Dream[1] weavers: horned animal autobiographies and *pointured*[2] forms

Ann-Marie Tully

Research Associate, Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre, Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Johannesburg

annmart76@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Elizabeth Wilson (2004:378) discusses the magical properties of textile media in relation to items of clothing, affect and perception. In this article, I take this enchanted sensibility further in a discussion of the strong confluence of stitched and woven (*pointured*) forms with horned animal mysticism, discussing the historical and contemporary beliefs surrounding horned animals in both western and African contexts in relation to, and as an influence on, the mysticism relating to *pointured* mediums.

I invoke Jacques Derrida's (2009 [1978]:301-315) critical term "*pointure*", which stems from the stitched practice of cobbling. Two sub-metaphors employed by Derrida (2009:302-307) in his extrapolation of this term bear weight in this context: his constitution of the word "lace" (derived from the shoe lace), and his perception of a haunting implicit in the relation of the original shoes, to the painted shoes, to the viewer. Following this looped notion of *lacing* and *haunting*, I argue that the vacuum made by the stitch is a haunted site invested with themes and experiences of human frailty and desire; filled precipitously by the yarn, a wished for end is sympathetically effected.

Keywords: *pointure*; *pointured*; lace; snare; textile; weaving; spinning; sympathetic magic; textile mysticism; shamanic; axis mundi; San cosmology; threads of light; horned animals; antelope; therianthropic figures; horned mysticism; trance; Celtic magic.

Introduction: portentous holes and thresholds

Artist and filmmaker Jurgen Meekel's novel adaptation of the classic fairy tale, *Sleeping Beauty* (Perrault 2011 [1697]) (Figure 1) is an insightful work from which to launch a discussion of the confluence of anthropocentric magical beliefs, stitching practices, and animal allegory, "pointing" as it does to the blood-magic redolence

1. The word "dream" is employed here in its meaning of "a wish", and references dream/trance-like states that can be evoked through the repetitive action of numerous textile and related practices.

2. The neologism "*pointured*" is employed in this article as a reference to Derrida's (2009:301) use of the term "*pointure*". Derrida (2009:301) employs this French word indicative of the registration pins on a tympan, and the practice of cobbling shoes, as a metaphor for the probing and projecting action of reading (analysing) paintings and the "unpicking" modality of deconstructive analysis. I employ the term in reference to the puncturing and stitching action of cobbling in a broad range of textile, bone, metal and bricolage-type objects and practices involving probing and threading actions. The penetrating projection and investment of symbolic value into these *pointured* objects by makers, viewers and users, is also associated with of the term.

FIGURE **Nº 1**

Jurgen Meekel, *Sleeping Beauty*, 2012. Compilation of stills from the motion graphic digital video. 3 minutes.

Courtesy of the artist.

of spiked and horned forms.[3] This motion graphics film depicts a "real" finger being pricked by a needle, set against the cartoon-like backdrop of a green and blue horizon interspersed with swirling red and pink vortexes. Digital artefacts visibly and subversively pierce the quixotic screen, while a mock-Tarantinoesque spray of blood (rendered in one-dimensional stop-frame animation), sprays the filmic environs.

The remarkable bestiary of variegated mythic and therianthropic creatures that populate the film, including a charging horned buffalo, a chimerical dismembered horse with a snake writhing from its hind quarters, a winged fish and a locust, amongst others, seem related to magical ends and historical and prehistoric animal signification and ritual investment. Assigning a mystic sensibility to the animal iconography in this film is a notion supported by the repeated spectre of a rotating spindle, which is reminiscent of the fairy tale in question, and the conflation of spinning and sorcery.[4] Ominous images of thorn bushes and numerous crowns of thorns float above incongruously pastel-coloured graphic patterns in motion: stripes, grids, cloud shapes, circles and squares abound. The spiked peak of a broadcast histogram enters the film as a moving character that bobs across and beyond the limits of the screen. Vortex forms are revisited in numerous guises throughout the film.

3. Meekel's film was first installed as part of the Pointure exhibition, co-curated by Jennifer Kopping and Ann-Marie Tully at the University of Johannesburg Gallery (8-29 August 2012).

4. Witchcraft and spinning were equated in the pre-industrial Catholic western world vilifying female economic independence (Jones & Stallybrass 2007:117).

FIGURE **Nº 2**

Jurgen Meekel, *Screen Shot 2012-08-04 at 12.43.25 PM*, 2012. Still from the motion graphic digital video. 2 minutes.

Courtesy of the artist.

Images of blood are coupled with thorn-like or spiked formations in variations ranging from the photographic image of transparent medical blood bags, ice-cream-commercial-like swirling blood, and the recurrent figure of the bleeding finger – which transforms to have two bleeding prick-like eyes, and appears in a suit with a wavy-patterned skirt, and as wearing a crown in a sequence titled "The Monarch". In this palimpsestual manner, which blends the strains of myth and whimsy with the hard edge of a retro-seventies design aesthetic and popular iconography, this idiosyncratic (and irreverent) film spikes together the strains of myth, religious belief and "blood magic". Sleep is a state that is also frequently referenced in this film, pointing not only to the expectant slumber of Sleeping Beauty, but also to trance-states in the broader cultural and mythical sense.

In this article, I reflect on a number of cultural, mythic, and theoretical references to a numinous sensibility being equated with holed (vortex), spiked, and horned forms (notions redolent with bodily openings and bleeding). A number of these numinous conceptions are present in my reading of Meekel's film.

The vortex-like structures in Meekel's film appear to reference (and may effect in the viewer) altered states of consciousness. This impression is further supported

by another video piece by the artist entitled *Screen Shot 2012-08-04 at 12.43.25 PM* (2012) (Figure 2). Looped to the "header and footer" of the main *Sleeping Beauty* feature, this short vignette features a tunnel-like illusion constructed from innumerable frame-grabs of a computer screen window, layered and apparently in motion. Trance states related to shamanic and other mystic incidences are frequentlylinked to the visual phenomena of vortexes (Lombard 2002:19). In relation to the Irish passage tombs of the fourth and third millennium, the cognitive archaeologist Jeremy Dronfield (1996:37) argues that vortex or tunnel-like visual phenomena –which can be effected under various circumstances, including flickering light, by means of hallucinogenic substances, and as a result of neuropathology – are produced neurologically in the brain.

