and suffered daily from the fact that we were as open and subject to storm from all the primeval urges as the sea is to the great winds that travel the world and time. How could I, for instance, as one of fifteen children, not begin with jealousy of the child that displaced me? Had it not been that the love available in our own vast family was impartially accessible and at the service of all, envy, jealousy and competitiveness could have distorted us. But happily I could not recollect a single act of parental favouritism. Scrutinizing the family record as I have over many years, I am uplifted by it. It was not until my mother was dying that I discovered that she had had a favourite after all without ever having succumbed to favouritism.

One began to learn early, therefore, that this basic form of insecurity, jealousy, could only be experienced without damage to oneself and others and ultimately one can only be redeemed from it and the fears it engenders, by a kind of emotion of self-courage. This has to be induced by reconciliation with the valid needs of others living in an atmosphere of love. This selfless love was the centre of our family. It remains an irrefutable social and individual premise, that no culture has ever been able to provide a better shipyard for building storm-proof vessels for the journey of man from the cradle to the grave than the individual nourished in a loving family. This, though, is still a mere abbreviation, but what I have said is perhaps enough to indicate the impact that the appearance of the hyena made on me and explain the gallop of fear that took over as it proclaimed its intention of breaking up the marriage of the Morning Star and taking the place of the lynx.

The way the hyena set about it was sheer black magic and so convincing that I had no need then for a conscious grasp of the universal symbolism of what was happening and of which I attempted a cursory exegesis in *The Heart of the Hunter*. By the power of her dark art, she transformed the food of the lynx into a poison that progressively deprived the lynx of her will and spirit to live. Each stage of the deterioration was illuminated in the story with a bright bead of detail, as in those necklaces the primitive world of Africa prepares in mourning for their dead, until the final and seemingly unavoidable eclipse of the lynx and her banishment into outer darkness were imminent, and my heart was almost black with dread. Then, suddenly, the hope which was almost at an end in me stirred again.

The world of fairy-tale and folklore proclaims with irrefutable accuracy that no matter how many evil feminine forces and wicked masculine ones in the shapes of ugly sisters, witches, giants, uncles, step-fathers and step-mothers combine against creation on earth, somewhere always there is something built into life to counter them: a small, often despised something, a mere Tom Thumb, a crumpled old man, a humble, simple peasant couple like Baucis and Philemon, or even just a being of potential nobility disguised as a repulsive toad. In the story of the lynx the good fairy appeared in the shape of the lynx's vigilant sister who acted immediately and decisively. Just as the apparently doomed lynx was cast out of her hut and the hyena moved in, the gallant sister went to warn the Morning Star and told him plainly that his light on earth, his love of the lynx, and the reality of his own feminine soul, was about to be extinguished. Just as the love that is feminine cannot endure without male amour, and male power has no meaning without a feminine soul to serve, so the Morning Star instantly recognized the universal implication of the hyena's threat to heaven and earth, and took instant action. Fitting an arrow to his bow, and spear in hand, the story describes in language worthy of Blake's 'tiger bright', how the Morning Star descends swiftly to the earth, his eyes full of the fire of a just anger. The violence of his approach sends the hyena rushing from the hut in great panic. Swerving to avoid the spear of the Morning Star, its hind leg catches on the coals of the fire which were burning as usual on the scooped-out place in front of the hut. The hyena was burned so badly that it was condemned to the lopsided walk that it still has to this day. From that moment the lynx recovered, was fully restored in her honour and affections and she and all manner of things were well.

I could not have been more relieved and happy by such an ending and embraced both my mother and Klara in tears of sheer joy. I was all the happier on being assured that the reason why the Morning Star continues to sit with an eye so bright between night and day is that he has learned the lesson that not only are the forces of darkness and evil which the hyena personifies on earth built into the foundations of the universe and indestructible, but also that it is only by an exercise of everlasting vigilance on the frontiers of the mind that he can defeat them and prevent a triumph of night over day.

The effect on me of this story was so great that I woke early in the dark next morning, and slipped out of the karosses, the rugs of soft animal skins in which I always slept in good weather outside on the wide verandah which surrounded our home. For a moment I hesitated. The howl of the perpetual recurring Ishmael element in life which is implicit in the voice of the hyena reached me and seemed to change into a minor scale the major key of the music of the stars which resounded over the vast full-leafed garden beyond. There stood the trees in their long robes of leaves, priests of their natural kingdom, heads bowed as if calling for prayer from the minaret of the world. For a moment I shivered with an involuntary spasm of the fear that the hyena's role in the story had induced in me the night before, but then I recalled the impulse which had delivered me from sleep. I went slowly to the very edge of the raised verandah and looked over and out to the east of the immense garden and there, just lifting itself clear over the dark crown of fig trees by the wall around the orchard, was the Morning Star. Perhaps as a result of the story, it appeared to me brighter than ever, its eye fiercer. An arrow was fitted to its bow, a spear was in its hand and the tips of arrow and spear were aimed at the area of darkness on earth where the hyena had just given a howl of self-pity, complaint, carrion intent and shame for itself. The rush of emotion was so great that it stays with me still. It provided the nursery in which a great tree of conviction and abiding hope grew, and I was confirmed in the knowledge that there is a vigilant and indestructible element of light in life that transcends night and day on earth as in heaven.

As for the hyena, the villain of the piece, a strange regret in me because it was not killed was slowly resolved. Over the years the hyena has taken its proper position in my mind. I realized why it had to live and have a hind leg permanently marked by fire. Fire was to become the great image of consciousness for me and that seal of fire on the hyena was an assurance that the evil it represents has been clearly marked. It is a sign of our conscious knowledge and experience of the living reality and power of evil. For all its dominion in the night of our unawareness and lack of vigilance, evil is so marked that man is free at last to choose between light and dark, good and evil; a freedom not of escape or evasion but a heightening of man's obligations to creation.

All this and much more was in the seed sown in me by a Bushman story heard at a very early age. It is the most striking and unanswerable evidence of man's need for enrolment in a true story if he is to endure and live his way towards his life's answer. The very next day, by a process of restless questioning from me and solicitous answers from Klara and my mother, I learned how Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd had collected many stories such as this.

They drew them out of a group of little Bushmen convicts, condemned to the hardest labour: work on a new breakwater in Cape Town harbour. The crime had only been one of killing, when hungry, a sheep from one of the large flocks owned by men, white and black, who had stolen all their land from them. One of the most prolific sources of stories was a little Bushman called Xhabbo — a name meaning Dream, which Klara hastened to explain was a not uncommon Bushman name, because what could be more manly and responsible than to be connected to a dream. In due course I was given a copy of a colour portrait of Xhabbo of the Dream. It is still with me, together with a snapshot of a Bushman taken in the heart of the Kalahari some thirty-five years after Xhabbo first came into my reckoning. I keep the Kalahari photograph because it is of the hunter who told me one day when, greedy for more stories, I had exhausted him with questions, ‘You see it is very difficult because there is a dream dreaming us.’ And what could be closer to Shakespeare’s prophetic soul, dreaming of things to come?

From that moment of illumination from the light of a star story, my appetite for Bushman stories, myth and legend grew and I clamoured for more. For years Klara and my mother complied. And as my interest in Bushman stories grew, the attractions of the fairy-tales of the Western world which were also thrust on me lessened, only the Greek myths and stories from the Old Testament still holding my imagination. It was not that I despised the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, or Andrew Lang but their characters were comparatively pale and remote proxies of those of men, animals and plants that were the heroic and anti-heroic material and settings of the Bushman stories. These were peopled with an immense cast of characters from the physical world into which I had been born and were the essential stuff of my imagination, dreams and being. There were even times when I felt sorry for European children fed on such anaemic food, so deprived of the trace-elements and forms of natural life that were lightning conductors of miracle and magic in my childhood. The more complex stories and literature of the West only moved into my imagination when the last Bushman story had been told.

Even then I seemed to know that the written literature which dominated my education and imagination was a mere dwarf poised on the shoulders of a giant of unwritten and oral literature that preceded it. It could never have had the meaning it possesses for me were it not for the stories of the living world which the Bushman had so reverently prepared for me. These stories, populated by the vivid natural life I understood and loved, remain with me. What I love most about them is that they are never obvious, and are intuitively Shakespearian in their wisdom. The Bushmen are never taken in by mere appearances and surface attractions. For instance, they are immune to the blasphemies of size, numbers and giant power and they do not measure the significance of man or beast by the ability to overcome and destroy those weaker than themselves. The heroes of the Bushmen, indeed, were almost invariably drawn from the physically insignificant.

The Stone-age civilization, of which I heard echoes in the Bushman stories of my childhood, spread over the greater part of southern Africa. It existed wherever the Bushman had enough permanent water and sufficient rain to make the earth fruitful. In Africa, nutritious roots, bulbs, tubers, wild fruit, nuts and berries grew in abundance. In no other continent was there so much game to be had. Consequently, the Bushman’s struggle for survival was never so desperate as to engage the whole of his days. He had the leisure even to gather and add to his food an archaic honey that was like light on darkness and brought sweetness to the many rough and bitter tastes endured by his spartan palate. Typically he raised the search for honey into a kind of sacramental adventure. He joined to him as allies, not only the bird known as the honey-guide, one of the most miraculous elements of the air, a prototype of Ariel almost, but also the ratel or honey-badger, a Calibanesque phenomenon so close to the earth and its plants as to be almost clay made flesh. There was a magic and religious revelation in this alliance and to see it in successful action as I have been privileged to do, is to be overawed by a sense of how near the first men were to the miraculous. From the beginning, the human being was devoutly involved with nature.

Perhaps uniquely, therefore, the Stone-age Bushman had leisure and this explains why and how he could evolve the richest and most complex form of Stone-age civilization in Africa. That is why in *The Heart of the Hunter* I turned to the record of Bushman civilization and gave it preference over others I knew as well. I use the word ‘civilization’ rather than culture deliberately because of the Bushman’s extraordinary achievement in the detail of his daily routine, and in the realm of the spirit through his myths, legends, stories, music, dancing and paintings. They are all without trace of the hubris to which Greek, Roman and Hebraic man were so prone that they feared it as the greatest source of evil. The inspiration of Bushman painting embraced not only ‘magical’ aspirations but all aspects of man and his surroundings, from the immediacies of his day to the most complex and subtle intimations of reality and immortality. Specialists in this field are usually not artists themselves. They tend to approach their subject with the preconceived attitudes imposed on them by the basic assumptions of their own discipline, conceived in a cultural context that could not be more remote and alien to that of the Bushman. I know of none among those who have written on Bushman art, for instance, who has thought it necessary to acquire in depth a knowledge of symbolism, comparative mythology and psychology. They need to recognize that the dream is the gateway to the meaning of our prehistoric past on which our sense of continuity and the totality of history depends. Indeed history is nothing if it is not so illuminated. Life is made intuitive and instinctive and inscribed in the forgotten language of the dream and its symbols. Dreams finally are the main instruments with which the meaning and achievement of Stone-age culture can be decoded, and the quintessential humanity of the Bushman unlocked. Indeed the Bushman was and, to an extent, remains what we, increasingly cut off from our natural selves and the little that is left of the natural world, can only dream of today. It is a constant source of amazement and of hope to me, that I have not been to a continent or island from East to West, where I have not found that when men fall asleep something like the Bushman awakes and beckons them.

Happily my introduction to the larger Stone-age man came at a time when he had not altogether vanished. I had only to ask and stretch out my hand to hear his authentic voice and touch his warm, smooth, apricot skin, and be startled by the electricity of immediate, utter humanity with which it sparked and against which we, in an arrogance of mind and hubris of our technological mastery of nature, are insulated. An illustration of this impoverished approach to Stone-age man, for instance, can be found in the work of a most worthy scholar who has dedicated his life to a study of Bushman painting and yet describes perhaps the greatest and certainly most tragic story ever told by the Bushman, as one of the funniest he has ever read. I feel certain this is because his studies were conducted in ignorance of the symbolism, mythology and, above all, the cypher of dreams in which their meaning is encoded.

It was not surprising that as my fund of stories grew, there were moments when the line so arbitrarily drawn by the exactions of contemporary consciousness between waking and dreaming seemed to vanish. I would often feel as if I were on an enchanted island in the sea of time at the still centre of the terrible storms, the aftermath of war, unrest, loss of faith and the prelude to an eventful catastrophic sequel which dominated the world of my parents. On this island I was surrounded with strange music and through these stories, it was as if the clouds for me too had opened as they had done even on Shakespeare’s Caliban and allowed unimagined riches and splendours to pour over me, so that I wondered whether I was really awake and longed to sleep and dream again.

