

**TRANSCRIBING TALES, CREATING CULTURAL IDENTITIES:
AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED WRITTEN ENGLISH TEXTS OF XHOSA
FOLKTALES**

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Abstract

This thesis maps a marriage of postcolonial theory and folklore studies. The progeny of this marriage is an analytic tool which can suitably and effectively tackle the subject of written folktale texts, whether they be part of a nineteenth century colonialist discourse, or a twenty-first century nationalist discourse. First, GM Theal's collection of folktale texts, Kaffir Folklore (1882), is analysed as part of his specific colonialist discourse. Theal formulated for himself, and for the Xhosa peoples, identities which consolidated the colonialisms he supported. I argue that these folktale texts, although a part of Theal's colonialist discourse, are hybrid, containing the voices of both coloniser and colonised.

Second, the position of contemporary written folktales in a neo-colonialist and >new nationalist discourse=, is examined. The optimistic belief of scholars and authors, that folktales are a means of bridging cultural gaps, is questioned. Finally, it is shown that authors of folktale texts can synthesise diverse literary traditions in a hybrid artform. This synthesis, to some extent, embodies the >new nationalist= aim of a unified national cultural identity in South Africa.

The central value of recognising the role of folktale texts in colonialist and nationalist discourses lies in the awareness that this type of literary activity in South Africa is a cross-cultural practice.

The confluence of voices which constitutes these folktale texts, reveals that our stories are intertwined. In the past, the discourses of colonialism and apartheid controlled the formation of the diverse and hierarchised cultural identities of South Africa. But this is not to say that alternative stories of self-fashioning and cultural self-determination did not exist. In the folktale texts of writers such as Mhlope, Jordan, and even in Theal's colonial collection, different

mediums, literary heritages and styles converge to create narratives which speak of cross-cultural interaction and the empowerment of the black voice.

In post-apartheid South Africa, there is even greater opportunity to reshape stories, to recreate selves, and to redefine intercultural relations. This thesis has outlined how some of those stories, which use folktale texts as their central trope, are constructed and commodified. Not only do these reinvented folktale texts embody the heterogeneous cultural influences of South Africa, they also have the potential to promote, first, the understanding of cultural differences, and second, the acceptance of the notion of cultural hybridity in our society.

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Introduction

AKwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi...@

(It happened in a fantastic tale...)

A[S]tories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history...@

(Said 1994: xiii)

The magic of a folktale text lies in its ability to tell a myriad of stories. A tale about a hare can say as much about its performer or transcriber as it can about a hare. The transcribers and re-tellers of folktales, be they colonisers or the colonised, create more than just lively, fantastical thematic characters. They create cultural identities for themselves, and for the peoples their texts represent. Stories about *Astrange regions of the world@* tell other stories about the people who wrote them, and about the people they were written about. Folktales were, and still are, included in ethnographic studies as cultural specimens. In both academic and popular mediums, folktale texts are presented as talismans which bear >authentic= knowledge of the cultures which spawned them.

One of the main questions asked in this thesis is, how were cultural identities negotiated in the colonial era in South Africa, and how do those identities continue to exert pressure on the present? One way of answering the question is to look at texts which reflect cross-cultural interaction. Folktale texts were often collaborative works and are therefore particularly revealing of cross-cultural activity. This aspect of the folktale genre has been sorely neglected by scholars.

The focus up to now has been mainly on structural features of both oral and written folktales. Postcolonial studies of folktale texts which might throw light on the intricacies of colonial cultural relations, have not been undertaken in South Africa.

Folktale texts of the colonial era, and of present day, have come to constitute a revealingly hybrid genre. They synthesise different literary traditions, different mediums (the oral and the written), different disciplinary approaches (ethnography, folklore, literature), and most significantly, the voices of different subjects. GM Theal's collection of folktale texts, Kaffir Folklore (1882), epitomises this synthesis. The question is, what does the presence of the African voices in this text reveal about Theal's colonialist discourse? Was it ever absolutely imposed, or do the African voices point to the agency (albeit limited), of the colonised Xhosa co-authors of Kaffir Folklore?

This agency has further significance when the role of folktale texts in the emergence and maintenance of African Nationalism is considered. The assertion of an African identity in the early twentieth century was brought about largely by textual means. The mission-educated and first literate Africans in South Africa began an anti-colonial struggle which consisted, in part, of a reinscription of African culture. Oral traditions were transcribed, sometimes even translated into English, and published in the press. In the apartheid era, this form of struggle continued. The work of one scholar and author in particular, AC Jordan, is examined to determine whether indigenous folktales were reclaimed and recreated into a hybrid written form which symbolised the heterogeneity of cultural-literary influences in postcolonial, apartheid South Africa.

In post-apartheid South Africa, a belief in the potency of folktale texts to signify cultural identity persists. A »new nationalist« discourse aimed at healing the rifts of apartheid, has claimed the folktale text as one of its tools. To bridge cultural gaps, especially between children, folktale texts are published in glorious, polychromatic, innovative forms which promote the texts as both culturally educational, and entertaining. Representing cultural difference, though, is a complex and risky process which first requires a re-historicisation of the written folktale genre in South Africa, and the rearticulation of difference in positive terms. This thesis questions whether the failure of scholars to do this has resulted in the prevalence of neo-colonialist modes of writing about, creating and publishing folktale texts.

I have restricted this study to written English texts of Xhosa folktales. This restriction allows for focus on colonial texts and contemporary popularised texts, without spilling over into related topics such as translation, the oral-written interface, tales in indigenous languages or performance studies. This thesis employs mainly postcolonial approaches derived from Michel Foucault's rearticulation of the »subject«, and Homi Bhabha's schema of a colonialist discourse, to analyse Thea's colonialist discourse, and the neo-colonialist and »new nationalist« discourses of contemporary scholars and authors. The purpose is not to examine the actual processes of colonial translation and transcription, which are not accessible. Rather, the *cultural* translation and transcription which are evident in the written English folktale texts are explored. This thesis is, then a cultural-literary study which analyses the broader discourses in which folktale texts are embedded.

I am acutely aware of my own precarious subject position as a scholar who desires not to impose an objectifying, ›western‹ academic discourse onto the chosen topic, yet armed with theory, I aim to analyse written English versions of Xhosa folktales. By remaining cognisant of the diverse, interpenetrating, and sometimes antagonistic dimensions of specific colonial cultural relations, and by describing *practices*, and understanding the *processes* which constitute them, rather than drawing theoretical conclusions, I hope to ›open up hybrid sites and objectives of struggle‹ (Bhabha 1994:25).

My own multi-disciplinary approach mirrors the synthesis inherent in the folktale texts. Also, MJ Hooper appeals to scholars in the field to recognise their position as cross-cultural interpreters: ›If cross-culturality is one of the most insistent pressures bearing on a postcolonial theory of narrative, as I believe it is, it is incumbent upon us as critics to take cognisance of our ethnographic positioning‹ (1994:22). My ethnographic position *in-between* cultures, being a second-generation South African Indian, offers me a Janus-faced perspective which, together with reflexivity, is a deterrent against polemical rhetoric and generalising conclusions. Finally, this thesis is undertaken with the awareness that in engaging with the narrativity of discourse, I am myself ›inventing a narrative‹ - but the narrative to follow is one which makes visible within its forms, its own strategies and practices.

Chapter One outlines the theoretical framework of this thesis. In my research I found that there were no in depth postcolonial studies of written folktales in South Africa. Seeing this as a huge omission in the field of folklore, I set about mapping a marriage of postcolonial theory and

folklore studies. The progeny of this marriage is, hopefully, an analytic tool which can suitably and effectively tackle the subject of written folktale texts, whether they be part of a nineteenth century colonialist discourse, or a twenty-first century nationalist discourse. In the course of the outline, the two bodies of theory are subject to rigorous criticism.

Chapter Two offers an analysis of GM Theal's specific colonialist discourse. First his life-story, and then his narrative of the colonisation of South Africa are examined, to show how Theal formulated for himself, and for the Xhosa peoples, identities which consolidated the colonialisms he supported. The contradictions in Theal's discourse are of primary interest because they are indicators of his ambivalent responses to cultural difference and similarity.

Chapter Three focusses specifically on Theal's collection of folktale texts, Kaffir Folklore (1882).

I argue that these folktale texts, although a part of Theal's colonialist discourse, are hybrid, containing the voices of both coloniser and colonised. This hybridity undermines Theal's discourse and draws attention to the agency of his colonised co-authors.

Chapter Four describes the position of contemporary written folktales in a neo-colonialist and 'new nationalist' discourse. The optimistic belief of scholars and authors, that folktales are a means of bridging cultural gaps, is questioned. Finally, it is shown that folktale texts can synthesise diverse literary traditions in a hybrid artform. This synthesis, to some extent, embodies the 'new nationalist' aim of a unified national cultural identity in South Africa.

A Note on Terminology:

Colonial is used to primarily to denote the era of South African colonisation by the British and the Dutch. The focus is on nineteenth century colonial activity.

Colonialist refers to discourses which were specifically concerned with consolidating and legitimating colonisation.

Postcolonial refers to the umbrella term which is applied to various disciplines concerned with understanding colonial relations and the subtleties of colonial discourses. It also refers to the era which succeeded colonisation. Further, it denotes a subject position opposed to colonialist or neo-colonialist power structures.

Folklore is the disciplinary field and the subject which covers both written and oral forms of traditional and popular culture.

Neo-colonialist refers to the discourses which reproduce colonialist discursive strategies or use new and different modes to assert dominance over other cultures based cultural difference.

>new nationalist= is the term used to describe the nationalist discourse prevalent in South Africa today which is disseminated by the government of >national unity= and is aimed at unifying the diverse peoples of the nation in a single, homogenised cultural identity whilst respecting cultural difference. This is not the same as the discourse of African Nationalism, although they do strongly overlap.

hybrid is used to signify both the postcolonial analytic trope, as well as the cultural and aesthetic processes of convergence of difference. The status of hybrid is not claimed for specific texts, identities or cultures only, but the specificities of certain hybrid forms are examined for their particular significance.

Chapter One

Tandem Theory

I

Even though the emergence of human science disciplines concerned with oral traditions (ethnography, folkloristics, history and anthropology) in nineteenth-century South Africa is deeply implicated in the hegemonic discourses of colonialism which were in circulation at the time, there exists a disciplinary gap between postcolonial studies and the study of oral traditions and related fields in South Africa today. There is an urgent need to historicise folkloristics, in particular, from a postcolonial perspective, so that the specific colonial cultural relations¹ which occurred as a result of such disciplinary enquiry, and their legacy to current cultural relations in South Africa, may be understood. This thesis will therefore draw from, and try to draw together, two main bodies of theory: postcolonial theory and folklore theory. Looking at colonial cultural relations and written folktale production, I need the tools of both postcolonial critique and folklore studies, but there is a strange estrangement between the two bodies of theory. I will therefore explore how postcolonial studies and folkloristics can be used in tandem to explain the cultural-literary² dimensions of presenting Xhosa folktales in English. In this chapter I draw theoretical links between postcolonial studies and folklore studies, and in later chapters I employ those combined insights to analyse GM Thea's colonialist discourse, and the nationalist and neo-colonialist discourses related to the publication of folktales for children in South Africa today.

On the one hand, postcolonial theory is a most suitable body of theory to draw from because one of the main aims of its enquiries is to describe those processes of colonisation which are to do

with representation and culture. Edward Said describes the aim of these enquiries as 'a massive intellectual, moral, and imaginative overhaul and deconstruction of Western representations of the non-Western world' (Said 1993:xxi). Also, in terms of methodology, the practice of postcolonial criticism, often acutely self-conscious of issues such as subjectivity, is a useful model for the purposes of this research. Section II of this chapter will elaborate on these uses of postcolonial theory and criticism, after first furnishing some background to this multifarious, highly contentious and fast-growing field.

On the other hand, the theories and methodologies of folklore, mainly of the American school,³ have begun to engage in earnest with the social and political implications of their projects. This is in addition to their existing tradition of structural and comparative analysis of the various genres of folklore. These trends have not yet extended to the study of folklore in South Africa, where such disciplinary revision is sorely needed. Section III of this chapter provides an overview of folklore theory.

In South Africa, no significant theoretical studies of Xhosa folktale texts from a postcolonial perspective have been undertaken. As a result, many texts of colonial origin, remain in circulation, either unrevised or uncritically adapted by contemporary authors. The *practice* of transcribing or re-telling tales has also been largely overlooked, with the result that neocolonialist transcription, editorial and publishing practices proliferate today. The most attention to Xhosa folktales has been paid by anthropologist and folklorist, Harold Scheub, who has conducted wide-scale studies of *iintsomi* and *iintsomi* performers, but his analyses are not concerned with

the wider discursive field in which the tales are embedded, nor is he interested in the colonial texts of the tales. He has focussed exclusively on structural and performative aspects of the tradition.

This neglect extends also to studies of Theal. The only scholarship I have encountered which evaluates the cultural impact of Theal's writing has been historical (viz. Saunders 1988, Smith 1988, Schreuder 1986 and Babrow 1962), and even these are sparse. His role as an ethnographer and folklorist has been neglected. Saunders is interested in the legacy of Theal's 'African myths' (Saunders 1988:36), but his emphasis is on historical issues, and certainly no cultural-literary analysis of Theal's writings has been done. The above historians barely mention Theal's interest in folktales.

Hence the central claims of this thesis. First, the transcription of traditional, oral Xhosa folktales into written, English texts was a colonialist process resulting in a particular hybrid literary form. This literary form needs to be examined from a postcolonial point of view, for what it reveals about relations between coloniser and colonised. Theal, as historian and collector of folktales in the Eastern Cape, was a central figure in this process. His folktale texts therefore need to be examined as part of his specific colonialist discourse.

The second major claim is that folktale texts reveal, and are instrumental in, the processes of cultural identity formation. This study focusses primarily on the identity of the 'author', Theal. Using his ethnographic texts, his histories and the folktale texts, I construct a model which describes the psychic motivations for his specific discursive strategies. In addition, the role of

folktale texts (specifically AC Jordan's) in the conception of African Nationalism is considered.

In South Africa today folktale texts in the form of popularised children's books are often couched in a neo-colonialist discourse, or they form part of a 'new nationalist' discourse geared towards nation-building. Contemporary tale texts from collections by such popular authors as Phyllis Savory and Dianne Stewart are examined for their complicity with these discourses, and their role in the creation of cultural identities.

Both postcolonial theory and the various theories and methodologies used by folklorists, are critically discussed. Hopefully, this positioning of the theory component as an additional object of analysis will facilitate a self-aware, metacritical use of the same theories while guarding against a simplistic or polemical objectification of the primary material. It is my intention to effect a marriage between postcolonial theory and folklore theory in order to make clear the links between colonialist discourses and folktale texts in South Africa.

II

Postcolonial Perspectives

The term 'Postcolonial' is variously defined and is applied to variegated branches of academic study. Most often the 'Post' in postcolonial is taken to refer to both an oppositional and a temporal stance. But the retrospective aspect⁴ of the term does not necessarily imply that colonisation or imperialism no longer exist, or that processes of decolonisation are not on-going. Mary Louise Pratt, in her paper 'Postcoloniality: An Incomplete Project?', argues that 'Postcolonial' is the name of a subject position from which one may continue to fight

monopolistic interpretive powers⁵. In this paper Pratt also comments on the appropriation of folklore as national capital in neo-colonial projects which deny people the means to auto-ethnographic representation. She cites Mexico as an example where folklore is collected by national bureaus which then commodify the material as corporate images. In the colonial context also, folklore was appropriated and processed as cultural capital for a global pool (Pratt 1999:n.p.).

Similarly, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, the editors of The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, see the postcolonial movement as having its roots in decolonisation, describing the movement as projects of counter-colonial resistance which drew upon the many different indigenous local and hybrid processes of self-determination to defy, erode and sometimes supplant the prodigious power of imperial cultural knowledge (Ashcroft et al 1995:1). These projects were of a creative and critical nature. But even though the term postcolonial has its roots in the formal processes of decolonisation, the term is applied today to resistance against subtler forms of neo-colonialism. However, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue that to maintain effective focus, even though the field is heterogeneous, theorists and critics need to remember that post-colonial studies are based in the historical fact of European colonialism, and the diverse material effects to which this phenomenon gave rise (Ashcroft et al 1995:2).

In South Africa, scholars have mainly recorded the actual events and statistics of colonialism, but few have analysed *how* those events and statistics were recorded and by *whom*. As Leon De Kock points out, There is very little scholarly work on South Africa in which a general

introduction to the representational basis of colonialism is offered, and scant scholarship which reads history as a cultural text (1996:18)⁶. With reference to Theal, no literary scholar has yet tackled the folklore texts, and no anthropologist has examined the ethnographic works. Theal's folktale collections are interwoven with his ethnographies and histories of Southern African peoples. Therefore, a study of Theal's folktales texts calls for a multi-disciplinary approach incorporating tools and perspectives from both postcolonial studies and folkloristics.

One of the main issues examined by postcolonial theory is the construction of colonial discourses. These discourses may have existed discretely in former settler colonies, or be discourses more broadly prevalent in contemporary society, for example the theoretical discourses of Western metropolitan centres. Many postcolonial scholars are influenced by Michel Foucault's arguments concerning the role of discourses in the construction of human subjects, particularly classificatory discourses used in the differentiation and government of populations. The various dynamics of power and knowledge existing within and through discourses are prime sites for postcolonial analyses and interventions, and it is this scholarship which forms the theoretical basis for a politics of identity.

Foucault's legacy to postcolonial studies is to draw attention to the epistemological and discursive nature of power. For the purposes of this study, Foucault's rearticulation of the 'the subject' in order to describe discursive practices, is crucial for the conceptualisation of identity and identity formation. Foucault's aim was to historicise the traditional conception of 'the subject' as an autonomous and stable entity, by providing an account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework (1980:115). Foucault warns that what we require is not a theory of the

knowing subject, but rather a theory of discursive practice (1970:xiv). Stuart Hall summarises

Foucault's reconceptualisation of 'the subject':

The subject is produced as an effect through and within discourse, within specific discursive formations, and has no existence, and certainly no transcendental continuity or identity from one subject position to another ... discourses construct subject positions through their rules of formation and modalities of enunciation.

(1996:10)

Hence, I will argue, discourses produce subjects and subject positions *from* and *about* which power and knowledge are articulated. For example, in a colonialist discourse, its key agent, the *colonising* subject, is produced. Within and through the colonialist discourse the *colonising* subject articulates knowledge about the *colonised* subject. This knowledge is strategic knowledge which inscribes the *colonised* as much as it reflexively describes the *coloniser*. The *colonised* subject is ascribed a subject position as the object of the *coloniser's* knowledge. An asymmetrical power relationship is thereby constituted. This intersubjective power/knowledge relationship is a culturally and historically specific, ongoing and dialectical process. In Chapter Two, I apply this interpretation to Thea's colonialist discourse.

One of the dangers of Foucault's theory of 'the subject' is that 'Discursive subject positions become *a priori* categories which individuals seem to occupy in an unproblematic fashion' (McNay 1994:76-77). Therefore, in Chapter Two, I also trace the development of the specific subject position which Thea came to occupy whilst collecting the Xhosa folktales and writing the ethnography of the Xhosa people. Also, I treat this subjectivity as mutable and ambivalent. Thea is not regarded merely as the product of discourse, but also as its agent.

Homi K Bhabha, in a programmatic statement, describes a colonialist⁷ discourse as 'A form of

discourse crucial to the binding of a range of *differences* and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization (1994:67; my emphasis). Bhabha emphasises the crucial concept, *difference*, in the description of colonialist discourses. In The Location of Culture (1994), Bhabha outlines the minimum conditions and specifications of a colonialist discourse, drawing from both Foucault's theories of discourse and Lacan's psychoanalytical models. To summarise, he describes it as 'an apparatus with a strategic function' (both terms borrowed from Foucault) which turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical *differences* (Bhabha 1994:70). Within recent postcolonial theorising, Bhabha has shifted the focus of colonial discourse analysis to the realm of identity-formation, psychic affect and the operations of the unconscious.

Bhabha comments on the dichotomising role of narratives in the process of colonialist identification: 'The legends, stories, histories and anecdotes of a colonial culture offer the subject a primordial Either/Or' (1994:75). In other words, the coloniser finds in the culture of the colonised something to identify with or something to reject. Here Bhabha is drawing from Lacan's theory of 'The Imaginary' in which Lacan asserts that the subject assumes a discrete image of itself during the formative mirror phase, and this image allows the subject to postulate a series of samenesses with objects of the surrounding world. This results in a process of identification which recognises difference/splitting through an identification with sameness. Bhabha's adopts this psychoanalytic theory to describe how a colonialist discourse is structured by both identification with sameness and denial of difference. He sees the contradictory psychic responses of the coloniser to the colonised Other ('that >otherness= which is at once an object of desire and derision' [1994:67]), as evidence of a profound ambivalence, an ambivalence which

ruptures and destabilises the discourse of the coloniser.

Bhabha also describes a colonialist discourse as resembling

a form of narrative whereby the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognizable totality. It employs a system of representation, a regime of truth, that is structurally similar to realism.

(1994:71)

Here Bhabha is making a similar claim to Edward Said, who, in his seminal Orientalism, says 'The kind of language, thought, and vision I have been calling orientalism very generally is a form of *radical realism*' (1978:48). The narratives of the coloniser are presented as the 'truth'. A story is created by the coloniser which informs the other subjects of the 'true' nature of their world and their respective roles in this world. The colonised subject is named, pointed to and fixed in this story (Bhabha 1994:71). The discourse resembles a realist narrative⁸ text. In such a context the subjects are disproportionately placed in opposition or domination through the symbolic decentring of multiple power relations (Bhabha 1994:72). But this is not to say that a colonialist discourse is monologic or unified. As Foucault would argue, the relationship between the participants in such a context would be an agonistic one - one of 'reciprocal incitation and struggle' and 'permanent provocation' (1982:86). This agonism renders a colonialist discourse particularly contradictory and conflictual. In Chapter Two I outline 'The' narrative of South African colonialism, showing it to employ a 'regime of truth, that is structurally similar to realism', yet ambivalent and contradictory.

Bhabha has been strongly criticised for his use of psychoanalytic theory. Robert Young questions

Bhabha's employment of the transcendental categories of psychoanalysis for the analysis of the historical phenomenon of colonialism (1990:144). Moore-Gilbert points out that Bhabha tends to take psychoanalytic theory at face value, never questioning either its assumptions and premises or, more importantly, its applicability to non-Western psychic cultural problematics (1997:141). Moore-Gilbert goes on to chastise Bhabha for having no conception of psychoanalysis as a specifically Western narrative of knowledge which may have been complicit in the production of modernity and, more particularly, modernity's Others (1997:141). In particular, Bhabha does not address Freud's couching of his theories of the unconscious in racialised terms, or Lacan's neglect of race or class as categories of identity.

Although not directly responding to such criticism, Bhabha manages to partially defend his use of psychoanalysis. In his foreword to Fanon's Black Skins, White Masks, he proposes that his strategy of subversion employs the psychoanalysis of colonialism as a site of resistance: It is from that tension [operating within the processes of colonialist authority] - both psychic and political - that a strategy of subversion emerges (1986:xxiii). He also explains Fanon's use of psychoanalysis as being compelled by this ambivalence of the colonialist subject:

And it is that bizarre figure of desire, which splits along the axis on which it turns, that compels Fanon to put the psychoanalytic question of the desire of the subject to the historic condition of colonial man.

(1986:xiv-xv)

My specific complaint with Bhabha is not with his use of psychoanalysis, which, when applied in a specific context, is highly effective in mapping the strategies and dissonances of this figure of desire within a colonialist discourse. Furthermore, his use of psychoanalysis may be seen as a form of mimicry which talks back to western human science discourses. The problem, though,

is that his theories are often over-generalised and homogenised. He does not always make the crucial distinction between coloniser and colonised when describing processes of identification in psychoanalytic terms. In the case of the coloniser (more often than not a white male of European origin), the ›western‹ psychoanalytic model may be fruitfully applied, but the same does not necessarily hold for the ›native‹ colonised subject. Bhabha's homogeneous model of the ›colonial subject‹ leads to further conflations: his description of a ›colonial discourse‹ is in fact a description only of a generalised colonialist discourse. Nevertheless, when a specific colonialist discourse such as Thea's is historicised, Bhabha's postcolonial reformulation of psychoanalytic theory is extremely useful for mapping the psychic motivations of the discursive strategies in question.

Elleke Boehmer also posits a theory of psychic affect for her description of colonialist discourses. Maintaining her central argument - that ›interpretation of other peoples on the basis of a known symbolic system‹ (Boehmer 1995:14) was at the heart of the British imperial drive in the nineteenth century - she points to the ›fascination with difference [which] competed with a reliance on sameness and familiarity‹ (1995:16). Boehmer describes such practices as ›[c]lassifications and codes imported from Europe ... matched to peoples, cultures, and topographies that were entirely un-European‹ (1995:17). This use of imported tropes or ›migrant metaphors‹ (Boehmer 1995: title) in the construction of a colonialist discourse is evident in Thea's collections of folktales where the tales are edited and modified for consumption by a European audience.