Marlize Lombard (citing Siegel & Jarvik 2002:19), the South African anthropologist and archaeologist who has linked bored stones to the vortex neurological phenomenon, notes that a number of such visions have been achieved under modern laboratory conditions. Lombard (2002:19) cites Rick Strassman's clinical research into psychedelic drugs. Strassman, a medical doctor with specialisation in psychiatry and psychopharmacology, proposes that DMT (dimethyltryptamine), a short-lived but powerful hallucinogen present in the human pineal gland, is responsible for hallucinogenic states when naturally released under stressful circumstances such as birth, trance and death. Lombard (2002:19) asserts that tunnel vision is a consistent factor in clinical trials that probe altered states. In the archaeological context of Upper Paleolithic rock art, the cognitive archaeologist David Lewis-Williams (1997:328) has proposed that the neurologically induced vortex draws the subject into the deepest stage of trance, mirrored and perhaps induced by the context of the cave.

Lombard (2002:19-23) draws upon various "holed" instances of shamanic material culture, ranging from the disk with a hole worn at the rear of Siberian shamanic ritual dress, called the "*oibonkungata*", to the significance of holes, pits, and apertures in San mythology as documented in the ethnographic work of Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd between 1870 and 1880.[5] Lombard (2002:22) notes that most San mythology relating to holes suggests that change, transformation, protection and danger affect all those who pass through them. Lombard (2002:20) also points out that the Siberian shaman, while in a ritual trance, perceives his location as the meeting point of the mythic "World Tree" or *Axis Mundi*, from where the shaman ventures through the centre of the world to where s/he can mediate between men and gods. In likeness to this notion of a passage, Lewis-Williams (2003:59) proposes that San rock paintings in the rock shelters of the Clarens formation of the Drakensberg were not simply representations of the world around

5. I employ the Nama word "San" to point generically to the people that the European colonisers of South Africa called "bushmen" in accordance with the request made by the descendants of the "bushmen" through the Working Group for Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) and the South African San Institute (SASI) (Deacon & Foster 2005:180).

them, but that these now vanishing visions 'had a life of their own', acting as visual thresholds, drawing the 'trancing' shaman into the world of */Kaggen's* animals.[6] */Kaggan* is the trickster deity of the San, a man who hunted and lived socially with others, while also being in possession of supernatural powers (Lewis-Williams 2003:59). This duality of character is indicative of the San belief that the supernatural dwells alongside the natural (Lewis-Williams 2003:43, 59).

Lewis-Williams (2003:72) also proposes that the emergence of 'rain animals' of supernatural import from behind naturally occurring features in the rock surface suggests that the San may have believed that the spirit realm dwelt within the rock of the Drakensberg. In keeping with this notion of a 'rock mantle', Lewis-Williams (2003:53) further proposes that following the trance encounters where the San shamans would remonstrate with */Kaggen*, they would return through 'the tunnel' and later document their visions on the walls, 'luring' visualisations of the spirit world through the rock face and fixing them there. Meekel's *peak-of-a-broadcast-histogram* character, referencing the unseen technical aspects of filmmaking, which travels in a Pac Man-like path across the surface of the screen and beyond its limits, is reminiscent of this notion of a realm beyond the visible.

Meekel's Sleeping Beauty (2012) is also reminiscent of the tiered levels of an *Axis Mundi* opening and encounter – a threshold between the material world and the spiritual realm (Lewis-Williams 2000:129). On encountering Meekel's digital tunnel in the video piece, *Screen Shot 2012-08-04 at 12.43.25 PM*, the viewer experiences the monotonous duplication of the computed screen windows as a tunnel-like vision; almost as if s/he were moving through an underground road tunnel at high speed. In this illusory manner, the viewer would probably be induced into something of a trance-like state reminiscent of the first tier of induction into an *Axis Mundi* (in this case, a digital *Axis Mundi*) where the viewer, like a Shaman, represents the inception point (Lombard 2002:20). The transformation of this digital cloning technique into a simulated tunnel vision may induce a further level of symbolic exchange in the viewer's mind, where software windows transmogrify into portals of desire, and elemental pixels form holes and passages of projection. In this sense, Meekel's digital tunnel (square at the 16:9 television ratio edges) comes to signify, like the non-circular Drakensberg rock paintings (Lewis-Williams 2003:53), the mythic portentousness of spiritual thresholds.

The cathexis achieved through the intercession of filmic suspension of disbelief in some respects mirrors the purposes of inter-cessionary shamanic healing, which is often a primary objective of trance activities (Lewis-Williams 2003:27-28). During trances induced by dance, rhythm, hyperventilation and intense concentration in

6. The orthography of the "/" click in the Xam word "*/Kaggan*" indicates a *dental click* where the tip of the tongue is placed against the back of the upper front teeth; when released it is pulled away with a "fricative" sound. English-speakers make a similar sound to indicate an admonition (Lewis-Williams 2003:[sp]). This sound is also similar to the sound of a "C" in isiXhosa and isiZulu (Deacon & Foster 2005:184). I am compelled by the notion that clicking sounds puncture (*pointure*) the soundscape.

contemporary San practice, the Shaman lays trembling hands on participants – an act believed to draw known and unknown sicknesses out (Lewis-Williams 2003:30). This "sickness" *(n/om*) is thereafter concentrated in the pit of the Shaman's stomach, which contracts into a painful knot, causing the Shaman to bend over and sometimes needing to supporting his weight on two dancing sticks (a pose that has been linked to bent-forward figures in San rock paintings) while the *n/om* 'boils' in his stomach (Lewis-Williams 2003:30-33). Finally, the Shaman expels the *n/om* through what is believed to be a hole at the back of the neck, the *n//au* spot, thus returning the "sickness" to the malign spirits to whom it is ascribed (Lewis-Williams 2003:30).[7] Practitioners believe that *n//au* hole (represented in examples of San rock painting with streamers emanating from the base of the neck) (Lewis-Williams 2003:34) is physiologically realised in the spinal formation. The manifestations of portentous legions on the body is reminiscent of widespread instances of tattooing (cultural, historical and contemporary) – a process involving the puncturing of the skin and the insertion of ink into the opening. Certain practitioners, such as the facially tattooed women of the Aures Mountains region of Algeria, believe that tattoos provide "magical" protection, luck and beauty (Bendaas 2013). Spiritual convictions in the potency of phenomena such as the *n//au* hole and tattoos are also reminiscent of the manifestation of spiritual legions such as stigmata in Catholicism.

The plethora of references to blood in Meekel's video can be linked to notions of spiritual legions, healing, and "blood magic" played out in the San trance ritual. The spray of blood that emanates from the pricked finger (first as interrupted lines and then as a solid "wedge" of red colour) in Meekel's work is reminiscent of the reddish streamers and interrupted red dots that emanate from the noses of figures of people and therianthropes (thought to be the product of shamanic visions) in San rock art (Lewis-Williams 2003:33-34). Based on the testimony of the San informant Qing to the Irish-born surveyor and politician Joseph Millerd Orpen, and the observations of the French missionaries, Thomas Arbousset and François Daumas, Lewis-Williams (2003:34-35) asserts that the red painted lines depict the nasal hemorrhaging that can occur when San shamans undergo the exertions of the trance. In relation to this ritual hemorrhaging, Lewis-Williams (2003:35) proposes that blood emanating from nasal cavities (holes) signified power, not debilitation as one might think, due to its association with the Shaman having accessed supernatural knowledge.