These stories were increasingly dominated by the Praying Mantis, the Hottentots’ god as my ancestors called him when they landed at the Cape of Good Hope three hundred years ago. They attributed him to the pastoral Hottentots, an ancient nomadic people of Africa who were closest to the Bushman. Had they paused to ask the Bushman and tried to throw the tenuous bridge of a desire for comprehension across the abyss of spirit and being which divided them from him, they would have known that the Mantis was a Bushman and not a Hottentot god.

The Hottentots had their own highly evolved image of a god, subtle, complex, most evocative and, for me, intensely moving and real. They called him Heitse-Eibib and saw him in the red of the dawn which they held to be the blood of the wounds he had incurred in his everlasting battle with night for day. I was surrounded in childhood by even more Hottentot than Bushman survivors because the place where I was born was once the capital of what we as children thought of as the Kingdom of the Griquas, one of the last coherent Hottentot clans driven into the interior by the white tide of immigration from the Cape to the north. In the process they were subjected by well-meaning missionaries to a strange injection of biblical myths and stories which did not eliminate Heitse-Eibib but merely drove him intact to the core and inner keep of their spirit. They not only showered stories about him on me but at moments of crisis and emphasis still swore in his name. He became so real to me that I found poetic justice and continuity in the fact that he should follow in the spoor of the Morning Star, an heroic and wounded protagonist of light in the van of the passing-out parade of the military academy of the sky. I learned to feel his presence in the wind which stirred the leaves of the wild olives and great broom bushes where I crouched with burning cheeks and smarting, bare feet for relief from the heat of the great flaming days of summer. The Griquas had taught me his spirit was also always in the wind. But he would be most near me when I contemplated one of the heaps of smooth pebbles piled high in his honour in places from what is Zululand in the southeast today to where the mythological sun went down in the far west over deep ancient river-beds that run no more and where his people are no longer known. These piles were raised by Hottentots bound, out of their constant awareness of what was due to their sense of creation, to deposit pebbles in recognition of Heitse-Eibib's all-pervasive presence and help, wherever they had forded a river or stream. In my childhood those pebbles were as much wayside shrines to me as those encountered by knights of the Round Table and Holy Grail on their quest.

Knowing the stories they had evoked in the Hottentot imagination, the piles of pebbles were more sacred to me than the Calvinist churches I was marched into like a young recruit by the implacable sergeant-majors of law-bound elders thrice on Sundays. They produced a sense of the mystery of creation far more intense than anything in the Bible, many as were the stories in that Book that I loved. Many Bible stories in any case did not contradict or make implausible either Mantis or Heitse-Eibib, but placed them as neighbours in the inner propinquity of the authentic dimension of religious experience. In this regard, it could be said that by the time I reached the ripe old age of five, I was either as confused or enlightened and enriched by this exciting input of stories from these aboriginal sources as any Hottentot. More consciously and most important, I found them a great bridge from the primordial world of the child into the here and now of a rapidly growing boy. All I know for certain is that from birth I was exposed to influences of spirit which turned me into something new and strange which was native to Africa but not totally of it, compounded with something that made me also of Europe without being in it. And there I have always left it, without definition of myself, because the matter is doomed to be either indefinable or capable only of definition when it will have been fully lived out into the answer that we are all contracted to seek at birth.

But to return to the coming of Mantis. I dwelt on his comparison with the god of the Hottentots because the myths of Heitse-Eibib which reached me simultaneously joined in a preparation of the earth on which this great seed saga of the Bushman was to fall and take prodigious growth. I deliberately call this a seed saga because I accepted intuitively, implicitly, and without any hint of doubt what I now know consciously for fact, as the circle of a long life rounds, that each of the stories which composed it carried the seed of new being and increased awareness. Why this is so I do not know. 'Why' in any case is a severely limited question as the child discovers from the moment it begins to talk. It produces limited answers, limited as a rule to the mechanics and laws of the world, universe and life of man. But the human heart and mind come dishearteningly quickly to their frontiers and need something greater to carry on beyond the last 'why'. This beyond is the allencompassing universe of what the Chinese called Tao and a Zen Buddhist friend, in despair over the rationalist premises native to Western man, tried to make me understand as a newly-graduated man by calling 'the great togetherness' and adding, 'in the great togetherness there are no "whys", only "thuses" and you just have to accept as the only authentic raw material of your spirit, your own "thus" which is always so.' In and out of these great togethernesses it came to appear to me that the story brings us a sense of this unique 'so' that is to be the seed of becoming in ourselves during the time which is our lot.

This is what gives the artist in the story-teller his meaning and justification to go on telling his story, and sustains him, despite a lack of material reward or recognition, in poverty and hunger. Even though his work falls on stony ground and deaf ears or is trodden under the indifferent feet of the proliferating generations too busy to live in their frantic search for the joys and hopes of gaining the honours of the plausible world about them, this radar of the story never fails him. He does not even try to know but through an inborn acceptance of the demands of the gift which entered him at birth, spins his story in the loom of his imagination. The life in him knows that once a story is truly told, the art which this mysterious gift places at his disposal shall, when the time is ready — and the readiness is all — find listeners to take it in; their lives will be enlarged and the life even of the deaf and dumb around them will never be the same again.

This is the reason why parables are such irresistible seed stories, and the reason also, I believe, why Christ preferred to use them rather than hand out moralistic rules and recipes for human conduct. This is why, despite the scholar he was, Christ never committed himself to writing but totally to the living word, knowing that the word that was in the beginning would transform life in a way which no written word, however inspired, could. It gives one meaning to his remark that he had come to transcend the great laws which had preceded him. This, too, was the way the first masters of Zen stretched the narrow and pointed awareness of their long troubled age in China and Japan, and so restored imagination to its pilgrim self. This is why almost the first question asked by the child after it has been fed is, 'Mother, please tell me a story' and the mother, without question, complies.

In all this we are in the presence of a great mystery which does not induce mystification but a life-giving sense of wonder out of which all that man has of religion, art and science is born. It is a cosmic area and therefore universal to man and there is no dignified place here for presumptions like the Descartian, 'I think, therefore I am'. In the presence of this mystery at the heart of these great 'togethernesses', the human being knows how small is the area within himself where thinking is at the disposal of conscious will and preconceived purposes. He does not think so much himself but is compelled to be an instrument of life through which something beyond articulation initiates the thinking. The German language, though it may dive deeper and sometimes come up muddier and less clear than the lucid French, has acquired out of this plumbing Teutonic tendency the virtue of surfacing with incomparable expressions for these great intangibles that in time move mountains of imperviousness. It speaks of this mystery as an *Ein-fall* — literally a 'fall-in' which we call 'inspiration'. One does not want to diminish the value of the word 'inspiration' since it is a reality but it suggests something rare and privileged, whereas I believe it is as ever-present and natural to all men as breathing in and out, since it too seeks night and day to fall, as it were, into the mind and spirit; and from there it is breathed out through words, images and symbols to be transformed into behaviour. Mozart and Beethoven, if I remember rightly, use it in regard to their own work and Beethoven wrote of how he had to dream twice of one of his most moving pieces of music before he became obedient enough to the dream to compose it. Some such elaboration, which is minimal in relation to the vast orchestration of the theme available in the history of the human spirit, is necessary, I believe, to establish the primary importance of the role of the spirit and to silence the sophisticated, watch-dog mind which raises a frantic, baying storm of alarm when any form of awareness which is not rationally, logically and substantially demonstrable, approaches the door of contemporary intellect. Yet it all could still benefit, I feel, from two contemporary illustrations in depth; one basic, primitive and positive, and the other sophisticated and negative, and both significant in the process of the fermentation of Bushman yeast in my own spirit.

The first arises from a discussion I had with Jung about Bushman stories and my belief that whole civilizations had been destroyed because their stories had been taken away from them by the intrusion of a physically powerful and alien culture. At the end of an account still fresh because I had just come from the Kalahari Desert, he nodded his fine white head as the wind released a far-off refrain among the leaves of the trees he had planted as a young man at Bollingen, because they were living and viable thoughts of God to him. He went on, in that deep bass voice of his, to tell me at great length, how his work as a healer did not take wing — the metaphor is mine — until he realized that the key to the human personality was its story. Every human being at core, he held, had a unique story and no man could discover his greatest meaning unless he lived and, as it were, grew his own story. Should he lose his story or fail to live it, he lost his meaning, became disorientated, the collective fodder of tyrants and despots, or ended up, as so many did, alienated and out of their own minds, as had the patients in the Burgholzli Asylum to whom he owed this insight and who, despite the label of madness — tied like millstones round their necks by a criminal exercise of the power of conscious conformity passing for normality — had enriched his own life and work.

Indeed he told me of such a patient, a young woman who opened his medically sound spirit to this ‘fall-in’ and ‘insight’. He had been warned against her by the other doctors who said she had been silent for years and could be dangerous. But as he watched her — often with the great father sun shining from beyond the high walls of the asylum through the leaves of the trees and occasionally weaving a halo as of gold around her head — deprived of voice, his colleagues believed for ever, he could not accept that this need be so. Something in him held that she could be restored to the light of her own day. But what and how? One day, watching her, there came the relevant ‘fall-in’. She was making certain movements, when an irresistible urge came to him to go up to her, make the same movements, close his eyes and say whatever came into his head. Obedient he went towards her.

And here I must interrupt to add that real religious experience is not possible without a response to a glimmering of new awareness, however improbable and absurd, since it is always too mysterious and wonderful for understanding. In such a spirit of sheer obedience to the ‘fall-in’, Jung did just that and as he spoke a suspicious conscious self just had time, so immediate had been his response, to suggest that he might now be provoking the dangerous reactions of which his colleagues had warned him. But to his joy he heard a low feminine voice ask, ‘But how did you know?’

From that moment, contact was established and communication grew so that they could speak of her dreams.

It was sixty years later when, piloted by this deep-sea navigator we call chance, I came across her case history meticulously kept in Jung’s always young hand. Already, then, dreams were used in a way that surpassed any doctrinaire Freudian or other approach to the dreaming process, and confirmed in detail his description to me of how within six months, he could rule, despite powerful opposition from colleagues, that she should return to the sun and the world. But on her last morning before he signed the order of her release — and until then I felt I had never experienced the full meaning of ‘order of release’ — he called her to his office.

‘Are you not anxious about going out into the world today?’ he asked her solicitously.

‘Of course I am,’ she answered, aggressive with fearfulness.

‘Did you have any dreams last night?’ he asked.

‘Yes, I did,’ she answered, paused and added most emphatically with a good peasant adjective thrown in which I can only transcribe as 'bloody well', 'And for once I am bloody well not going to tell you what they were.'

The expression of joy on Jung's face at this point lives with me still and his voice was a chord of music as he concluded, 'You see, at last her dreams were her own, her story was her own again.'

He told me that he was never to see her again but he heard that she had gone with the years out of their sight without need of help or treatment again from 'the likes' of him.

So here was the positive confirmation of the importance which, without my knowing it in my childhood, the story of the Bushman had for me and for my own order of release.

As for the negative illustration, it belongs inevitably to my own deprived and diminished day. When I came to telling stories myself and the years went round like the swivels of lighthouses in the dark of the main behind me, I became apprehensive about the decline of the story in its most relevant and contemporary form, and its reduction to more and more archaic expressions in the cold, brutal sensation and action dominated fiction denied of soliloquy and inward vision. Stories were increasingly being strung along on thin, arbitrary threads of a bleak curiosity without a twist of fantasy, feeling and wonder in their making, or worst of all, reduced to adroit and nimble paperchases of intellect. They were written computer-wise without regard for humanity and its flesh and blood to give them life, as if all were mind — and the metamorphic spirit had no part in it. It struck me as a symptom of a deep and alarming sickness in the heart of our time, a loss of soul as the primitive companions of my boyhood would have called it, and as such an erosion of the power of increase and renewal that we and our societies so desperately needed. What or where, I wondered with increasing dismay, had all the stories gone? Why this decay of the great and meaningful orchestration of the story that had occurred everywhere in the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries? What made eminent critics say complacently and with an assumption of ultimate authority, 'The novel is dead', as if it were some kind of archaic technology of the imagination, to be superseded by something more up to date? I knew writers with imaginations so bankrupt that they no longer gave birth to the characters of their stories but went to research them in the world about them. There was no metamorphosis of fiction which is art but rather sociological essays on people without a breath of invention or fantasy to give life to them.