Drawing from the above theories on colonialist discourses, I now offer a hypothesis for Thea's discursive strategies relating to Xhosa ethnography and folklore. The hypothesis takes the form

of a schema of psychic responses to cultural difference and similarity. I call this schema, which is designed to step beyond the binary model of subjectivity explicit in colonialist discourses (and implicit in some postcolonial analyses), the *model of double polarity* (see Figure 1).

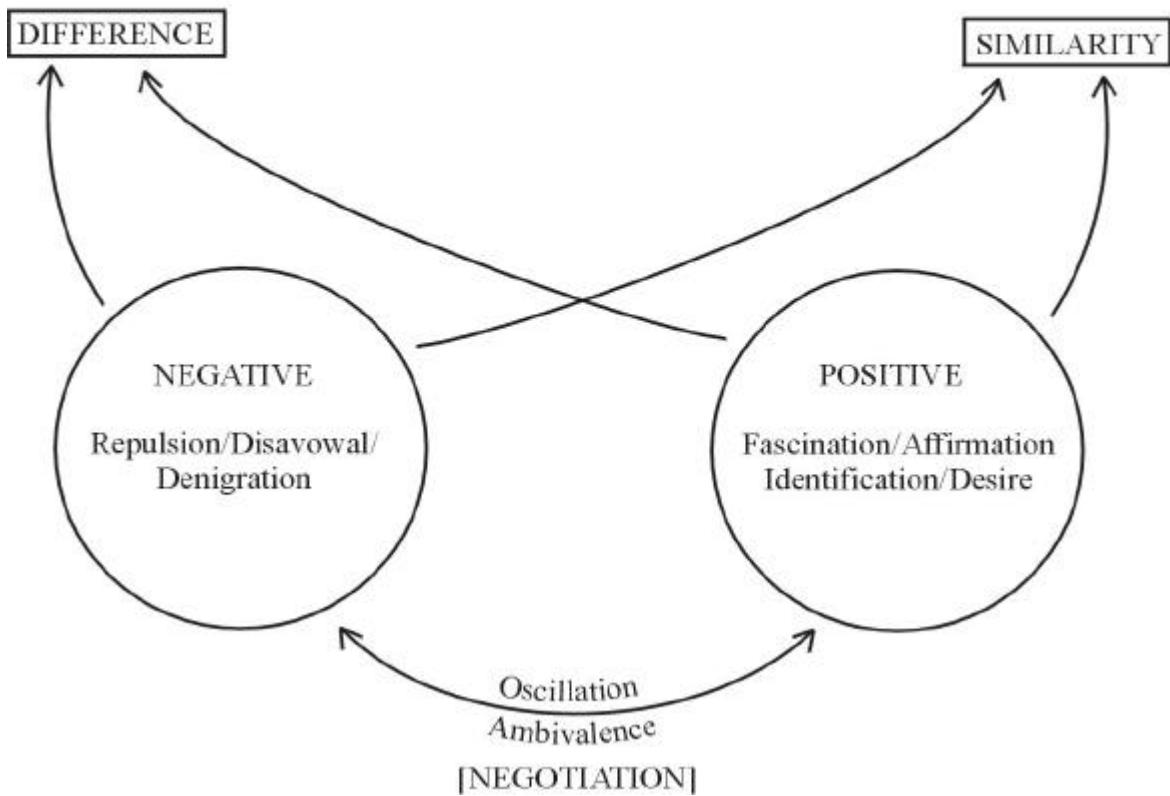
Theal encountered both difference and similarity in the Xhosa. He responded to difference and similarity both negatively and positively. He was fascinated by difference and he was repelled by it. He was also fascinated by precisely that similarity which posed a threat to him. Theal oscillated between these negative and positive poles of response, affirming or disavowing difference and similarity according to the demands of his racialised and hierarchised discourse. These oscillations account for the contradictions and ambivalences of his discourse. In the preface to Kaffir Folklore, Theal expresses his fascination for cultural sameness and strangeness:

These tales also show the relationship between tribes and people of *different* countries and even of *different* languages. They are evidences that the *same* ideas are common to every branch of the human family at the *same* stage of progress. On this account, it is now generally recognised that in order to obtain correct information concerning an uncivilised race, a knowledge of their folklore is necessary. Without this a survey is no more complete than, for instance, a description of the English people would be if no notice of English literature were taken.

(1882:v-vi; my emphasis)

Difference is used to show the gap in ~~civilisation~~ between ~~An uncivilised race~~ and ~~English people~~. Yet at the same time, the tales had to be familiarised and domesticated by Theal, who anticipated the tastes of a European audience. Identification of similarities are used by Theal as a point of departure for his comparative and discriminatory postulations. For example, basic similarities allow for hierarchical comparisons based on evolutionary theory to be made. Onto destabilising difference Theal projects a myth of heathen depravity describing some of the ~~alien~~ customs in the tales as ~~A gross licentiousness~~ (Theal 1882:205). Uncomfortable similarities are also treated in this way.

Figure 1. The Model of Double Polarity



- \$ The model maps psychic responses to cultural difference and similarity.
- \$ Responses to both difference and similarity can be negative or positive, or they can oscillate between the negative and positive poles.
- \$ This oscillation accounts for the ambivalences which are manifest in the subjects discourse.
- \$ The oscillation also provides the space for negotiation

The *model of double polarity* helps avoid some of the major pitfalls in postcolonial theory. One is the perpetuation of the use of the binary model of subjectivity, often at the core of colonialist discourses. Gayatri Spivak, in her discussion of *The narrow epistemic violence of imperialism* (1988:28) describes this use of the model as the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogenous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other (1988:24). The result, according to Spivak, is the construction of the colonial subaltern. But what exactly is this binary model of subjectivity and how does it operate? JanMohamed, describing the binarism as *A Manichean Allegory* (1985:18), explains how the use of the model is prompted in the colonial situation: *AFaced with an incomprehensible and multifaceted alterity, the European theoretically has the option of responding to the Other in terms of identity or difference* (1985:18). One of the earliest and most influential explorations of colonialism as Manichean dualism is Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which he asserts that the >native= is constituted as *Athe negation of all values* (1961:31).

De Kock sees this dichotomy of coloniser/colonised, self/other, as having its roots in the *Atraditional humanist conception of subjectivity* (1996:10). According to De Kock's argument, *AIt is this unified, rational, controlled subject of humanism* (1996:10) which privileges itself above the heathen, abject colonial other. Deriving from the imposition of such a scheme, according to theorists such as Bhabha, are the discursive strategies of stereotyping and fetishising of the colonised other. These, together with an array of similar strategies, serve to reinforce the processes of signification which constitute cultural colonisation. Subjects and subject positions of colonialist and neo-colonialist discourses are thus created.

Recent developments in postcolonial studies have alerted critics to the pitfalls of analysing

colonialist discourses in terms of such a binary model of subjectivity. Spivak herself alludes to the possibility that the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of Other as the Self's shadow (Spivak 1988:24). Her most recent work, A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present (1999), launches a scathing attack on metropolitan postcolonial theory. In this work it is specifically the American academic practitioner who is accused of being Abogus and of objectifying natives of ex-colonies. The accusation is that the critic reproduces the assumptions inherent in what is essentially a reductive model by, for example, ascribing agency to the coloniser only and voicelessness to the colonised.

What De Kock therefore advocates is that the postcolonial critic

differentiate between binarisms in their primary operations as historically embedded discursive effects, widely employed by colonisers themselves, and sceptical appraisal of the ambit of such binarisms - appraisal that does not underestimate the range and scope of such dualistic schemes in their *historical* sense, nor imagines that the experience of colonialism itself is in any way reducible to the effects of these binaries alone.

(1996:16)

My appraisal of the binarisms in Thea's discourse is mindful of the above counsel. Although the use of binary schemas is an important facet of Thea's discourse, it is by no means the only strategy employed by him, as an application of the *model of double polarity* reveals. Further, it is borne in mind that such processes of identity formation are highly complex, mutable and subject to resistance.

A second pitfall of postcolonial theory is the unreflective use of theory. Moore-Gilbert points out that postcolonial theory is often attacked for being Acomplicit with the dominant neo-colonial regimes of knowledge (1997:3). By this he means that postcolonial theory, with its debt to the

theoretical heritage (viz. postmodernism, poststructuralism and psychoanalysis) of the ›western‹, metropolitan academies, might be seen to perpetuate a world order in which the ›west‹ is still effectively privileged over the ›orient‹. Aijaz Ahmad is likewise vehemently critical of postcolonial theory, voicing his suspicions of the ‹western' institutional location and affiliations of scholars like Said, Bhabha and Spivak, and claims that, by selecting ›Third World‹ culture as its object of study, postcolonial theory reinforces the centre-periphery relationship which is at the core of colonialist discourse (Moore-Gilbert 1997:18-19).

However, the use of theory to carry out such an analysis is best defended by Bhabha whose revision of the history of critical theory forms the introductory chapter of The Location of Culture (1994). There, he urges that we understand the tension within critical theory between its institutional containment and its revisionary force (1994:32). He differentiates between the institutional history of critical theory and its conceptual potential for change and innovation (1994:31). What Bhabha ultimately advocates is a politically committed theoretical perspective which takes into account the various dynamics of power and knowledge which are a part of any discourse - this perspective should be articulated from a Third Space or a split-space or in-between space (Bhabha 1994:38) where the processes of the enunciation of culture (1994:34) occur. He describes this location in the following way:

In such a discursive temporality, the event of theory becomes the *negotiation* of contradictory and antagonistic instances that open up hybrid sites and objectives of struggle, and destroy those negative polarities between knowledge and its objects, and between theory and practical-political reason.

(1994:25; emphasis in original)

According to Benita Parry, this identification by Bhabha of the multiple and contradictory articulations of colonialist discourses, liberates the colonial from its debased inscription as

Europe's monolithic and shackled Other' (1987:41). Parry, in defiance of the standard criticism heaped on Bhabha, goes on to praise Bhabha for recovering a 'Native voice' which, in the 'Hybrid moment' of its emergence, reveals the uncertainties and ambivalences of the colonialist text (1987:41-2). By using theory to formulate a strategy of subversion based on ambivalence, Bhabha, not only 'Liberates the colonial' [ie. colonised subject], but also reinscribes theory with respectability. In a kind of meta-performance of mimicry, Bhabha uses theory not only to subvert theory, but also to redeem it. Certainly in Thea's texts, it is the interstices and dissonances which are most revealing of colonial cultural relations, and in particular, they throw light on Thea's processes of identity formation. In addition, the hybrid nature of Thea's folktale texts, with their Xhosa cultural content and their European stylistic modifications, renders their status particularly ambivalent as appropriations *and* transgressions.

I take Bhabha's cue regarding the use of a 'Third Space' for the articulation of theory. I am acutely aware of my own precarious subject position as a scholar who desires not to impose another layer of objectifying, 'western', postcolonial discourse onto the chosen topic, yet armed with theory, I aim to analyse written English versions of Xhosa folktales. The 'Third Space' is not necessarily a safe space. By remaining cognisant of the diverse, interpenetrating, and sometimes antagonistic dimensions of specific colonial cultural relations, and by understanding the *processes* which constitute them rather than drawing theoretical conclusions, I hope to 'open up hybrid sites and objectives of struggle'.

Another pitfall of the use of postcolonial theory is the adoption of the objectifying and alienating rhetoric used by some 'western' scholars. Aijaz Ahmad describes it as an 'Inflationary rhetoric', and more specifically, he describes Bhabha's discourse as 'A very arcane' (in Moore-Gilbert

1997:21). In a recent review of Spivak's A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason, Terry Eagleton describes her rhetorical style as 'Obscurantism', accusing her of thus widening the gap between herself and the 'Natives' whom she champions (London Review of Books:13 May 1999). Some postcolonial theorists are accused of creating and operating with an exclusive and insular discourse which muffles its own subversive aims. Robert Young constructs a scheme of the narrative of Bhabha's theories, observing that he jumps from one conceptual scheme to another, baffling the reader and obscuring the thread of his argument. Young then considers whether this is a deliberate strategy aimed at avoiding the 'same structures of power and knowledge in relation to its material as the colonial representation itself' (1990:146). The upshot of such a style, Young argues, is to avoid the logocentric foreclosure inherent in colonialist discourses by introducing ambivalences and dissonances into one's argument. I am not convinced that such an intention necessitates the use of a largely inaccessible rhetoric.

Further, some postcolonial theorists have been criticised for their 'interdisciplinary ambitions', mainly by historians and anthropologists who feel that, as literary critics expand their fields to incorporate texts from areas other than just traditional literature, the transgressed areas are subjected to trivial inspection. Said, especially, was singled out for this sort of criticism (Moore-Gilbert 1997:14). De Kock's pertinent observation with regards to this criticism, after remarking on the significance of studying culture and discourse in South Africa, is:

The potential for cross-disciplinary engagement between history and this kind of theory [postcolonial] would therefore seem to be self-evident, but the literary and the historical have generally not been allowed to converge in the field of South African cultural-historical debate.

(1996:6)

De Kock's book, Civilising Barbarians (1996), is an attempt at just such a collaborative reading of colonial relations. Moreover, the variegated shape of postcolonial theory mirrors the shape of

its object. If postcolonial theory is to describe the various effects of colonisation, covering cultural and material processes, then a set of heterogeneous disciplinary tools are required.

The use of a multi-disciplinary approach is especially valuable to this study because the primary material does not constitute a formal genre of English literature. Rather the selected texts fall under the areas of ethnographic writing, history, folklore and children's literature. Some of the folktale texts undergo a literary analysis. Viewed as part of a colonialist, a neo-colonialist and a nationalist discourse, the political and cultural aspects of the texts also need to be highlighted. For these purposes, postcolonial theories offer a range of conceptual tools which are themselves generically and discursively hybrid. It is with the above requirements in mind that I now turn to the second body of theories which underpins this study - the theories of folklore.

III

Folklore Revisited

The genealogy of folklore as a discipline is multi-disciplinary. In the nineteenth century, in Europe, the study of folklore formed part of the development of 'human science' disciplines such as philology and anthropology, which experienced a boom in primary material as more and more 'foreign' territories were colonised. Philology (the study of civilisation from the perspective of language), which provided the methodology for folklore, was preoccupied with racial typologies and hierarchies, and was often bound up with cultural nationalism (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:289). In this approach the literature (including the oral literature) of a nation was taken as an indicator of its level of development on the 'ladder of civilisation'. The discourses of philology and anthropology, coupled with the discourse of social evolutionism,⁹ were to prove highly

significant for the study of folklore in the colonies in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Many scholars consider the Grimm brothers to be the forerunners of the discipline and they have often been referred to as 'the fathers of folklore'.¹⁰ The brothers, who lectured on German philology and classical antiquity at Berlin University, published their first collection of folktales, *Kinder-und Hausmarchen*, in 1812. Their work had far-reaching influence, and has been the subject of useful critique. Charles Briggs points out that recent critics are divided 'on the nature and legitimacy of the Grimms' sources and editorial practices' and he questions whether they are to be regarded as 'disciplinary heroes or discredited patriarchal figures' (1993:392-393). This debate is Briggs' main focus and rather than examine the transcription methods and practices of the Grimms, he chooses to, firstly, 'focus on the rhetoric used to imbue these practices with authority and to characterise their epistemological status' - what Briggs calls 'metadiscursive practices' (1993:388). This attention to discourse in relation to folklore studies is a new and rare approach in the area and it has yet to be fully explored by South African scholars.

Secondly, the work of the Grimms has been linked to the emergence of romantic nationalism and the reconstruction of an 'authentic' folk literature in Germany.¹¹ Thirdly, Briggs notes that 'the Grimms selected texts and edited their content in order to render them appropriate reading material for the children of the emerging bourgeoisie' (1993:393). This link between socio-political context and the rise of folklore as a discipline in Germany is a highly significant one to make, because it problematises the origins of the discipline itself. As mentioned above, folklore has been plagued by accusations of either class or race biases. These accusations have coloured the discipline as a 'western', elitist project intent upon objectifying the subaltern 'folk'.

›Folklore= is further complicated because it refers to the discipline as well as the disciplinary subject. The term 'folklore' was first used in 1846 as an alternative to 'popular antiquities' or 'popular literature', and it referred to the "survivals" from the past (Thoms 1846:862). This coining of the term in opposition to 'high', contemporary culture has tainted the discipline. As William Murphy argues, the term

sets up derogatory distinctions between oral and written forms of literature: calling the former folklore invokes connotations of something simple, crude and less 'civilized'. These negative associations in the word 'folklore' have adhered to the term throughout its intellectual history. Although professional folklorists argue that they use the term technically without those associations, it is an unavoidable fact that nineteenth-century ethnocentrism weighs heavily on the term in its present-day usage.

(Murphy in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:303)

To counteract this taint some scholars have attempted an extreme democratisation of the term. In Dundes' very influential book, Interpreting Folklore (1980), chapter one is devoted to a discussion of the term 'folk', where Dundes offers his own, loose definition of the term. He chooses to view the term as 'heterogeneous' or as an 'independent variable' which could refer to any group of two or more people with one common factor or common core of traditions e.g. a nation, a family, surfers, lumberjacks etc. (1980:6). This definition is ultimately so loose that I doubt it has any practical value for folklore practitioners.

Other scholars have attempted to re-historicise the term. David Kerr, a folklorist working in Zambia, notes that the association in Africa of folklore with colonial administration has 'brand[ed] Folklore Studies with a kind of original sin' (Kerr in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 304). He further claims that it is not enough to identify and confess the colonial sins associated with folklore, because the stigma carried by the term remains. Can the term ever achieve respectability? Even

when employed by native intellectuals in nationalist projects aimed at rejecting the culture of colonial power and resignifying native culture (e.g. Fanon 1968:206-248), folklore does not gain respectability as a discipline (because it is recovered for reasons of political expediency), nor as a form of popular resistance (because of its official control). For Kirshenblatt-Gimblett the answer lies not in the name, but in the game. She encourages a realisation that folklore is not only a disciplinary subject and disciplinary formation...but also a mode of cultural production (1998:305). Sounding very much like a postcolonial scholar pressing for discourse analysis, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls for awareness of the processes of knowledge production and the politics of representation:

Folklore's facticity is rather to be found in the ways that particular objects or behaviours come to be identified, and understood, as folklore. This is the enabling moment for the discipline, for folklorization is something we do in order to create our disciplinary subject, even if those caught in our disciplinary net protest.

(1998:305)

In short, the discourses which constituted folklore as a discipline formulated a topic and a field of enquiry which answered specific governing statements and produced strategic knowledge about specific groups of people (Foucault 1980:145). These discourses then gained currency and institutional authority in Europe, and with the advent of colonialism, the discursive field soon widened. With all this in mind, it is clear why a postcolonial approach to the study of folklore in South Africa is necessary in order to fully uncover its complicity with colonial discourses, and in order to trace (and counter) the legacy of taint which still colours the discipline and its object today.

In the case of Theal, his collections of folktales formed an important part of his ethnographic discourse. This was the case with many of the colonial collections of folklore in South Africa:

they formed part of larger, ›scientific‹ studies aimed at describing the African colonised subject to a European audience.¹² The Comaroffs, in Ethnography and the Historical Imagination (1992), present an incisive critique of ethnography while defending the discipline. They do, however, readily point out that ethnography is Areminiscent of the early biological sciences, where clinical observation, the penetrating human gaze, was frankly celebrated, and that it is impossible to rid the discipline of ethnocentrism (8,10). This ethnocentrism has its origins in colonial collections of folklore which attempted to ›capture‹ the otherness of Africa for a white, middle class, Victorian audience.

Not only does postcolonial theory point to these folklore texts as part of a system of representation, it identifies specific tropes employed in these texts, such as universalism, fetishism, or stereotyping. For instance, one of the strongest discursive strategies in the colonial folktale texts is infantilisation of the colonised subject. Infantilisation has been identified as one of the key ways in which racial difference has been represented in a racist discourse (Hall 1997:262). The ›primitive‹, childlike state of the African subject in comparison to the mature, ›civilised‹ nature of the coloniser was highlighted in this way, thus consolidating, for the coloniser, his superior position and the subordinate status of the colonised subject

This trope of infantilisation has its roots in Europe. Isabel Hofmeyr, like Briggs, points out that the brothers Grimm were Apart of the complex process of creating childhood (1996:90) by shaping folktales into literature specifically for children. She goes on to draw a parallel between these processes in Europe and the writing down of folktales in Africa during colonial times: Athe net result of mission intervention in the process of storytelling was to infantilize a form that had

previously been directed at both adults and children@ (1996:90). Hofmeyr's interpretation of this process is posited in postcolonial terms: APart of this came from the colonial belief in the childlike nature of African societies and their cultural products, but part of it also came from existing ideas in Europe regarding a literature especially for children@ (Hofmeyr 1996:90).

Such tropes were not eliminated by the development of the discipline after Thea's time. In Europe, in the first half of the twentieth century, the study of folklore had expanded but was largely subsumed in other disciplinary fields. During the interwar years experimentations in literary studies led to the Formalist analyses of folklore associated with Vladimir Propp and Roman Jakobson, which were to impact so strongly on the American school. In the 1880s when emigration to the United States from Eastern and Southern Europe was at its height, the *American Folklore Society* was founded. Postwar nationalist zeal in the United States led to the establishment of folklore as an independent university field (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 286,291), associated especially with the names Richard Dorson, William Bascom and Stith Thompson.

Dorson was a central figure in this process of institutionalisation. In the introduction to Folklore and Folklife he notes, uncritically, that Afolklore emerged as a new field of learning in the nineteenth century, when antiquaries in England and philologists in Germany began to look closely at the ways of the lower classes@ (1972:1). In this same introduction he also mentions the debt owed to the Grimm brothers for their contribution to the development of the field, but he offers no criticism of their methods or context. He certainly does not comment on the elitist assumptions inherent in the emerging field. With regards to its early disciplinary formation in the United States,

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett points to folklore as an ideological tool of either social reform or resistance to foreign domination, and as a practical instrument of administration at home and abroad (1998:286). This link to cultural nationalism is another of the taints which has dogged the discipline until this day, and is starkly evident in the use of folklore in the nationalist propaganda of postcolonial countries, and as in the case of South Africa, in a post-apartheid, new nationalist discourse aimed at reconstruction and reparation.

Another front-runner in the United States is Stith Thompson, who revised and translated the work of Finnish folklorist Antti Aarne in order to compile the first tale type index - Motif-Index of Folk Literature (1955 - 1958) in six volumes. This mammoth publication made a huge impact when it was published, and is still used extensively for comparative studies and by scholars using the historic-geographic method, often without their ever questioning the sources of the material contained in the index. The index might be viewed as a testimony to what Pratt calls the global classificatory project¹³ which characterised imperial writing (1999). This collection of material, re-ordering of it into a system, interpreting, encoding, publishing and then decoding of it, is the subject of many postcolonial studies (notably, Said's study of 'Orientalism'). Lidchi asserts that such a system is not reflective of the essential nature of cultural difference, but classifies and constitutes this difference systematically and coherently (1997:160-161).

One of the most easily recognised names in American folklore studies today is William Bascom. Bascom's most recent book (published posthumously), African Folktales in the New World (1992), questions whether folktales found in the United States came here from Europe or from Africa (xxiv). Using the Aarne-Thompson index, he offers summaries of different versions of the

same tale type. Each summary is prefaced by the country or state of origin and the vernacular language or tribal origin of the tale. After every summary Bascom quotes his source. Often these sources are colonial scholars (in fact Theal, and two other South African, colonial folklorists, Henry Callaway and WHI Bleek, are used extensively). Bascom does not question these sources, the conditions under which these tales were collected, or any possible modifications these collectors might have made. The same criticism applies to his use of the Aarne-Thompson index.

Bascom's facile use of 'evidence' is disturbing and indicates to what extent a text such as the Aarne-Thompson index can harden into hypostasis (White 1978:3), or form a regime of truth. Bascom describes his use of 'evidence': 'This is purely a library research project...The evidence has been sitting on library shelves, waiting to be analysed' (1992: xxiv). He is naive in his acceptance of Thompson's authority and comprehensiveness: 'Because Thompson cites no references to Europe (or India) for K1066, I conclude that this tale type came to the Americas from (and originated in) Africa' (1992:137). Anachronistically (he was conducting this research in the 1980s), Bascom was obsessed with origins and, although his proving that Afro-American tales originated in Africa and not Europe does go some way towards challenging Eurocentric cultural biases, he does not couch this project in postcolonial or revisionary terms. He is also guilty of making no reference to individual narrators or the performance context of these tales. Sadly, while Bascom makes a connection between Africa, the New World, colonialism and slavery, he never explores this connection in any interrogative way.

Some folklore scholars in the United States today are trail-blazing the marriage of folklore theory and postcolonial theory, but they are very few and far between. Most useful for this thesis have

been Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), who rehistoricises folklore as a particular mode of cultural production, Briggs (1993), who draws attention to the metadiscursive practices of folklorists, and Kapchan and Strong's recent publication in the *Journal of American Folklore*, 'Theorizing the Hybrid' (1999), which critically engages the metaphor of hybridity as it is currently employed in the analysis of narratives and discourses, genres and identities' (239).