I begin with this scoped historic and pre-historic account of the mystic sensibility of holed forms to gesture to a mystic sensibility attached to the inverse pointed objects that form and penetrate these openings (stigmata) in most textile instances

7. The orthography of the "//" click in the Xam word "*n//au*" indicates a *lateral* click where the tongue is placed against the alveolar ridge. This tension is then released against the side teeth (Lewis -Williams 2003:[sp]). This sound is similar to the "X" in isiXhosa, and is similar to the sound used by an equestrian to drive a horse/s forward (Deacon & Foster 2005:184).

(*pointured* grounds). Pointed textile tools such as the needle, hook, or the pointed bobbin-holding shuttle of a loom, which is wound between the openings in the warp to form the weft, render a replete object that at close inspection, is riddled with holes. The pointed objects that make these significant holes, as well as the material threads that fill these openings, are considered in this account to be equally portentous, and important to a position that proposes the perceived magical properties of textile and stitched media.

The hypothesis I propose and develop in the proceeding sections connects this *hole-point-thread* mystic trinity to the pervasive sorcerous sensibility of horned (pointed) animals, synthesising an argument that proposes a strong confluence between these apparently discrete and "enchanted" phenomena. I invoke Jacques Derrida's (2009 [1978]:301-315) rhetorical use of the term "*pointure*", which he uses in reference to "laced" forms such as shoelaces and stitched objects like shoes, as instruments with the capacity to "haunt" and connect comparative textual analysis. This theoretical precedent, which directly references the mysticism of "pointed" and textile-related practices is important to this comparative discussion of the historical, contextual and overlapping mysticism of pointed, threaded and horned practices and forms. I use the "interlaced", entangling methodology of Derrida's textual *pointure* as a departure point for *grafting* together a textual weave of pointured mysticism.

Pointured mysticism: lacing the inside and outside

In "Restitutions of the truth in pointing (*Pointure*)", Derrida (2009:301-302) explores authorial projections and themes of presence in Martin Heidegger's (1998 [1950, 1957,1960]:285),"The origin of the work of art" in which he makes vague reference to a painting of peasant shoes by Vincent van Gogh – who in fact painted such shoes several times (Shapiro 2009 [1968]:296)."Restitutions" is constructed as a polylogue of self-reflexive voices, including Derrida's variations on those of Heidegger and Meyer Schapiro (2009), who also wrote a critical reflection on Heidegger's theses, entitled "The still life as personal object: a note on Heidegger and Van Gogh". Derrida's "Restitutions" operates through a set of metaphors, a key one being that of "*pointure*"–a French term that relates to printing in terms of the 'small iron blade with a point, used to fix the page to be printed on to the tympan', and 'the hole which it makes in the paper'(Derrida 2009:301). Derrida (2009:301) also links the term to the practice of cobbling and the stitching of shoes. In 'tying' together the etiology of this term with both texts and the shoes represented

in Van Gogh's painting, Derrida 'cobbles' together a complex critique and discussion of the act of reading paintings (Payne 1993:228).

Two sub-metaphors that Derrida (2009:305-311) employs in his extrapolation of the term "*pointure*" are significant to the context of this paper.

First, Derrida (2009:305) develops the word "lace" (derived from the shoe lace) in respect of its 'rewinding passing and repassing through the eyelet', a motion that travels from 'outside to inside, from inside to outside'. This stress on the reciprocity of the inside and outside, a conception that Derrida (2009:305) develops in relation to "reading" paintings, is significant to textile media, where the thread, yarn, or other medium passes through a holed ground (or forms a punctured mantle by means of entwined stitching/weaving) to exist both at the rear and front of the textile object, while remaining inextricably connected. A less obvious implication of the inside/outside-entangled structure of textile media is the movement of investment from outside to inside, suggesting the investment (lacing) of significance into the textile form by the maker and the viewer. This *pointured* notion of a lacing action that passes between two ends of a holed form is also reminiscent of the proposed San belief in the two sides of the rock face (Lewis-Williams 2003:72).

Lewis-Williams (2003:52) proposes that the painted red lines fringed with white dots that appear to weave (lace) in and out of the rock face, entering and exiting through holes or inequalities in the rock surface (amongst rock art scenes),[8] suggest that the San may have conceived of the rock face as a transitional passage between the seen and the unseen. Lewis-Williams (2003:52) also conjectures that these fringed red lines represent the entoptic patterns neurologically induced during trance. The term "entoptics" stems from the Greek, meaning "within vision", relating to the neurological origin of these forms and the spiritual dimensions of this "unseen seeing". Recorded accounts from San healers have described the 'climbing' of these entoptic threads–assisted by the spirits of the ancestors – as a form of transport to a mystic realm where these 'threads of light' 'shimmer and transform into figures of animals and people (Deacon & Foster 2005:119-123). The resemblance of these rock art renderings of entoptic patterns – broken lines resembling stitches – to textile forms is compelling in association with the numinous perception of textile media.[9]

The second sub-metaphor of interest to my contention of a mystical responsiveness in the cultural perception of textile media emerges from Derrida's (2009:302, 310) reflexive defense of Heidegger's argument, which was, in turn, written in response to Schapiro's rebuke of the uncritical projection implicit in Heidegger's ascribing

8. These are especially visible on the Klipfontein Stone, housed in the Origins Centre, University of the Witwatersrand.

9. The term "threads of light" referenced in /Xam records can be (with some latitude) compared to Giles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's (1988:11) term 'lines of flight'–a phrase coined in *sympathy* with rhizomic root systems that move laterally between disparate rhizomic entities, and mobilised as a textual metaphor. The method of this enquiry is aligned in sensibility with both the disparate but connected (*laced*) reach of 'lines of flight' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988:11); and the penetrating and looping potential of the "threads of light" (Deacon & Foster 2005:123-126).

of the shoes represented in Van Gogh's painting to that of a peasant woman's. Derrida (2009:305) proposes that what is actually implied in both the shoes (the thing in the world) and the painting of the shoes (figured within the painterly plain) is 'lack'. The lack relating to the shoes-in-the-world pertain to their emptiness and the absence of the wearer, while the lack implicit in the painting of the shoes is their distance from the thing they represent. While Schapiro (staged as a voice in the text) argues for the discretion of the objects that are shoes and those that are paintings, Derrida (2009:305) returns to the notion of lacing, proposing that 'like a lace, each "thing", each mode of being of the thing, passes inside then outside the other'. In relation to this, Derrida (2009:304) also proposes that Heidegger's focus on the shoes rather than other objects represented in Van Gogh's *oeuvre*, is the veracity implicit in an article of clothing (*Fussbekleidung*) which attaches snugly to the naked body (or feet in this case) of the subject – having brushed against its *Dasein*. He further connects this notion of nakedness to the products (shoes and paintings), proposing that in their state of disuse, the shoes are akin to the naked feet they once shod, and, by extension, in its detachment from the real object it represents, the painting is also naked (Derrida 2009:307).