In the theatre, too, where some of the greatest stories of all have been enacted, not only the people who wrote for it but also distinguished talents in the service of the story in play like the Sybil Thorndike of my early years in London, declared, 'The theatre is dead'. Critics on the subject can be discounted, in a sense, unless they are writers of stories themselves, but the alarm could not be overlooked when these symptoms appeared among considerable novelists of the day like, for example, E. M. Forster. I quote him because I knew him and had admired his sensitive, compassionate, humane and original approach to the life of his time and always thought it tragic that what I believe was a fragmentation of spirit diminished contact between the artist in him and his natural self, and made him less creative than he could have been. I quote him, therefore, not to criticize or judge him in terms of what he could not be but strictly because I must evaluate what he said about the story on the magisterial level of the artist in him and the art to which he dedicated his life. In an essay of great merit called — with a modesty that was as admirable as it was unusual in a self-confident day — *Aspects of the Novel*, he asks the question, 'Must the novel tell a story?' and answers it to the effect that, 'Oh dear, yes, the novel must tell a story.' This answer to a vital question tells us a great deal more about E. M. Forster than the novel. He was through and through an 'Oh dear, yes' man, condemned never to be full-throated but capable at the most of 'the two cheers' of his celebrated remark: a ration of cheers, one suspects, that might have been uttered as an unenthusiastic 'Hurrah' not preceded by any 'hip-hip-hips'.

All this was brought acutely to my mind when I returned from the Second World War and saw

Forster for the first time after a number of years. I went to fetch him from Benjamin Britten's home at Aldeburgh where he was already discussing the libretto for the composer's opera about Melville's Billy Budd as well as taking part in a special Festival evening. We went for a long walk on the wall beside the estuary which was the model of the water in Britten's *Curlew River*. The wall was raised above the Alde and the marshes were still wild and abundant with natural life and not plundered as they are today, almost like the invisible scene of the scorched earth of the modern spirit made visible. It was still early summer with the air a misty luminous yellow and the larks in such good voice that we could barely hear each other speak. He told me then he proposed reading an unfinished story of his to the Festival audience that night. I remember a strange quickening of intuition at the news and feeling hopefully, 'then the story must still live for him and this urge to tell it in public a sign to him and all of us that it wants to be finished and lived.'

I heard the story for the first time then with increasing emotion and ended by being profoundly impressed with its significance and urgency. It was, I remember, then called 'Arctic Summer'. I said to him that I found the fragment — because it was only the prelude of a story I had heard — one of the most important things he had ever written and begged him to set everything aside and finish it.

He shook his head sadly, almost tragically, and said with an 'Oh dear' nuance in his voice: 'I shall never finish it!'

I pleaded with him then and argued through the days that followed that all who had heard it found it important and wanted it finished. More, I urged him, despite signs of growing agitation in him, it was vital to him as a man and artist to finish the story. So why, oh why not?

'I cannot,' he declared finally with an emphasis highly dramatic in a man whose disposition excluded dramatics: 'I cannot because I do not like the way it will have to finish'.

The remark for me proved both how natural stories were to him and how acute was his sense of their significance, but at the same time revealed that his awareness was inadequate for the task the story imposed on it. It had to abort the story almost as soon as its conception was assured and an advancing pregnancy diagnosed. An irresistible and an immovable force had met and a condition of self-nihilism established. Yet I said no more. Perhaps for good or ill I realized this something was concerned with what Virgil called 'error inextricabilis', an error so profound that even some virtue can be dependent on it.

It was perhaps the explanation for why he never was more than he was. He had failed the story in him since he could not bend it to his own will and partialities. It was for me accordingly a most telling illustration of the power or forces at the disposal of the story in us and how the human spirit declines when they are denied. It remains one of the most illuminating experiences on my own doorstep of time of the sort of cancer of artifice, rationalism and one-sided spirit that is denying man the fulness of his own nature and devouring the cells of renewal and re-creation that are kept alive and dynamic in him by his story, his readiness to obey the story and to add his mite to it.

And here the last word on the subject, like the first, is with the Bushman. They are words spoken by Xhabbo, the Dream, who I have already mentioned. He was a convict — a man whom the establishment of European civilization had utterly in its power, and had not only violated his age-old right of occupation in his native land, but had also dishonoured his natural spirit, judged and punished him with the most extreme form of punishment short of death by hanging. He had been reprieved only as a result of the endeavour of this remarkable old German scholar I have mentioned. This old scholar noticed one day that Dream was sitting by himself deeply absorbed, silent and with a tragic expression on his face. Concerned, he asked what troubled him. Instantly there came from him who had never heard of, let alone known the Heidelberg and Cambridge which fathered the scholars and Forsters of this world, these words which remain for me the greatest statement ever uttered on the story. This is what Xhabbo, and the dreamer dreaming through him, said to the scholar he called master:

> Thou knowest that I sit waiting for the moon to turn back for me, so that I may return to my place; that I may listen to all the people's stories . . . that I may sitting listen to the stories which yonder came, which are stories that come from a distance, for a story is like the wind, it comes from a far-off quarter and we feel it. Then I shall get hold of a story . . . For I am here, I do not obtain stories; I feel that people of another place are here, they do not possess my stories. They do not talk my language for me, that I may set my feet forward in the path, having stepped around backwards . . . I must first sit a little, cooling my arms that the fatigue may go out of them, because I sit and listen, watching for a story which I want to hear; while I sit waiting for it that it may float into my ear. I must wait listening behind me for when a man has travelled along a road and sits down he waits for a story to travel to him, following him along the same road . . . I will sit at my place, that I may listening turn backwards with my ears to my heels on which I went, while I feel that a story is the wind.

Even to this day I do not know how to describe the emotions these words and the long statement that followed caused in me. It can be measured best perhaps by the fact that both the light and the shadow they cast over me has not decreased but has become more intense as I have grown older. I remember as clearly as ever the moment — how I was sitting high on my favourite perch among the broad leaves of a gigantic mulberry tree planted in the centre of our immense garden some seventy years before by my grandfather. It was so high, wide and dense that no one looking upwards from underneath could see me, while the view over the orchard, all aglow with peaches, apricots, plums, cherries, pears, apples, quinces, pomegranates, purple and emerald grapes, contained between long walls of spreading fig trees planted in foursomes side by side to protect the fruit from the searing air which the burning hills of summer and the hot broad vale in their keeping breathed over them, all gave me a feeling as if I and the story were part of the beginning in the garden which our devout and constant Biblical induction, let alone our instincts, would never allow us to forget.

And then instantly the tragedy implicit in the scene and the meaning in Xhabbo's statement would join forces and become too much for my self-control with a sorrow too profound for tears. The scene, of course, had to come into the mood of the moment, because its fountains, and the stream of the otters, as the Bushman called it, which cut the garden in two but which also gave it the waters to nourish those alien trees and plants of Europe and China, had once made it great Bushman country. There was hardly a crest, ridge or dent in it which Klara had not endowed with some story or association with the history of her people. Yet, like the otters, the Bushman had vanished from the scene and left it as vacant and melancholy as a graveyard in which the mounds had been flattened and where only the walls remained, slowly crumbling, unattended and deconsecrated in the minds of their unnatural heirs and successors. A something without shape or name went through the calm and silence, so intense that there came to my ears a sound as of the congregation of blood singing deep within of unfailing metamorphosis to which even these broad Chinese leaves among which I sat bore witness by translation through worm into silk. The Bushman may have gone forever but whatever it was that had made him and fashioned his spirit remained undefeated in that earth and sky.

Of course, I do not pretend that on occasions such as this — and there were many — that I was capable of expressing my reaction in words such as these but they and much else beside were there as feelings only bearable because of their potential of catharsis and transfiguration which never left me. Evidence of how active all this was within me is to be found in a story that I wrote at the age of eight after my own father died. The story, to use the term which I defined at the beginning, fell into my imagination late in September 1914, despite its preoccupation then with the shattering impact of my father's death, the outbreak at the same moment of the First World War and a civil war which divided our large family against itself. The story, moreover, dropped in to me with such force that I had to obey it despite a theme which even I feared would appear so trivial to my elders and betters that I wrote the story in secret, and to this day have never shown or spoken of it to anyone. I thereby unknowingly set the pattern which I have followed ever since: not to let the world, not even its most trusted and beloved persons, sit in on what I am trying to create until I have done.

In this and many other ways the writing of this little story is perhaps the most important thing I have ever done. It was the first pilot scheme not only for my own vocation of writing but for my general behaviour and most things of meaning to me. It marked the beginning of an awareness that one's own small contribution to creation demanded the answering of apparently insignificant, improbable and, in the eyes of the world into which I was born, totally useless calls from within my imagination. I might even say in hindsight that obedience to the private and most intimate summons of imagination is to live symbolically and religiously: not so much by rational calculation and prescription, much as they are needed in the service of this obedience, but as if one were following the flight of a bird. I often shudder to think what would have become of me had I not allowed the will of this intangible to take over that September morning and confer a certain 'freedom of the borough' of the here and now on me as nothing else could have done. Although there have been times when I argued that the spirit of creation is infinite and would have given me other opportunities to seize on, I believe the process of education which already had me firmly in its grip, would have undermined the trust in the universal memory and instinctive knowledge of creation we bring into the world at birth and impaired my capacity to follow their improbable intimations as I obeyed them then and have tried to since.

This was the story which needs only some explanation as to why the 'flower', at the heart of the story, meant so much to me. September is the kindest of our months. It is the beginning of spring and towards the end of the month, if the season is good, it sees the appearance of the wild freesia in the hills and rocky ridges of the native interior. Since this part is exceptionally arid, the manifestations of spring produced there are bleak and deprived compared to the eruption and violence of flower, leaf and grass in England. The appearance of this rare and beautiful flower, therefore, had a miraculous effect on all of us — young, old, white, yellow and black. It was far more beautiful than the fat, lush, multi-coloured freesias on sale in Europe. It was clean-cut in shape and clear in colour and light as a star at midnight in a moonless sky of the southern hemisphere. Only at the bottom of its cup did it hold some distillation of the blue of heaven and a suggestion of the shades befitting a herald of a dawn also in the darkness of our black earth. Its scent, which for me is still incomparable, was both more intense and more subtle than the product the horticulturalists create in the belief that they can improve on nature. Indeed at night, when the dew began to fall, this scent would rise and travel the land and bring a sacramental quintessence to our senses. The scent combined with its star-like quality to make us call the flower not freesia but by its ancient Bushman name of 'evening flower'. Perhaps for a full understanding of this impact one has to consider how harsh and demanding the soil of Africa is; how powerful and in many ways ruthless a land it is, a giant among the continents of the globe. Yet it applies this power also to the protection of something so vulnerable and blessed as the evening flower. It explains, perhaps, as nothing else can, why we who are of Africa are bound to it and find it so great a source of wonder. It is not least of all because, even though it raises mountains to the moon, spreads outsize lakes among them, sends long rivers to the sea and rejoices in the creation of animals great and small, from the lion and elephant to the gazelle and springbok, it does not forget the fundamental significance for creation overall of the small, and the power of the minute of which the freesia with its star-light and scent of heaven at nightfall is plenipotentiary and which is at the heart of this Stone-age matter.

As a result, throughout September my generation would scout the vast land about them for freesias and when the first scouts returned with the news that the freesias were beginning to appear, everyone who could walk or even toddle, made for the hills in the afternoon and came back in the twilight carrying bunches of freesias like phosphorescent flares in their hands. Within days of their flowering the village was perfumed all over from dusk to dawn with the smell of freesias.

In this catastrophic September of the paradoxical year of our Lord 1914, freesias were unusually late in coming. This explains perhaps why my story begins with the fear of a young boy called Pierre, that no freesias would ever come again. This fear became so intense that it woke him early one morning and sent him off in haste to the hills. After a desperate search he found one sprig of freesia in bud. He resisted the temptation to pick it and hastened home where he refused to say why he had been gone so long. Early the next morning, he went to visit the freesia again and already it had begun to open and spray incense on the cool air. On a second morning the one flower had been joined by two more and left only one bud to unfold. On the third morning Pierre hastened back, excited by the prospect of seeing the bloom fulfilled only to find an animal had stepped on and flattened it just before his arrival. The shock was so great that he began to cry but then in the midst of crying he heard a voice saying beside him, ‘Look up !’