In the latter half of the twentieth century two other scholars of folklore stand out for their exceptional contribution to the field. They are Ruth Finnegan and Isidore Okpewho, who have both published comprehensive accounts of the traditions of oral literature¹⁴ in the African continent (Finnegan 1970; Okpewho 1992). Extremely useful in both seminal texts are their summaries of the various approaches to the study of folklore. These summaries cover historical provenance, theoretical context as well as methodological practices. Finnegan provides a detailed discussion of the various 'schools of thought' of folklore under a chapter entitled 'Prose Narratives I. Problems and Theories' (1970: 314-334), and like Okpewho later, also offers a brief criticism of each approach. But what is evident in this text is Finnegan's reluctance to engage with issues which are directly political. Instead, Finnegan concludes this chapter with a mild reprimand against these approaches for having in common 'an implicit assumption that oral narratives in Africa (and other non-literate cultures) can be treated in a fundamentally different way from the literature of more familiar peoples' (1970:334). Finnegan does not in this text, or subsequent publications, offer explications for these assumptions, nor does she examine the processes whereby these assumptions enter the institutional discourses which constitute the field. Even when actually discussing colonial folklorists, Finnegan only refers to them vaguely as 'early scholars' and her criticism of their methods is lukewarm:

In many cases, furthermore, they were using quite inadequate sources, perhaps

secondhand (so that they themselves had not direct experience of the actual performance involved), or in synopsis only with the artistic elaborations or repetitions omitted. This in itself goes a long way to account for the very simplified impression of African oral literature we often receive from these collections.

(1970:13)

This is valid, but when Finnegan deals with colonial folklore practice she falls just short of offering a cogent critique. Her diffidence in this respect is all the more frustrating for her incisive and novel views in other areas within the field.¹⁵ For example, whilst making the observations that the main motive of many of these linguistic studies was to aid evangelization of Africa, and that grammars, vocabularies, and collections of texts appeared by and for missionaries (1970:28), she does not mention the effects of colonialist biases on such collections of texts. Moreover, she offers no thorough-going critique of the civilising mission. Although later in the same chapter, Finnegan presents a brief but insightful critique of the evolutionist approach and its influence on preconceptions about African oral literature, she does not link this approach with the work of missionaries.

Similarly, the following comment by Finnegan might be read as a veiled criticism of a universalising discourse:

Current prejudices may be false, but they go deep. And this is especially so when they are securely rooted in particular historical and cultural experiences, so that the familiar and traditional forms of a given culture come to be regarded as the natural and universal ones, expected to hold good for all times and places.

(1970:17)

She goes on to say, 'This kind of ethnocentric preconception has had to be revised by scholars in other spheres such as, for instance, the study of modes of political organization or religious

practices...@ (1970:18). However, these *other spheres* are obviously where Finnegan, at this stage in her career, is very hesitant to tread.

A closer look at Finnegan's early discourse reveals that she is guilty of more than just negligence. First, her use of sources is often unreflective. When examining language she uses CM Doke's study of *Bantu languages* (1970:57-68), without once questioning his methods or obvious condescension to his subject¹⁶ (1970:68). She also uses colonial sources, and although she alludes to the shortcomings of these scholars, she does not interrogate their discriminatory discourses. For example, she quotes Bleek, celebrating his recognition of the literary status of *Namaqa [sic] Hottentot tales*, but she is conspicuously silent about what can be interpreted as his derogatory, evolutionist-inspired comment: *The fact of such a literary capacity existing among a nation whose mental qualifications it has been usual to estimate at the lowest standard, is of the greatest importance* (1970:31). The contradictions in Finnegan's own discourse blind her to, or mask her awareness of, the contradictions inherent in the metadiscursive practices which constitute her subject of enquiry.

Second, Finnegan's use of personal pronouns reveals a binary model of *us* and *them* which obfuscates her subject position. Considering her project, one would expect Finnegan to cast herself in the role of unaffiliated, neutral scholar. Instead she aligns herself squarely with *western* academic traditions and the *western* reader. When she utters *In spite of the natural reluctance to regard very different verbal forms as of ultimately the same nature as our own familiar types* (1970:18; my emphasis), she is very clearly appealing to a *western* readership which shares her fears and fascinations for cultural difference and similarity. It is highly probable that a

book about African oral traditions would have a large African readership. Therefore, one has to ask, why did Finnegan not anticipate this in her authorial discourse?

Two decades later, to her credit, Finnegan takes a leap into a ›Third Space‹ of scholarship. In her 1992 publication, Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts, she employs a multidisciplinary approach which covers such diverse theoretical perspectives as Marxism, post-structuralism, narratology, discourse analysis, performance theory and ethnopoetics. Finnegan's use of pronouns in this text is markedly changed, perhaps because it is intended as a guide for anthropologists and therefore directly addresses them. The critical edge lacking in the earlier publication is evident in this one. While never abandoning her reluctance to squarely critique hegemonic discourses or to align herself with any specific theoretical paradigm, Finnegan nevertheless displays an awareness of the trends and developments in the field - an awareness which keeps her at the forefront of the folklore discipline - as the following quote reveals:

Equally striking is the growing awareness of the ›political‹ nature both of the material to be studied and of the research process itself. This is increasingly appreciated within anthropology, but also runs across many disciplines, from emphasis on the politics of language or of literary theory, to the socially constructed nature of artistic forms or the many-layered nature of human expression. Similarly there is now more sensitivity to the ethical and political issues of researching...

(Finnegan 1992:50-51)

A disciple of Finnegan's in many ways, Okpewho has gained considerable weight in the field in recent years, especially since the publication of African Oral Literature in 1992. For his summary of the various approaches to folklore, Okpewho draws heavily on Finnegan, especially for the discussions on the evolutionists and diffusionists (Okpewho:1992:5-9). There is an advance, though. For example, Okpewho questions Sir James Frazer's legacy to colonial scholars, and he

critiques the assumptions of such an approach. He also notes that the diffusionists 'mapped out the world' (1992:7) in order to trace the origins of European culture and that one of the main problems with this approach is that it assumed a hierarchical model of culture. He cites Stith Thompson's work The Folktale (1946) as an example of such 'mapping'. In this section Okpewho makes the crucial link between the boom period of ethnological research and the colonial period. He also recognises that many amateur ethnologists were also colonial administrators (1992:8). He then offers a theory about the effect of colonial scholarship on the texts of oral literature (1992:8-9).

Like Finnegan, one of Okpewho's main aims is to empower the individual performer, thus shifting the focus from foreign written texts about folklore to local oral performances. Both scholars are intent on combatting earlier approaches (such as diffusionism) which generalised and essentialised certain aspects of African folklore. Finnegan's recent work marks this shift to more interpretive and specific approaches: 'One theme is a greater concern with individual voices, repertoire and creativity, part of the move within anthropology and other disciplines from 'structure' to 'agency' (1992:51). Okpewho's call for the study of 'indigenous aesthetic and critical thought' and 'indigenous rational systems' (1992:366) is a bold one, and I imagine it receives both boos and cheers from postcolonial critics (Okpewho is a migrant to the 'west' having given up his post as professor at the University of Ibadan for his current post as head of the Afro-American and African Studies at the State University of New York). Nevertheless, he does draw attention to native African scholars who are researching African oral traditions (1992:14), and he also singles out Finnegan and Harold Scheub for their contributions to the field. He is especially impressed with Harold Scheub's focus, methodology and presentation (1992:16-17).

Even though Okpewho often emphasises the need to liberate African culture from the *‘prejudices of earlier European scholars’*, even though he critically evaluates the use of the terms *‘primitive’* and *‘savage’* in the discourse of the colonial scholars, and even though he sings the praises of the *‘New Trends’* which are sweeping through African literature (1992:17-18), he does not ever explicitly ally himself with the postcolonial project. However, in his method and theoretical insights, he in many ways borders on a marriage of folklore and postcolonial studies.

In South Africa the study of folklore has been marginalised. Never an institutional discipline in its own right, folklore has been studied here under the auspices of African Languages, Anthropology, English Literature, and more recently, Cultural Studies or Oral Literature Studies. There are, however, academic journals dedicated to folklore studies¹⁷, and recently the Oral Literature Association (ISOLA) was formed. Scholars are working in various areas within the broad field of oral literature: oral poetry (Jeff Opland, Russell Kaschula, Liz Gunner), historical narrative (Isabel Hofmeyr), and less so, folktales (Joan Neethling, Noverino Canonici). Scheub’s structural-formalist analyses have been the most sustained attention the Xhosa folktales have received.

However, little study of colonial scholarship in the area of folklore has been carried out. *Written* folktale texts, as part of an ethnographic discourse which defined race relations and formed the bulwark of cultural imperialism during colonial times and subsequently, have not been examined. This neglect has had a two-fold impact: crucial processes of cultural identity formation in the colonial era, which have import for the understanding of race relations in South Africa today, have not been explored; and folklore has not been properly defined as both discipline and object of

analysis. Moreover, since the 1970s there has been an upsurge in the publication of popularised versions of folktales aimed mainly at juvenile consumption. This upsurge has been linked to the search for a national cultural identity which forms part of the wider processes of reconstruction and reconciliation in South Africa. The trajectory between cultural identity formulations reflected in the colonial folktale texts, and similar processes reflected in these modern versions of the folktales, must be mapped out.

The approaches to folklore founded and propagated by European or American folklorists have had significant influence on such South African scholarship as there is. Sophonia Mofokeng, in her unpublished doctoral thesis (1954), carried out comparative investigations of tale types (A Biting the Foot and A The Stone Motif) using the authoritative Aarne-Thompson index. Joan Neethling's doctoral thesis (1979), in Afrikaans, is a structural analysis of Xhosa folktales, aimed mainly at relating the superficial structure of the tales to deeper, thematic elements, and is very much in the fashion of Levi-Strauss. Peter Mtuze included an examination of Xhosa folktales in his doctoral thesis (1990), A A Feminist Critique of the image of women in the prose works of selected Xhosa writers (1909-1980). He tried to ascertain whether the numerous stereotypes found in written Xhosa literature have their source in the folktale. These are the only three doctoral theses in South Africa, ranging from the 1950s to the 1990s, which deal with folktales in any significant way. None focus on the colonial collections of folktales, nor on the discourses which constitute the field of folklore studies.

Noverino Canonici has written extensively on the Zulu folktale tradition. His article, A The Folktale Tradition Yesterday and Today (1990), provides an overview of the tradition. Unfortunately, he

is uncritical of colonial issues. His main interest is a Proppian, morphological analysis of >functions= (syntactic and semantic elements) of the tales (1990:149-150). Like Finnegan, he skirts the issues of colonialism and apartheid. When discussing the impact of urbanisation on the folktale tradition, he does not mention political factors. He does not offer a criticism of the missionary collections of tales. Instead he admires their efforts: AConscious of the formative influence of the school, the early missionaries who compiled the first Zulu school readers made abundant use of both European and African didactic stories, while also introducing Biblical characters relevant to their religious education programmes.@ (1990:138-139). Canonici seems to be aware of the hybrid status of these texts, but does not explore its implications for cultural identity.

Canonici is guilty of some of the colonial misconceptions about the tradition. For example, he asserts that ATraditionally the audience was composed of children@ (1990: 131). Like Callaway, who named the Zulu folktales, Anursery tales@ in 1868, Canonici infantilises the tradition. The most alarming aspect of Canonici's discourse is his stereotypical image of African culture as exotic and primitive. This description of the performance context of the folktale, written in 1990, is reminiscent of colonial travel writing¹⁸ and fiction:

Imagine the effects of a subdued fire in the centre of a hut during a long winter night, when the flames cast an uneven reddish light on the faces of the people squatting around, while the ashes gradually cover the burning charcoal. Each movement of the storyteller is magnified by the shadows on the wall which lies in semi-darkness, while the outside world reverberates with the sounds and the mysteries of the African night, blanketed, as it were, by a thin cover of darkness. The performer's voice could ... become the echo of the innumerable sounds of the forest where predator animals are roaming in search of their daily supper...

(Canonici 1990:136)

Other scholars who have dealt cursorily with folktales have done so under the auspices of children's literature. Elwyn Jenkins, for example, has dedicated a chapter of his book Children of the Sun (1993) to 'Folktales in Translation'. In this chapter he covers some pertinent issues such as economic factors which influence the publication of the tales and their status as anthropological data. Jenkins's sociological approach is a more fruitful and up-to-date one, especially in light of recent developments in the written folktale tradition. But even though he alludes to the colonialist origins of folklore studies in South Africa, referring to the influence of the 'old social Darwinist and evolutionist concept of culture' (1993:21), he does not present a comprehensive critique of the role of folklore in colonial relations. Jenkins and other scholars of children's literature who have given attention to folktale texts are studied in Chapter Four.

Isabel Hofmeyr is virtually the only scholar in the field who actually tackles the topic of the usefulness of postcolonial theory for the study of both oral literature, and hybrid literary forms which combine aspects of oral and written literary traditions. She sees the 'methodological advantage to be gained from such a 'hybridised' framework' (1995:24). Although not studying folktales in particular, Hofmeyr's insight that the 'business of writing down oral testimony could probably be taken as one of the defining features of colonial encounters and has certainly characterised the activities of most aspects of the colonial state' (1995:18-19) is a far-reaching and pertinent one which needs to be followed up. The written folktale texts which resulted from colonial encounters are an important part of the intellectual and cultural history of South Africa, and need to be analysed with this in mind.

To analyse written folktale texts as part of a colonialist discourse, the theoretical insights of postcolonial studies are vital. Various aspects of colonial cultural relations are thus problematised, scrutinised or criticised, allowing for political revision. But, as in the case of Bhabha, such theorising can become remote and impervious to the very issues it is addressing, or the very people it is speaking for. Folklore studies, on the other hand, performs the practice which postcolonial studies advocates: through direct contact and ethical collaboration, the subaltern can claim a voice in western academic discourses about itself¹⁹ (e.g. Scheub's collaboration with Gcaleka story-teller, Zenani). What folklore studies lacks is the self-reflexive theoretical edge which postcolonial theory can offer it. Karin Barber has commented on the lack of discourse analysis in the area of folklore studies:

On the one hand, literary critics and folklorists have taken up a stance which combines a limited contextualisation (the emphasis being on performance and the immediate conditions of performance) with a formalist analysis of texts (with the emphasis on the incidence of wordplay, repetition and other literary devices): *thus ignoring by and large what the texts actually say.*

(Barber in Hofmeyr 1993:1; my emphasis)

What the texts actually say can best be understood with the superior analytical tool which is postcolonial theory and folklore practice in tandem. MJ Hooper has pointed out that there is a tentative step in that direction as literary scholars realise the value of ethnography for literary analyses of cross-culturality, since it allows an engagement with the textual complexities of relations between cultures (Hooper 1994:19). With this in mind, I now turn to an analysis of Thea's discourses, which will, hopefully, throw light on the relationship between transcribing tales and creating cultural identities.

Endnotes for Chapter One

1. Bearing in mind Mastin Prinsloo's caveat in his critique of De Kock's Civilising Barbarians, 'To read off processes of identity formation from such representational forms is to misread text as if it were synonymous with cultural process' (1998:35).
2. Cultural-literary: De Kock uses the term to position himself theoretically (1996:6). It denotes that culture and all its attendant concerns are studied textually.
3. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), Briggs (1993), Kapchan and Strong (1999).
4. 'Post' taken to mean 'after in time or sequence' (Collins English Dictionary).
5. Paper given at Port Alfred, 17 September 1999.
6. De Kock cites two works which deal with 'Questions of representation and the cultural negotiation of identity in relation to nineteenth-century South Africa' (De Kock:1996:18): Crais's The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865 (1992a) and Jean and John Comaroff's Of Revelation and Revolution (1991). In more recent years, scholars from diverse fields have begun to re-evaluate colonialism in South Africa, perhaps because many of the problems facing the country today have their roots in that era.
7. Note that Bhabha refers to the discourse of the coloniser as a 'colonial discourse'. He does not differentiate between the discourse of the coloniser and the discourse of the colonised subject, both of which might be called 'colonial'.
8. Examples of other scholars who have theorised discourse as narrative are Benedict Anderson (1980) and Hayden White (1978).
9. The influence of the discourse of social evolutionism on Theal is discussed in detail in Chapter Two.
10. Linda Degh (1972), MacEdward Leach (1968) and Richard Dorson (1972) are scholars who credit the brothers with founding the discipline.
11. A similar utilisation is evident in the discourse of African Nationalism - see Chapter Four.
12. For example, the collections of German philologist, WHI Bleek. His orthographies included collections of folklore. Theal describes Bleek's work as follows: 'He devoted his attention almost entirely to the study of the habits, folklore, and particularly the language of the Bushmen, for their race in South Africa in its purity was almost extinct' (1910:21).
13. See note 5. above.
14. Finnegan and Okpewho both elect to use the term 'oral literature'.
15. Finnegan shows her perceptiveness in other areas. For example, when dealing with misconceptions about the nature of oral forms in relation to written forms: 'First, the idea that all primitive (and thus also all oral) art is severely functional, and thus basically different from art in 'civilized' cultures' (1970:20).

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16. An example of Doke's condescension: 'Bantu languages are capable of remarkable fluency...They provide a vehicle for wonderful handling by the expert speaker or writer' (1948:285).
 17. South African journals which cover folklore are *The Southern African Journal for Folklore, Voices, Bantu/African Studies*.
 18. Cf. WJ Burchell's descriptions in Travels in the Interior of South Africa (1822) 2vols. London: Batchworth, 1953.
 19. In Bhabha's terms, 'those negative polarities between knowledge and its objects' are destroyed (1995:25).

Chapter Two

The Tales of Theal

I

Three interwoven narratives are crucial to the progress of this study: the life story of Theal; the history of colonialism which was his life-long task; and the Xhosa folktale, which I regard as a symbol of the cultural encounter which occurred between coloniser and colonised.¹ In this chapter I provide a biography of Theal, which will help to elucidate his motivations for his collection of Xhosa folktales. An examination of Theal's peculiar and chequered career throws some light on how he came to be caught in the contradictions and complexities of the broader colonial project in the country at the time (circa 1860 - 1880). Alongside this version of his personal history is my interpretation of the national history he constructed. This history is a vast panorama stretching from precolonial days up until the formation of the South African Union in 1910. The collecting and publishing of Xhosa tales, I will argue, are part of a tangled, intricate narrative aimed (not always consciously)² at legitimating some of the processes of colonialism; at providing a basis for self-determination for Theal himself; and at offering the colonial reader (both European and African) a textual basis for the processes of cultural identification which were so vital for the success of colonialism.

These strands are, of course, often incongruous, and the result is a bumpy, sometimes ambivalent narrative which reveals more through its gaps and contradictions than through its linear plot. In this way, Theal's history of South Africa takes the form of narrative whereby the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognizable totality (Bhabha

1994:71). Theal's narrative employs a system of representation, a regime of truth, that is structurally similar to realism (Bhabha 1994:71), but its dissonances point to its contrivance. Theal's critics have been aware of these gaps and they fall roughly into three camps. The earliest critics were alarmed by his antagonism to the Imperial government and his support of the Afrikaner causes (Cappon 1901, Iwan-Muller 1902). Another later group of critics focussed on Theal's method of historiography, pointing out that he often does not acknowledge his sources, that at times his use of archival material is unreflective and uncritical, or that he does not make sufficient use of secondary material (Colvin in Snelling 1950, Marais 1944). More recent critics have reacted to Theal's racism, recognising his writings as the origin for some of the racial myths which have survived in historical texts of the late twentieth century (Saunders 1988, Babrow 1962).

There is a fourth group, supporters rather than critics, who have been strongly influenced by Theal, who have emulated his particular brand of historiography, or who have relied heavily on his writings as a source for their own work (e.g. Cory 1926, Brooks 1924). The endeavours of this latter group have ensured that Theal's voluminous legacy of historical texts remains influential although the author himself has become a shadowy or forgotten figure. But none of these respondents has undertaken a thorough analysis of his discourse. I regard the folktale transcriptions as particularly revealing because they are collaborative *literary* texts which tell a particular kind of story about cultural relations at a time of violent, protracted conflict between Xhosa and white settlers on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony; and the lack of analysis of these relations reveals the urgent need for the literary and the historical to converge in the field of

South African cultural-historical debate@ (De Kock 1996:6).

A holistic inspection of Theal's writings reveals that through his histories, his ethnographies and collections of folktales, he relates a narrative which supports the colonisation of South Africa.

The heroic protagonist is the Afrikaner trek-boer, the tragic hero is the bumbling British imperialist whose honourable principles are marred by his painful mistakes, and the villain is the degenerate, aggressive, yet redeemable African. It is an adventure plot, with epic migrations, the discovery of treasure, a distinct chronology, periods of conflict and danger, and ultimately a satisfactory denouement when in 1910 South Africa emerges as a Union.³ But, as expedient as this narrative may seem, a closer reading tells another story, of ambivalence on the part of the author and insurrection on the part of the >villain=.

The tales are part of this narrative, providing >poetic interludes= for the literary or scientific reader in Europe who was interested in the indigenous cultures of the colonies. For the African reader, I believe that Theal *intended*⁴ the texts (accompanied by lengthy ethnographic notes) to serve as an authentic record of his or her cultural heritage. He wrote: **It is with a view of letting the people we have chosen to call Kaffirs describe themselves in their own words, that these stories have been collected and printed@ (1882:vi).** It is clear that early in his writing career he realised that his writings would impact significantly on the African reader:

The first edition was read by some hundreds of natives, among whom were many of the teachers of mission schools on the frontier, and as it is confidently anticipated that this issue will have a still larger circulation among them, it is but fair that anything in the history of their people - even to the spelling of the names of the chiefs of old - should be accurately given.

(Compendium 2nd ed.:1876: n.p.)

Note that even though he intends the Compendium to have a large ›native= readership, he addressed his prefatory remarks to a white audience (*At their people*). This incongruity, one of many, is strongly evident in Kaffir Folklore (1882), where all his editorial comments are directed to the European reader. There are, of course, many other reasons for his collecting and publishing the folktales of the Xhosa; these reasons will be discussed as this chapter unfolds.

Theal himself would have vehemently repudiated the above reading of his life=s work, as he seems to have clung to the belief that he was never partisan and that he never veered from the ›truth= as contained in the archival documents:

Determination to be strictly impartial, freedom from prejudices which might involuntarily affect that determination, are equally requisite. I believe that I possess these qualifications, at any rate I have done my utmost to work in that direction. I have no interests to serve with any particular party, and I am on friendly terms with all.

(History of the Boers:1887: n.p.)

This obfuscated view of Theal=s regarding his impartiality lends support to my theory that often his motives were unconscious. In clinging to this notion of objectivity, Theal was able to position himself as a reasonable, enlightened subject through and within his own discourse. But he seems unaware of how often this position was compromised, especially by his psychic responses to cultural difference and similarity. In Chapter One, I outlined the *model of double polarity* which maps Theal=s motives in terms of unconscious desires and fears. Theal is both fascinated and threatened by difference and similarity in the ›others= he encounters. His historical and ethnographic discourses which are aimed at fashioning an identity for the African ›other= and for himself are thus shaped, and often disrupted, by these responses. The Comaroffs have recognised this function of ethnographic discourse: **A**We require ethnography to know ourselves ... For ethnography serves at once to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar@ (1992:6).

Together with the conscious impetus for his writings, Theal's unconscious motives form the basis of a complex and contradictory colonialist discourse.

II

Life-Story

Ironically, the 'father' of South African history was not born a South African. George McCall Theal was born in 1837 in Canada. His family were 'United Empire Loyalists' (Schreuder 1986:99) who had left the United States during the War of Independence. As a child Theal heard from his family endless stories about his pioneer ancestors who had retained their loyalty to Britain (Saunders 1981:3). What is interesting about this background is that the future 'frontier nationalist historian' spent his formative years in this 'Imperialist-social and political milieu' (Schreuder 1986:99). Theal claims that his Canadian origins rendered him particularly neutral and impartial in the South African colonial context:

...I am by birth a Canadian, the descendant of a family that sided with the king at the time of the American Revolution, and afterwards removed from New York to New Brunswick with the other Royalists. The early years of my life after boyhood were spent in the United States and Sierre Leone. Thus no ties of blood, no prejudices acquired in youth, stand as barriers to my forming an impartial judgement of events that transpired in South Africa.

(History of the Boers:1887: n.p.)

However, despite his foreign origins and the claim to objectivity made on this basis, Theal became deeply embroiled in South African politics. As circumstances and personal ambitions dictated, he shifted allegiance between different colonial factions - the 'state colonialism' of the British Imperial government, the 'settler colonialism' of the Afrikaner, and the 'civilising colonialism' of the Nonconformist British missionaries (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992:197).⁵ These conflicting (and sometimes complicit) colonial forces and their impact on Theal's narrative will be elaborated

on in the following section.

In 1861, en route to Australia, Theal arrived in South Africa and decided to stay. He pursued many different careers, working as a journalist, a diamond prospector in Kimberley, a teacher, a farmer, a labour agent, and a magistrate for the colonial government's Department of Native Affairs (Immelman 1964:5). He enjoyed minimal success at any of these endeavours (Smith 1988:32). Nevertheless, the determination and resourcefulness of the young Theal are remarkable.