Directly following this meditation on the "naked" and "lacking" properties of the shoe-products, Derrida (2009:307) invokes the word 'haunted', noting that both the shoes and the painting are haunted by the 'form' of another 'naked thing' from which it is partially detached – the shoes from the naked feet, and the painted shoes from the naked (empty) shoes-in-the-world. By extension, the viewer is tied to this "naked"(vulnerable) loop: detached as s/he is from the feet that once occupied the shoes-in-the-world (be they the feet of the artist, or Heidegger's hypothetical peasant); from the artist and the time of making; and from the simulacra of the painted environment. The viewer is haunted by the absences resident in the painting and its provenance, and simultaneously haunts the image in his or her projected reading. Extrapolating from this *pointured* notion of laced and looped haunting, amidst absence (*holes*), I propose that the vacuum made by the stitch (*lace*) in textile forms is a haunted site laced and looped to themes and experiences of human frailty and desire, both from within the work (maker), and from beyond the work (viewer/user).

Warp, weft and witchcraft

Whether one looks to historical myth or contemporary theory, the notion of supernatural fecundity is a resident feature of the *pointured* mark and the variable

linking (*lacing*) media that join and close these openings (*holes*) of human origin. In the act of configuring things previously unseen or fragmented into holistic form, through what is often a violent gesture that opens, binds, and has the potential to harm its maker, the *practice of the stitch* is imbued with a numinous sensibility – endorsed by a plethora of mythological and historical narratives.

The femininised, pre-industrial economic practice of spinning yarn out of flax or wool, or weaving with these threads, is widely linked to conceptions of mystic power. This identification of "spell-binding" in textile production is expressed in female figures such as Homer's Penelope (Jones & Stallybrass 2007:104-106), who wove a shroud for Odysseus' father Laertes. On a nightly basis, she would unravel the shroud with the intention of delaying Laertes's death, and her acceptance of one of the suitors that courted her during Odysseus' absence. This sympathetic gesture (which also willed the closing of distance between her and the lost figure of Odysseus), carried out in a textile medium is *laced* to the woven teleology of thread and mysticism (Jones & Stallybrass 2007:110). James George Frazer (1955 [1890]:114), the British social anthropologist, folklorist, and classical scholar, proposed that the two generating principles of sympathetic magic are Homeopathic magic (the Law of Similarity) and Contagious magic (the Law of Contact). Homeopathic magic is imitative and performed, mimicking (often through textile and material means) the desired outcome, while contagious magic involves direct contact with the target (Frazer 1955:115). Frazer (1955:115) also notes that 'both principles may be involved in one and the same custom'.[10]

These anthropological categories are useful to consider in relation to textile (*pointured*) forms, explicating the human belief in the "haunting" of complex (*laced*) material configurations. An example of belief in contagious sympathetic magic can be found amongst the Ghiliak people of Siberia (Paine 1998:188).[11] Ghiliak men reportedly steer clear of women embroidering owing to their belief that the loops forged (*laced*) by 'witch embroiderers' can ensnare the souls of people standing in their presence (Paine 1998:188). In line with this belief, the Ghiliak verb, "tcagott", has two meanings: to embroider patterns, and to cast spells (Paine 1998:188). Patterning the Ghiliak embroidery phenomenon along these lines, the threat can be said to reside in the stitch's resemblance to a snare (lace), while the Ghiliak men's reluctance to be near the textile, points to the veracity of their belief in the mystic virulence of textile media (haunting).

The Ghiliak belief in the spell binding capacity of embroidery (Paine 1998:188) exhibits a homeopathic tendency, as it is based on the performed resemblance of a stitch to a snare (*lace*). This superstition is reminiscent of Michael Payne's

10. James G Frazer's definition of the contagious and imitative patterns of sympathetic magic is seminal to the anthropological study of cultural superstition and ritual (Dickey [sa]). I am mindful of critiques of Frazer's work that position his oeuvre within the imperial mindset of "reasoned" study of the "Other" with the purpose of correction (Dickey [sa]).

11. Embroidery is frequently linked to witchcraft. In numerous origin cultures, magical objects are made by women, whose "miraculous" fertility (a malignant notion subscribed to well into the eighteenth century when conception was firmly linked to sexual intercourse) connected the female gender with witchcraft and sorcery (Paine 1988:188).

(1993:229) interpretation of Derrida's use of the word "lace" ("*le lacet*" in French), as that which can imply a 'noose trap' or 'snare'. Payne's opinion is borne out by several references in "Restitutions" to the binding or 'tightening of laces' and the 'sewing-back' actions of the stitch (Derrida 2009:310, 307). Both the Ghiliak and the Homeric example of Penelope, patterned on the story of the Three Fates or *Moirae* who practiced the spinning of thread that magically determined the length of individual lives (Jones & Stallybrass 2007:117), are connected by a homeopathic strand of sympathetic magic, where the resemblance of the basic unit of the stitch bears similarity to a trap or snare. In Penelope's case, her weaving (lacing and looping) can arrest time and ensnare desire; and in the case of the Ghiliak people, the resemblance of the looped embroidery stitch to the snare is what gives rise to the belief of the stitch being threatening. That said, the "haunting" that assails Penelope's weave and Ghiliak embroidery transcends resemblance to a snare. Ultimately these objects are possessed by the 'invisible lace' of human culture that penetrates and binds materiality and context, passing 'into it then out of it in order to sew it back onto its milieu, onto its internal and external worlds' (Derrida 2009:307) – its 'material symbolic' domain (Renfrew 2003:136).[12]

Operating beyond the confines of clothing as a language of signifiers, fashion theorists Alison Lurie (1983:10) and Elizabeth Wilson (2004:378) also muse over the quasi-magical properties of items of clothing, affected through the material veracity of the item that was present on the body that vanishes. Lurie (1983:10) points out that articles of clothing such as wedding rings and "lucky" items of clothing 'may be treated as if they had manna, the impersonal supernatural force that tends to concentrate itself in objects'. While Wilson (citing Winnicott 2004:378-379) argues that clothes or textile objects are 'transitional objects', giving the example of a child's 'security blanket' that could be a part of a dress, a scarf, a shawl or any other textile object belonging to the mother. Wilson (citing Winnicott 2004:378-379) explains that this 'transitional object' to which the infant clings, becomes a symbol or metaphor of the mother, as the child separates from the symbiotic maternal bond. This disavowal of mother-child symbiosis through the adherence to a residue of presence in the textile object or garment presents a fetishistic character to the child's (and the broader human) relation to the textile object (Wilson 2004:379).[13]

12. Colin Renfrew (2003:136) notes that the investment of symbolic meaning into artefacts and material substrates was due to cognitive and technological developments brought about by the Neolithic revolution, which saw the development of farming practices and settlements.