Startled because he had thought himself alone and abandoned, he glanced in the direction of the voice. An old Bushman with a head of mottled grey hair, stood close behind him and repeated the injunction to look up. He did so and in the precise blue of a clear September morning directly above the crushed flower a small cloud was forming.

‘Your flower is there helping to make a cloud for the rains to come. It will utterly flower one day again when its cloud joins the clouds to come and the rain has been made to fall.’

I have no doubt today that the story, expressed in the symbolism which night and day urges man into an enlargement of his being through an increase of his awareness, was telling me that the disaster all around us at the time was not the end and that the flower showed how creation was always a jump or more ahead of death.

But, of course, I did not analyse the story and failed to see any connection with the fact that once it was written I had made my peace with my father’s sudden death, the World War and the civil war in our midst. But I never forgot it and even found comfort in it twenty-eight years later when I was told one night in a Japanese cell in Java that I was to be executed the next morning.

However, long before that I had inklings of how my little story could have more than a subjective reality and how it had grown out of the authentic first seed of Africa in my own native and aboriginal earth. One, for instance, was a statement made to Bleek about clouds by a Bushman in the course of a discussion on death. ‘The hair of our head will resemble clouds when we die . . .’ he told Bleek. ‘We who know, we are those who think thus, while we feel that we seeing recognize the clouds, how the clouds in this manner form themselves . . .’

The connection between crushed evening flower and its translation into cloud then seemed more like part of a message of unfailing resurrection sent straight out of the earth of Africa to all life and greatly raised my conscious appreciation of the significance of the story. Hard on this came Xhabbo’s great observation on the story and its connection with the wind that is our greatest image of the spirit of creation, indeed the only one which can explain our dread over the calm which enveloped the ship of Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner and the surge of hope within our hearts and minds when at the end of Valery’s finest poem, ‘The Graveyard of Sailors’, we hear as a Reveille on a far-off bugle: ‘Le vent se leve, il faut tenter vivre (The wind rises, one must try to live).’

All this combined to produce an unwavering emotion of revelation of the Pentecostal nature of the story and a full understanding why, as Xhabbo’s statement to Bleek made plain, he was far more homesick for stories than people or places. Ultimately Xhabbo needed stories more than people and implied that they were a food without which the life of his spirit would die, destroying even the unique love of life of his kind and their will to live no matter what the odds. So when I began writing my first improbable long book on a little Mediterranean island, a place which, like Xhabbo's, was not my own and where, though the time for telling stories had come at home, I no longer 'obtained them'. Remembering this, I was back at once with Klara and my mother. In the undimmed recollection of what they told me I found unbroken the continuity between the writing my estranged grown-up self was attempting and the stories of my beginning, and the courage to work on my own unlikely and untried story.

The characters in these Bushman stories were, with rare exceptions, always insects, birds and animals and the most heroic chosen from among the small, insignificant forms of life, alien and abhorrent to European and Bantu senses and imagination. It was impressive how the first imagination of Africa rejected the great, imposing, splendid, powerful and glittering animals from its treasury. The elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, lion, leopard, baboon, the hyena indeed, figured in his stories, sometimes prominently, but, even when respected, never in the Bushman's affections and innermost imagination. It was here that his sense of purpose and energies of creation were husbanded and grew great in his sense of the infinite in the small, like that of the Blake who had seen 'infinity in a grain of sand'.

The extraordinary forms of being that populated the world of Bushman stories were part of my own life, known to me personally, almost socially, a living texture of my own imagination; the beetles, lizards, house-mice, field, short-nosed, striped and long-nosed mice; birds, like the numinous hammerkop (hammerhead) charged for the Bushman with extra-sensory perception; his 'sister the vulture'; the blue crane; 'go-away birds'; honey-guide and countless others; the bee ants, ratel (honey-badger), hare, chameleon, porcupine, jackal, rock rabbit, mongoose; the cat family among which only the lynx was an image of his love of light; the steenbok, springbok and on through the immense antelope families where his heart ranged wide and free between large and small. Though most of all he concentrated on the beloved little gazelle, the springbok, he drew into his heart and inner aspirations the gemsbok, hartebeest and above all the imperial eland, which was his and Mantis's authentic guide to ultimate metamorphosis. Subtlest and of great transfigurative power, were elements of the sky: stars, moon, clouds, wind, particularly the great Gothic spires of whirlwinds, rain, pools of water, reeds and of utmost significance — an image inspired by the rainbow, which he called Kwammanga and allotted to his god-hero, the Praying Mantis.

It is perhaps understandable that European invaders, confronted with such an unfamiliar, improbable and promiscuous array of characters, and their organization into patterns of myths, should have been confused and bewildered into dismissing them all as primitive nonsense. But way back in the store of European literature, after all, there is Aesop who so effectively used animals for parables of wisdom which are eloquent and persuasive to this day.

Creatures of nature can live on and dominate a world of human society as, for instance, in the stories of Beatrix Potter whose own safe passage from childhood in the claustrophobic confines of a house in London to unimpaired womanhood and marriage, was due to the pets she kept in cages in her bedroom in Kensington and the fantasies she wove round them in isolation. The role of the mouse in her *Tailor of Gloucester* first excited me as a child, because it is similar to the role of the striped mouse in one of my first Bushman stories where it, too, is an image of the hidden fecundity and infinitely detailed little forces of great powers that live in the wainscots of our cat-like consciousness. They emerge only after dark and under the protective cover of the great objective unconscious to further causes of creation which can only be done in secrecy just as the seed can only germinate in the darkness and privacy of the earth. I can think of other instances from *Alice in Wonderland* to *Black Beauty*, *National Velvet* and *Animal Farm*. The animals from oysters to horses and pigs are epic and seminal material of the questing imagination of man when the abstract and cerebral word fails it.

They abound, too, in folklore and fairy-tales and in Africa, there are great Bantu nations who still put the soul of their people in the keeping of some animal and call themselves Men of the Crocodile, Elephant, Baboon, Duiker and so on. All these things are incontrovertible testimony to how new forms of life are not merely fresh stages in the mechanistics of zoological and botanical evolution, but each one of them a unique and truly proven achievement. They are a leap forward of spirit made visible and alive, and hence an organic and dynamic element of our being which instinct and intuition put at the disposal of the child. By maintaining continuity of origin and destination and deepening our roots in aboriginal earth they promote a growth of awareness high and wide into the blue of our own day.

One example of the leap forward of spirit demonstrated by and made accessible through the story was the tale of the beetle and two kinds of mice. An attractive young beetle woman was imprisoned by her father, the lizard, in a house in the earth. The lizard is an image of awareness bound too closely to the earth and its rocks to be good for the future. Hence the beetle woman, its future self, though also intimately of the earth, was winged, capable and desirous of taking to that other great opposite of creation, the sky. But the father, as so many fathers throughout the masculine-dominated past and present, denies the daughter, the soul in him, the right to raise life towards the heavens and so fulfil the end to which it had been born.

At this point the Praying Mantis, who has appeared on Bushman earth as the instrument of ultimate meaning, has a dream and sees how life itself would be denied and arrested if the tyranny of the lizard were allowed to continue. He, therefore, sends the long-nosed mouse into battle against the lizard. We already know the reason for a mouse, but why a long-nosed mouse? Because the nose which informs life of things not seen in the night or hidden by distance and other forms of concealment, is one of the earliest of our many images of intuition. But like all intuition, wise and sensitive as it may be, like the dove in the realities of heaven, it lacks the cunning of the serpent which is necessary to overcome the lizard. Inevitably the long-nosed mouse is killed by the lizard and, though followed by countless gallant long-nosed kinsmen, all are killed and the lizard remains an adamant and triumphant impediment to ‘becoming’ new being. Happily, Mantis is informed of the disaster in a dream and decides to send the striped mouse into battle instead. The striped mouse, of course, has a sensitive nose but it is not too long, there is no hubris of intuition, and its stripes are of even greater significance. They are the outward signs that it is a more differentiated form of being and consciousness. Just as Odysseus was chosen to complete our Homeric quest, not because he was the bravest and wisest of the men who fought on the great plain of Troy, but because he combined without exaggeration in one person the best elements of all, so the striped mouse is elected as a Stone-age kind of Odysseus, to battle for the future of all. He kills the lizard, calling out as he does so, ‘I am killing by myself to save friends’, and hastens to free the beetle woman, the feminine in life, all in a manner I described in *The Heart of the Hunter*. All the dead forces of intuition, the long-nosed mice, are resurrected and there follows a most moving description of how this army of tiny visionary creatures are led back to the palace of the Praying Mantis, the Stone-age’s supreme image of the infinite in the small. Jubilant and triumphant they follow the striped mouse and the beetle woman marching at his side, feeling herself ‘to be utterly his woman’. As they march, they wave high above their heads like flags the fly whisks which the Bushmen of the great plains of the south alone had made out of animal tails.

It was for me, hearing this again and again, as though the earth joined in this triumphant waving like a kind of hosanna, not uttered but enacted. It was, and remains all the more so, because the story ends with the Mantis bringing up the rear, suddenly seeing that the wind has risen and everywhere the long, tasselled, green-gold grass is waving too. And this wind, I was told, came out of the East, the East where the new days are born. Seeing all this, Mantis leaned back, content because he had 'foreseen it all in a dream'.

Alone in the imagery of the stories told to me, Mantis was dealt with in epigrammatic form without extended definition because I was young and too affected by this tale. As a result, nothing more was necessary to underscore his importance in the rich mixture of stories poured on me like those splendours, the dreams of Caliban of the Island at the still centre of the storm in *The Tempest*. But this much and this approach were necessary to explain why the Bushman stories held me as no European fairy-tales did, though I came to love them too. The wolf, the fox, the bear, the giants, the bean-stalk, the sleeping beauties, the chocolate-box princesses and princes, came into my imagination at a more conscious level because they came later and were hearsay material to me. For me, the characters of the Bushman stories were all a direct part of the processes of growing up. Isolated from the great tides of civilization ebbing and swelling like the seas over Asia and Europe, the Bushman fought the battle for light and creation in his own triumphant way, transforming darkness into light and as he renewed and increased himself, he held back the forces that sought to deny life, until European and Bantu man arrived to quench him. Considering how long that old, old Africa had been there, a known unknown, a mystery in the full sun, and that none of the great civilizations surrounding it had been able to penetrate its natural frontiers and explore it, one would have thought this achievement alone would have entitled the Bushman to respect and been a passport to human consideration by the invaders. Yet despite all this, there appeared to have been something just in what he was which provoked all that was worst in the invaders and aroused the extreme self-righteousness which can only be justified by the unconscious guilt for the wounds man inflicts on himself. It resulted in this compulsion to kill in the illusion that he would only have to remove the external reminders of this primordial unrest to calm his conscience forever. It was all summed up for me in the cry of explanation that both white and black sent echoing, like the voice of Cain, down the canyons of the centuries, 'You see. He just would not tame!'

What, then, was this hated being? It is too late, I think, to answer this question decently and in the round. It is, in any case, something so profound and so remote from what we have become ourselves that no answer perhaps, would ever have been complete. We would have been able to do better, however, had our ancestors paused before the killing to ask themselves the question and then looked, for instance, into what it was in the Bushman spirit that made him cover the rock of his native land with paintings of the external world and the world within him, covering all the aspects of art which the visual artists of the great cultures had explored: everything from the world about him, insect, animal and human, historical and immediate to his innermost world and his aspirations towards a meaning and reality beyond his here and now. It is so inspired and moving that it raises his painting to the order of that of an unusually articulate civilization.

We have incontrovertible evidence today that he was already painting superbly some thirty thousand years ago so that by the time Europeans and Bantu invaded his country, they had everywhere Louvres and National Galleries of paintings, still glowing with enough colour and light to brighten the darkest shadows of overhang and cave. Nor did the newcomers listen to their stories and music which made the Bushmen dance to the moon and under the stars and act out the meaning to come as it stirred within him and in the process gain access to those transfigurative energies which had entered him at conception. Luckily I was somewhat better placed. My family had over three centuries' experience of him, even though mostly only in battle; had been puzzled by him which was a beginning, however slight. It started a process of wonder which two little Bushmen, Klara, the Bleeks and Lucy Lloyd augmented to put me in closer touch with his spirit. Moreover, after the Second World War, I saw something of the original version still being lived in the central Kalahari and had a sufficient glimpse of his unique being to suggest some of the answers.