Shortly after his arrival, in 1862 he began editing the *Macleay News*, one of the most important early Border newspapers of the day (Denfield 1965:74). In 1863 he moved to East London and began editing the *Kaffrarian Recorder* which went bankrupt after a year, but undeterred by failure, Theal revived the paper, calling it *The Kaffrarian*. Three years later, in 1866, Theal was resident in King William's Town where he was the secretary of the local literary society, and in 1867 he is mentioned in the King William's Town newspaper, the *Kaffrarian Watchman*, as a member of its staff (Denfield 1965:74-76). From King William's Town, where he also taught at Dale College, he drifted to the diamond fields of Kimberley, but when the slump in diamond prices caused a depression, he returned to the Eastern Cape (Saunders 1981:11) where his fortunes took a distinct turn for the better.

This account of his early years in South Africa shows that Theal was imbued with the principles of what the Comaroffs term 'enlightened liberal humanism' (1992:202). Arriving in a strange country with nothing but resolve to succeed and his personal abilities, the young Theal epitomised

the Imperial spirit: labour, resourcefulness, a rational mind, the desire for private property, and Christian morals. Moreover, he showed his support for a literate culture by engaging in jobs which promoted literacy. Taking his entire career into account, it is even clearer that Theal was committed to a life of extreme personal exertion - the sort promoted by the Bourgeois ideology (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992:201) of the British Imperial age.

It is not difficult then to understand why Theal's attitude to labour issues in his time was so value-laden and censorious. In the introduction to Kaffir Folklore he takes the Xhosa men to task: 'Ingenious as they are, the men are far from being industrious. A great portion of their time is spent visiting and gossiping, of which they are exceedingly fond' (1882:27). Also, Theal had a great admiration for the industriousness of the Afrikaners and their 'native' labour policy which he vociferously supported later in his life. This bias had a significant impact on his discourse. These developments, in both Theal's life-story and his history of South Africa, are discussed in the following section.

In 1871 he took up a teaching post at Lovedale Mission at Alice in the Eastern Cape. The mission had been founded by the Scottish Presbyterians in 1842 with the aim of converting and uplifting the Africans of the area. The institution had the combined power of influence of a school, a seminary and a printing press. Leon de Kock's main focus in his book Civilising Barbarians is the 'making of a discursive orthodoxy by literary means' and he identifies Lovedale as 'crucial in constructing this literary basis' (1996:19). De Kock argues that the missionaries at Lovedale were engaged in constructing a new cultural order which forced the African subject to accept a narrative of identity based on western, Christian subjectivity. De Kock believes that the 'task of

representing the new order fell to missionaries who had to construct a colonial text for self-apprehension...a text which depended on the new edifice of literacy in English (1996:48).

Theal's employment at Lovedale, with its Presbyterian work ethics and printing resources, was a step in the right direction for the ambitious young colonial with a literary bent.

Theal joined Lovedale when it was thriving (under the principalship of James Stewart) and at a time when the missionaries there were in accord with colonial administrative policy for the area - Sir Harry Smith and Sir George Grey both supported the missionary endeavours to instil in the African knowledge of a mercantile economy, Protestant morality, and literacy in English (De Kock 1996:44,47). With Theal's personal background in mind, it is easy to see why he fitted in so well at Lovedale. The institution provided Theal with the opportunity, not only to exercise his own work ethic, but also to propagate it through teaching. With the Mission's emphasis on literacy, Theal also had the backing for his interest in writing, and a means to further the transformation of the indigenous oral culture into a civilised, literate one.

Theal had access to a printing press and more especially he had close contact with Xhosa people from whom he could extract historical and folklore material. He began publishing tales in the *Cape Monthly Magazine* (Saunders 1988:11) and the *Cape Quarterly Review*. He also collected proverbs and figurative expressions. His first major publication was a pamphlet entitled South Africa As It Is, published in King William's Town in 1871 (Mendelssohn 1910:472).

While at Lovedale he published two editions of the Compendium of South African History and Geography, and he prepared the manuscript for Kaffir Folklore, but the outbreak of the Ninth Frontier War in 1877 prevented this book from being published at Lovedale. In addition to

furnishing the publishing tools, Lovedale provided Theal with an ideological framework for his ambitions as a writer. At the same time, through his writing Theal contributed to the discursive orthodoxy which he encountered there.

At the outbreak of the Ninth Frontier War, due to his special knowledge of native character, Theal was asked to visit the Xhosa (Gaika) chief, Oba, in order to persuade him not to take up arms against the settlers (Saunders 1988:12).

On the outbreak of the Kaffir War, towards the close of 1877, I was requested by the Government to undertake a diplomatic post requiring special knowledge of native character. Having succeeded in performing the duties entrusted to me, when the war was over I asked for and obtained the charge of the Colonial Archives preserved in Cape Town.

(History of the Boers:1887: n.p.)

The five months or so that Theal spent at Oba's kraal must have been invaluable for the increase of Theal's knowledge of the native, but strangely he does not mention details of his visit in any of his accounts of the war. His success as a diplomat led Theal in a different career direction once more. In the above quotation Theal does not mention that immediately after the war he first worked as a labour agent before taking up a minor government post in Cape Town where he had access to the colonial archives. This was to prove a turning point in his life.

Theal began a monumental writing career using the documents he found in the colonial archives. He also travelled to the Hague, London and Lisbon to gather material pertaining to the colonisation of South Africa. In total he eventually published more than forty volumes (Schreuder 1986:113). Theal suffered a severe blow in 1881, when the government, under Prime Minister

Gordon Sprigg, appointed HCV Leibbrandt as Parliamentary Librarian instead of himself (Preller 1959:30). Theal was denied access to the archives and he was posted as acting special magistrate at Tamacha in the Eastern Cape (Saunders 1988:14). But this did not deter him. A change of government a year later meant a change of fortune for Theal.⁶ He was re-employed by the Native Affairs Department in Cape Town and with characteristic zeal he launched himself into archival research once more.

The following year, 1882, he enjoyed his first publication in England, Kaffir Folklore. He continued to write voluminously, publishing his most widely-read History of South Africa (in five volumes) between 1888 and 1900. Most of his major works were published in London, where they were very favourably received by the press.⁷ In 1891 he was appointed to the post of Colonial Historiographer, which he retained until his death in 1919. Theal became the most prolific historian in South Africa and he is arguably the most influential.⁸ His work has been the basis for history textbooks and syllabi for high school history most of this century, beginning in about 1909 with the publication of Maskew Miller's Short History of South Africa.

I now return to the claims made in the introduction of this chapter regarding the teething phase of his writing career, when Theal was collecting ethnographic material and the Xhosa folktales in the Eastern Cape (circa 1860-1880). The evidence here suggests that his early writing did legitimate the civilising colonialism of the missionaries by providing the Africans of the region with *written* records of their history and culture. It did provide him with a means for self-determination as he forged a career as a writer, and he did contribute to broader processes of identification as he assigned subject positions for the key characters in his narrative. A closer look at his discourse is

necessary to unravel the above processes.

III

Peculiar Plots, Contradictions of Colonialism

This section analyses Theal's discourse which was comprised mainly of a grand narrative of South African colonialism. I use the term 'discourse' in the tradition of Stuart Hall, who in turn draws largely from Foucault for his definition. According to Hall, discourse is 'a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - a way of representing the knowledge about - a particular topic at a particular historical moment ... Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language' (1992:291). Further, discourse 'defines and produces the objects of our knowledge' (1996:44). Theal both constructed knowledge about colonial South Africa, and helped to define the objects of that knowledge, in particular African culture.

Theal's main guide to the construction of knowledge was an implicit belief in 'truth'.⁹ Drawing from the archival sources and his own observations and experiences, Theal set about narrating the 'true' history of South Africa. The result was a discourse which championed colonisation and represented its subjects in a racial hierarchy. He succeeded in producing an authoritative history which passed as the 'truth' for nearly a century. Ruby Agar O'Connell described Theal's impetus to write the history of South Africa in the following way:

In the outlying districts of Kaffraria he had come in contact with pioneers whose tales of hardships and adventure had impressed him. A fluent native linguist, he had heard, too, the native version of events that had passed. Through all these traces and tales there was evidence enough that truth and tradition were intermingling; evidence that the true history of the country was passing into a jumble of unauthenticated tales. South Africa, he found, had a story, but a story that so far was practically untold.

(*The Star*, 10 April 1937: n.p.)

In short, Theal's grand narrative (as recounted in the five volumes of History of South Africa [1888-1900]), begins with the >discovery< of the Cape by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, the establishment of the Cape Colony by the Dutch East India Company, the rule of the Dutch governors, including a detailed account of slavery in the colony at the time, the assumption of British control in the Cape Colony in 1795, the clashes between the Dutch and British which ensued, and especially the disputes which arose as a result of the abolition of slavery in 1838. Thereafter the narrative focuses on the activities of the Boers, their movement into the interior, their clashes with both Africans and British and the formation of the Boer Republics. The final volume deals with the British annexation of the diamond fields and the events leading to the Anglo-Boer Wars. In later works, Theal also described the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910.

This grand narrative of South African colonial history is influenced by his own life-story, and it includes within its scheme stories from and about the colonised subject. Theal realised that a history of South Africa was incomplete without an in-depth study of its indigenous people.

Scattered along the course of the historical narrative are Theal's descriptions of the

Bushmen or Aborigines of South Africa, the Hottentots and the Bantu. In 1910 he gathered this material from the History of South Africa volumes into one publication dedicated to ethnography and folklore - The Yellow and Dark-Skinned People of Africa South of the Zambesi. This move of Theal's, the extraction of ethnographic material from previous works, and its reification in a single dedicated volume, might be seen as a metadiscursive practice aimed at enhancing his authority as an ethnographer, and characterising the epistemological status of the material. Theal's descriptions cover the following areas: physical description, clashes with other African tribes, miscegenation, domestic life, form of government, religion and belief systems, methods of war, personal dispositions, artistry, language, capacity for civilisation, and migrations,

especially the movements leading up to the clashes with the white colonisers and folklore. It was Theal's opinion that in order to obtain correct information concerning an uncivilised race, a knowledge of their folklore is necessary (1882:vi).

By collecting ethnographic and historical material on the African people of Southern Africa, he attempted to pin down the African subject, utilising differences and similarities for the construction of his specific discourse. In Kaffir Folklore, Theal sought a full knowledge of the object of his study, the Xhosa people. He was engaged in interpreting Xhosa culture, and his main tool for such an interpretation was their folklore. Not only was he interested in outward manifestations of culture; he also attempted to understand the psyche of the Xhosa subject through the tales:

It has been found that a knowledge of the traditionary tales of a people is a key to their ideas and a standard of their powers of thought. These stories display their imaginative faculties; they are guides to the nature of the religious belief, of the form of government, of the marriage customs, in short, of much that relates to both the inner and the outer life of those by whom they are told.

(1882:v)

His methods of acquiring and constructing knowledge were eclectic: he both read and borrowed from other scholars in the field, and he gathered information from oral sources. My task, in the following discussion, is to interpret Theal's modes of objectification (Foucault 1982:77) in order to understand how he constructed knowledge using Xhosa folktales. By examining how this knowledge circulates and functions, and how it relates to dynamics of power (Foucault 1982:78), I uncover its links to the creation of identities for both Theal and the Xhosa subject.

For his information on the Bushmen Theal used the research of his contemporaries W H I Bleek and Lucy Lloyd. He also borrowed from the travelogues of Henry Lichtenstein (Theal 1910:19-21). For information on physiognomy he draws on the research of the Fellows of the Royal

College of Surgeons of England (Theal 1910:33-34). In his chapters on the ›Hottentots‹, Theal again referred to the work of Bleek and two other contemporaries who were engaged in mapping out and surveying the region, James Adamson and George Stow (Theal 1910:58-59). The descriptions are always accompanied by a selection of folktales, proverbs or riddles collected from the respective groups and photographs or illustrations of ›specimens‹.

For his ten chapters dedicated to the description of the Bantu, Theal's use of source material is significantly different. Here he draws on ancient Phoenician, Greek, Egyptian, Arab and Persian sources in order to uncover the supposed origins of the Bantu race. In contrast, for his physical descriptions, clan histories, comments on belief systems, and folklore, he relies heavily on the material he himself gathered while resident in the Eastern Cape. The material contained in Kaffir Folklore (1882) is duplicated almost entirely in Yellow and Dark-Skinned People of Africa South of the Zambesi (1910). This material is most intimately bound up with Theal's own life and is, in many respects, a record of his personal observations and experiences. I will return to the topic of oral sources and how the use of them set Theal apart from his contemporaries in the Eastern Cape.

Also pertinent is the extent to which Theal was influenced by the imperial discourses about Africa which were circulating in England (and the colonies) in the nineteenth century. In addition, there is the significant role Theal himself played in *constructing* these discourses. As mentioned in the previous section, a major portion of Theal's works was published in London, and the press reviews reveal that his publications were widely read in England and other parts of the Empire. The representation of Africa and its inhabitants in the nineteenth century was crucial to the ›west-›

will to power over the African colonies it wished to govern and exploit. Theal was influenced by these representations¹⁰ and made his own substantial contributions to them.

The main discourses about Africa in the nineteenth century were concerned with race, culture, geography and economic viability. The texts produced (maps, drawings, photography, journalistic accounts, travelogues, scientific reports, official documents, adventure novels, diaries) had one thing in common - an inordinate preoccupation with *difference*, often resulting in the construction of binary oppositions between European and African cultures. In postcolonial theory, whether viewed from the perspective of structural linguistics, social anthropology or psychoanalysis, the recognition of difference is considered essential for the construction of meaning, usually through the setting-up of binary oppositions. The danger, though, as evident in colonialist discourses, is that a binary opposition might be a reductionist and over-simplified - swallowing up all distinctions in their rather rigid two-part structure¹¹ (Hall 1997:235). The images of Africa in these discourses were, more often than not, stereotypical ones (see Appendix B).

Theal's ethnographic writings evince a strong association with the 'scientific' discourses about race which were gaining popularity in England at the time due to the publication of Charles Darwin's works.¹² Using ethnographic and ethnological evidence and a biological argument, these discourses sought to describe 'real or imagined physiological and anatomical differences - especially in cranial characteristics and facial angles - which allegedly explained mental and physical inferiority' (Frederickson 1987:49). One of the effects of such a discourse was to create strategic knowledge about the African subject - knowledge which then 'fixed' the subject in an inferior position in a socio-cultural hierarchy.

In his works dedicated solely to ethnographic description, Theal reveals his fascination for the ›laws= of social evolutionism. Even in his historical writing ATheal=s concern with ›race=, culture and ethnicity as historical determinants, is pervasive@ (Schreuder 1986:123). For example, he uses craniological evidence in his discussion of the difference between hunters and herders, asserting that it was their skull size which determined their response to white settlers (Theal 1902:9). Theal constructed a racial hierarchy for the inhabitants of southern Africa using the principles of social evolutionism. He believed that the folktales could be used as a cultural gauge for this hierarchy:

These tales also show the relationship between tribes and people of different countries and even of different languages. They are evidences that the same ideas are common to every branch of the human family at the same stage of progress.

(1882:v-vi)

Theal employed in his discourse one of the key concepts of social evolutionism, natural selection.

The concept is defined as A biological explanations for judgments of individual and cultural variation ... [which describe] social progress as a product of the efforts of biologically driven human beings to cope with their natural environment@ (Kuklick 1991:81). For instance, Theal expressed an awe for the endurance and progress of the Afrikaner race, whom he saw as being at the top of the cultural ladder in South Africa. In contrast he placed the ›Bushmen= at the bottom of his hierarchy, and saw it as fit that they should be exterminated by the worthier, aggrandising Voortrekkers:

The settlement of the Europeans in the country was disastrous to the aborigines. Bushmen were still numerous along the interior mountain range, but in other parts of the colony there were hardly any left. One may feel pity for savages such as these, destroyed in their native wilds, though there is little reason for regretting their disappearance. They were of no benefit to any other section of the human family, they were incapable of improvement...

(History IV:381)

What is striking about this statement is the ambivalence Theal feels about the near-genocide of

the ›Bushmen‹. Pity, though, is quickly assuaged by the rationale that the ›Bushmen‹ were so low on the scale of civilisation, that their absence will not be felt, except positively by the colonisers. Despite the ›Bushmen‹= inconsequence, Theal uses a somewhat mournful tone to evoke their precolonial existence, in idyllic *Native wilds*:

The Xhosa, on the other hand, were much higher on Theal's ladder. If successfully civilised through Christian conversion, education and the adoption of the European work ethic, the Xhosa might move up a notch or two because *A[h]is intellectual abilities are of no mean order, and his reasoning power is quite equal to those of a white man* (Theal 1882:8). Theal even goes so far as to say that this ability to improve through contact with white culture is apparent in the tales:

It will surprise no one to learn that these tales are already undergoing great changes among a very large section of the natives on the border. Tens of thousands of Kaffirs have adopted the religion of the Europeans, and the facility with which such changes can be made ... has encouraged them to introduce ideas borrowed from their teachers... Their tales are thus a counterpart of the narrators, in possessing an adaptability to growth and a power of conformation to altered circumstances.

(1882:viii)

In addition to the comments about the civilising value of the superior white culture, what is interesting is Theal's awareness of the hybrid nature of the tales and his sensitivity to the processes of acculturation taking place around him.

Despite this sensitivity, Theal's use of social evolutionary theory remains primarily a means of legitimating the processes of colonisation which he was recording in his multi-volumed histories. The expediency of his strategy is apparent when one considers that he was writing at a time when thousands of Africans were being enslaved, denied their land or killed by white colonisers. This

strategy is not limited to Theal but was employed by many other colonial ethnographers and anthropologists. Henrietta Lidchi describes the functionality of such anthropological discourses in the following way:

it is not reflective of the essential nature of cultural difference, but classifies and constitutes this difference systematically and coherently, in accordance with a particular view of the world that emerges in a specific place, at a distinct historical moment and within a specific body of knowledge

(1997:161-162)

Theal did apply a systematic 'scientific' code to the study of cultural difference, but Lidchi's suggestion that this difference was constituted *coherently*, is problematic. As the *model of double polarity* attempts to show, Theal's responses to cultural difference and similarity were negative or positive, resulting in an ambivalent and disrupted discourse. Although not always coherently or consciously, Theal classifies and constitutes the difference between white coloniser and African colonised subject in terms of social evolutionary theory for the purpose of rendering the African subject biologically and culturally inferior, and therefore more liable to domination and exploitation. Potentially, Theal could have posited a view which ran counter to this colonialist strategy.¹³ He could have, through his representations of African folklore, openly championed the cause of the colonised. But, oscillating between a fascination for the folktales he collected, and a denigration of their alterity, Theal opted to reinforce his racial hierarchy by only partially recognising their literary value. This ambivalence between his apparent delight in the tales, and his appropriation of them for political ends, is explored further in Chapter Three.

To return to the prevailing discourses about Africa in the nineteenth century and how they influenced Theal, I now turn to the impact of western humanism on the civilising mission which Theal participated in whilst living in the Eastern Cape. This mission, as epitomised by the efforts

of Lovedale, was informed by the myths of an essential, unified, rational and controlled self. The works of British liberal philosophers such as Bentham, Mill and Arnold¹⁴ formed part of a discourse which supported utilitarian individualism and the virtues of the disciplined, self-made person (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992:187). As discussed in the section on his life-story, Theal epitomised the spirit of bourgeois self-determination in his own career, by his commitment to Lovedale, and by his attitude to labour issues in the colony.

The bourgeois subject, in the form of the Victorian, white, Christian male, was set up, in the colonial context, in binary opposition to the black, heathen, abject, African subject. De Kock sums up the effect of humanist discourses on the colonial encounter:

Within the traditional humanist conception of subjectivity, a belief in transhistorical truth made it possible to think of culturally-determined categories such as 'civilised' and 'savage' as unmediated and literally God-ordained. Colonial forms of knowledge...depended precisely on a notion of the masterful *Western subject as a repository of truth and immutability*.

(1996:10; my emphasis)

The result of such a conception of subjectivity also had the effect of rendering the discourses which employed it, 'universal' or 'general' truths. The scientific discourse discussed earlier also fed this philosophical discourse by claiming a 'natural', genetic superiority for the colonising subject.

The effect of such myths was to privilege the white coloniser over the African colonised in a subject-object relationship.¹⁵ The colonising subject assumed the position of 'gazer/observer' and the object of his scrutiny was the African.¹⁶ Theal, like the travel writer, Barrow, or the

missionaries Moffat and Livingstone, viewed his objects through the avowedly omniscient eye of the enlightened, civilised individual, often ignoring, denying or exploiting differences, imposing universal categories, and always holding up the tenets of liberal humanism as a beacon to illuminate darkest Africa.

For example, when examining African religion and custom, Theal regarded his object in opposition to the Christian monolith and is scathing of any deviations, terming them *Asuperstition* and *Awitchcraft* (1910:202). Later, Theal is more sceptical about the successful conversion of Africans into Christians, and it seems that he is outraged by the Africans' refusal to repudiate their culture in favour of the superior, white one:

Instead of the new doctrine eradicating and completely filling the place previously occupied by his hereditary religion, the profession of our faith by a Kaffir seems only to give a Christian colouring to his belief. The one undoubtedly leavens the other, but, if I have observed these people correctly, ancestral worship and fetishism will only be completely removed by a series of rejections, taking place with long intervals of time between them.

(History III: 464)

Note that the religion of the African is described as a lack or space¹⁷ to be filled by the new religion. Also, the gradual process of progress described in the above quote follows the logic of the social evolutionary argument.

An interesting paradox in Theal's discourse is revealed by his use of oral sources. Theal relied heavily on the African sources for his writing. Not only would he not have a subject for his ethnographic texts, but he also would not have a bona fide, first-hand source for a lot of his information, without the full co-operation of the African people he observed. According to Bakhtin, meaning is constructed through dialogue, through the give-and-take between speakers:

The word in language is half someone else's (Bakhtin 1981[1935]:293-294). Interplay and interaction are essential for meaning construction. Meaning is dialogic. Bakhtin goes on to say that the word has to be appropriated for it to become one's own, and this is what Theal does with the folktales he collected. But they never become entirely his own. The tale texts contain both voices, the voice of the coloniser and the voice of the colonised, resulting in what Bakhtin has called a 'double-voiced discourse' (Bakhtin 1986:218). Theal's privileged subjectivity did not afford him total tyranny over the text.

Theal's use of oral sources is the most contradictory facet of his writing. One of his earliest publications, Compendium of South African History and Geography, published in 1874 at Lovedale, drew from Southern African oral sources and attracted African readers. In the preface to the first edition, Theal claims to have 'the advantage of being correct from the Kaffir point of view' (Theal 1874:iv). Mendelssohn, in South African Bibliography, notes an improvement in the second edition (1876), an improvement to which Theal himself draws attention: 'Mr. Theal observes in his Preface that the chapters referring to early Kaffir history will be found more complete in this edition than in the first. 'Kaffir names are spelt in this book as they would be by an educated [ie. colonised or assimilated] native, so as to give the correct sound of the words' (1910:473-474). This statement discloses the collaboration between Theal and the educated natives, and it points to the larger project of orthography of the African languages, of which Theal was a part. For reasons to do with professional pride and ambition, or, on the contrary, because of a genuine loyalty to the object of his study, Theal was very concerned with the authenticity of the oral material he gathered and often stressed his passive role in the transcription process.

But passive he was not. Not daunted by the lack of written records, he actively sought and

directed oral sources. In some ways, he was a pioneer in the method of collecting oral source material. In the preface to Kaffir Folklore he outlined his method of collecting folktales:

It is necessary to say a few words concerning the care that has been taken to give absolutely not a single sentence in any of these tales that has not come from native sources. Most of them have been obtained from at least ten or twelve individuals residing in different parts of the country, and they have all undergone a thorough revision by a circle of natives. They were not only told by natives but they were copied down by natives. The notes only are my own. I have directed the work of others, but have myself done nothing more than was necessary to explain the text.

(1882:viii-ix)

Theal reveals in the above quote his awareness of his in-between position. He seems to realise that as ethnographer he >decodes= the folklore for his audience (&explain the text@), but he is unaware that he simultaneously encodes by translating, de-exoticising, and transforming the alien into the comprehensible (Lidchi 1997:1666). As >director= of the project, as the coloniser, he selected the tales for publication, he edited them, he oversaw the translation and transcription processes, and ultimately it is his name which appeared on the title page as author of the tales.

Nevertheless, even though he drew from the material of contemporaries like Bleek and Callaway, he certainly differs from predecessors in the field. One significant work which deals with the indigenous races of South Africa is Donald Moodie's The Record: or a series of official papers relative to the condition and treatment of the native tribes of South Africa, papers which were written between 1834 and 1841. These papers cover the period 1649 to 1841 but they comprise mainly Moodie's comments on archival documents, and they were written (on the request of Sir Benjamin D-Urban) for the express purpose of refuting Reverend John Philip's claims of abuse of the Africans by the settlers (Snelling 1950:n.p.). Robert Godlonton's

Introductory Remarks to a Narrative of the Irruption of the Kafir Hordes into the Eastern

Province of the Cape of Good Hope (1835), contains a brief review of the Frontier Trade, and an account of the several Kafir tribes (n.p.), but mainly it is a diatribe against the Asavage invaders (1834:4). Godlonton's attempt at ethnography is merely a demonising description of the enemy, and shows no evidence of the use of oral sources.