13. All forms of fetishism have in common the process of disavowal, where cultural objects take on meanings that connect them to, or stand in for, other meanings and associations (Gammon & Makkinen 1994:445-446). The existence of these surrogate objects points to the loss or partial denial of the loss of an originary subject or object (Gammon & Makkinen 1994:446).

The magical properties of horned animals

Reverence for horned and antlered animals owing to the regenerative capacity of horns, which can be shed and re-grown, is a common feature in both African and European cultural legacies (Paine 1998:152).[14] The popularity of horned creatures in contemporary visual culture suggests that the significance of horned animals remains in residue. The fashion designer, Alexander McQueen's frequent references to deer and antler motifs in his collections are notable in this regard; as is the popularity of horned animal design motifs amongst urban pastorally nostalgic sub-cultures, such as "Hipsters".[15]

Antelope feature significantly in African art and culture. The eland (the largest antelope) is highly esteemed in San culture. Patricia Vinnicombe (2009:143) – whose groundbreaking research into the rock art heritage of Southern Africa served to define the field of enquiry – suggests that although evidence suggests that antelope were rare in the San diet, they account for 77 per cent of the wild animals depicted in rock paintings. Of this percentage, eland comprised 33 per cent, with a high concentration in the Drakensberg region (Vinnicombe 2009:143, 156), suggesting a particular significance in the San cosmological belief systems (Vinnicombe 2009:144). San mythology is rich with references to the intimate and filial relations of the eland to the San deity /Kaggen (Vinnicombe 2009:158; Lewis-Williams 2003:45). Vinnicombe (2009:155-169) suggests that the eland's significance to the San relates to the animal's characteristics of stately size, docile nature, stealth, selectivity in feeding, and the similarity of the eland gestation period to that of human gestation. Interestingly, Vinnicombe (2009:156) does not include the horned character of eland in this rationale except to note that the vagaries of paint may account for the absence of horns on some figures, while in others it seems intentional that horns are invisible (not present). This possibly intentional omission of horns is also noted in relation to rhebuck and other smaller antelope, which are aligned with the basic family unit of San society (Vinnicombe 2009:187, 189). As both female and male eland have horns (of different dimensions), their absence may be related to very young eland, suggested by the presence of both horned and un-horned figures in several panels traced by Vinnicombe. This is, however, a tenuous explanation, as paintings such as those at the Bonnievale farm at Upper Ndawana (Site M8) employ scale to show the difference between very young eland and older animals, both of which are hornless (Vinnicombe 2009:162).

It is also notable that Vinnicombe's reproduction of a section of the Bonnievale frieze of paintings records two eland figures, and a therianthropic figure with horns amongst

14. A striking example of the totemic belief in the regenerative and protective abilities of horned animals is the Celtic legend of soldiers who wore helmets with detachable horns of gold, silver or bronze (Ettlinger 1945:306) that could be "shed" and reattached ("regrow") as battle adornment. The soldiers would lay the detached horns in portentous positions before a battle (Ettlinger 1945: 306). The stitching on and off of the horns *lace and bind* these adornments to the mystic context of both textile and horned objects.

15. The hipster subculture, which arose in the 1990s, is a material sub-culture characterised by middleclass adherents who appropriate from past eras in an iron-ic or anachronistic fashion (Alfrey 2010:6).

the hornless eland figures in the painting (Vinnicombe 2009:162). This marked distinction could point to possible insights into the spiritual significance of horns: I propose that it is possible to read this absence of the potent signifier of "rebirth" (horns) in some eland figures in the Bonnievale frieze (Paine 1998:152) as signifying the presence of a 'spirit animal' (Lewis-Williams 2003:57) that is not in need of the physical "tools" of renewal and recuperation. The hornless figures juxtaposed amongst the figures of horned eland (who may signify worldly presence), could be aligned to the San belief that the supernatural dwelt alongside the living (Lewis-Williams 2003:43). A contrary argument could also be made that the presence of a horned therianthropic figure, which might represent a Shaman in trance, amongst the eland figures in the Bonnievale frieze, could suggest the mystical ability of this individual to passage (rebirth) between the realms of the living and the supernatural. These musings over the significance of horned figures in rock painting are speculative, but coupled with other San artefacts such as horned necklaces for the possible containment of mystical substances (as is the case with numerous amaZulu and isiXhosa examples), they point to the possible numinous significance of horns in San culture.[16] Significantly, Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd were told by /Xam informants that /Kaggen sits between the eland's horns, a notion that points to eland horns as objects of perceived spiritual power (Lewis-Williams 2003:45). Vinnicombe (2009:170) also notes that the San believed that /Kaggen was in the bones of the eland, accounting for its ability to run away from hunters. This is a compelling thought as bovids such as antelope have a horn consisting of an inner layer of living bone and an outer keratin sheath indicating annual growth (Davis *et al*. 2011), indicating that the bone-filled horn may have been perceived as invested with transubstantiated divinity.