The essence of this being, I believe, was his sense of belonging: belonging to nature, the universe, life and his own humanity. He had committed himself utterly to nature as a fish to the sea. He had no sense whatsoever of property, owned no animals and cultivated no land. Life and nature owned all and he accepted without question that, provided he was obedient to the urge of the world within him, the world without, which was not separate in his spirit, would provide. How right he was is proved by the fact that nature was kinder to him by far than civilization ever was. This feeling of belonging set him apart from us on the far side of the deepest divide in the human spirit. There was a brief moment in our own great Greek, Roman, Hebraic story when his sort of being and our own were briefly reconciled and Esau, the first born, the hunter, kissed and forgave his brother Jacob, the strangely chosen of God, his betrayal. But after that Esau, like Ishmael before him, vanishes from our story and a strange longing hidden in some basement of the European spirit still waits with increasing tension for his return. Meanwhile, the divide in our consciousness between the Esau and the Jacob in man deepened and the Stone-age hunter and his values could not have been more remote and antagonistic to ours when we clashed increasingly in southern Africa. We were rich and powerful where he was poor and vulnerable; he was rich where we were poor and his spirit led to strange water for which we secretly longed. But, above all, he came into our estranged and divided vision, confident in his belonging and clothed as brightly as Joseph's coat of dream colours in his own unique experience of life. Where we became more and more abstracted and abstract, he drew closer to feeling and the immediacy of instinct and intuition. Indeed for him, his feeling values were the most important and the liveliest. Even the language he spoke was a feeling language, expressing reality not in ideas, calculation and abstraction so much as through the feelings provoked in him. He would speak of how the sun, feeling itself to be sitting prettily in the sky and feeling itself to be warm, believed it could make people on the cold earth feel warm as well. His language, therefore, was poetic rather than realistic and though, of course, he was not indifferent to a robust range of the sort of verbs we favour, all usages of his grammar, still warm from the presses of his aboriginal imagination, were contained in an assessment of reality and meaning through feeling.

This pre-eminence of feeling for natural forms of life was attached to him from birth. The family became his fundamental social and universal unit and his feeling of belonging was so wide and deep that all on earth and the universe were family to him. It was the unchanging rod in his bureau of standards by which experience of reality and a sense of future were measured. He seemed to have felt no need to organize himself into tribes or nations. He moved naturally as hunter societies do, in small family groups, and his contact with others of his own kind appears to have been unusually free of friction and dominated by the consideration that they were a family among other human families and one and all, they were part of a universal family.

He was never imperilled as we are by numbers, and the blurring of the human spirit which their collective standards and approximations exact today. He had as a result no national organizations or institutions, no ruling establishment and therefore no kings, queens or presidents. The highest and noblest titles he could bestow were those of 'grandfather' and 'grandmother'. And since the stars, with which the nights of the southern hemisphere are so densely packed that one can hear them straining at the seam of the milky way in the stillness, since they were family too, he naturally addressed the greatest of them as grandfather and grandmother, since there was no discrimination of value and dignity between the sexes. Two of the brightest, for instance, Canopus and Sirius, were female stars and since both were associated with one of his delicacies, the white ant-larvae referred to by my ancestors as Bushman rice, he would encourage and warm them from the cold with some of his own positive fire. For instance, he would call on a child, 'Give me yonder piece of wood, that I may put the end of it in the fire, that I may point it burning towards grandmother, for grandmother is carrying Bushman rice.'

Hungry, they would call on one of them, ‘Thou shalt give me thy heart, with which thou dost sit in plenty: thou shalt take my heart with which I am desperately hungry, that I may also be full like thee.’

As important as the element of belonging was the feeling of being known. Perhaps this more than anything else sets him apart from us and the rest of Africa. In this connection we must not forget that the great black societies of Africa from which we derive our notions of the primitive, were and are not primitive at all. They were already extremely advanced in what we like to term the stages on the way to civilization; they, too, were people of property, with sophisticated concepts of life, law, order and makeshift ideological abstractions of their own. Moreover, they had already succumbed to the heresy of numbers and inflicted on themselves the stifling collective priorities in which socialism and communism are now trying to imprison the life of our time, as if they were the newest leap forward instead of a lethal somersault backwards into an amply discredited pattern of spirit.

Relatively, of course, they had not gone down the road of cosmic anonymity and unbelonging as far as we have done, thanks to the great natural world that still contains and restrains them, but far enough nonetheless to hate Stone-age man with a vehemence as great if not greater than our own. They, too, have tended to lose, as we ourselves with rare, individual exceptions have totally lost, this sense of being known. How many of us, for instance, have any emotional understanding of what St Paul meant by his conclusion of what is for me the greatest statement, not excluding Dante’s, ever made on love: ‘Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known’ ?

We have become perhaps the most bigoted collection of know-all cultures and sects the world has ever seen but this sense of being known, which accompanied, uplifted and preserved the Bushman from extremes and held him accountable throughout his thousand and one centuries alone in the vastness of Africa, has vanished from the heart of modern man. All that Klara told me, all I read, and all I experienced of the Bushman in the years I knew him in his last keep in the heartland of the Kalahari, almost overwhelmed me with nostalgia for this shining sense of belonging, of being known and possessing a cosmic identity of one’s own, recognized by all from insect to sun, moon and stars which kept him company, so that he felt he had the power to influence them as they influenced and helped him. All was two-way traffic and honourable reciprocity. I have already anticipated some of this obliquely in the story of the Morning Star and his response to the appearance of Canopus and Sirius, the grandmother stars, in his night sky but there was more of this in the practical detail of his everyday life.

For instance, as a hunter he would call on the stars to guide the hand that released the arrow from his bow, with a certainty that was as much a command as a prayer: ‘Thou shalt take my arm with which I do not kill. For I miss my aim, Thou shalt give me Thine arm.’ He already knew himself well enough to be in battle against error and fallibility and falsehood in himself and to turn to the cosmic pattern of stars and constellations, in ordered courses where falsehood and error did not exist, to overcome his own inadequacies.

In fact, one of my most moving memories is concerned with just this aspect of his life in the Kalahari. One evening I went from my camp fire in the central desert to see if all were well with a little Bushman group, desperate for food and water, that I had encountered that day. As I came near their own fire, my Bushman guide and closest companion stopped me. Against the clear starlight I saw the outline of a woman and as my eyes became more accustomed to the dark, noticed that she was holding her baby, a boy, high above her head and calling softly to the sky above.

I asked my guide what she was doing. Reproving me for not speaking more softly he whispered, ‘She is asking the stars up there to take from her son the heart of a child and give him the heart of a star instead.'

'But why the heart of a star?' I asked.

'Because the stars are great hunters,' he answered with the condescension which my ignorance of what was essential and self-evident to him always provoked. 'And she wants them to give him the heart of a hunter too. If you listen carefully you will hear the sounds of their hunting cries up there.'

I listened and indeed a far sea-sound came from the stars to my ears.

'You hear!' he whispered, 'How they are calling out "Tssa!" and "Tssk!"'

These sounds needed no explanation. For generations all of us in Africa had used and were still using these very words to set our dogs after game. I had thought until then that they were of our own invention. But that evening I knew we had them from the Bushman and he had them from the stars. The word that was in the beginning came from the stars and the word was true.

That, of course, was more evidence of his intimacy and assumption of two-way communication with his universe long before this in-built pattern in life was revealed through the dream of a ladder pitched between another desert and heaven to a Jacob who had done a hunter and brother wrong. It is testimony, however, that should be amplified by the fact that the sun, too, made a sound for him, the same great ringing sound it made for Goethe and which he asserts as fact in the 'Prologue in Heaven' to *Faust Part I*.

As long as the Bushman heard this sound of the sun and stars and could include it in the reckoning of his spirit, all was well in his world but when the sound ceased, tragedy was upon him. It needed only one death, so clear was his identity, so at one with the family over all, that the sun ceased ringing and a star fell.

To use his own words, 'Since the feeling strings were cut, the sun has ceased to ring for me in the sky.' His heart cried out specifically on the death of a friend because that is what the cutting of strings meant; or more generally: 'When our hearts fall down, that is the time when the star also falls down. While the star feels that our heart falls over, as when something that has been standing upright falls over on its side — for the stars know the time at which we die. The star tells the other people who do not know that we have died.'

And the wind, the spirit that travels the world and time, would know it too, and in the cause of the precision and the symbolism of truth which presided over his spirit, would join in to perform the final rite on behalf of life that the man had served so well: 'The wind does this when we die,' he declared. 'Our own wind blows, for we who are human beings, we possess wind, we make clouds when we die. Therefore the wind makes dust because it intends to blow, taking away our footprints, with which we had walked about, while we still had nothing the matter with us, and our footprints which the wind intends to blow away would otherwise still be plainly visible. The thing would seem as if we still lived. Therefore the wind intends to blow, taking away our footprints.'

So even at the exit of the world, his spirit stood whole and fast, demanding accuracy in the last account with life and, compared to the longing for immortality which characterizes Western man, without complaint or regret. Indeed the hunger for immortality of the ego, too, had to preserve the proportions of creation and it plays the ultimate role as an instrument of truth and not as an impediment and source of confusion. Like rebirth and resurrection, death, oblivion and the wind were people of the early race, dark sisters who had their place among the first family of life at nightfall by his little fire with its spire of flame reaching up towards their cousins, the sun, moon and all the other stars.

For years I would watch the Bushman as I shall always remember him by countless such fires at nightfall, so confident and at home in his immense wasteland, full of an unappeasable melancholy. He was the Esau being we daily betrayed in our partial and slanted modern awareness and instead of blaming ourselves for the betrayal, we projected it on to him to such an extent that we had to kill him as Cain killed Abel. Yet, though he himself is vanishing fast from the vision of our physical senses as Esau vanished from the great story which contained as it fashioned the foundations of our culture, he lives on in each one of us through an indefinable guilt that grows great and angry in some basement of our own being. The artist and the seer, even though the priests who should have known it best have forgotten it for the moment, know there is an Esau, a first man, a rejected pattern of being within us which is personified by something similar to a Bushman hunter, without whom they cannot create and sustain a vision of time fulfilled on which a life of meaning depends.

As they create and dream their dreams by making his sort of being contemporary, by linking that which was first with what is new and latest and all that is still to come, they do work of cosmic importance and in the process are invaded with a compassion for this betrayed Esau element that leads unerringly to a love that is overall and which knew him long before we were made. Like that which created creation, named or not named, known or unknown, he is always there.

That this vital link with the first man in us is no subjective assumption of mine but objective truth is proved, I believe, by the striking parallels that exist between the basic images of his spirit and those of Shakespeare, Goethe, Blake and Valery on which I have already drawn. I know of many more. But I believe these are enough to show how, in considerations such as these, we can proceed to dispel the lethal imperviousness in the cultures which compelled men to fear and extinguish him. Our diminishing civilizations can only renew themselves by a reconciliation between two everlasting opposites, symbolized by Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau and, in our own day, by the Bushman and his murderer. We have no excuse left for not seeing how fatally divided against themselves the processes of civilization have been, and how horrific the consequences in the human spirit. Now there is only a re-dedication of man to knowing himself: the command of both Christ and Apollo which can lead him to rediscover the wholeness lost in the beginning in a contemporary and greater form. Something of this sort is the armour the spirit needs for a future imperilled by corruption from the power we have acquired over the forces of nature. Since this future has come to include man's journey to the stars, the proportions that our humanity needs to protect it from brutalization by hubris of power and extremes of greed demand that we should look back to the moment the first man summoned his son, his future self, and gave him a stick of light with his fire, his awareness, and pointed it to a great feminine star, a mother figure through which an overall father begets. In that slight exercise of what the anthropologists label Stone-age superstition, the journey to space was born and made inevitable, and we have an inkling of why the first man thought of the glittering men of heaven as hunters.

The hunter in the Bushman family, of course, was the person who provided the food needed for physical survival. But it is of fundamental importance to remember that for him, spirit and matter were manifestations of one another and the well-being of the body and the heart ultimately one. It was an axiom of his being that he could not eat without participating also in the character of the essential spirit he attributed to the source of his food. A Bushman father, therefore, would as soon as possible feed his son on the heart of a leopard, the bravest of the brave in the animal kingdom, so that his son would become brave and, as he put it, 'possess the heart of a leopard too'.