In contrast, it seems, For Theal, Africans had their own culture and their own sense of history (Schreuder 1986:100). Theal did recognise a *different* history and culture for the Xhosa, but what use did he make of this difference? How did he perceive that history and culture, and more importantly, how did he write about it? What, for example, did he mean when he regarded information as 'correct from the Kaffir point of view'? Why, when Theal was living in the Eastern Cape with its ever-disputed Frontier, did Theal record the customs, the beliefs and the oral traditions of the 'enemy'? Ironically, it is likely that, accompanying his more self-seeking motives, Theal also wanted to preserve in print the indigenous cultures which he witnessed being so drastically and violently altered by colonisation. Like folklorists in Europe, Theal romanticised the folktales of the Xhosa as 'survivals' from the past.

Despite his extensive use of oral sources, Theal's belief in the exactitude of the detailed archival record, and its ability to tell the 'true' story, never wavered. Strangely, Theal had the same belief in objectivity with regards to his ethnographic writing even though it employed a different methodology:

During 14 of the most active years of my life it was my duty to supply the head of the Native Affairs Department of the Cape Colony, in which I served as first and chief clerk, with abstracts of the contents of collections of documents on every variety of

subject relating to the Bantu tribes. Such abstracts necessarily contained nothing but facts, as they were to be acted upon by the heads of department, and favour, prejudice, or imagination could find no place in them.

(The Progress of South Africa:1902: n.p.)

But in the preface to Chronicles of Cape Commanders (1882), he expressed a different sentiment. Here he was critical of just such a dry and impersonal written historiography and he advocated a personal acquaintance with the object of study:

When, for instance, one meets with relations of the intercourse between Batuas, Obiquas, Chobonas, and many others, if one knows what people these words refer to, a flood of light is thrown upon the pages that would otherwise be very wearisome reading. The greater the acquaintance with any of the native races of South Africa that one has, the more information will he be able to extract from the Cape Archives...

(n.p.)

In the same year, in the preface to Kaffir Folklore (1882), he proudly claims this Agreater ... acquaintance@ with the African people while still attempting to assert his objective editing stance:

I have directed the work of others, but have myself done nothing more than was necessary to explain the text. For this I can claim to be qualified by an *intimate knowledge* of the kaffir people, gained through intercourse with them during a period of twenty years, and while filling positions among them varying from a mission teacher to a border magistrate.

(viii-ix; my emphasis)

What is odd about the above extracts is that they contain profiles of contradictory writing personas. On the one hand Theal regards himself as the completely detached, objective archivist, and on the other hand he has to claim Aintimate knowledge@ of the African subject in order to be a credible ethnographer. It would appear that Theal's more conscious motive for writing - his ambition and self-determination - led to confusion over his perceptions of his methodology, which was a lot more flexible and permeable than he gave himself credit for. Some scholars have even interpreted his interest in African culture as a humanitarian bent in Theal:

Theal's early history still evinced a strong concern for the manner in which the

process of acculturation took place, and showed a distinct empathy towards the protective agencies of Humanitarianism concerned for African rights in the process of colonial development.

(Schreuder 1986:111-112)

This is somewhat of an over-statement. Theal's early writing certainly did show an interest in the processes of acculturation, but was this humanitarian¹⁸ concern? Did Theal ever evince a genuine concern for the loss of life, property and liberty which the Africans suffered at the hands of the colonisers? No writings of Theal directly express such a concern, and no recorded events in Theal's life substantiate the claim that his interest was motivated by humanitarian concern. Even while residing with Chief Oba Ngonyama during the Ninth Frontier War, Theal was acting in the interests of the Cape colonial government which had employed him to prevent the chief from going to war (not to avoid the destruction of human life and property, but to ensure victory for the colonialist troops). Also, after leaving Lovedale he worked as a labour agent in the Western Cape farm districts - in other words he recruited workers from the rest of the colony, especially people who were homeless after the Frontier Wars, to work in the prosperous farms of the Western Cape. But it seems that he did not do these destitute war victims a service. Many of them fled the Western Cape and tried to return to their homelands. Theal was reprimanded for the failure of his recruitment by the Secretary for Native Affairs (Saunders 1988:12).

Babrow (1962) also points to the 'humanitarian' slant of Theal's early writing. At the very most he showed scholarly integrity by consulting with indigenous sources, but did he have the welfare of the people at heart? Neither his attraction to the similarities of the African cultures he studied, nor his fascination for the folklore and history of the African people and his collaboration with them in his writing endeavours, can be elevated to the status of 'humanitarianism'. Theal identified cultural differences and similarities and was keen to share these, but not without iterating the value such differences and similarities had for the reinforcement of European cultural supremacy. He was aware of the cultural significance of the tales: their main currency lay in their ability to reveal the 'degree of civilisation' (1882:ix) of the people who created and performed them.

The above contention is substantiated by the huge changes in writing style, as well as in political and racial stance, which occurred when Theal left the Eastern Cape for good. Saunders, like Schreuder, is of the opinion that when Theal lived amongst the Xhosa, he had a genuine interest in the culture of the people. But when he went to Cape Town and began undertaking larger projects his writing became distinctly more partisan and racist (Saunders 1988:21-22).

Schreuder believes that the move from the Eastern Cape frontier to Cape Town, the seat of colonial power, had a great impact on Theal's career:

Lovedale and Humanitarian perspectives were gradually lost as Theal was assimilated into the Cape ruling elite. By the time he came to draft the first volume of the History he had moved somewhat from both his Maritime and his missionary background: the History became indeed something of a declaration of Cape colonial citizenship.

(1986:113-114)

As Theal began to adopt a more colonial nationalist stance,¹⁹ his discourse became more racist against the Africans and more partisan towards the Afrikaners (he did not totally repudiate British authority but opposed British Imperial highhandedness in colonial matters). Why did this change occur? In short, Theal's life-story impacted on the narrative he was creating. His new job gave him access to the Cape archives where he acquired an intimate knowledge of the narratives of the Dutch settlers of the seventeenth century. He was impressed by the hardiness and resourcefulness of these settler heroes, and he saw their descendants as equally fit and worthy for the role of colonisers. In contrast the Africans were ascribed all the negative qualities which legitimated their exploitation, the disownment of their land, their cultural denigration and their deaths. He also became antagonistic to those settlers who opposed slavery or other forms of African exploitation:

It will be seen that almost all Theal's errors, whether of fact or of interpretation, tend to one result: to tilt the balance in favour of the European colonists and against the non-Europeans as well as those Europeans who, like Maynier,²⁰ were critical of the

colonists= point of view and behaviour.

(Marais 1944:iv)

In this later discourse Theal employed a strongly hierarchical and stereotypical notion of race, as is evident from the following quotations in which he praised the Afrikaners and strongly disparaged the African peoples:

Their views of rights and liberties were not indeed those of today, because they were men of the seventeenth century, not the twentieth century. But they possessed a full share of the sturdy spirit of independence which led the people of the Netherlands on more than one occasion within that century to risk life and property in defence of freedom...And assuredly the men who built up the European power in South Africa were, in those qualities which ought to command esteem, no whit behind in pioneers of any colony in the world.

(History III:373)

...observation and experience had taught them [by 1800] that these [African] races who did nothing for the world's good were inferior to their own, and they did not, and could not, set the same value upon the life of one of them as upon the life of a civilised white man. There were instances of harsh treatment of coloured people, but upon the whole the white colonists of South Africa were not more cruel than other Europeans in similar circumstances were at that time. To their feeling of superiority of blood it is due that the present colonies [1893] are not inhabited by a nation of improvident and worthless mongrels.

(History IV:375)

Theal is at once attempting to praise the heroic efforts of the Dutch, justify their acts of racial cruelty, designate the rightful position of the African peoples in the colonial context and ultimately show the universal glory of colonisation. Through his narrative of Dutch colonisation, Theal expresses in very definite terms his views regarding the difference between the life of one of them and the life of a civilised white man. This discourse not only legitimated colonisation, it championed it. In his last years, Theal offered his colonial nationalist vision of the convergence of Dutch and English traditions, towards a single united white governing caste (Schreuder 1986:96). The grand narrative of the colonisation of South Africa was to have a happy, fairytale

ending for the white heroes.

To conclude this chapter, the examination of the three narrative strands: the life-story of Theal, his narrative of the colonisation of South Africa, and the folktales which intersect with the other two show *how* Theal's colonising discourse was constructed. The application of postcolonial perspectives shows that there were many contradictions and discrepancies, as well as correlations, between the three strands. Theal's ambition and resourcefulness led him to turn to his immediate surroundings for writing inspiration when in the Eastern Cape. Using this early success he was able to win himself an influential and powerful government post and thus he achieved status and fame. The early collections of folktales and folklore were a stepping stone in the direction of international recognition and influence as South Africa's foremost historiographer and ethnographer.

The exploration of his three main aims for writing - to legitimate colonisation, for self-determination, and for processes of identity formation - show *why* the discourse was constructed. Of course, it is unlikely that any of the three aims would have been fully-formed, conscious aims. But a careful analysis of his discourse uncovers these motives as the main ones for his zealous writing efforts. A study of South African history in the last century, a perusal of the shelves in the Cory Library which houses Theal's entire published collection, and a delve through the biographical material in the Cape Archives, testifies to the fulfilment of these sometimes conflicting but often congruous aims.

The contradictions of his colonial discourse and the peculiarity of his plots point to deeper

ambivalences, which a close literary analysis of the folktale texts themselves, in the following chapter, will expose.

Endnotes for Chapter Two

1. In the preface to Kaffir Folklore, Theal repeatedly describes the tales as a key to understanding other cultures. In Chapter Three, an analysis of the tale texts reveals the dynamics of the interaction between Theal and his African collaborators.
2. Both Robert Young and Bart Moore-Gilbert question Bhabha's claim regarding the consciousness of the agent in colonial discourse. I argue that the basis for many of Theal's colonialist convictions were indeed conscious but the contradictions in his discourse are the result of unconscious fears and desires.
3. In May 1910 South Africa celebrated the unification of two former Boer republics and two former British colonies and the creation of a South African nation state. The celebrations culminated in a national pageant which acted out an ameliorative and conciliatory history - blacks were included as representative of primitive and pre-historical South Africa. Theal was the historian consulted for the invention of this history (Merrington 1997:11).
4. This *intention* clashed with other intentions Theal had regarding the purpose of his writing, and it is never fully realised, especially as his later career moved away from interest in African subjects to white nation building.
5. In their chapter entitled 'Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience' in Ethnography and the Historical Imagination, the Comaroffs identify three models of colonialism which they draw from mission literature (1992:198)
6. It was at this time that Theal became involved in Jan Hofmeyr's *Afrikaner Bond* and the parties of British capital led by Cecil John Rhodes. The major significance of this involvement is Theal's growing commitment to colonial nationalism i.e. the founding of a nation he termed 'South Africa' through the cultural intermingling of the Dutch and British communities (Schreuder 1986:115).
7. In an advertisement distributed by the London firm which first published his works, Swan Sonnenschein & Co. included this review of The History and Ethnography of South (1907-1910):

To the antiquary, the anthropologist, and the folk-lorist, the earlier chapters of the volume before us offer a wealth of material. The later chapters, being more purely historical, have a more limited interest; but those which deal with the life, the customs, games, weapons, implements, and lore practice of every kind, of the aboriginal Bushmen, of the Hottentots, and of the various tribes of the Bantu, who are supposed to have migrated from the north, are of great and lasting scientific importance.

Antiquary (from Swan Sonnenschein & Co. order form: circa 1910)

8. Theal's influence on the shape and flavour of South African history has been the subject of interesting debates between contemporary historians. For example, Theal's claim that the vast interior of South Africa (present day Gauteng and Free State) was a desolate, uninhabited area as a result of the widely destructive wars waged by the Zulus under the leadership of Shaka, when the Voortrekkers arrived there (commonly known as the Mfecane theory) is strongly challenged by Julian Cobbing as an ideological justification for the racially unequal division of the land (Cobbing 1988:487).

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9. De Kock expounds on this use of the concept 'truth' in colonialist discourses: 'Within the traditional humanist conception of subjectivity, a belief in *transhistorical truth* made it possible to think of culturally-determined categories such as 'civilised' and 'savage' as unmediated and literally God-ordained. Colonial forms of knowledge...depended precisely on a notion of the masterful *Western subject as a repository of truth and immutability*' (De Kock:1996:10 my emphasis). Cf. Foucault on 'Regime of truth' (1980:131).
 10. For example, the pejorative representations and idealised abstractions of Africa contained in the works of British anthropologist, Edward Tylor; folklorist and evolutionist, James Frazer; and French philosopher, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (Vail & White 1991:5-10).
 11. Derrida has argued that there are very few neutral binary oppositions. There is always a relation of power between the poles of a binary opposition (Derrida:1974).
 12. Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) and Descent of Man (1871).
 13. There were alternatives to draw from e.g. the Christian humanitarianism of Reverend Philip who was an anti-slave campaigner. But Theal was most vehemently against Philip's humanitarianism because 'the government was put to infinite trouble, and the progress of the colony in prosperity and of the black races towards civilisation was greatly retarded by the measures which he devised' (History V:504).
 14. Tony Davies cites Matthew Arnold as a key proponent of the 'universal Man'-myth because Arnold believed that 'the human is something essential and above and beyond the accidents of historical or national difference' (Davies 1997:19).
 15. This is not contrary to saying that both Theal and the colonised are constituted as subjects in his discourse. The subject-object relationship describes their relations as subjects within the discourse.
 16. Pratt describes this practice as 'anti-conquest' i.e. to look passively and possess by describing (Pratt 1985:145).
 17. Cf. James Stewart's pamphlet 'On Native Education - South Africa': 'the mind of the African is empty' (De Kock 1996:89). Theal published the findings of a parliamentary committee appointed in 1908 to investigate education for Africans (1910:265). Many of the reports describe the African as vacuous, empty or lacking.
 18. See Note 14. above. Here I mean 'humanitarian' in the sense of having the best interests of other human beings at heart, not the nineteenth-century sense which mainly meant opposing slavery.
 19. See Note 7. above. Theal became more and more opposed to Imperial intervention in colonial government. He supported colonial nationalism: the founding of a South African nation led by white settlers.
 20. Maynier was the landrost in Graaff Reinet in the First Boer Republic. He opposed the wars against the Xhosa and was severely criticised by his peers and by Theal.

Chapter Three

The Struggle for Authority

I

Deborah Kapchan and Pauline Strong make a cogent comment on the postcolonial application of the concept 'hybridity' to the analysis of narratives, discourses, genres and identities: 'Hybridity calls attention to *disjunctions* as well as conjunctions, and it encourages a focus not on structure but on *practice*' (1999:249-250; my emphasis). In the previous chapter, I described Theal's specific colonialist discourse, highlighting some of its contradictions and peculiarities. The focus of this chapter is the *disjunctions* in Theal's collection of Xhosa folktales, Kaffir Folklore (1882). Three tales - *The Story of the Bird that Made Milk*, *The Story of Dema and Demazana* and *The Story of the Girl and the Mbulu*¹ - have been selected for analysis. The preface, introduction and explanatory notes are also examined, as they, together with the tales, reveal details of Theal's editorial and ethnographic *practice*. One of the most striking features of the collection is its multi-layered authorship, despite Theal's bid for textual authority. In the preface, Theal makes a claim regarding the authorship of the text:

Most of them have been obtained from at least ten or twelve individuals residing in different parts of the country, and they have all undergone a thorough revision by a circle of natives. They were not only told by natives, but were copied down by natives. The notes only are my own. I have directed the work of others, but have myself done nothing more than was necessary to explain the text.

(1882:viii-ix)

Clearly, then, the text is a hybrid text, a collaborative work,² containing at least three sets of authorial voices. The African oral sources (Ten or twelve individuals), the African transcribers

and revisors (Aa circle of natives@) and the colonial ethnographer (Theal), together produced the manuscript. This is not an unusual literary practice. Hannah Jones has examined the phenomenon in South Africa:

Co-authoring is a common and longstanding phenomenon of South African literary endeavours. From the transcription by nineteenth-century missionaries of African oral narratives to the place of the proverbial 'participant observer' in the making of worker plays and poems in the 1980s, such relationships - often cross-cultural - are a ubiquitous presence, frequently ignored or under-researched.

(1995:601)

Isabel Hofmeyr also comments on the neglect of this genre: 'Another longstanding tradition of oral testimony activity is evident in one of the most neglected of South African literary genres - the co-authored text' (1995:19). These co-authored texts, especially those compiled in the colonial era, need to be examined from a postcolonial perspective for the light they throw on the intricacies of colonial cultural relations. This genre is a hybrid genre, or as Kapchan and Strong might describe it, an 'anti-genre, defying categorical definition' (1999:243), because it synthesises different literary traditions, different mediums (the oral and the written), and different disciplinary approaches (ethnography, folklore, literature). The folktale texts in Kaffir Folklore (hereafter KF), epitomise this synthesis. The result is an odd admixture of views and literary styles, which, although they coalesce, give rise to many telling disjunctions and disruptions.

The main line of argument in this chapter is that Theal's colonialist discourse is disrupted by the multiple authorship of KF. At the same moment that Theal assumes authority over the text by articulating his discourse of the Xhosa *other*, he has to concede that the voices of the African subjects are crucial to the production of the text. In the preface to KF he proudly asserts his

liberalism: It is with a view of letting the people we have chosen to call Kaffirs describe themselves in their own words, that these stories have been collected and printed (1882:vi).

Without entirely relinquishing his hegemony, Theal acknowledges the authorial voices of the African subjects - the presence of which often disrupts the 'authority' of his own discourse.

Although this chapter aims to identify the different authorial voices at work in the text, it must be borne in mind that this text taken as a whole exemplifies Theal's colonialist discourse. Theal uses his ethnographic discourse in KF to familiarise his audience with the Xhosa race. In so doing, he creates a complex and vivid, often negative, image of the Xhosa as *Other* to his intended European audience. It is possible to compile a profile of Theal's ideal reader from the various references he makes to and about his audience. Moreover, Theal's editing practice (as discerned from the differences between the Lovedale manuscript of KF, the 1882 publication and the 1910 volume of ethnography), reveals that Theal was not unaware of the impact his writing had on the creation of cultural identities, for his subject, for his readers and for himself. This trichotomy of identity formations and the ambivalent discursive strategies which gave rise to it, are addressed in this chapter.

To facilitate the analysis of the tales in KF, with the aim of identifying Theal's manipulations and modifications of the transcripts at his disposal, the tales are compared to 'unadulterated' transcripts of the same tale type.³ For this purpose I have chosen Harold Scheub's transcriptions from his collection, The Xhosa Ntsomi (1975). As access to the original performances is impossible, and as other colonial transcripts in English of the same tale types, are not available,

Scheub's transcripts are used, not as *Ur*-tales, but as a means to speculate on Theal's editorial practice. Scheub's methods of collection and his transcription techniques have been highly praised by scholars in general. Both Finnegan and Okpewho cite Scheub as being a pioneer in the study of the performance elements of the oral folktale tradition. In addition, Scheub's structural explication of *iintsomi*, combined with postcolonial discourse theory, provides an appropriately hybrid methodology for a cultural-literary analysis of Theal's folktale texts.

Scheub's methods of collection and presentation are very unlike Theal's, but their descriptions of the form of the tales are not dissimilar. The main focus of Scheub's study is the performance and he therefore covers various elements of the creative process of composition. For example, using a structuralist approach, he explains how the tales are constructed by the performer who uses core-images and core-clichés. Interestingly, Theal identified this feature of the art-form as early as 1877: 'There is a peculiarity in many of these stories which makes them capable of almost indefinite expansion. They are so constructed that parts of one can be made to fit into parts of another so as to form a new tale' (1877:4). Also, Scheub's studies of the role played by the audience has shed light on the practice of indigenous criticism. Although he was working in Southern Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, Scheub's approach is imbued with the 'sensitivity to the ethical and political issues of researching' (Finnegan 1992:50-51) advocated by postcolonial theorists now, as the following discussion of his practice shows.

In KF, Theal does mention the performance context of the tales. His emphasis is on the setting and atmosphere. He is aware of the dramatic power of the tales and he appreciates the

psychological effects produced by the combination of tale and ambience. However, his description is not without a slur against the >superstitious=beliefs of the Xhosa:

This is perhaps not so much on account of the evening being the most convenient time, as because such tales as these have most effect when told to an assemblage gathered round a fire circle, when night has spread her mantle over the earth, and when the belief in the supernatural is stronger than it is by day.

(1882:vi-vii)

Scheub emphasises the individual characteristics of the performer. His attention to individual creativity has re-claimed agency for the performer. Through detailed descriptions of individual dramatic techniques and with the introduction of a series of photographs, Scheub has brought the role of the body in the *iintsomi* tradition into focus. Okpewho notes that AScheub provides, as no scholar before him ever did, a variety of photographs capturing the dramatic movements of his narrators@ (1992:17). Theal, on the other hand, mentions only one specific source in KF - not an oral performer but Aan educated grandson of the late chief Moroko@ (39) who wrote down the tale for Theal. Otherwise, the oral sources are referred to generally as Aancient dames@ (vi).

Scheub also shows particular sensitivity to the problems of translation and transcription.

Finnegan, in fact, uses Scheub=s observations on this issue to comment on the seriousness of the problems:

How does one effectively translate the verbal and non-verbal elements of such a tradition to the written word? ... It is impossible to consider the verbal elements of the performance in isolation from the non-verbal, yet there is no useful way of transferring the non-verbal elements to paper. ...[The Xhosa narrator] will leave gaps in the plot from time to time, which are filled in by the audience. To find an *artistically pleasing* means of filling in those gaps for an alien reader without interfering with the subtle balance being created by the artist in other regards is another special translation problem.

(Scheub in Finnegan:1992:191; my emphasis)

Scheub's concern for finding an 'artistically pleasing' transcription for the 'alien reader' is a concern which Theal also shared, but Theal did not share Scheub's awareness of the complex practical and ethical problems associated with transcription. With the above in mind, it is arguable that Theal and his circle of revisors, in their translation, transcription and editing of the tale texts, did attempt to 'fill in those gaps for an alien reader', but there are no means ultimately of verifying those processes. However, with the material available, these processes may be speculatively outlined.

Scheub has mainly been praised for his attention to the dramatic elements of folktales, but his method of collection has also received acclaim from folklorists. He spent two years in southern Africa where he collected a total of 3946 tales from 2051 different artists (1975:4). He travelled alone and by foot in order not to be intrusive. He is very careful to describe all the details of the context of an individual performance, such as the time of day, number and composition of the audience, and his volume includes Xhosa transcriptions alongside English translations. He struck up a lasting relationship with one of his sources, Nongenile Masithathu Zenani, and he edited a volume of tales and observations by Zenani, The World and the Word (1992).

Despite his scholarly and ethical standing, even Scheub makes some naive assumptions. In an attempt to efface his *otherness* Scheub claims that '[o]nce the performance was under way, I simply receded into the background, a member of the audience. I should add that I believe that the analyses I have made of the performances are much the same as those that members of the

Xhosa and Zulu audiences would make (1975:5). This statement is very similar to Theal's disingenuous claim regarding his unobtrusive role in the transcription process. Scheub's contribution to the field would have been enhanced if he had displayed the same sensitivity to his own *otherness*, as he did to the object of his study. Nevertheless, in the absence of any transcripts contemporary to Theal's, of the same tale types, Scheub's transcripts provide a useful guideline for an analysis of the KF folktales.

The analyses which follow begin with a description of the KF publication. The differences between KF and the manuscript prepared by Theal in 1877 while he was employed at Lovedale (of which only a sample sheet was printed) are explored. Adjustments and revisions in The Yellow and Dark-Skinned People of Africa South of the Zambesi (hereafter YDSP) are also included in the discussion. Then the tale transcripts in KF are compared to Scheub's transcripts, which are the most suitable English written versions of Xhosa *iintsomi* performances which are available in published form. KF is examined as part of Theal's colonialist discourse, and thus the various contradictions as well as conjunctions are noted, but most importantly, the disruption of Theal's discourse by the clamouring of different authorial voices in KF is uncovered.

II

Kaffir Folklore - The Publication

The tales in KF were first published in various South African papers and magazines,⁴ some as far back as 1874 (1882:ix). Whilst at Lovedale Theal prepared the 1877 manuscript, which was to be published by the Lovedale Press. He began to print it in 1877 but he was interrupted by the

outbreak of the ninth Frontier War. This first collection of tales was entitled Stories of the Amaxosa and, unlike KF, was intended to be a collection of tales in Xhosa A[w]ith English translations and notes (1877: title page). KF was eventually published in London in 1882 by W. Swan Sonnenschein and Co. Later in 1910, much of the same material was incorporated into YDSP. In total, KF contains a preface which serves as justification for the publication, an introductory ethnographic chapter, twenty one Xhosa narratives, a selection of proverbs and figurative expressions, and lengthy explanatory notes. Most of the stories are to do with marriage and the observation of custom, or deal with the theme of famine. The stories contain fantastic creatures such as Azims (cannibals), talking animals, and five-headed snakes.