One of the most compelling San rock art mysteries is the meaning of the antelope-headed figures, described by Qing in response to Orpen's query as having rhebuck heads (Lewis-Williams 2003:26). An inspection of the iconographic similarities between the heads of the Libesoaneng group of antelope-headed therianthropic figures, accompanied by two eland figures, suggests that the therianthropic figures have eland heads (Lewis-Williams 2003:26). These eland-headed figures are bent forward with stick-like protrusions from their hands, possibly representing Shamans using sticks as supports during the rigours of trance (Lewis-Williams 2003:30). Qing also told Orpen that these antelope-headed figures had been 'spoilt' (Lewis-Williams 2003:35). Based on Meagan Biesele's further definition of the word 'spoilt' as meaning 'to enter deep trance' – based on having heard the term used by present day Kalahari !Kung in this context – Lewis-Williams (2003:35) formulates that Qing references the 'spoiling' of trance, when a Shaman may become completely cataleptic, a notion that is in keeping with the rest of Qing's answer to

16. The Wits Art Museum has a number of examples of San, Xhosa and Zulu adornment including horned forms.

Orpen: '… by the dances of which you have seen paintings.' Based on this formulation, Lewis-Williams (2003:35) concludes that the antelope-headed figures of San painting depict Shamans who have entered into deep trance. This notion is also born out by Qing's reference to the death of these men at the same time as the elands (Lewis-Williams 2003:26). The Kalahari !Kung believe that conducting a trance next to the carcass of a dead eland leads to a particularly valuable trance (Lewis-Williams 2003:38). This belief in the transporting capacity of the dying/dead eland, suggests firstly, the equation of notions of death with trance, and secondly, the union of the Shaman with the eland in this passage (a zoomorphic transformation) (Lewis-Williams 2003:38). Such beliefs in the liminal capacities of antelope are conceivably influenced by observations pertaining to the 'rebirthing' ability of horns (Paine 1998:152).

Another example of horned animals as interlocutors between the quotidian and the supernatural realms is the common motif of horned antelope designs on Tsonga and Shona headrests (Nettleton 2007:370). Anitra Nettleton (2007:370) notes that the purpose of the headrest is for sleeping and thus also for dreaming (an activity connected with the ancestors). Nettleton (2007:370) connects the horned antelope motifs on headrests to the metaphoric relationship between diviners and particular species of antelope that submerge themselves beneath water, a notion associated with visiting the spirit world.[17]

Smaller antelope like Grimm's duiker, bushbuck, rhebuck and springbuck are considered liminal creatures in numerous African cultures (Roberts 1995:52). Their horns are referenced in paintings, patterns, masks and figures, and are frequently combined in composite collage sculptures, lending a sense of "horned-power" to the object (Roberts 1995:52). Small antelope such as Grimm's duiker and bushbuck roam nocturnally between the wild and domestic realms, lending to their attribution as tricksters in much African folklore (Roberts 1995:52). This characteristic is celebrated in the horned Congolese *Kayamba* masks, which serve to perform this shrewd animal trait as a human characteristic in the *Yananio* ritual of the Bwami Society (Roberts 1995:54). Across Africa, use of small hollow black duiker horns as containers for magical compounds is common (Roberts 1995:54). These horns synecdochically signify the numinous sensibility and entirety of the animal's being and character, and are worn, hidden in the home, or stuck into wooden sculptures amongst other physical incarnations (Roberts 1995:54). In central Africa, the horns of bushbuck are used to contain the most aggressive forms of magic, and are incorporated into Tabwa *nzunzi* figures believed to have the potential to animate and do the sorcerer's bidding (Roberts 1995:54). This holding-capacity is a powerful testimony to the perceived supernatural veracity of horns in African culture.

17. The association of the spirit realm with being underwater is widespread in Africa and further afield (Lewis-Williams 2003:38).

FIGURE **Nº 3**

Unknown artist, *"Tsonga" medicine horn with telephone wire detail*, twentieth century. Accession no: 2006.10.05.03/09. Wits Art Galleries Collection.

Courtesy of the Wits Art Museum.

FIGURE **Nº 4**

Unknown artist, *"Zulu" beaded duiker necklace,* nineteenth century.
Accession no: 2010.14.03.077. Wits Art Galleries Collection.

Courtesy of the Wits Art Museum.

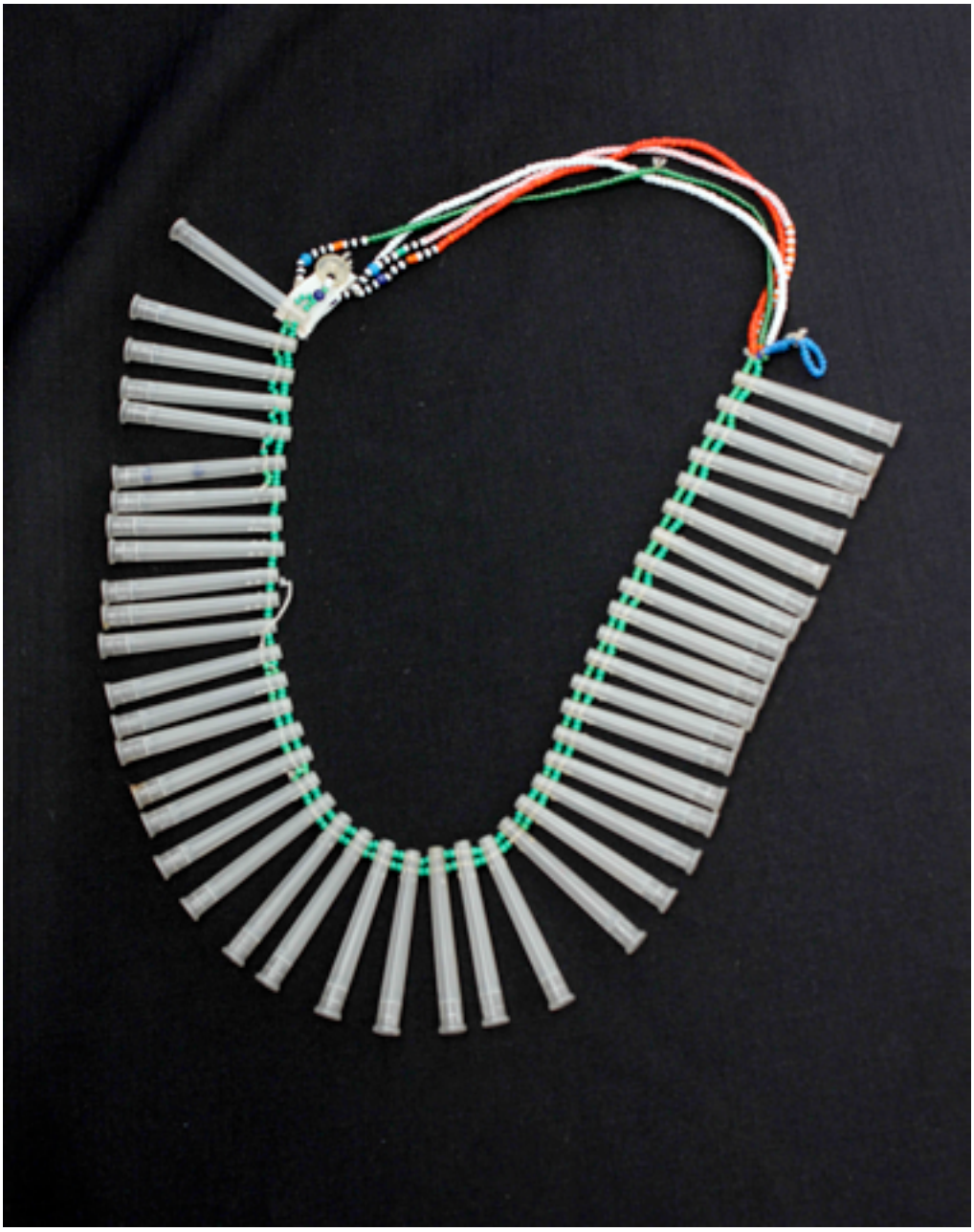

FIGURE **Nº 5**

Unknown artist, *"Xhosa" hypodermic needle cover necklace*, twentieth century. Accession no: 91.21.05. Wits Art Galleries Collection.