There presided always over his eating a sacramental element. His spirit was naturally so transubstantiative that he did not deny the animal reciprocity in the matter. In one of his most moving stories, like all great tales a frontier story and as illuminating and enigmatic as an early *Hamlet*, he tells of a lion who seeks to become a man. For this purpose a lion, significantly on his way to life-giving water, encounters a young hunter whom he overpowers and fixes firmly in the fork of a thorn tree with the intention of eating him when he has drunk his fill of the desert water of life. The young hunter, unknown to the lion, is merely pretending to be dead. Hurt by the rough fork of the tree, the pain forces tears to start from his eyes. Amazed, the lion licks away the tears with a strange tenderness and in that instant the relationship of lion and man is transformed and takes wing. It is as if the suffering of the young man is absorbed and understood by the lion and is translated into a compassion which establishes a bond between them that demands their union alive or dead. Sadly, as the story makes clear, it is a reckoning so royal, of such ultimate individuation and so transcendent a value that neither the community of the young hunter, the young man himself nor indeed the king of the greatest animal kingdom on earth, can yet achieve it.

In this, as in all else, the hunter for the Stone-age man was the image, the personification of the greatest of all the urges of his being, the hunger for food of the spirit, for meaning that would transfigure him. He felt himself without doubt or self-questioning a participant in the hunt that was on everywhere, not only on earth but in the expanding universe above and about him. The hunter was charged with the supreme image of all within himself that sought a truth that would transcend everything and quiet the unrest and the hunger for a reality beyond his here and now, his tiny allotment of time and space. He already knew instinctively what Baudelaire came to recognize at the end of one of his finest poems, ‘Les Phares’ [The Lighthouses], one of the most moving surveys of the meaning of the art of painting that I know. ‘What is art, o lord, what is this ardent sob that breaks out and re-echoes from age to age?’ he asks with a cry of anguish at the end of the poem and concludes, that it is also, ‘A summons from hunters lost in the great woods’. This symbolic hunter was the Bushman’s summons, the pentecostal element at the quick of his being that connected him to a process of becoming something other and more than he was in his given moment, always seeking to increase himself through his painting, story-telling, dreaming the great dream over all, making music and dancing his dances in sacred circles under the stars and the moon. And although I mention his music and dancing last, they were perhaps his most immediate way of linking himself to creation and the forces that raised the sun out of darkness; the stars and moon out of a bright day that blotted them out, so restoring them to the night that renews and reveals them in their lawful courses.

I was privileged to encounter the Bushman at a time when his culture was sufficiently whole to have preserved his music and dancing relatively intact and I marvelled at how, despite the diversity I uncovered in his highly differentiated stories, in the music and dancing from north to south, east to west, he was at one and his culture united and whole. Long after his story-tellers and painters had vanished from my part of Africa, fragments of his dancing and music remained. His last survivors had only to take a few dancing steps, utter a refrain or two for them to declare, with tears beyond our understanding springing to their eyes, as Klara and two little gray-haired old men had declared after a rehearsal of their history performed for me one unforgettable evening in the interior, ‘But ah! How we have become young again’.

The steps and the music stayed with me so clearly that I recognized them forty years later as part of the patterns of the dances and the singing of Kalahari men. The dances were of all kinds but there were three that had a special meaning for me. There was first of all the dance of the little hunger that was performed to express the Bushman’s need of food in his struggle for physical survival, and to enlist the help of the stars that knew no falsehood or impression but were always accurate and true. This was the dance that had its fulfilment in another performed to express gratitude to the animal which had allowed itself to be killed so that he could live. And there was the dance of the great hunger, not for the meat or fruit of the earth but for the food which the hunter within and his fellow hunters, the stars, were after. I suspect that this was the grand dance of which my ancestors spoke, the dance which fascinates the anthropologist of today almost to the exclusion of all other forms of his dancing: it is called the trance dance. This was the dance in which one of the dancers who had a gift of healing, of dreaming great dreams, of seeing visions and was, accordingly, a seer and prophet to his clan, summoned power, as it were, from the universe to reinforce his gift from life of healing the sick and anguished among his kind.

I have seen such a person also acquire similar powers and perform his healing in lesser dances but in this dance of dances, an awesome element and power was acquired that was not present in the others. It, too, was performed in a circle of mushroom magic, the image of mathematical completion, the sacred mandala of Tibet and the total rounding of the torn and divided soul which the modern psychologist tries to achieve in depth. It was danced like all the others, by the men, the women sitting close to the wavering margin of fire light, leaning against the black of night and providing the rhythm with song and clapping of hands while the dancers added to the beat by the pounding of their feet in the scarlet Kalahari sand and the swish of the rattles tied round their ankles. But it went on much longer than any others. In fact, the last great dance I saw in the Kalahari in 1954 started about four on an afternoon of clouds raised like temples in a sky illuminated with the revelation of lightning, and ended only at about midnight when the first heavy drops of rain began to fall. From time to time, one of the older women would jump up and break into the sacred circle to urge the men to greater exertion, until at the climax, as I watched it alone and apart in the dark, the whole of nature seemed to come alive and join in the dance and its call on the universe to appease a terrible hunger. The thunder became incessant, the lions suddenly began to roar, the ostriches to boom, the night plover to pipe its deep-sea call, the hyenas to howl and the jackals to bark as if they were a chorus of fate sent to swell the music and the prayer for appeasement and wholeness. The beat of feet, hands and voice indeed became so loud and regular that it was like that of a great time machine, and heard out of context on my taped recordings today, the beat sounds not so much human as like enormous pistons driving a ship at full speed ahead. At this moment the healer chose to lay his hands on the sick, pressing them tight against the ailing bodies before pulling them along and up to the top of the aching heads, uttering, as the hands left them, the defiant cry of the animal spirit with which the sickness was associated. At that moment the music would change; the frenzy left it and a mood of the most tender and delicate compassion took over, as if one and all knew instinctively what Paracelsus, the Einstein of modern medicine, as he has been called, knew in the sixteenth century when he declared that without love and compassion there could be no healing.

At that moment I realized why the dance had to last so long — fatigue was to the healer what drugs are to the psychiatrist; a means of lowering the level of consciousness and its wilful inhibitions so that the unconscious forces and the instinctive powers at the disposal of all life could rise unimpeded and be released in the healer. What these forces are I cannot define and would not be so foolish as to try to describe by anything save their consequences. Judging by those, they were as great as they were dangerous and only that prolonged and highly disciplined ritual of the dance could first contain and transform them into elements of healing. The danger, of course, was greatest for the healer. He was the lightning conductor to the great storm of primeval energies which had been released and when the healing was accomplished, he fell unconscious to the earth. Another dance and cycle of song began to bring him back to the here and now from this underworld of the forces which he had plumbed and released in order to heal. When he opened his eyes at last and the water from a dozen or more ostrich eggshells was poured down his parched throat, the look on his face in that firelight was, I believe, the oldest I have ever seen on a human being and the expression that of a pilgrim who could never tell others where and how far he had travelled that night.

Yet despite all this, he did not bleed at the nose. I mention this because on many rock paintings of dancers, the healers are depicted as faint and bleeding profusely at the nose as if to demonstrate the Greek healers' dictum, 'only the wounded physician heals'. I can only vouch that at the end of the dance I understood why holiness and being holy were one and the same, just as I and all around me that night on earth and in heaven had felt to be one. And somehow whenever I think of his dancing and how it renewed and made him whole, I recall a dance I witnessed when his culture was intact. It was a dance to the full moon, a moon as beautiful as any moon of Japan. When I asked them why they performed that dance, they said with pity at my ignorance: 'The moon is about to fall away and shall utterly die unless we show her by our dancing how we love her not a little; how we feel we want her to live, utterly knowing that feeling thus, she will not die but return, lightening the night for our feet on which we go out and return.' In all these and many other ways, out of his belonging and being known, he felt responsible to the universe and capable even of influencing its course. Feeling thus, he was preserved from that erosion of meaning and sense of participation in the wider plan of creation, which is eating out the heart and will to be and to become of our bright technological day.

For all these and many other reasons, when I returned from nearly a decade of war, I thought it well worth while to make one last effort to preserve the Bushman and his culture in the heart of what I called the lost world of the Kalahari, and try to arrest there this age-old story of persecution and annihilation. I persuaded the British Government for the first time in our history to appoint an officer charged with the sole duty of learning the Kalahari Bushman's language, and to live with him and get to know, understand and defend him. I did not mean to imply thereby that he should be preserved as some kind of living museum piece. I had too great a respect for him and his potential for creative re-evaluation. All I wanted was recognition of his humanity, his values that were, at their best, precious qualities that we had neglected in ourselves and at our peril, and his right to native land wherein his security was guaranteed so as to give him time enough to find a way of his own into the world of the future. 'Give this officer fifty years with them,' I told a sympathetic administration, 'and at the end of that time ask him for some recommendation on how to go on from there.'

But I did not mean to leave it at that. I had experienced a Kalahari Desert that had overflowed its arbitrarily imposed political boundaries from South West Africa which today goes by the unhistorical and utterly contrived name of Namibia, and up and over the river boundaries of Angola right to the outskirts of Mocamedes itself. All this vast area was still recognizable Stone-age country and the Bushman hunter's life still a relatively coherent culture. Moreover, this land was a desert only in the sense that it had no permanent surface water and was covered with grass, shrubs, trees, bush, even forest, a dense life-giving vegetation that made it the home of a rich and abundant animal population. Yet at that moment it had no great and lasting economic value in the modern sense.

So I had a dream of persuading all the governments who claimed sovereignty over this immense tract, to join forces and declare it an international heritage, transforming it into a unique reserve where both the first man and his attendant animal world would be protected and conserved. I began working at once with my friends to that end but we had begun too late. The world of Empire, which had this unique and precious earth in its keeping, collapsed and the forces of an archaic nationalism moved in to take its place. In the process, the Bushman was once more overlooked and his claims forgotten. He was not physically eliminated, but merely overwhelmed by a brash new world wherein he not only had no voice in his own future but had no command of any language which would have made sense to the powers that seized his secluded land in a cast-iron grip. Moreover, he had no immunities whatsoever to protect him against an infected world, sick with unschooled power and uncritical worship of its technological and material endowments. As a result when I went back recently, as I felt I had to in order to see what, if anything, could still be done to help him, I hardly recognized the man I had known in the nineteen fifties among the tragic fragments of families left behind like flotsam and jetsam on some desert island beach by the tidal wave of the mindless forces we had released and allowed to sweep over it.

As a result, he was being destroyed rapidly and more subtly now from within himself. To use his own metaphor, I found that his story had been utterly taken away from him. He could no longer live it and had only a fast receding memory of it left in the labyrinthine regions of his convulsed imagination, like an echo of the brave voice of the legendary hunter pausing to call farewell at the edge of his forest of the night before vanishing on his quest for the great white bird of truth. His culture was dying before our eyes and he and what was left of it, was about to vanish physically and spiritually into the bastard bloodstream of his unworthy conquerors. No doubt he will live on as other vanished and unrecorded men live on, and add a nuance or two to the being of the future, a look in the eye, a curl of hair, a tone of affirmative and indestructible laughter, a quickening of fantasy and expression on some face, that will stir men to wonder and to experience an inexplicable nostalgia of the heart and provoke a dream of new-old life in their sleep. This could be reward and treasure of an incorruptible kind. However, the horror of it for the moment was, to use a phrase I had learned out of the heart of suffering of Japan, 'an unbearable of life one had to bear'. There was nothing else to be done; neither he nor I and others who wished him well had any court or power in the world to whom we could appeal in our so-called enlightened day. The organizations that should have been the first to rush to his aid, like that whited-sepulchre of the hopes which had sustained us in yet another World War in which the best of my generation died, the United Nations, would not heed and had no ear for the voice of so tiny and powerless a minority as it has had no ear for the hapless Indians of Central America, Brazil, and other violated natural worlds.

Ironically, the much condemned apartheid country of South Africa was alone inclined to listen and concede the Bushman a certain recognition of identity and rights of his own. Far from perfect as that recognition is, it is more than anything practiced by the apprentices to the nationalism fathered by the political liberalism which is the international fashion and dominant hypocrisy of our day. All we could do who had gone to the Kalahari to testify to the Bushman's human and primordial right to a pursuit of life, liberty and happiness in his own way, was to persuade dying fragments of his culture to re-enact for us such memory as they had of what I ventured at the beginning to call a Stone-age civilization. Added to the film record, *Lost World of the Kalahari*, I made in 1954-5, my book *The Heart of the Hunter*, and this film made with Paul Bellinger and Jane Taylor, what we have written here is in a sense, therefore, a last will and testament. Late, partial and hurried as it was in the doing, it will make those who ponder its fragmentary bequests nonetheless rich because they are all he had left to bequeath of the wealth of natural spirit out of which in his own day he gave so abundantly with all the grace, willingness and fulness of which he in his time on earth was capable.