First, the visual commodification of this material is an important indicator of Thea's (and the publisher's) categorisation of the publication, and anticipated audience. The beginning of every section is heralded by a rectangular, scroll-like illustration, often resembling a coat-of-arms or crest. Each section ends with a smaller illustration, which is floral with birds or small animals (see Appendix A). These pastoral images formed part of a European convention at the time, which romanticised folklore as 'survivals' from an idealised, bygone era. As discussed in Chapter One, the term folklore, when it was first used in the nineteenth-century, referred to the purity of national culture preserved in rural backwaters outside the cosmopolitanizing reach of the metropole (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:297). Briggs draws attention to the nostalgia and romanticism of the German poet, Herder, who was also a folklorist: 'Herder equated the oral texts of the folk with emotionality and closeness to nature, and linked the written word to thinking, philosophy, and alienation from nature' (1993:400). In KF, this dichotomy between oral, rural

folk and urban, literate elite, which still dogs the discipline, is reflected in the visual panoply. But despite the floridly imaginative quality and (for a European reader) exotic content of some of the tales, there is no attempt to echo the content of the tales in the illustrations, and no design or motif which is remotely African (even though it was the arts and crafts of the Xhosa which Theal admired the most). This European commodification of the text (at a quick glance the volume might be a collection of the Grimms= *Kinder-und Hausmärchen*) jars not only with the content, but also with the claims to authenticity which Theal makes in the preface.

Why was the text commodified in this way? It is probable that Theal, the amateur ethnographer, made a bid for textual authority by targeting a select scholarly readership (those who have made it their business to study mankind@ [Theal 1882:v]), for his first >scientific= text to be published in London. This speculation is supported by press reviews of The History and Ethnography of South Africa (1907-1910), which Swan Sonnenschein and Co. included in a mail advertisement for the same publication. Almost all the reviews recognise the appeal the texts hold for the Antiquary, anthropologist, and the folk-lorist@ (*Times*).⁵ Furthermore, Theal's choice of presentation, assuming that the decision was not made entirely by the publisher, did not conform to the images of Africa which were prevalent in the popular, domestic media in England at the time (see Appendix A). As McClintock argues, the imperial project was given prominent visual form in

Images of colonial conquest [which] were stamped on soap boxes...biscuit tins, whisky bottles, tea tins and chocolate bars ... No pre-existing form of organized racism had ever before been able to reach so large and so differentiated a mass of the populace.

(1995:209)

But Theal opted for a sober, scholarly-looking package for his folktale texts. KF, as a scientific publication, not popular domestic literature, validated Theal's social evolutionist notion of a racial hierarchy in Southern Africa, a notion which became the backbone of his colonialist discourse.

A second issue is the selection of material. Theal claims that the tales in KF have been so selected as to leave no distinguishing feature unrepresented (KF), and indeed, the material covered in KF is extensive. By representative Theal obviously means, representative of the Xhosa subject for European readers,⁶ who were, most likely, desk-bound anthropologists in London or Cambridge or Paris (Vail and White 1991:4). Theal selected material which would best describe every aspect of Xhosa life for the purposes of defining Xhosa cultural identity to these readers. Vail and White describe this sort of material as:

accounts of non-Western peoples written by explorers, travellers, traders, missionaries, and government administrators who were untrained as observers and predisposed to dwell upon the most exotic of strangers' customs who could thereby define their own.

(1991:4)

Theal, though living in close proximity to the Xhosa, was certainly untrained as an anthropologist, and, as the explanatory notes in KF reveal, he did sometimes dwell upon the most exotic of strangers' customs.

Thus, in KF, Xhosa culture is explained, described and translated for the European reader with an interest in the human sciences. Also, constant reference to the culture of the reader, either in terms of similarity or difference to the Xhosa, sets up and perpetuates the binarism so crucial to the rationale of colonialism. Briggs calls these formal processes (such as selection and editing)

associated with producing particular types of texts in the service of social and political agendas
 Aentextualization@ (Briggs 1993:390). But Theal's attempts at entextualization are not consistent.

In order Ato leave no distinguishing feature unrepresented@, KF covers a huge cross-section of themes and topics. But on a stylistic level, there is evidence of Theal's attempts to homogenise individual tales. For example, the *Hlkanyana* series of tales has been edited into one, very long tale: AI have greatly reduced this story in bulk by leaving out endless repetitions of exactly the same trick...in all other respects it is complete@ (1882:210). Finnegan, commenting on the transcription of *Limba* tales from Sierra Leone, notes the imposition of a >western= notion of order: Athe stories are told as short independent narrations on different occasions, and their inclusion into one united narrative may represent the outlook of the Western systematizing scholar rather than the intentions of the narrators@ (1970: 360). This appropriation and modification is designed to render the tales more accessible to a European audience. Theal imposes his notion of Aartistically pleasing@ on the text, thereby establishing a degree of authority over it.

Also, Theal edited the *Little Jackal* tale: AIt is capable of indefinite expansion by the narrator, but the tricks of Little Jackal are always very silly ones. The above are among the best of them@ (KF:212). Here Theal has anticipated what might appear tedious or silly to his reader, according to >western= values. In this way the tales are disparaged and, to some degree, infantilised. There is evidence also of sanitisation in the selection of specific versions of the same tale type. Speaking of *The Runaway Children*, Theal reveals that AOne version makes Magoda escape with the children, and introduces a great deal of obscenity@ (KF:211). He predictably selected the version

without the obscenities so as not to offend his white Victorian reader. However, Theal's editorial stance is ambivalent. There are many examples of sanitisation, yet some of the tales contain violence or abjection.

The most intriguing and characteristically contradictory element of the preface is Theal's enthusiasm to express how the tales show the relationship between tribes and people of different countries and even of different languages (1882:v-vi). In the Lovedale preface Theal wrote an entire paragraph dedicated to this theme, but it was omitted from the KF preface. This paragraph reveals Theal's desire to familiarise the audience with the material, and also his fascination with similarity and difference:

Many of the actors in these Stories of the Amaxosa will be familiar to Europeans. Animals of various kinds will come upon the stage and talk as naturally as did the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood. Giants who feast on little children will appear, and Jack the Giant-killer, under another name, will play his well-known part. Long before the curtain falls it will be seen that *Africans and Europeans have more in common than is usually suspected.*

(1877:4-5; my emphasis)

This similarity, which Theal so excitedly presents to his audience in 1877, is banished from KF, which concludes with the following sentence not found in the 1877 preface: 'The book is now issued, in the hope that it may be found useful, as throwing light upon the mode of life of a people who *differ* from ourselves in many respects besides degree of civilization' (1882:ix; my emphasis).

This shift can be explained by reference to the *model of double polarity*, which argues that similarity is a source of anxiety as well as fascination for Theal. In the 1877 excerpt Theal

appears excited by his discovery and keen to share it with his overseas audience. This excitement and keenness have become barely discernible in KF where observations of similarity are qualified by reference to the evolutionary scale: 'They [the tales] are evidences that the same ideas are common to every branch of the human family at the same *stage of progress*' (1882:vi; my emphasis). In the end, in order to maintain ascendancy on the ladder of civilisation, commonality has to be downplayed and differences have to be emphasised.

The preface immediately differentiates between the identities of author and intended reader, and object of enquiry. Theal, through his heavy use of first-person and third-person plural personal pronouns ('We', 'ourselves', 'their'), creates a 'speech community' with the European reader. His use of social evolutionist jargon ('stage of progress', 'degree of civilisation') is a further indication of his target audience. There is strong indication in the preface that this target audience was specifically English: Theal makes reference to 'English people', 'English literature' and 'St. Paul's' (1882:vi-vii). With a growing English settler community in the Eastern Cape, the advent of the Frontier Wars, and the fact that the territory was still under British rule, it is clear why the ethnography and folklore of the natives of the area would be of interest to English readers. Theal does not address African readers directly in KF.

Another significant feature of the preface is Theal's preoccupation with 'authenticity'. This claim is very similar to what other collectors in the same era were saying. The Grimms' preface to *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* makes the same claim but with more poetic flair:

We have tried to write down these tales as purely as possible. ...No circumstance has been added through poetic efforts or embellished or changes, for we should have

shied from augmenting tales that were so rich in themselves with their own analogy and reference. They cannot be invented.

(1989:37)

The Grimms use what Briggs calls a *quasi-moral lexicon* (1993:396) to characterise the relationship between the printed texts and sources as unproblematic. Theal also glosses over the problematic processes of transcription and translation. He appears to buy into what Briggs terms the *image of intertextual transparency*, which is the assumption that *A*texts created through transcription, translation and editing bear an intrinsic connection to their source such that the former are extensions or synecdoches of the latter (1993:396). Theal tried to disguise his entextualization of KF by effacing his role in its production whilst drawing attention to the role of the African sources and transcribers. However, in stark contradiction, he also promotes his authority on the subject of Xhosa folklore.

In the following claims to authenticity, Theal emphasises the texts' *A*connection to their source by omitting himself from the process. In KF he states, *A*They were not only told by natives, but were copied down by natives. The notes only are my own (viii). The Lovedale preface is more emphatic: *A*In point of fact, they have not only been told by natives, but they have been copied down by natives, the type has been set by natives, and, finally, the proof sheets have been read by natives. The notes only are the editor's own (1877:5). Theal here even refers to himself in the third person.

Ironically, this confident claim belies an anxiety about the very issue on which he appears so adamant. Theal needs the presence of the *A*natives to establish authenticity for his text. This

necessitates relinquishing some of his own textual authority, and admitting to his *otherness*. The over-emphasis on authenticity suggests that Theal was aware of the inevitable gaps between the oral and the written texts, and the claim to authenticity is an attempt to render those gaps invisible. A further question is, why was the claim watered down in the 1882 preface? Could it be that in the earlier 1877 preface, written when Theal was resident in the Eastern Cape, before his career ambitions and political affiliations had crystallised, he dangerously ascribed too much agency to the African subject?

Certainly, the most incongruous point about this claim to authenticity is the lack of information about those whom Theal presents as the real authors of the text, *the natives*. We are never told who these *natives* are, or given a full account of the process of recording and transcription, but we are urged to believe in the authenticity of the process. In Liz Gunner's words, *Who were the informants - elders? Or schoolboys?* (1996:115). To use Theal's own stage trope, the *natives* formed the backdrop or played minor characters in the colonial drama which he *directed*, despite the fact that he depended on them for the acquisition of *authentic* material.

Theal ends the preface with a note about his credibility as director of this text. Even though he cannot claim authorship, he can claim authority through his *intimate knowledge of the Kaffir people* (1882: ix). This claim is a wry contradiction in Theal's discourse because his assertion of authority points to his crucial role as cultural translator, a role he earlier wished to downplay. This claim epitomises his struggle for textual authority, a struggle which creates a covert narrative in KF. In short, Theal attempts to establish in the preface: subject positions for himself, for his

readers and for his object of knowledge, and authenticity for KF.

The introductory chapter of KF is dedicated to an ethnography of the Xhosa. Theal covers a wide cross-section of topics: language, history, geographical setting, the tribal system, physical description, manner of abode, farming methods, religion, superstition, and manufacturing skills. Although positivist in spirit, it lacks »scientific= method and is a hotchpotch of information and opinions. Nevertheless the material has been selected by Theal to »represent= the Xhosa as thoroughly as possible. Two features stand out in the introduction. One is Theal's sensitivity to the processes of acculturation that were occurring in the »contact zone« (Pratt 1992:4) of the Eastern Cape frontier, and the other is his praise for the manufacturing skills of the Xhosa.

First, regarding Theal's sensitivity to the processes of acculturation, even though he extols the changes wrought by the European colonisers, he appears to hold some sympathy for the Xhosa. Take for example his remark about pottery: »Hardly less remarkable was their skill in pottery, an art rapidly becoming lost since the introduction of European wares« (1882:26). In the preface he perceptively identifies the tales as a key indicator of change:

It will surprise no one to learn that these tales are already undergoing great changes among a very large section of the natives on the border...Their tales are thus a counterpart of the narrators, in possessing an adaptability to growth and a power of conformation to altered circumstances

(1882:vii-viii)

But this sensitivity is outweighed on the whole by Theal's belief in the benefits of European morality, Christianity, and literacy for the Xhosa. The following remarks indicate that Theal's sensitivity did not extend so far as to apprehend the violent and oppressive nature of the changes

wreaked by the European settlers.

Before the supremacy of the Europeans it was seldom that the individual who filled this office died a natural death (1882:21). Referring here to the fate of the unfortunate priest and witch-finder in Xhosa society (1882:21), Theal neglects to mention how many Xhosas had died *unnatural* deaths since the supremacy of the Europeans. He is attempting to illustrate the 'civilising' influence of the Europeans on the violent and superstitious Xhosa who killed erring priests, but he makes no comment on the number of Xhosa who had died in the Frontier battles which were waged since the supremacy of the Europeans had been established.

Before the advent of the white man, the Kaffirs knew nothing of letters or of any signs by which ideas could be expressed (1882:10). This remark reveals that Theal was so deeply steeped in the bias of literacy versus orality, that he did not realise that in recording the tales, he was recording a most complex and effective system of signs by which ideas could be expressed. For Theal, the oral culture was not valued in itself, but gained status as the object of 'scientific' enquiry once reified in textual form. De Kock has identified the printing press of the missionary as the foremost weapon of civilisation (1996:48), and certainly Theal, with his formidable writing career, embodied the spirit of progress through literacy.

Second, no other aspect of Theal's ethnographic description is as positive as his comments on manufacturing. His antiquarian interest in artefacts is evident in his detailed description of each facet of manufacturing: metallic wares, pottery, wood carving, weaving, the treatment and use of

animal skins. His tone is both one of wonder and genuine praise: *AMany of their manufactures display considerable skill and ingenuity@* (1882:24); *AIN this laborious operation a vast amount of patience and perseverance was exercised, and the article when completed was very creditable indeed@* (26). This entirely positive view of an aspect of Xhosa culture is incongruous, but the paragraph immediately following this lengthy and rare passage of respect and admiration, resumes the colonialist trope of negative *othering*: *AIngenious as they are, the men are far from being industrious. A great portion of their time is spent in visiting and gossip, of which they are exceedingly fond@* (1882:27). On top of calling them lazy and idle, he goes on to label them liars (*Athey are not strict observers of the truth@*) and habitual cattle thieves (*Although not pilferers, they are addicted to cattle lifting@*). This derogatory generalising and stereotyping is unfortunately how Theal chooses to end his introduction, with a sting in the tale.

Material from this introductory chapter of KF was later incorporated into YDSP. In YDSP, the ethnography of the *ABantu@* tribes (a huge assortment of people he divides into *Aeastern coast tribes@*, *Ainterior tribes@* and *Awestern coast tribes@*)⁷ forms the bulk of the text. The significant difference between the 1882 and the 1910 publication is that the 1882 introduction does not mention the tales, or the *iintsomi* tradition. However, in YDSP, in the chapter on the *›Bushmen=*, Theal offers a surprisingly sensitive and *›modern=* account of the performance of a tale, an account not found in KF:

but judging from the manner in which Bantu women tell such stories, *a great deal of their interest is lost when they are read in print*. A Xosa woman when narrating one of them displays all kinds of gestures, alters her voice in the dialogues, and sings the parts capable of such treatment, in short , puts life into the tale.

(1910:53; my emphasis)

In YDSP Theal reproduces the same tales contained in KF, in two chapters entitled *ASpecimens*

of Bantu Folklore. He makes some crucial changes to the presentation, foregoing the scrolls and floral emblems of KF in favour of the newly accessible medium - photography. He also includes a Xhosa transcript of a tale as 'a specimen of the language' (1910:275). And in YDSP, Theal's obsession with authenticity seems to have dissipated: 'They are not indeed exact literal translations, but they are as nearly such as they could be made while at the same time they were put into English that can be easily read and understood' (1910:275). Perhaps twenty eight years of experience as an historiographer and archivist had rid him of the 'image of intertextual transparency' (Briggs 1993:396).

The positive change in YDSP is Theal's sensitivity to the intricacies of transcription which he no longer characterises as so facile a process. Nevertheless, in YDSP, Theal retains the 'scientific' jargon of his earlier ethnographic discourse, referring to the tales as 'specimens' and presenting the photographs as museum exhibits. Despite the improvement in other respects, Theal's colonialist discourse in YDSP is more overtly racist. His construction of a racial hierarchy for the inhabitants of Southern Africa is more detailed and more strongly argued than in KF, where the foundations of his colonialist discourse were laid.

III

Telling Tales

This section analyses the folktale texts themselves with the aim of demonstrating their specific hybridity and how this hybridity calls attention to the disjunctions in Theal's editorial practice.

The first tale type in KF is the *Milk Bird*. Theal offers two versions of the same tale type. In the first version (hereafter KF I), a woman's work in her garden is undone by the singing of a bird.

The woman's husband captures the bird and it turns out that the bird can produce milk. The man and the woman keep the bird and secretly drink the milk it produces. Their children drink inferior milk obtained from a tree. Two of the children discover the secret and whilst obtaining milk from the bird, the bird escapes. The children follow the bird but do not manage to capture it. The father punishes the children so they run away. (At this point in the narrative the tale begins to resemble another tale type, *Demane and Demazana*, which is discussed later.) The boy and the girl live in a rock where they are befriended by a crocodile. The crocodile helps the children to prosper. The girl marries the crocodile who is transformed into a man. After some time, during a famine, the parents of the children come to their village to beg for food. The parents are helped by the children and the crocodile.

Scheub collected seven versions of the same tale type. I have selected Performance 27 (hereafter Scheub I) (1975:329) for comparison because its content resembles that of KF I-s. In the performance notes, Scheub records that this version of the tale was narrated by a Hlubi woman of about fifty years old to an audience of thirty women, five men, fifteen teenagers and thirty children (1975:422). In Scheub I, the parents do not conceal the bird from their children. The milk is shared by the family. The children, either through curiosity or greed, allow the bird to escape. The bird returns to the field where the parents are working and undoes the work. When the father discovers the children's folly, he pursues them with weapons. The children run away and encounter a cannibal. The cannibal eats one of the children. The other two children flee from the cannibal and return home. Scheub I is a direct transcript of the *intsomi* performance and contains no embellishments or revisions for the written medium.

By comparison, KF I contains some obvious signs of Theale's editing. The tale begins with a formulaic opening which is of European origin, "A...once upon a time@. The Xhosa folktale tradition has its own opening formulas: "AA *ntsomi* says@" (used in Scheub I), "AIt happened in a *ntsomi*@ or "A Now for a *ntsomi*@. In Scheub I, this is followed by a very prosaic indicative statement with no reference to time - "AThere was a woman who hoed in the fields@. Almost every transcript by Scheub begins in this way. Scheub I also closes with a formula "AThe *ntsomi* is ended, it is ended@. The closing formula usually follows a sudden and dramatic conclusion of the plot. But in the KF tales, most of the conclusions are long-winded and they often allude to an eternal resolution: "AThat was a nice place, so they remained there ever after@" (1882:73), or "AAfterwards Makanda Mahlanu became a man, and Mpunzanyana continued to be the wife he loved best@" (1882:53).

These differences suggest that the Xhosa opening and closing formulas were replaced by European framing devices. Briggs identifies a similar editorial strategy in the work of the brothers Grimm:

Stereotypic opening and closing formulas were added, thus helping to bound the texts. Elements of both content and form were introduced to render the rhetorical structure of the narratives *more cohesive and more explicit*.

(1993:397; my emphasis)

Briggs identifies the Grimms' concern with rendering the tale texts accessible to a literate but juvenile audience. The intended effect of such modifications in KF, it can be surmised, was to render the tales more familiar and palatable to a European reader. However, there are exceptions. For example, KF I does not end neatly with a typical "fairytale" formula although it does offer a resolution. In contrast to the other closing paragraphs in KF, this one appears

clumsy and confused:

Crocodile then gave them (the parents) three baskets of corn, and told them to go and build on the mountains. He (the man) did so, and died there on the mountains.

The disjointedness and incompleteness coupled with the awkwardness of the parentheses, remains redolent of a performance.

Generally, however, Theal also seems unable to accept that *iintsomi* performances do often end abruptly: In a note at the end of *Story of the Hare*, he declares "This story terminates so abruptly that I have little doubt about it being merely a fragment" (1882:174). This view of Theal's suggests that he was not really acquainted with the performance context of tales, or else he would have realised that performances are often interrupted or cut short by a dissatisfied audience. Even if the involvement of the audience results in a sudden termination of the performance, the performance (including the disruptive elements) retains the status of an *iintsomi*, it does not become "a fragment". As Scheub relates:

If for any reason the performer does not achieve an early harmony with her audience, or if the audience seems hostile or sustains indifference to her efforts, then the *audience* remains in control, and the performer usually takes one of several paths: she quickly ends the *intsomi*, presenting little more than basic plot-core with few details and few related stylistic touches.

(1975:12)

In the explanatory notes for *Story of the Girl Who Disregarded the Custom of Ntonjane*,

Theal makes the following observation regarding the conclusion of tales:

A large proportion of Kaffir tales have a similar termination with many English ones;

the heroine gets married to a prince. These show that a desire for worldly rank is as great in the one people as in the other.

(1882:204)

Reading Scheub's transcripts of performances, this is clearly not the case. In KF, eight of the twenty one tales end in marriage, and it is likely that Theal selected these tales with the 'happy ever after' endings because of their resemblance to European folktales. As Scheub points out, the resolution of a tale does not necessarily mean a happy ending or the achievement of success:

Resolutions reveal the restoration of social harmony or they detail its continued disruption as the performance comes to a close. These resolutions parallel the conflicts: human vices prevail or are diminished; human desires are satisfied or thwarted.

(1975:84)

Theal's comment above is more revealing of the European tradition than it is of the Xhosa *iintsomi* tradition. Theal's encapsulation of the tales, his statement about the *Story of the Hare*, and his selection of tales, reveal that he desired complete and coherent narratives which conformed to a European written folktale tradition for his collection, rather than transcripts which closely reflected the Xhosa *iintsomi* tradition (which he claims KF does do).

In the details of KF I there are also definite instances of sanitisation. Theal refers to the bird as 'the bird that made milk', while every one of Scheub's transcripts refers bluntly to the bird as the bird that 'shits' or 'defecates' *amasi*. Nowhere in the tale or in notes is the actual production of milk by the bird explained by Theal. Also, in the tale, the unfamiliar term, *amasi*, is changed erroneously, but it seems deliberately, to the innocuous 'milk'. This translation is explained in an endnote:

(a) The word *amasi*, translated milk, means that kind of fermented milk which is used

by the Kaffirs ... *Amasi* is very nutritious; it forms one of the principal articles of food of the Kaffirs, and is relished by most Europeans in Kaffirland.

(1882:195)

Note that the interesting instance of cultural convergence (relished by most Europeans in Kaffirland) is repressed in the tale text itself. Theal also explains implements and utensils translated in KF I - (c) *Ikuba*, a pick or hoe, (e) *Itunga*, a basket used to milk the cows in (sic). Points about agriculture, land ownership and circumcision are also annotated. It seems that Theal is eager to render the strange familiar to his reader. This process is a complex and loaded one. Lidchi describes the process:

The purpose of ethnographic texts is ostensibly that of **decoding** - to render comprehensible that which is initially unfamiliar ... In ethnographic texts, such a reading is frequently accomplished by a translation, the transposition of alien concepts or ways of viewing the world, from one language to another or from one conceptual universe to another. ... Ethnographic texts can only successfully *decode* - unravel the meaning of that which is unfamiliar, distant, incomprehensible - if they simultaneously *encode* - translate, de-exoticize, and transform that which is alien into that which is comprehensible.

(Lidchi 1997:166; emphasis in original)

Lidchi's account of the processes of decoding and encoding is very applicable to Theal and his editing of KF because she captures both aspects of the dual endeavour. Theal constructs Xhosa culture through a specific mode of representation whilst simultaneously dissecting and explicating it for European consumption. He uses points of similarity and difference to do this. According to the *model of double polarity*, Theal both values difference as an indicator of European superiority, and is threatened by that difference which alienates and undermines, rather than reinforces, his own identity. His sanitisation and explication of the tales may be read as an

attempt to deflate the threat of cultural difference, whilst still validating that difference. Therefore, the tales are partially familiarised and domesticated for his European readership, whilst still embodying a certain disruptive, or potentially disruptive ›subaltern‹ voice.

The limits of Theal's ethnographic method are shown in that for both the *Milk Bird* tales he explains alien objects and customs, but he does not comment on the social functions of the tales themselves. Despite his comment in the preface that the 'Atraditional tales of a people is [sic] a key to their ideas and a standard of their powers of thought' (1882:v), Theal does not acknowledge or explain the moral lessons contained in the tales. In the notes to *Story of the Girl who Disregarded the Custom of Ntonjane* (the title alone suggests a didactic theme), he claims that 'Most Kaffir tales are destitute of moral teaching from our point of view' (1882:204).

Why does he adopt this ambivalent stance? Could it be that he was terrified of discovering a moral code which was not dissimilar to the Christian one, the same Christian code which was being touted as colonialism's banner? Here Theal is confronted with too much similarity - a similarity which poses a threat to the rationale of colonialism, for in KF I, as in most other tales in KF, the moral lessons are obvious,⁸ and must therefore be suppressed.