Courtesy of the Wits Art Museum.

Pointured and horned adornment

Figures 3-5 represent necklace accessions in the Wits Art Museum collection, each of which pertain to instances of mysticism surrounding horned objects. As

objects that are beaded and laced together, these necklaces fit into the wide-ranging definition of a *pointured* object. The source of the twentieth-century *Tsonga medicine horn* (Figure 3), is difficult to ascertain due to the telephone wire weave that covers the object. However, what is notable is the horn-like shape; and the significance of the *interchange* between the inside and outside of the form – stressed in the presence of a pointed (*pointured*) dropper that fits into the hole (a point within a hole that is also a point), containing the medicine within the horn and extracting it for application. Considering the supernatural associations of holed and pointed objects, it is not surprising that an object that is both a hole and a point could be afforded magical properties.

A *beaded duiker necklace* (twentieth century) of amaZulu origin (Figure 4), draws on the same principle of sympathetic resemblance (Frazer 1955 [1890]:115). When worn on the body, the two pointed duiker horns reference the protective capacities of their animal incarnation, warning off supernatural and perhaps commonplace attacks. Capped with beaded "lids" constructed of red and white beads – colours associated with Sangomas (southern African traditional healers) (Van Binsbergen 2007) –the presence of compounds of veracious medicinal and magical potential are suggested on the inside of the horns, implying that without these potent spiritual containers the contents may penetrate the wearer in an unseen capacity.[18]

Notions of horned veracity are also present in western accounts of amaZulu "*impi*" (soldiers),[19] particularly in problematic Napoleonic comparisons with Shaka's strategic 'chest-and-horns' defensive formation (Daniel Alban Wylie 1995:263-269). Jeff Guy (1999:23) connects "*iziqu*" necklaces – carved, interlocking beads conventionally understood to be awarded to valorous soldiers, which he argues is a colonial reduction and appropriation of this necklace tradition – to the broader material culture of necklaces in amaZulu society; connecting elements such as bone and horn, found in other necklace examples to the understanding of "*iziqu*" (Guy 1999:35). Wright (cited in Guy) notably claims that "*iziqu*" are 'one part of a whole complex of "charms", medicines and practices which were used by men who had killed in battle to ward off misfortune'. A photograph of an amaZulu warrior who appears to be wearing a necklace made of duiker horns, reproduced in Cornelius H Patton (2008 [1917]:[sp])[20] further suggests a connection between horned necklace adornments and enchanted protection in battle, a notion in keeping with the "battling" function of horns in the animal world.[21] In her investigation into the amaXhosa "*ukuthwasa*" (initiation) rite for female diviners, Lily-Rose Nomfundo Mlisa (2009:153-154) notes that "*iimpondo*" (horns in a necklace form) filled with 'mixed herbs' are placed around the initiate's head to strengthen and

18. I imagine that the inner catchment of the horn could also function like a pillbox for the wearer, keeping the medicine close for ready application/ingestion.

19. The IsiZulu word for an armed force of men.

20. Patton's (2008 [1917]:85-108) book is a didactic and pejorative account of the outcomes of "Christian Strongholds", entirely biased towards the colonial project of "reform". The vilification of Islam is undertaken at length (Patton 2008:57-84), as is a discussion of the ills of paganism set against the lens of heroic individual missionaries (Patton 2008:137-163). That said, *The lure of Africa* is a fascinating reflection of western perceptions of Africa at the turn of the nineteenth century.

21. This image can be viewed online: http://ia700204.us.archive.org/16/items/lureofafrica00pattiala/lureofafrica00pattiala.pdf

protect her against evil spirits. The "*ukuthwasa*" rite of passage also involves trance and shamanic intersession (Mlisa 2009:82). This confluence of the horn in a context that involves trance states lends veracity to the reading of a horned object as an inverted vortex, aligned with shamanic passage and practice (Lombard 2002:19).

Figure 5 is an intriguing example of a twentieth-century *hypodermic needle cover necklace* of amaXhosa origin. This modern equivalent of a horned necklace substitutes the point of the horn for the absent point of the needle, the presence of which is implied in the vacuum of the hypodermic needle cover. This object links the medicinal and protective values of the horned necklace within amaXhosa culture to the practice of western medicine, while still retaining the properties of an object that could carry substances of medicinal value, or gesture to them.

Human acts of puncturing and piercing (bleeding) have long been associated with horned supernatural and magical portents. Artefacts such as needles constructed from horns are examples of this confluence – like a horn, a needle is a pointed object containing a hole that makes holes. A needle made of horn sympathetically aligns these relations. Examples of horns that have literally become needles are numerous, ranging from Iron Age Nordic finds (Berry 2005:1), to antler needles found in Middle Bronze Age Hungary (Gál 2011:147), to Neolithic Chinese needles constructed from sharpened pieces of horn (Gwei-Djen & Needham 1980:69). Other pointed anthropological objects and rituals also bear a resemblance to the magical sensibility of horns: a disturbing example can be apprehended in the Celtic legend of the making of Finn's sword. Finn's mother warned him not to enter the smithy where her father was forging the sword (Ettlinger 1945:296). So as to fix its magical potency as a weapon, following tradition the sword would be tempered in the blood of the first living creature to enter the smithy (Ettlinger 1945:296).[22] Archeologists have unearthed a smithy dating back to the Bronze Age near the Heathery Burn Cave (Ettlinger 1945:296). The caves contained broken human skulls, reminders of the veracity of Finn's mother's warning; and the confluence of horned mysticism, "blood magic" and *pointured* technology.

Dream weaving: Holes, horns, stitching, and trance states

Returning to the curious sleep of Meekel's three heavy-breathing prick-entranced-sleeping subjects, one seated, one lying down and one lying supine and inverted at the top of the screen, I am reminded of the figure in the Linton Panel of rock

22. Needles are often accidentally "tempered" in the blood of their users; and are integral to surgical procedures.

FIGURE **Nº 6**

Jurgen Meekel, *Sleeping Beauty,* 2012. Screen-grab form the motion graphic digital video. 3 minutes.