For myself I can only record that on my last return from the desert my own world had never seemed bleaker. For not only was the sense of belonging and being known absent, but the individual self which was an instinct of his being and centre of his totality of imagination and doing was everywhere under powerful attack.

First man, as I knew him and his history, was a remarkably gentle being, fierce only in defence of himself and the life of those in his keeping. He had no legends or stories of great wars among his own kind and regarded the killing of another human being except in self-defence as the ultimate depravity of his spirit. I was told a most moving story of how a skirmish between two clans in which just one man was killed on a long forgotten day of dust and heat and sulphur sun, caused them to renounce armed conflict forever. He was living proof to me of how the pattern of the individual in service of a self that is the manifestation of the divine in man was built into life at the beginning and will not leave him and the earth alone until it is fulfilled. It is no mere intellectual or ideological concept, however much that, too, may be needed, but a primary condition written into the contract of life with the creator.

As I thought of the first man's instinctive sense for the meaning of life, I seemed to be more aware than ever of the loneliness creeping into the heart of modern man because he no longer sought the answers of life with the totality of his being. He was in danger of going back precisely to those discredited collective concepts and surrendering this precious gift of being an individual who is specific for the sake of the whole, an individual who believes that a union of conformity is weakness but that a union of diversities, of individuals who are different and specific, is truly strength. A grey, abstract, impersonal organization of a materialistic civilization seemed to be pressing in on us everywhere and eliminating these life-giving individual differences and sources of enrichment in us. Everywhere men were seeking to govern according to purely materialistic principles that make us interesting only in so far as we have uses. It was true even in Zululand, let alone Paris and London.

I was speaking once to an old Zulu prophet who, when I asked him about their First Spirit, Unkulunkulu, said to me: ‘But why are you interested in Unkulunkulu? People no longer talk about him. His praise names are forgotten. They only talk about things that are useful to them.’

This ancient reverence for the individual, so clear and unprovisional in the Bushman, has been lost, this individual dedicated to a self that is greater than the individual, who serves something inside himself that is a microcosm of the great wheeling universe. This individual who, by being his self, is in a state of partnership with an overwhelming act of creation and is thereby adding something to life that was not there before, is being taken away from us. We no longer feel the longing, the wonder and the belonging out of which new life is raised. In the depths of ourselves we feel abandoned and alone and therein is the sickness of our time.

Human beings can enjoy anything except a state of meaninglessness of which it seems a great tide is creeping down upon us. Apparently nothing but conformity will do. Take, for instance, the concept we hear so much about — the statistical notion of the average man. When you come to think about it, there is no such thing as an average man. It is like the average rainfall, which never falls. But because numbers have replaced unique and human considerations in the faceless abstractions of our time, we feel lost in a world where nobody cares any more for what we are in ourselves. Inevitably we cease to care in return. One of the most awful consequences is that as we lose touch with the natural man within, which demands a unique self of us, we lose respect for him. And as the natural man within loses honour, so too does nature without. We no longer feel reverence for nature, and defoliation of spirit and landscape are everywhere to be seen.

It is only now that we have lost what I re-found in the Kalahari in the nineteen fifties when, for months on end, I moved through country no ‘sophisticated’ man had ever set eyes on, that I realize in full what it meant and did for my own senses, brutalized by years of war. It was as if I had been in a great temple or cathedral and had a profound religious experience. I returned to the world, knowing that unless we recover our capacity for religious awareness, we will not be able to become fully human and find the self that the first man instinctively sought to serve and possess. Fewer and fewer of us can find it any more in churches, temples and the religious establishments of our time, much as we long for the churches to renew themselves and once more become, in a contemporary idiom, an instrument of pentecostal spirit. Many of us would have to testify with agonizing regret that despite the examples of dedicated men devoted to their theological vocation, they have failed to give modern man a living experience of religion such as I and others have found in the desert and bush. That is why what is left of the natural world matters more to life now than it has ever done before. It is the last temple on earth which is capable of restoring man to an objective self wherein his ego is transfigured and given life and meaning without end.

Looking back with a nostalgia that I am powerless to describe and which often wakes me aching in the night and walks like my own shadow at my side, I must testify with all the power and lucidity of expression at my command that this lost world was one of the greatest of such temples, in which the first man and the animals, birds, insects, reptiles and all, had a glow upon and within them as if they had just come fresh and warm from the magnetic fringes of whoever made them. He and they were priests and acolytes of this first temple of life and the animals dominated his stories, his art, his dancing and imagination because they followed neither their own nor his will but solely that of their creator.

Follow, I would add today, the first man in ourselves, as well as the rainbow pattern of beasts, birds and fish that he weaves into the texture of the dreams of a dreaming self, and we shall recover a kind of being that will lead us to a self where we shall see, as in a glass, an image reflected of the God who has all along known and expected us.

This is as far as my own words about my experience of the being of the Bushman can carry me and yet there is more. The word that was at the beginning and shall be at the end is a living word. The living word and the living truth are always more than statistics and facts. Neither can be imprisoned in any particular expression of themselves however valid and creative, but must move on as soon as that phase of themselves is fulfilled. The concepts, cultures, whole civilizations, indeed, are not terminals, but wayside camps, pitched at sunset and broken at dawn so that they can travel on again. As end and beginning round to meet in my own life there seems only one lasting form without inbuilt obsolescence of any kind in which their nature can be conveyed from generation to generation and that is through the story. And it is in a great Bushman story that I sought and found refuge from the sense of doom of the Bushman idiom of primitive man that assailed me on my return to one of our cities where, to use Xhabbo's words, 'I no longer obtained stories'.

It is a story which is, in a sense, like a symphony wherein many notes and chords are struck on a diversity of instruments to compose a whole. I must begin the story, therefore, with a description of the characters and elements that are the instruments, the notes and chords and associations. Thus preauditioned in imagination, when the full orchestra is assembled, the key and scale determined, the listeners' minds will be wide open to the subtle alchemical intent of the story.

The principal character in such a seminal story, of course, is Mantis; the others that appear in it are Kwammanga who is described on this occasion as Mantis's son-in-law; Kwammanga's son; Kwammanga's shoe-piece; and Mantis's shoe-piece. It also includes a pool of water where reeds stand; honey; an ostrich feather; an eland; and the moon. As these characters and elements appear they strike chords of association in the minds and emotions of all those listening because of the roles they have played from the time of the first story on and through the age-old story-telling process that leads to ultimate communion.

I begin with Mantis as he is the supreme plenipotentiary of creation on Bushman earth; his is the clearest image of the Bushman's acute sense of the infinite in the small, and as such is endowed with powers of creation himself. He is, indeed, so much the child of light that the children of the world appear far wiser in their generation than he. They, like his wife the rock rabbit, his son and grandsons are constantly reproving him for his apparent foolishness without realizing that it is god-inspired and that that which is still to come always looks impossible in the eyes of what is. He it was, after all, who stole fire to give to the Bushman; he is the Prometheus of that world, and significantly, one of the nicknames conferred on him after my ancestors arrived at the Cape was 'old tinder-box'. With him, the miracle of consciousness — of which fire is our supreme symbol — came into the Bushman's world and set him apart from the animals who, an early story tells us, ran away in great fear from mankind with whom they had been at one, when his first fire was lit. Here already is an example of the great divide, the separation and polarization of life-giving opposites, which consciousness inflicts on man with such a nostalgia for the whole that preceded it. With consciousness, inevitably. came the word because it was Mantis, it is said, who first gave things their names, declaring, for instance, that 'Your name shall be tortoise and you shall be utterly tortoise to the end of your days'.

All these associations and many more which I have analysed in *The Heart of the Hunter*, were alive and active in the imagination of listeners when Mantis walked on to the earthly scene in this story. However strange or absurd his elevation to such a role may appear to men today who have only to see an insect to rush to the nearest chemist for the latest insecticide, it was not strange to the

Greeks who recognized his qualifications for such a role and gave him the name mantis, seer, which meant he was a prophet of sorts to them as well. Besides, even my ancestors, for all their imperviousness and other inhibitions, were compelled to think of him as an insect at prayer and so not without numinosity. Not surprisingly, he carried for the Bushman a charge of the numinous of the kind Moses experienced, when he saw fire in the burning bush. I do not know what the Bushman name for Mantis meant but I do find it of the highest significance that among the thousands of Bushman paintings I have examined, I have not found one of Mantis, implying that he, too, did not allow images, painted or graven, to be made of him. Hence it is as a bringer of consciousness and as an instrument of enlarging human awareness that he figures most of all in this story.

Kwammanga, his son-in-law, his future self in the law of creation, is not flesh and blood, not even insect or anything tangible but an element visible at times in the rainbow. Since we know that the rainbow in our Hebraic story was an arc of the covenant set by God in the sky as a sign that he would never flood the world again, never allow unconsciousness on a universal scale to overwhelm consciousness again, it is not surprising that as son of Mantis, he, too, represents consciousness of a kind. It is consciousness of the beginning in the here and now and far more circumscribed than the larger awareness for whose increase Mantis is uniquely responsible.

He and his sons, all images of Mantis's future selves, are in the business of living out today new stages of consciousness imposed on their reluctant and conservative selves by Mantis; they are the politicians and statesmen, as it were, in the parliament of the totality of Mantis's complex and diversified being; converting Mantis's vision of the impossible into the art of the possible. As more evidence of the Bushman's gift for universality, all this would have been dear to the heart of Goethe, who also thought of the rainbow in a similar way, especially as a natural image of consciousness. As for the two shoe-pieces in the story, they are there as images of man's conscious way through life, his consciously adapted behaviour. Kwammanga's shoe-piece is the image of his role, his influence on the way of man in the restricted here and now; that of Mantis is the image of the greater awareness which compels Stone-age man to think beyond the here and now and serve the being to come. As a result, Mantis becomes in most of the stories the great, incorrigible disturber of peace and social order; the trickster who twists, convulses and confounds fireside complacency and is forever at war with the gravity of human inertia. Although his strange family is forced to obey him, it fears and mistrusts him, complying with his wishes with an air of 'Oh God, what next?' which in many stories was such irresistible comedy for my ancestors. As the fear of the Lord was the wisdom of the Old Testament Lord, so it is with Mantis and at the end of the long and complex Mantis saga, I have emerged again and again with a searing re-perception of how the love of creator for the created is darkened not only by a separation from the created but also by a lack of reciprocity of love from the created. These stories are full of illustrations of Mantis's love of *all* things but none of an equal reciprocity. It is as if there is implicit in the way he carries on the task of creation regardless, an assumption that that is precisely what creators are for. Without that thought, I would not have had an inkling of what the story of Job might mean nor that appointment with a cross in Palestine.

The pool of water is a symbol of the lifegiving and transfigurative energies in the collective unconscious. Just as in the Bible, wells, rivers and watering places are the material of miracles and settings for fateful and sacred encounters, so they are in the saga of Mantis in particular, and of Stone-age man in general. For instance, it is in such water that Mantis resurrects his son killed in his great war against the baboons, by dipping his dead child's eye — his vision of the future - deep in the pool.

Perhaps most moving of all because it is from a story told with singular delicacy and tenderness, it is in such a pool that a Bushman of the early race, hungry and dispirited, sees the wind that represents the living spirit, spiralling over the stricken wasteland. It lifts an ostrich feather to which one tiny speck of dried blood is clinging and deposits it deep in the pool, where it is transformed into a perfect ostrich chick. The pool in the story to be told is surrounded by reeds, marking it as an area of growth dear not only to the water but to the wind that sings in passing as they sway and swish in the rhythm of its movement, a song of birth, death, resurrection and eternal life-giving change.