Another disjunction in Theal's editorial practice is that KF I contains some irrelevant events which do not further the plot. These indicate either inconsistent editing on Theal's part, or the tenacious presence of the performer's voice. For example, after the children have established themselves in the rock, 'A bird came one day with a child, and left it there by there house. The bird said : So

have I done to all the people@. The bird=s visit and the child are not mentioned again and the event seems to have no bearing on the main trajectory of the narrative, but the episode was not edited out of the text. It appears that the episode is part of the Arepertory of remembered traditional core-images@ (Scheub 1975:46) which the performer has at her disposal, but having selected it she elects to reject it in favour of another (that of the crocodile). Not only the voice, but also the will, of the performer, persists in this tale text.

Why has Theal not enhanced cohesion or developed the linear quality of the tales with a more rigorous editorial policy? More editing would almost certainly have resulted in the elision of difference and too familiar a tale text. Theal=s colonialist discourse relied on his notions of difference and varying degrees of cultural sophistication. At the same time Theal recognised similarities, which were also expedient for the construction of a racist discourse (commensurability of cultures being a requisite for comparisons). But those similarities had to be kept in check. If too much similarity between the cultures of the coloniser and colonised was admitted, the gap between them on the evolutionary scale diminished. When one considers the fine line Theal trod between delight and disavowal of both similarity and difference, it is no wonder that his editing is inconsistent. Further, Theal had to strike a balance between publishing an >authentic= text and appealing to an >alien= audience.

In addition, Theal was faced with the challenge of the irrepressible African voice in the text. As Hooper points out:

If narration, like culture, takes place between Asubjects in relations of power@, the goal for the critic is to be aware of the polyphony of the text, of the narrative as a Astory among stories@, of, in Clifford=s terms, multiple voices Aclamour[ing] for expression@.

(Hooper 1994:23)

The African voice in KF I certainly *Acclamours for expression* and partially succeeds. The voice of the oral performer is evident in the performance elements which remain in the written transcript. For example, the bird's imperative songs and the declarations after the songs (*It was so* and *All these things happened*) are key features of a folktale performance, as Scheub's transcripts show. Scheub comments on the structural importance of songs in performances:

The performance has as its dynamic centre a core-cliché, an easily remembered song or chant (which may sometimes be flattened into sayings) around which the narrative-plot is constructed. Implicit in the core-cliché is the plot, but it should be emphasized that the cliché in itself is only a song or chant.

(1973:3)

There is evidence that Theal tried to eliminate the songs from KF I. In the 1877 text, the bird merely spoke in a flat and uninteresting voice: *When she left, there came a bird to that place, and said, Agrass be as before, grass of this garden return to your place* (1877:13). This attempt to suppress the liveliness of the performer's voice by removing the core-cliché/song seems to have been reconsidered, and the songs are reinstated in KF I. Some parts of the bird's song are not translated into English, for example, *Aciti, citi,* from the second song. Scheub declares that songs *retain their structure more completely than any other element in the ntsomi tradition* (1975:50). He also comments on how songs function in the tales: *the songs, rendered at critical moments, reveal the feelings of the characters without the necessity of analytical or descriptive statement* (1975:50). This function, of obliquely revealing rather than stating feelings or actions, would have been very difficult to translate and smoothly incorporate into the written narratives. This is a possible explanation for the retention of the songs in their original form (and sometimes original language) in the KF tales.

The voice of the performer is also audible in the survival of idiomatic expressions. In KF I the narrator says that the children *Aslept three times on the road* and this expression is not explained or referred to in any way in KF. But in YDSP, Theal realises that the expression is alien to his European reader and he clarifies it in a footnote: *This is equivalent to saying that they travelled for three days* (1910:286). Also omitted from KF I are the numerous ideophones⁹ used by narrators to dramatise the defecation of the *amasi* - *Abatsha!* is the ideophone recorded in Scheub I. Other ideophones in Scheub I are *Vukuthu!* - the sound the bird made when commanding the weeds - and *Aprrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!* - the sound the bird made when it flew away.

Moreover, it is not one African voice, but many. The other African voices in KF I, besides those of the *Ancient dames* who narrated the tales, are the voices of the transcribers - the *Acircle of natives*. These are the people who actually performed the transcription and translation, and, according to Theal, they were also the initial revisors:

they [the tales] have not only been told by natives, but they have been copied down by natives, the different versions have been compared by natives, the type has been set by natives, and, finally, the proof sheets have been read by natives.

(1877:5)

It is, therefore, very likely that they would have been responsible for the first and most obvious level of editing - the cutting out of repetition in order to develop the linear quality of the tales. KF I does not contain repetition other than the repetition of stylised elements, like songs or parallel episodes. But in Scheub I the transcript abounds with repetition. The narrator of Scheub I composes the following repetitions, either for emphasis or as a strategy for gaining time: *AShe began all over again, she hoed, she hoed and hoed, she hoed*, *AShe dug it, she dug it, she dug it,*

she dug this hole. Even if the native transcribers had retained such repetitions, it is likely that Theal would have found such endless repetitions (1882:210) silly and tedious, and cut them out himself.

As a buffer between Theal and the original oral texts, it is also possible that these revisors, who were almost certainly mission educated, selected tales which *they* considered the most representative of their culture. In the same vein they might also have sanitised the tales. Although it is impossible to distinctly identify the different voices in KF, it is necessary to recognise that the polyphony exists, that the text is, in Bakhtinian terms, a mixture of different social languages, a mixture of different linguistic consciousnesses (Bakhtin 1981:358).

The second version of *Milk Bird* in KF will be referred to as KF II. This tale is noteworthy because it is the only one whose transcription is treated as a specific cultural and historical event.

In KF Theal wrote a foreword to the tale:

The following is another version of this story of the Bird that made Milk, as current among the Baralongs ... It was written down for me by an educated grandson of the late chief Moroko.

(1882:39)

This foreword shows that not all the tales were collected from oral sources, and that Theal was occasionally interested in the biographical details of his sources. This interest grew, as shown in YDSP, where Theal augmented the same foreword:

This story was written down for me in English by an educated grandson of the late chief Moroko of the Baseleka branch of the Baralong tribe. He informed me that he had often heard it told when he was a little boy, and that he believed every Morolong woman knew it by heart.

(1910:287)

As argued before, this sort of improvement in YDSP is quite incongruous with the development and consolidation of Thea's colonialist discourse which is also evident in YDSP.

The second tale type examined is *Demane and Demazana*. Thea's version is referred to as KF III. For comparison I have selected Scheub's Performance 8 (*Furujani and Demazana do battle against a Zim*, hereafter Scheub II) which was performed by a Hlubi woman of about forty years old, to an audience of twenty women, two men and twenty children (1975:418).

KF III is about a brother and sister who run away and set up home in a cave. The girl, Demazana, is kidnapped by a cannibal but the boy, Demane, outsmarts the cannibal and rescues his sister. This transcript also shows signs of multiple authorship. The general (but not overriding) tone of the tale text is flat and staid although the content lends itself to various inflections of drama and humour. This is due mainly to the stylistic transformations of the text, but there is also an interesting expurgation of content. Like KF I, this tale begins with a European formulaic opening 'Once upon a time'. And the tale ends with a neat, one-sentence, denouement: 'Demane and Demazana then took all Zim's possessions, which were great, and they became wealthy people'. The text abounds with stiff and formal expressions such as 'obliged on account of ill usage', or 'But she was wayward...', which are not characteristic of the *iintsomi* tradition. Even the terrifying *Zim* has acquired the idiom of an English gentleman: 'So he went away and consulted with another cannibal. He said: >What must I do to obtain what I desire?=@.

Yet at the same time that the hand of a serious and grandiloquent editor is apparent, the voice of

a not altogether proficient English speaker is heard. There are odd grammatical errors such as *And then no longer spoke hoarse*, and the more awkward *And one could get their honey*, because when any *one* tried, *his* hand stuck fast (my emphasis). This might be put down to the exigencies of translation for the second-language *A circle of natives*.

The voice of the performer voice is also heard in KF III, in the cannibal's song, which in performance would be exploited to the fullest by a skilled performer. It is apparent from the transcript that the singing of the song and Demazana's response would make a very lively and entertaining exchange in performance. Also the sudden transition from *the cannibal* to referring to the cannibal as *Zim* is probably indicative of a performer's whimsical alterations. The direct speech exchanges which characterise the climax of the plot are in the colloquial, idiosyncratic rhetoric of the oral performer rather than the rigid formal voice of the editor. For example, some humour is detectable in this exchange between the cannibal and his daughter.

He said to his daughter: There is something nice in the bag; go bring it.

She went, but the bees stung her hand, and she called out: *It is biting.*

The end of KF III is extremely funny with the cannibal falling *headlong* into a pond where he becomes a tree stump and the home of a beehive. But the fate of the cannibal in KF III is strongly censored. The end of the unfortunate cannibal is related in this dry and unclear way: *The bees made their home in the stump, but no one could get their honey, because, when any one tried, his hand stuck fast.* The censorial voice of the editor does not relate why the hands stick in the stump. However, in Scheub II, the humour of the situation is exploited to its fullest and a reason for the sticking hands is given:

The children ate, they came and ate the honey here in the buttocks of the Zim. They did not know that it was the buttocks of the Zim, and that there are its feet, sticking

up in the air! They ate and ate. Then one of the children scraped, and her hand stuck tight! It was clear that her hand would not come out of the Zim=s buttocks!

This is heavy-handed sanitisation by Theal or his revisors. Whether prompted by the anticipation of an English, middle-class, Victorian readership, or the revisors=mission education, it is not at all surprising that reference to hands sticking in buttocks was eliminated!

The third and final tale for analysis from KF is *The Story of the Girl and the Mbulu* (hereafter KF IV). The corresponding Scheub transcription is an extract of Performance 28 (*A boy murders his sister; a surviving sister is victimized by a mbulu makhasana*, hereafter Scheub III). This is a story about an orphaned girl who is forced to exchange places with a deceitful monster. After much suffering the true identity of the girl is discovered and the monster is vanquished. Like the other tales in KF, the various authorial influences in KF IV are manifest most clearly in the disjunctions they create.

Once again a European framing device is used to open the tale: *AThere was once...@*. The editor of this tale worked hard to create a succinct and abridged version. Many of the episodes, which are lengthy and complicated in Scheub III, are expressed in the form of short, curt sentences in KF IV. For example, the murder of the sister by the brother is reported in one bland sentence: *AWhile she was away the boy quarrelled with his sister and killed her@*. None of the emotion and drama of the tragedy is retained in the following sentence, which reports the mother=s slaying of her son: *AWhen the woman came home and found out what had happened, she killed her son.@* These compressions not only enhance the cohesion of the tale, they also lessen the psychological and emotional dimensions of the narrative, the lack of which renders the tale morally worthless.

In an endnote, Theal makes a pronouncement about the moral value of the tales: **A**Most Kaffir tales are destitute of moral teaching from our point of view (1882:204). Here is evidence to support my earlier argument that Theal perceived the tales as lacking any moral function because of his reluctance to recognise in them a moral code not dissimilar to his own.

Another example of excision occurs later in KF IV when the *mbulu* has to explain its strange voice to the people it is deceiving. The incident is reported in the most matter-of-fact way: **A**They wondered at her voice, but she told them she had been sick and her throat was not yet well. In contrast, in Scheub III, the incident is not only humorous, it conveys the traditional characteristics of the fabulous *mbulu* who lisps and rarely speaks the truth: **A**I was very ill! I nearly died! It said, >The back of my tongue wath cut off. Also, in Scheub III, the woeful song the heroine sings about her true identity is designed to elicit sympathy for her, and at the same time, being overheard, it is meant to serve as a revelation. In KF IV this episode is also downplayed: **A**While engaged in this occupation she used to sing about the *mbulu* taking her clothes and passing itself off for a person, until the women who worked in the gardens took notice of this song of hers. The overall effect of this editing is that KF IV has lost most of the flavour and dynamism of an *intsomi* performance, but neither has it acquired the dramatic depth and engaging rhetoric of an entertaining written folktale.

But this drastic abbreviation does not mean that the voice of the performer is totally eradicated from KF IV. Even this transcript contains digressions and irrelevant material. After the girl leaves home she encounters an old woman: **A**After this she met an old woman, who called to her, but she took no heed and walked on. Who is the old woman? The reader is never told anything more about her or how she connects with the plot. Also, the mother's final injunctions to the girl do not

have any bearing on the plot:

Then she gave the girl a stick, and told her to go to her uncle's house, saying that when she got there she must strike the ground with the stick, and all the clothes and other things that belonged to her would then rise up out of the earth.

The stick and the possessions in the earth are not mentioned again. In Scheub III, the scene described above does occur when the girl arrives at her uncle's house, and is crucial to the plot as it explains the girl's means of survival:

She beat the ground, and said, 'Part, Earth! I have no mother, I have no father!' The earth parted. Food, plenty of food appeared, food which was very good, and other things, other things.

In KF IV, as in the other tale texts examined, the disjunctions and slippages which arose from transcription, translation, editing and revising are apparent. As a result of the combination of Theal's ambivalent, editorial voice, and the voices of the African performers and revisors, the tales are, on the whole, dry, awkward and disorienting. These sort of 'slippages', for Bhabha, are the consequence of the process of 'translation' of particular ideas, narratives and theories from the metropolis and their 'hybridization' in the course of their rearticulation in a different context (Moore-Gilbert 1997:119). This process of 'translation' might also be viewed as travelling in the other direction, from colonial context to metropolis.

In KF, Theal assumes partial authority over the text by articulating his discourse of the Xhosa *other*, but at the same time, he concedes authority to the voices of the African subjects of that very discourse, who are not only the sources for the tales, but the co-authors of KF. Theal's colonialist discourse, itself fraught with internal oscillations, is never able to fully assert its authority over the text. Instead, the voice of Theal, the voices of the transcribers and translators, and the voices of the *iintsomi* performers, all struggle for authority.

KF is a result of collaboration, and the encounter which it records is not one of absolute

domination. Rather, it is a hybrid text, reflecting the combination of the Xhosa *iintsomi* tradition with European folktale practice, as well as the complex power dynamics between coloniser and colonised. What is not clear is the exact measure and location of each influencing voice. But the different voices do exist, sometimes side by side, sometimes overlapping, sometimes struggling to assert themselves or survive. The process of aesthetic hybridisation which resulted in KF was not entirely deliberate, or conscious. The different influences and voices were sutured together without full awareness of the stylistic heterogeneity which would result. This explains the awkwardness and flatness of many of the KF tale texts. In the following chapter, the focus shifts from colonial to contemporary folktale texts, and ultimately to the analysis of a consciously hybridised folktale form, which seeks to harmonise the different voices which constitute it.

The impact of Theal's folktale texts on the development of the genre is immense. First, in KF we see the beginning of the process of infantilisation, which culminates today in the categorisation of folktales as juvenile literature. Second, Theal's preoccupation with authenticity lingers in the discourse of contemporary authors and scholars, who are also attempting to represent an 'essential' or 'true' African identity. Third, Theal's modes of sanitisation and familiarisation are duplicated by authors intent on appealing to a 'western' audience. Fourth, the metamorphosis of *iintsomi* into written English texts heralded the dominance of print media and the English language over oral, Xhosa traditions, a dominance which still prevails. Theal does also leave a positive legacy, the imbrication of South African cultures in folktale texts, which he initiated in KF.

Endnotes for Chapter Three

1. The relevant tale texts are in Appendix A.
 2. Another example of a collaborative folklore text is Ruby Agar O'Connell's *Iintsomi* (circa 1941). The translations were done by BA Bangeni and the illustrations by GM Pemba.
 3. For example, *The Milk Bird* is a tale type. Many versions exist but there are enough core-clichés in common in the different versions for them to belong to the same tale type.
 4. In Chapter Four, the founding of African Nationalism is discussed, in relation to the many literate blacks, such as William Gqoba, 'Hadi' and WB Rubusana, who translated and transcribed various aspects of their oral traditions for publication in newspapers. It is not unlikely that Thea's 'circle of native' collaborated with him for similar reasons.
 5. This extract from the *Times* review is from the Swan Sonnenschein & Co. order-form, circa 1910.
 6. In Chapter Two I mentioned that Thea anticipated African readers for his *Histories*, but this intention, to draw an African readership, is not apparent in KF, where the appeal is to a white readership.
 7. Vail and White argue that 'tribalism' was used by colonialists as a binaristic term to represent Africans as 'lacking individual initiative and creativity' and to define them as 'essentially rural people, out of place in the cities' (1991:13). This binarism was used in apartheid discourse to legitimate segregation and the 'homeland' system.
 8. The moral lessons of KF I are clear: greed, disobedience, cruelty and kindness. Scheub says this of the performer: 'She never preaches, but she always deals with this essentially moral problem of the good in man and his potential for evil' (1975:82).
 9. Okpewho defines the ideophone as an 'idea-in-sound', in the sense that from the sound of the word one can get an idea of the nature of the event or the object referred to (1992:92).
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Chapter Four

Bridging the Gaps

I

The process of transcribing tales as part of an ethnographic or transculturation project continues in South Africa today. Most often, indigenous folktales are ›retold‹ and published as examples of ›authentic‹ African literature for a juvenile audience. In a study of indigenous children's literature, Katrine van Vuuren found that the folktale genre accounts for the majority of children's books produced in South Africa, as well as being the genre most commonly borrowed from libraries (1994:117). The cultural import of these modern folktale texts is no less than that of their colonial counterparts. Colonial folktale texts, such as Thea's Kaffir Folklore (1882), being ethnographic and anthropological data, were often employed in a colonialist discourse which sought to inscribe the subjectivities of both colonised and coloniser.

The modern folktale texts in South Africa are embedded in two main discursive fields: a neo-colonialist¹ discourse which employs the essentialist typologies of a colonialist discourse to categorise and describe African folklore; and what I shall call a ›new nationalist‹² discourse which seeks to reinscribe African cultural identity in positive terms. Often these two discursive fields overlap. Many of the neo-colonialist publications are genuinely committed to ›preserving‹ African oral traditions, but ironically, the commodification of folktales as specimens of an ›other‹ culture often results in stereotyping which reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes ›difference‹ (Hall 1997:258). The main aim of the ›new nationalist‹ discourse is to bridge the cultural gaps of a post-apartheid society. In Section III selected folktale texts are analysed, and I will argue that

they, as part of the above two discourses, contribute to the creation of cultural identities in South Africa today.

The ›new nationalism‹, which employs the indigenous folktale as a symbol of unity and patriotic pride, has its roots in anti-colonial and anti-apartheid resistance movements. In 1961, Fanon argued that to ›fight for national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation‹ (1995:154). Anne McClintock recognises that ›African nationalism was...the product of conscious reinvention ...[which would] describe its own distinct trajectory across the century‹ (1997:105). According to Benedict Anderson, an ›imagined community‹ (1983:15) of the nation is what enabled postcolonial societies to invent a liberated and empowered self-image. Fanon saw the creation of a ›national culture‹ as an effort to create and sustain an independent collective identity:

a national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence.

(Fanon 1995:155)

In the face of domination by transplanted European culture, the decolonising nationalists had to construct a discourse which incorporated and amalgamated the ›essences‹ of local culture, whilst assimilating aspects of the hegemonic foreign cultures. Even the notion of nationhood is imported. Anderson has remarked that ›Third World‹ nationalisms of the twentieth century were ›modelled on the popular nationalisms of 19th century Europe‹ (1983:123), and Partha Chatterjee asserts that nationalism ›seeks to represent itself in the image of the Enlightenment and fails to do so‹

(1986:17). Bhabha finds the Nation's claim to modernity, as an autonomous or sovereign form of political rationality (1995:176) particularly troubling. At the centre of this African nationalism is the paradox of utilising local cultures and histories, together with the ›western‹ discourses of modernity and nationalism, for purposes of liberation and self-determination.

This paradox is evident in South Africa too. In 1912 the African National Congress (ANC) was formed in reaction to the exclusion of blacks from the ›national‹ convention of the newly created Union of South Africa. Born of and driven by the exigencies of a traumatic, violent and divided colonial past, the ANC established itself as the chief orchestrator of the ›national‹ liberation movement. The struggle had begun in the arena of cultural production with the black³ journalists of the Eastern Cape reclaiming an African voice on behalf of an African nation. As Leon De Kock explains, it was from within the ambit of colonialist discourses that the African elite in the second half of the nineteenth century [took up] the struggle for selfhood (1996:63). De Kock narrates the tale of the Model Kaffir⁴ (1996:179), Tiyo Soga, who despite his assimilation into missionary orthodoxy, wrote the following for the first issue of *Indaba* (1862), a Xhosa-English newspaper published at Lovedale:

Our veterans of the Xhosa and Embo people must disgorge all they know. Everything must be imparted to the *nation* as a whole. Fables must be retold; what was history or legend should be recounted ... Whatever was seen heard or done under the requirements of custom should be brought to light and placed on the *national* table to be sifted for preservation. ...All anecdotes connected with the life of the *nation* should be brought to this big corn-pit our *national* newspaper *Iindaba* ...

(Williams 1983:152-153; my emphasis)

The appeal to cultural ›tradition‹, especially oral traditions, in this process of reinvention was, and still is, strong. Timothy Brennan, influenced by Anderson, concludes that nations are imaginary

constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role (1995:173). Folklorists too have identified the role of oral traditions in nationalist projects. Finnegan comments on the use of folklore in contemporary nationalist discourses: 'In more recent ex-colonial nations, the search for national and >folk-identity has fostered the collection and creation of texts expressing national culture or providing a focus for nation-building and local education' (1992:27). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett recognises the role played by nationalism in the founding of folklore as a discipline in Europe in the nineteenth century: 'A cultural nationalism ... gave to philology, and to folklore studies in particular, its racialist tendencies' (1998:289). In South Africa, indigenous folklore has had to be reclaimed from colonialist clutches for the purposes of nation-building.

Even before the formation of the ANC, indigenous written folklore formed part of the 'apparatus of cultural fictions' intended to foster a new national identity. Many of the first literate blacks (some of whom were the front-runners of African nationalism in South Africa) such as William Gqoba, >Hadi= and WB Rubusana, translated and transcribed various aspects of their oral traditions for publication in newspapers. In the years to follow many more African nationalists took up their pens in order to reclaim some of the >tradition= which had been eroded by the Christianising, civilising mission of the colonialists, and then by the exploitative, apartheid regime of the Afrikaner nationalists. Herbert Dhlomo, in the 1940s, wove *izibongo* into his dramas but insisted on English as an African lingua franca. In the 1960s, novelist and critic AC Jordan turned his attention to >traditional= Xhosa culture, where he found material for his fictional and scholarly works. Jordan's collection of Xhosa folktales, Tales from Southern Africa (1973), is discussed in detail in Section III.

In the 1970s South Africa laboured under the yoke of the National Party's apartheid policy. When the ANC and many of the Black Consciousness organisations were banned,⁵ there was a move towards reclaiming folktales. As Van Vuuren observes, 'No longer were folktales distantly derived from anthropological collections, suddenly they were stories experienced first hand by their retellers' (1994:124). Due to the unequal distribution of resources at the time, most of the 'reclaiming' writers were white, writing for a white audience. This trend continued into the 1980s. Ironically, the authors who epitomise this form of liberalism are often the same authors who embed their folktale texts in a neo-colonialist discourse. It is very likely that the Soweto Uprisings of 1976 and the murder of Steve Biko in 1977 helped prompt the liberal white intelligentsia of South Africa to offer some resistance to the prevailing discourses of Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid. The alternative discourses of African Nationalism and Black Consciousness afforded them an opportunity to dissociate themselves from apartheid discourse, but the stranglehold of apartheid legislation hindered active resistance. One possible way of identifying with and contributing to the struggle was the valorisation of African culture through literary activity. This hypothesis is explored in the following sections of this chapter.

In the 1980s, the voice of African nationalism was severely muted, but not destroyed. A few black writers, for example BL Leshoai⁶, continued to research and publish indigenous folklore. At this time, black authors addressed the problem of a Eurocentric education system, devised and implemented by the apartheid government, by introducing school readers comprised of indigenous folklore. The *Mokga kgati o a ikela* (1986), compiled by D Makgala, J Mothusi

and S Makopo; the *Igoda* series of Zulu folktales, compiled by C Nyembezi; and The Prophetess and other stories (1989), an anthology compiled by D Rangaka, were aimed at providing black children with a positive, validating image of indigenous African culture.

Rangaka's prefatory Note to the Pupil urges children to reinscribe their cultural identity

The aim of this anthology is to introduce you to stories that speak about the life you live and know. This will help you to see this life in a different way, show you how other people live it and hopefully make you enjoy seeing these pictures of your own life.

(1989:vi)

In post-apartheid South Africa, where a 'new nationalist' discourse is crucial for reparation, regeneration and cultural identity formation, the politicians and other voices of authority spearheading the transition processes, speak of healing the rifts of the past, of reconciliation, and of a bright future for the 'new South Africa'. Their vision is couched in terms of non-racialism, cultural pluralism, peace and nation-building. African Nationalism is no longer offered as a panacea for blacks only, but for all the people of the nation. Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech on 11 May 1994 captures the essence of this nationalist discourse:

The time for healing of wounds has come. The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come. The time to build is upon us...We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity - a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.