Courtesy of the artist.

FIGURE **Nº 7**

Marcus Coates, *Journey to the Lower World*, 2004. Dual channel digital video. 30 minutes.

Reproduction by permission of the artist and Workplace Gallery.

paintings.[23] Lewis-Williams (2003:39) proposes that the Linton supine figure, with his cloven antelope hoofs and red lines streaking across his face, is a Shaman in deep trance experiencing nasal hemorrhaging. This reading is supported by the figure being surrounded by antelope (one bleeding from the nose), eels, and fish, suggesting the presence of water (Lewis-Williams 2003:39). The floating appearance of the figures in this panel further suggests that they are submerged (Lewis-Williams 2003:39). This reading aligns with accounts of trance that parallel the sense of weightlessness, heavy breathing, and altered sensorial perception experienced when being underwater (Lewis-Williams 2003:39). Meekel's linear black and white sleeping figures (alluding to the prick-induced, spell-bound sleep of Sleeping Beauty) allude to this shamanic repose. Vortex-like silhouetted forms resembling crowns of thorns and spiders cross the screen, accompanied by cacti with waving extensions that resemble submerged plants moving with the current. The repeated figure of Yves Klein's flying form ripped from the context of his famous *Saut dans le vide* (*Leap into the void*) (1960) photomontage resembles and transforms into a flock of "birds" that cross the screen. This intertextual reference to Klein's notion of a void, as well as the vortex-like figures that accompany it in this surreal skyscape, stage an altered reality simultaneously suggestive of flying and being submerged in water. Later Stone Age burial practices such as an Oakhurst burial of a male skeleton with a bored stone containing an unbroken series of fish vertebrae placed on his right thigh, indicate a connection between water and the spirit world in San cosmology (Lombard 2002:19).

The inverted figure on the top-right of the screen, wearing a "hoodie" that appears to feature protrusions reminiscent of animal ears or small horns *points* to a further connection that can be drawn between shamanic trance states, the wearing of magical horned headdresses, and stitched-material practices. The contemporary British artist/shaman, Marcus Coates, invests in the donning of a taxidermied antlered reindeer headdress to precipitate his quizzical shamanic decent into the underworld of 'small dead animals', where he serves as an interlocutor for the human-living (Dorment 2010). The apparent significance of wearing fashioned (*pointured*) horned animal adornments in the exposition of trance states is not limited to this instance, and has been observed in shamanic rituals around the world. As mentioned earlier, San rock paintings of therianthropic rhebuck-headed figures have been linked to trance rituals (Woodhous 1984:86). Bleek's informants also suggested that horned therianthropic figures were sorcerers (Woodhous 1984:86). That said, it is important to note that scholars such as Lewis-Williams (2003:26) have argued that these representations do not confirm that San Shamans wore animal adornments in the trance, but rather that they are suggestive of a

23. Portions of this panel were removed from the shelter in the southern Drakensberg in 1917, and are now housed in the South African Museum in Cape Town (Lewis-Williams 2003:39).

zoomorphic culture that combined the notions of human and animal as integral to the spiritual domain (this does not however preclude the possibility of animal material elements being worn by San Shamans as part of ritual events).

Ted Hughes's (1998:135) poem 'The Rag Rug', published in his anthology "*The birthday letters*" (1998) – a volcanic account of the poet's married life with Sylvia Plath–is notable for its utterance of the trance-like introspection of textile practices and the magical lore that "hems" it. Hughes muses over an occasion when Plath made a rag-rug, *lacing* chilling references to harbingers of doom throught, activating the violent properties of the stitch (Hughes 1998:135): References to blood such as comparing the red colour of the rags to "dark venous blood", evokes in the biographically informed reader contemplation of the poetess's life and death (Hughes 1998:135) – *a-rag-morphic-becoming-non-sentience-of-the-maker*. A mesmeric rhythm accompanies the piece. This rhythm mimicks the measured motion of weaving the rug,reflecting the calm that the process rought in Plath (Hughes 1998:135); potentially generating a trance-like state in the reader. References to numinous transformation during the practice of plaiting the rag rug occur throughout the poem: Hughes's (1998:135) comparison of the plaiting of the rag-rug to the formation of a coiled serpent constructed of heterogeneous textures stands out in this regard. I am struck by his reference to the snake, a creature that like textile thread "*laces*" its way around forms (a living warp). The snake's thread-like liminal ability to penetrate holes is also a theme present in San rock paintings, where snake figures (sometimes combined with other animal forms) weave "in and out" of the rock surface, pointing to a belief in the reptile's transitional and portentous character (Vinnicombe 2009:220-221).[24] The presence of the writhing snake in Meekel's film, like its textual counterpart in Hughes's poem, gestures to the figure of the "charmed" snake, which, in both cases, is the viewer and reader. The equation of a "charmed" snake with a threaded form ties together laborious textile practices with notions of trance.

Conclusion: The *pointured* weave

The related transformational and transitional mysticism associated with horns and horned creatures, a wide range of *pointured* technology, and textile practices are steadfast human phenomena. The liminal character of these *pointured* forms that simultaneously reflect the inverted holes they can make, or enter into, is a likely hinge for this correlation (anthropological weave): relating to the phenomena of "blood magic", evidenced in the violent histories of the smithy, where point met fleshy vortex

24. Other characteristics of the snake that lend this creature to mystic interpretations are the ability to "play dead" and revive (Lewis-Williams 2003:40); the ability to shed its skin; and the possession of venom (which the San extracted for inoculation purposes) (Vinnicombe 2009:222).

to magically fix the sword's potential (Ettlinger 1945:296); and in fairytales such as *Sleeping Beauty* (Perrault 2011) where the spindle-pricked finger enchanted the protagonist. The wide-ranging shamanic belief in the potency of holes, where the Shaman serves as the inception *point* of the passage (Lombard 2002:20) also informs the mystic interlocution of pointed forms and vortexes. What Derrida (2002:402) calls 'animal-autobiography' – reflexive application -- of the human conception of the animal to the formulation of human identity – suggests that the observation of horned animals and the violent, useful, and regenerative capacities of horns influenced and fashioned *pointured* technology and mysticism in human culture.[25] Numerous prehistoric examples of needles fashioned from horns support this human appropriation of horned animal character (Berry 2005:1; Gál 2011:147; Gwei-Djen & Needham 1980:69). The persistence of this archaic mysticism in contemporary art, theory and popular culture is a magical phenomenon in itself.

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25. Phallic resemblance is also a probable reasoning behind the association of pointed forms with power.

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