The honey, which recurs in many a story, was dearer even to Mantis than to the Bushman for whom it was miraculous and a source of sacramental transubstantiation. The Bushman, the most perceptive and experienced naturalist and botanist Africa ever produced before our coming, had observed the bee faithfully and long, even as Solomon the Great had commanded the men of his day to observe the ant and become wiser in the process. For the Bushman the bee was an image of wisdom and foresight in action; the patience, industry, perseverance, selflessness, attention to miniscule detail, and devotion of all to transcendent value, which was the life of the bee, made a profound impact on the Bushman imagination. Bees and his permanent water were, according to my ancestors, almost the only two fixed material elements he was prepared to fight for as for his own life. In going about the business of promoting the welfare of his own highest value, which significantly was feminine, the bee was also an instrument of universal creation, fertilizing the flowers and fruit of his world and transforming their essences into honey. For this pagan African honey, with its wild flavour and texture so translucent with archaic light and made of the essences of the flowers of creation itself, brought sweetness to the Stone-age man's palate in a way equivalent to the light of his eye in the night of his spirit. In the logic of an imagination wide open to the wonder of creation, inevitably honey became the ultimate symbol of the wisdom that leads to the sweetness of disposition which is a love that transforms and the only source of power that could not corrupt. That this was already so in the beginning is made clear in a story which describes how one of the first deeds of Mantis was to give the animals their different colours and in so doing fixed each colour with honey. He was clearly devoting all the sweetness, the love in his disposition, to the task.

The feather that follows, of course, represents the bird which, in a land so rich in bird life as Africa, is never far from the story-teller's imagination. Plato, who described the mind of man as a cage of birds, would not have marvelled at the fact that for the Bushman, too, the bird represented inspiration, the thoughts that come into the mind of man, winging of their own accord out of the blue of the imagination and demanding to be acknowledged and followed.

One of Klara's first stories to me was of the Bushman hunter who, as a result of just seeing the reflection of a great white bird in the water of a deep, blue pool at which he was drinking in the heat of the day, lost all his passion for hunting game. He devoted the rest of a long life to an exhausting and apparently vain quest for the bird whom he knew only by its reflection. Close to death, he had travelled far and wide enough to reach the foot of an unscalable mountain on top of which the bird was reported to roost. Convinced, as he watched the sheer cliff soaring into the blue of evening above him, that he would now die without ever seeing the bird itself, he lay down in despair, until suddenly a small voice said, 'Look up !' In the red of a dying day, he saw a lone white feather come floating down to him. He stretched out his hand and grasped it, and in grasping it, I was told, he died content.

When I asked for the name of the bird, Klara told me, 'It has many names but we think of it as the bird of truth'. It has remained a key story of my life and a source of illumination of many obscure things.

The feather in this story may not be a feather of the bird of truth itself but nonetheless the association with it is important because it is also a servant of the living truth that the great white bird symbolizes. It is specifically an ostrich feather, a feather of the bird from which Mantis stole the fire that is consciousness and which he gave to man. As a consequence of the natural precision which characterizes Stone-age symbolism, fire, the inspiration which is the image of the source of the greatest transformation of life on earth, could only be represented by the biggest bird of all — a bird, moreover, which was deprived of the gift of flight after the theft of fire as a sign that consciousness had come down from heaven to earth forever.

After the feather, the inspiration: the eland, the greatest of African antelopes, charged with a grandeur of creation in a measure that exceeds all others of its kind no matter how impressive their beauty and grace, is the central element and instrument in the symphonic story. For the Bushman he represented creation in its highest animal form, food for survival in its greatest abundance, and in its most nourishing, reassuring and alchemical measure; so much so, that the eland was associated with the miraculous and given a eucharistic role in Stone-age culture not accorded any other animal. He was, I was told, dearest of all to Mantis and in some stories, Mantis is depicted seated between the horns of the eland. In one story told to me in the Kalahari, Mantis is seated between magnetic toes that release sharp electric clicks which echo as the eland walks, magisterial in the silence of the desert, lifting one patent-leather hoof after the other. It is what I have often heard and observed him doing and in this bleak European scene, I ache in my heart for the wonder of it all. It is as if we are being told symbolically by Stone-age man that Mantis positioned between the eland's eyes, directs its seeing so that his vision and the eland's are one, and that positioned also between the eland's toes, Mantis is showing us that the eland's way is Mantis's way. The symbol could not be more complete and meaningful and all this is given additional force by the fact that no animal figures more frequently, diversely and beautifully in the rock paintings of Africa than the eland. There is not a phase of his physical existence and his importance to the welfare of Stone-age man that is not a subject of rock paintings from the mountains of Natal, the plains and hills of southern Africa through to the Kalahari and on to Namibia. But more significantly still, his numinous character, his eucharistic role, his translation into a bridge between the divine and man is greatest in the Bushman's dances and in the best of his paintings.

I think of one particular painting in this regard, perhaps the most remarkable of all. It is painted on the fragmented and scoured canvas of rock of what was once a great cave in the mountains between Natal and Lesotho. There, in the quiet, a great herd of eland graze at peace, unstalked and unhunted and move across the rock to the music of a fall of water nearby. But suddenly there rises from among them the awesome shape of two beautifully painted Bushman Titans. Tall as the Bushman always walked in his own imagination he has never walked as tall as in these shapes. The instinctive authority and power of the Titans in the painting left no doubt that they were deliberately raised by the artist out of a passionate longing for a state of being far beyond that on earth below. High above the placid herd, a mystical animal is depicted as the goal and food for yet another ascent of the spirit of man. It is in a true sense both a mythological and a mystical painting and the way the numinous and pentecostal harmonize with the natural and normal progression of the herd made me tingle all over. Like the story to come which also has an eland at its core, the painting rises fountain-wise in a place of Stone-age spirit where man experienced the revelation of the divine.

Finally, there is the moon which he loved as man loves woman. In, one of his first stories, I was told, the moon looked down on the people of the early race and saw how afraid they were of dying. Moved in its heart by compassion, the moon summoned the fastest animal nearby, the hare, and commanded, 'Run. Tell the people on earth to look at me and know that as I in dying am renewed again, so they in dying will be renewed again'.

The hare in its haste — and in Bushman mythology as in many others, haste was invariably a source of evil — got the message wrong and told the people, 'The moon wants you to look at it and know that unlike it, who in dying is renewed again, you in dying will not be renewed'. The moon was angry and it bit the hare in the lip so hard that it was split, as it remains to this day, as a sign that it bore false witness in a matter of universal truth.

All these instruments combined in the following story of Mantis and the eland to strike great chords in the memory of Stone-age man and swelled as in the climax of a great symphony, soaring to reinforce the urgent music of the spheres beyond the stars.

So this is the story. Once upon a time, Kwammanga took off part of his shoe and threw it away. Mantis picked up the despised piece and took it to the water at a place where the reeds stood. It is as if Mantis is aware already that the spirit renews itself out of what is despised and rejected by our worldly selves. It is an eternal axiom of 'becoming' as expressed in the biblical observation that the stone the builders rejected became the cornerstone of the building. Hence Mantis soaks the piece of wornout leather, or the spent way that needs renewal, in the water or the transfigurative element of the unconscious. He goes back later and finds that the rejected element has already been transformed into a tiny eland and, since it is still small, he leaves it there until it is strong enough to emerge from the water by itself. Then Mantis rejoices, dances and sings to it, and fetches it honey. He summons, in fact, all the love and wisdom at his disposal and rubs the honey into it to make it beautiful, strong, wise and great. Mantis becomes so moved by his creation that he weeps as he fondles it. For the magical number of three nights, he leaves the little eland to grow great within the pool by itself and then returns to call it to come out of the womb of the unconscious onto firm conscious earth. The story says the eland 'rose forth', and came to Mantis in such a manner that the ground resounded with the power and glory of his coming, and Mantis composed and sang for joy a song about it before once more rubbing it down with honey. Only then did he return to rest at his home.

The Story proceeds from there to disclose in detail how Mantis's rainbow aspect and grandsons, his future selves, become aware of his creation and in Mantis's absence combine to kill the eland and cut it up for food. Mantis comes on them in the process and weeps for the eland but his sorrow, by implication, is not just caused by the killing, as there is no other way in which the eland can be made food not only for the body but for the spirit. He weeps also for his suffering which is being exacted under a clause of the law of creation itself that separates and sets apart the creator and his creation. Mantis is in the role here of a Stone-age Moses who can lead others to a promised land of new being which he is not allowed to enter or participate in himself; his bitterness for the moment is extreme and is depicted in a furious argument with the gall of the dead eland.

The gall was one part of an animal that even Stone-age man could not swallow. And it seemed for a while as if Mantis would not succeed in swallowing and digesting the gall of the consequences of the separation his creation had forced on him. The gall warns Mantis that if it is pierced and dispersed, it will burst and overwhelm him with the darkness of hate and despair. In the end, however, Mantis pierces the gall which, as threatened, covers him all over so that indeed he can no longer see. The bitterness has become so great that he has no vision left at all and he has to grope along the ground in hate and despair, feeling his way like an eyeless animal. He finds at last an ostrich feather — a flicker of consciousness that was fire in the great bird's keeping. It is enough to brush the last vestige of negation and unconscious resentment out of his eyes and to make conscious the meaning of what Mantis had done intuitively and so make his suffering bearable: since all suffering is bearable once a meaning is discerned within it.

Free in heart and mind again, he throws the feather high up into the sky, committing the flame of light that emancipated him into a permanent light of heaven, calling out to it, as it soars up: 'You must now lie up in the sky. You must henceforth be the moon. You shall shine at night. You shall by your shining light up the darkness for all man. You are the moon, you do fall away, you return to life, when you have fallen away, you give light to all the people.'

In a total recall of the role of this story in my own imagination from childhood over the long random years of a life that is rounding fast, I remembered something I read in my boyhood lying on a dune beside a gleaming Indian Ocean, a mirror of unfathomed sea darkened as by a cats-paw of wind with reflections of longing to travel then from a halfway to a full house of history and spirit. It was a passage from the Upanishads to which Indian friends in Port Natal had directed me. It describes a scene at the court of the great King to which the sage Yajnavalkhya had been summoned.

‘By what light,’ the king asked him, ‘do human beings go out, do they work and return?’

‘By the light of the sun,’ the sage answers.

‘But if the light of the sun is extinguished?’

‘By the light of the moon,’ the sage replies.

And so question and answer proceed; if the moon is extinguished, then by the starlight, — if even the stars are cancelled, by the light of the fire but if the fire too is quenched, what then, the king finally wants to know.

‘By the light of the self,’ is the conclusive reply.

I had no doubt that in this story Mantis was teaching the spirit of Stone-age man a discovery of the self in which the great sage who never knew them put all his trust as well. For without this moon of renewal to transfigure our partial, bright daytime selves spent under all that is symbolized by the great sun of reason, men shall lose themselves in light as stars are lost in morning even before the nightfall of their time. This moon which lifted Mantis out of hate and the black rejection, is an image charged with evocation of the capacities with which life has equipped the human spirit to see through the darkness that falls when his conscious self fails. It is the symbol of all the feminine values, the caring, feeling values, the receptive spirit charged with wonder and hope and the glow, as the shining of the moon, that is intuition and its shy intimations of new being and becoming that make the opaque past, the dark present and obscure future, translucent with inner light, as was the comb of wild African honey that Mantis used to make the eland great and Stone-age spirit new.

We live, I wrote at the end of a long desert exploration some thirty years ago, in a sunset hour of time and need the light of this moon of Mantis, this feminine Ariadne soul, which conducts the travel-stained prodigal son of man on a labyrinthine journey to the innermost chamber of his spirit where he meets the ‘thou that heals’. Had it not been for the Bushman I myself would not have the confirmation, the certainty and continuity of hope in the wholeness of an origin and a destination that is one and holy. And I wish I could take each one of these anonymous fragments of those remaining Stone-age men and women by the arm and say to them before they vanish: ‘Thank you, and please go in the dignity that is your right. You and your fathers were not beasts and cattle but hunters after meaning: painters of animal eucharist and metamorphosis of man on canvasses of rock; tellers of stories that were seeds of new awareness; dancers of dances that restored men to the fellowship of the stars and moon and made them heal one another; and makers of music in which the future sings. They have altogether travelled a way of the truth that would make men free.’

In this, I know, they did not live in vain, however much the desecrated present denies their children. We need their spirit still. We who loom so large on the scene are not better than they, only more powerful with a power that corrupts us still. It is we who shall have lived in vain unless we follow on from where their footprints are covered over by the wind of the moving spirit that travels the ultimate borders of space and time from which they were redeemed by their story. Woven as it is into a pattern of timeless moments, their story may yet help the redeeming moon in us all on the way to a renewal of life that will make now forever.