(in Norval 1993:293)

But this 'new nationalist' discourse, despite its immediate value for reconstruction, carries with it many risks and contradictions, as Fanon was aware. McClintock has noted, 'For Fanon,

nationalism gives vital expression to popular memory and is strategically essential for mobilizing the populace. At the same time, no one was more aware than Fanon of the attendant risks of projecting a fetishist denial of difference onto a conveniently abstracted ›collective will= (1997:110). The denial or elision of difference (epitomised in the favouring of the term ›nonracial= over ›multiracial=) is a very real danger in the face of an ardent search for a new national identity which is unifying and reconciliatory. Bhabha plots the narrative of the nation by questioning the ›homogeneity= of modernity ...that progressive metaphor of modern social cohesion - *the many as one* - shared by organic theories of the holism of culture and community@ (1995:177). The chief contradiction and challenge of South Africa's ›new nationalist= discourse is its insistence that all cultural groups can be equally represented and respected whilst all citizens adhere to a single, homogenised national culture⁷. Gary Baines has noted how the ANC's 1994 draft document on National Cultural Policy ›situated culture squarely within the twin processes of development and nation-building@ (1999:3). Baines quotes one of the objectives in the document: ›to promote the development of a unifying national culture, representing the aspirations of all of South Africa's people@ (3).

The first step towards addressing this contradiction, and meeting the challenge of co-existing cultural difference and national unity, lies in the problematisation of the term ›nation=. Bhabha describes this problematisation as ›explor[ing] the Janus-faced ambivalence of language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation@ (1990:3). The ›new, rainbow, South African nation= needs to be understood as a complex discursive construct which is aimed at projecting peace, unity, and co-operation, and the flip-side of this is the realisation that, as

subjects in this discourse, the diverse citizens of South Africa are urged to identify with this mythic memory of a unique collective identity (Bhabha 1989:123), a sentiment which is expressed in our new coat of arms.⁸ The tensions between diversity and unity have perhaps been neglected in favour of immediate and surface amelioration.

The dynamics of power which inform the 'new nationalist' discourse, and the various forms it assumes, be it in the media, on a political platform, or in the classroom, need to be identified and scrutinised. As Stuart Hall proposes: 'Instead of thinking of national cultures as unified, we should think of them as constituting a *discursive device* which represents difference as unity or identity' (1992:297 emphasis in original). This seeming contradiction, that disparate people are unified, is not insuperable, but it is the facile representation of this unity which is questioned. For example, the popular slogan 'Simunye, we are one', signifies that we, despite our differences, are united. What is not clear is *how* we are different, and *how* it is that we are able to unite.

Moreover, an analysis of the 'new nationalist' discourse needs to be balanced between an understanding of its political expediency, and its tendency to glibly impose a national cultural identity on a heterogeneous and hybrid society.

Certainly, one of the aims of the discourse is to redress the imbalances, injustices and suppressions of apartheid, in the hope that new cultural relations are forged, and that a new, shared identity is negotiated. Hall draws a direct link between national cultures and identities: 'National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can identify; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect

present with its past, and images which are constructed of it (1992:292-3). Some of the folktale publications attempt to do just that. Authors, although they might sometimes claim 'authenticity', present their readers with images of a shared and rearticulated cultural heritage. The current folktale texts are neither 'essentially' African, nor purely European-derived, but 'other'. This 'otherness' is created by and reflects the cultural hybridity of the 'nation'.

The increased publication (and popularity) of indigenous folktale collections in the last decade can be seen as a significant facet of the 'new nationalist' discourse which pervades post-apartheid South Africa. But the role of folktale texts in the development of this discourse goes back a bit further, to the days of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggle. At the same time, it must be noted that many of the present day authors, whilst valorising indigenous cultures, employ a neo-colonialist discourse. The aim of this chapter is to examine two layers of textuality related to the publication of Xhosa folktales in recent times: scholarly criticism of the practice; and the nationalist and/or neo-colonialist discourses of selected folktale 'authors' and their publishers.

II

Scholarly Debates, Risky Difference

Some contemporary scholars in South Africa have recognised the role of folktale texts in the processes of cultural identity formation, but they do not situate these texts in the wider discursive structures of nationalism or neo-colonialism. Furthermore, these scholars, such as Andree-Jeanne Töttemeyer and Noverino Canonici, have not historicised the practice of indigenous folktale publication in South Africa, a task which would uncover the colonial origins of many of

the texts in circulation today. Some of the modern folktale texts are palimpsests of cross-cultural collaboration dating back to the colonial era. They are multiply-authored, sometimes multi-lingual texts, largely local in content and form but not devoid of the influence of foreign literary traditions. The numerous re-workings and re-tellings of these tales tell another kind of story: the story of cultural relations in our turbulent past, and the negotiation of new cultural relations in our tenuous present.

Isabel Hofmeyr describes this cross-cultural collaboration as the **A**tradition of oral testimonial activity[@] (1995:19). Her description of the genre reveals that, dialogic as the process might be, it is still predominantly African culture which is the object of study for white subjects.

Generally, but not always a white amateur and in some instances a professional who interviews, records and then represents the experience of someone else - who is generally African - this ^{as told to} genre has probably accounted for a significant percentage of South African publishing and stretches from something like Poppie Nongena (sic) to coffee table books on ^{African legends}

(1995:19)

Although more and more black scholars and authors are taking an interest in the genre (and are in a position to do so), the industry is dominated by white, middle-class women, some of whom have become household names. Marguerite Poland, Phyllis Savory and Dianne Stewart have enjoyed considerable career success and popularity, not to mention commercial dividends.

Elwyn Jenkins observes that in the late 1980s, the target audience for folktale texts was **A**White English-speaking South African children[@] (1988:191). He added that **A**these children are heirs to a European and American literary culture that excludes everything African[@] (191). Five years

later, in 1993, when Jenkins published a book about South African children's literature, Children of the Sun, he commented on the market opening up to a potentially vast black readership, which creates a demand for books in the vernaculars as well as in English (10). He noted that some writers were publishing translations of their tales, and black publishing houses were publishing folktales retold in English by black writers (10). He does, however, reiterate that All but the most recent books were intended for white readers (11). The anticipated audience of white, English-speaking children, no doubt, had a huge impact on the re-telling and packaging of the folktales. Briggs' comment on the popularisation of the Grimms' *märchen* is applicable to the South African context:

Ease of de- and recontextualization translates into ease of commodification: neatly bounded, structured, homogenized, and somewhat sanitized narratives could be easily packaged and sold in the growing market...

(Briggs 1993:398)

Jenkins does make a distinction between white and black publishers: white publishers promote the otherness of the tales...black publishers and writers evince pride in their own black culture, coupled with a sense of urgency about the need to preserve it (Jenkins 1993:12). He does not venture a motive for white publishers to promote the otherness of the tales, nor does he attempt a detailed analysis of how this otherness is represented. He also fails to make a link between pride in their own black culture and African nationalism. The motives for publishing folktales and their entextualization are a key to understanding relations between the relevant cultures, as well as the role played by the texts in cultural identity formation. Jenkins does, however, observe that the [white] writers and their publishers have at times been guilty of condescension, misrepresentation or racial stereotyping (Jenkins 1993:25). He concludes that this sort of publishing practice, which emphasises the otherness of the tales, reinforces the cultural divisions

in South Africa.

Jenkins also elaborates on his own horror at what he perceives as the alienating content of some of the tales for a white audience. He remarks on the unsuitability of some tales for white children:

Many of these are strange tales of magic, or of brutal cruelty, which are unfathomable and sometimes apparently pointless if judged against Western narrative convention (1988:198).

Jenkins makes the distinction between Western fairytales and African folktales in the following way:

English fairy-tale books for children cushion their readers against the sort of horrors to be found in African stories (1993:16). Focussing on the aesthetic appeal and entertainment value of the tales, he makes the alarming comment that the dreadful stories of cannibals, ogres, monsters and cruel treatment of women and children to be found in some collections (especially Leshoais) are likely to repel young white readers (16). He even suggests that these tales contribute to the cultural gap (16) in South Africa.

Could it be that Jenkins is concerned that the violence and ›savage‹ contents of the tales could reinforce negative stereotypes about African culture? If so, he does not state this concern. Nor does he compare the violence of African tales to those of their European counterparts which, though sanitised in many versions, are also full of horror and cruelty (viz. Snow White, Hansel and Gretel, Red Riding Hood etc.). In holding the view that African tales are too horrific for white English-speaking children, Jenkins is expressing his simultaneous fascination and repulsion for the cultural difference he encounters in them. He does not acknowledge similarities between the African and European tales. Instead he sets the African tales against the sanitised European

tales which he describes as having been subjected to varying degrees of bowdlerisation that have removed or disguised the earthiness, cruelty and sexual overtones (1993:24). This veiled approval of the editorial practices of European authors and publishers suggests that Jenkins would have local tales similarly sanitised and censored for consumption by white audiences. Indeed, Jenkins is advocating a neo-colonialist appropriation and assimilation of African folktales in order to downplay otherness for a white, mainly bourgeois, juvenile audience.

Like Jenkins, Katrine Van Vuuren is also concerned about the alienating effects of such cross-cultural representation, but unlike Jenkins she blames the authors and not the tales:

so long as the retellers of African folktales remain distanced and voyeuristic in their efforts, the effect of the folktales on the readers will be to alienate and to separate the audience from the folktales themselves, and by implication from Africa and from the groups of people who originally told the tales.

(1994:122)

Andree-Jeanne Töttemeyer also voices strong criticism of the promotion of otherness in folktales:

By instilling admiration in South African white children for the various black cultures with due emphasis on the differences between them, the apartheid system based on these differences is perpetuated. Although this may not be the intention of the retellers and collectors ... of folktales, their endeavours can contribute to the reinforcement of the concept of ethnicity on which apartheid ideology is based, *depending on the manner in which the stories are told.*

(Töttemeyer 1989:397; my emphasis)

Even though her focus is on the effects of the literature on the target audience, white children, her concern is not as narrow as Jenkins's alarm. She is concerned that the manner in which the stories are told might reinforce the ethnic divisions which formed the bedrock of apartheid

discourse, a discourse which was premised upon the construction of closed, organic identities (Norval 1996:275).

What then is the solution to the problem of representing cultural differences in folktales? First, theorising psychic responses to cultural difference and similarity, as I have done with the model of double polarity, can go some way towards interpellating the discourses which are utilised for the representations. Second, scholars and authors need to grasp that 'otherness' cannot be suppressed or disguised, but it can be imbued with positive rather than negative value. So, instead of down-playing difference by bowdlerising indigenous folktales, they need to adopt a democratic politics of difference (Norval 1996:303). This is Norval's rearticulation of difference, central to her project of deconstructing apartheid discourse. In short, she valorises the notion of hybrid identities:

The structure of identity formation requires that identity is formed through differentiation, but it does not follow from this that all 'differences' have to be excluded as 'other', as 'evil'. Consequently, one has here a site of indeterminacy that opens up the space for considering a variety of ways in which the relation between self and other may be conceived...This would involve doing justice to both *sameness and difference*, to conceive and develop practices in which it is possible to recognize the instability of identity, and to respect the otherness of the other.

(1996:303; my emphasis)

A nationalist discourse aimed at establishing healthy and harmonious cultural relations between diverse groups, without jeopardising the individual characteristics and rights of each group, and at the same time, aimed at enunciating a unified, collective identity, could benefit from such a theorisation of the psychic responses to cultural difference and similarity. The *model of double*

polarity used to map Theale's responses to the Xhosa can perhaps be applied more generally to a contemporary subject. As outlined in Chapter One, this model recognises the possibility of positive identification with similarity and difference, with space for negotiation. Subjects in the new South Africa may be guided by a nationalist discourse towards the positive pole of response. The fears of Jenkins and others regarding the promotion of otherness in folktale texts might be quelled if that otherness is neither essentialised, nor signified as a primordial threat. This is possible only if the complex role of folktale texts in the processes of cultural identity formation are specifically historicised and theorised. The fields of folklore and postcolonial studies in tandem, carry vast opportunity for such a re-orientation.

Scholar's responses to this challenge range from poor to promising. One scholar still paralysed in a colonialist mode of response to cultural difference is Noverino Canonici. His article, 'The Folktale Tradition Yesterday and Today' (1990) echoes the romantic nationalism of the subjects he is describing. Referring to recent publications in English by white authors, he avers that 'this kind of writing reveals the search, also from the point of view of the more sensitive Europeans, for roots in this land of Africa, a mother who brings together all her children of whatever colour' (1990:142). In effect, Canonici is claiming that the motive for the publication of folktales by white authors is a longing for a national cultural identity. A parallel can be drawn between these authors and the German folklorists, whose romantic nationalism resulted in a powerful union of the rhetorics of authenticity, nationalism, nature, and preservation with the rhetoric of science [which] reserves, to scholars, textual authority over language, folklore, and the culture of Others' (Briggs 1993:404). In the following section the rhetorics of some local authors will be explored,

but, as with my analysis of Thea's texts, I will take pains to show that *textual authority* is more elusive than Briggs suggests.

In an earlier publication Canonici stated that *It is beneficial for intercultural exchanges that African folklore be researched, preserved and presented in a language which can reach the majority of people in South Africa and in the world. The understanding of African cultural values and life frame work revealed in these publications can only help to create a climate of mutual understanding which is conducive to cross-culturation* (1987:69). Nowhere does Canonici question who is doing the researching, preserving and presenting, nor does he question the practice which results in this *understanding of African cultural values*. His optimism that *Traditional cultural elements are seen as a unifying factor for peoples which are trying to establish their political and cultural identity* (1990:138) does not conceal his lack of critical engagement with the politics of cross-cultural transcription and translation of folklore. Finnegan has concerned herself precisely with these politics of anthropological research, and she emphasises the necessity of such self-awareness:

What settings are chosen for collecting, and from whom; how texts are recorded; what decisions are made about transcription, written representation, translation and publication - all these affect the final product and hence the interpretation and assessment of the text ...This awareness of the constructed nature of what used to look like neutral texts has been one of the most powerful ideas in the recent study of oral forms.

(1992:20)

Van Vuuren, on the other hand, radically questions *the current belief in children's literature as a means of bridging gaps in South African society* (1994: iii). She is critical of how children's

literature is being touted as a 'potentially unifying force' in South Africa (1994:13), and she recognises the importance of studying the 'ideological messages being transmitted to young South Africans through both the types of books produced as well as the structures surrounding the availability of the books themselves' (1994:13). In the final chapter of her thesis she examines how some genres, especially indigenous folktales, 'perform social commentary, and how they can be seen as being corrective, as trying to make amends for some of the effects of South Africa's Apartheid past' (1994:14). Ultimately Van Vuuren's study is asking 'Can children's literature make a difference in South Africa?'

In order to answer this question Van Vuuren adopts a postcolonial perspective on the children's literature industry in South Africa. Like Jenkins and Töttemeyer, she ponders the risks of 'promoting otherness' in folktale texts, and, astutely, she traces this tendency back to colonial texts. Van Vuuren's argument is that these colonial texts, by infantilisation, and with their pseudo-anthropological superstructures, alienated the white reader by representing 'otherness' in hierarchical terms. This, surely, is the biggest risk facing folktale practitioners today: the articulation of cultural differences within a neo-colonialist paradigm which signifies indigenous culture as alien or inferior.

As mentioned in the previous section, Van Vuuren identifies the 1970s as a period of significant departure from the legacy of the colonial authors: 'In the 1970s... there was a move in South Africa to re-examine and re-affirm Africa and the experience of being 'African'. From regarding Africa as alien and other, there was a move towards identifying with Africa, towards being

>African= (1994:124). Unfortunately, Van Vuuren does not provide any details of this trend, which appears similar to the romantic nationalism which Canonici found so admirable. A further oversight is that she does not say who mobilised the move, nor does she give her views on the political climate which prompted it.

Van Vuuren's observation regarding the 1990s is that 'A further development in the area of folktales in South Africa is the publication of increasing numbers of folktales written in English by black writers' (1994:125). She interprets the development 'As a desire by black South Africans to reclaim folktales in print...as well as a desire to >share= and spread a rich cultural heritage' (1994:125). She is correct in her observation that there are 'An increasing numbers' of black authors, but she overlooks the fact that the 'A desire' to 'Areclaim', 'Ashare' and 'Aspread' the cultural heritage in print itself dates back to colonial times, to the first literate blacks in the country and the roots of African Nationalism. Also, this desire prevailed in the days of anti-apartheid struggle. For example, BL Leshoai, in the 1980s, expressed his desire that folktales fulfil a didactic function among modern English-speaking children:

The choice of these legends, folktales and stories has been influenced by the sociological and political life of the people of South Africa. After all, in traditional African life, they serve as conscience pricklers and also to educate and entertain children and adults alike. It is hoped that the readers will enjoy the collection with this in mind.

(Leshoai 1987:2)

At a time of great unrest and conflict, Leshoai risked depicting cultural difference in his collection of African folktales in English, which he saw as a valuable medium for 'Asociological and political' education. As mentioned earlier, this was the period of the emergence of >school reader= folktale

collections by black authors. Jenkins, rather cantankerously, claims that AWhite readers (adults, let alone children) will find the stories in his [Leshoais] collection so alien and enigmatic that they are most unlikely to see any political or moral relevance in them@ (1988:194-195). As argued earlier, this sort of comment reveals Jenkins= own conservative response to cultural difference.

Another current trend noted by Van Vuuren is the emergence of authors who successfully, and purposely, combine the African oral folktale tradition with the >western= written one, instead of merely >retelling= the tales. Marguerite Poland is one such author whose literary style is an example of a new and hybrid way of presenting the tales. Poland does not cite a source or attempt to retell a static, already recorded tale. In fact, she argues against this practice: Athis fixed-ness of plot is false and untrue to the oral tradition@. Poland believes that oral stories are dynamic, they change over time and new stories are developed or created to fill new needs within society.⁹

Because Poland=s aim is not to represent one culture to another, but to integrate different cultural influences in a unique and syncretic literary form, her tales do not alarm Jenkins and Van Vuuren with a potential for Apromoting otherness@. In fact, Poland is seen as the antidote to such divisive, transcultural literary practice. Both Van Vuuren and Jenkins praise Poland:

Poland in her tales does not reproduce a known folktale, instead she attempts to create a new piece of literature out of *both African traditions and English traditions* to produce a work that is uniquely South African for contemporary readers.

(Van Vuuren 1994:123; my emphasis)

Jenkins goes so far as to claim that Poland=s self-consciously hybrid style is superior to and more relevant than either of the traditions she borrows from:

Marguerite Poland=s >Stories for the children of Africa= are unique to their time and

place. They are not the moral fables that their European talking-beast ancestors were; nor do they reflect the concerns, almost uninterpretable to modern anthropologists, of their San and African cousins

(Jenkins1993:45)

Poland's success in the literary academy of South Africa bears testimony to the success of this style. She is the first recipient of a South African award for an English language children's book, the Percy Fitzpatrick Award for The Mantis and the Moon (1979). She is also one of a growing number of authors, performers and artists who realise that the dissolution of cultural and aesthetic boundaries in order to invent a new folktale form, a form which is *Neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between* (Bhabha 1994:219), best serves a heterogenous, postcolonial, postapartheid South Africa.

Such a realisation by authors and artists is ideally accompanied by dynamic and revisionary scholarship. But, like Van Vuuren, I have found that such critical scholarship as exists in the area is often flimsy and insipid. For instance, the section on children's literature in David Adey's Companion to South African English Literature (1986) touches on the *colonial and English tone* of much that has been written in South Africa for children in English (51). He does mention the *important role that folktales, in their various forms, play in the emerging canon of children's literature* (51). But Van Vuuren is impatient, as I am, with Adey for not pulling off the scabs. If the wounds of *colonial and English tone[s]* are to heal, then scholars like Adey will have to do more than give titles and content summaries of various folktale collections.

Shirley Davies is another scholar of children's literature who has certainly not met the challenge of specifically historicising the role of folktale texts in the processes of cultural identity formation in South Africa. Her book, Reading Roundabout: A Review of South African Children's Literature

(1992), espouses the ubiquitous nationalist view that *‘In our South African multi-cultural society...children’s books can be a means of bridging differences and highlighting similarities between the cultures’* (n.p. preface). In this preface Davies echoes the contradiction of the *‘new nationalist’* discourse by simultaneously stressing the universal nature of human beings (*‘All people have the same needs’*), and the fact that South Africa is a multi-cultural society. Furthermore, Davies recognises the hybrid nature of South African children’s literature without problematising the processes which engendered the hybridity:

South African children’s literature is multi-faceted, reflecting the interaction of many different races and cultures. Among the indigenous people there were the San, ...the Khoi, the Nguni, the Sotho, the Xhosa, the Zulu who spoke in expressive tongues and had a gift for story telling although their languages lacked a written form. The first European people to discover and settle in Africa...contributed their own cultures, languages and literature.

(Davies 1992:31)

For example, she euphemistically claims that Europeans *‘contributed’* their own cultures, language and literature (my emphasis), when in fact they were, often violently, *imposed*. Later, on the same page, she describes colonialism merely as *‘unhappy historical conflict’* (1992:31). She delights in the assimilation of folktales into South African children’s literature (here she presupposes that the folktales did not already belong to a South African literary tradition) without questioning the politics of assimilation. Davies glosses over historical inequalities and conflicts in favour of promoting the belief that children’s literature is the bridge which connects cultures in South Africa.

Jenkins, Canonici and Davies ultimately deliver the same message: folktale texts reflect cross-

cultural interaction and have the potential to bridge cultural divides in South Africa. What these scholars (and others too) have neglected to do, is explore this interaction in its historical and political context. This exploration is required before optimistic claims that children's literature is a healing force which can bridge gaps, or pessimistic denouncements that folktale texts are potentially divisive, are made. Instead, the interaction needs to be first understood as the encounter between cultural differences and similarities, an encounter which gave rise to a hybrid folktale form, and to hybrid cultural identities.

III

Encountering the Hybrid

In this section the works of a few selected authors will be analysed. The tales, the superstructure which surrounds them, and the general packaging of these 'modern' publications will be considered. The 'powerful union of rhetorics' (Briggs 1993:404) used by authors to market or entextualise the tales, are of chief concern. The study is limited to authors who have published Xhosa folktales in the latter half of the twentieth century. The authors are divided as follows: those who display a neo-colonialist discourse; those who subscribe to a 'new nationalist' discourse; and those who embody a specific cultural and aesthetic hybrid.

Those authors, be they amateur anthropologists, creative writers or scholars, who draw upon a neo-colonialist discourse, implement a variety of rhetorical strategies. First, the unreflective and glorifying use of colonial sources is common. AC Partridge's collection, Folklore of Southern Africa (1973) is one of many publications hugely indebted to Theal.¹⁰ In the introduction, Partridge enthuses about the value of colonial folkloristics: 'The wealth of folk-tales indigenous to

Southern Africa is a debt to the collecting zeal of European missionaries, especially from Germany and Britain ...The Europeans who communicated indigenous folk-tales attempted to preserve the originals in their native purity@ (1973:iv). He thus subscribes wholesale to the Aimage of intertextual transparency@ (Briggs 1993:396). Partridge's ethnography of the Bushmen, Hottentots and Bantu is merely a summary of Theal's The Yellow and Dark-Skinned People of Africa South of the Zambesi (1910). For example, his comments on the fate of the >Bushmen= are very similar to Theal's: A...but most were exterminated, as useless marauders, by Hottentots, Bantu or Europeans@ (1973:vi). Theal is quoted on subjects ranging from oral performance to ethnology, and finally, acculturation. No attempt is made to update the material or even alter the colonialist rhetoric: ATheal noted that thousands of Christianized Bantu were encouraged by their nineteenth-century teachers to borrow ideas from European literature. At the same time he observed that their powers of reason were quite equal to those of a white man@ (1973:x). Extending this implicit confidence in Theal's scholarship, Partridge published two tales from Kaffir Folklore (1882), *The Story of Demane and Demazana*, and *The Story of Lion and Little Jackal*, without revision.

Second, the adoption of specific colonialist discourses, such as social evolutionism, are *de rigueur* with some authors. Partridge, for example, describes folklore as Athe study of legends, customs, beliefs and superstitions of the common people, *whatever the stage of civilization reached*@ (1973:iv; my emphasis). Phyllis Savory, in her introduction to Tales from Africa (1968), uses social evolutionary theories and the comparative method to construct a somewhat lyrical history of African culture and folklore: ASurely some of these tales were carried, *this time from the Teutonic and Scandinavian Northlands of antiquity*, downwards to the then still

slumbering shores of dark Africa' (1968:12-13; emphasis in original). Note that the geographic trajectory described mirrors the movement on the ladder of civilisation. Also, in Little Wise One (1990), Savory cites 'The great authority on folklore, Sir James Fraser' [sic] (11) who in his seminal work, The Golden Bough, expounded the theories of social evolutionism.

Third, the 'production of knowledges of the colonizer and colonized which are stereotypical but antithetically evaluated' (Bhabha 1994:70), continues today. This affects, particularly, the evaluation of religious beliefs. In 1991, thirty nine of Savory's tale texts were republished in the revamped and re-imaged collection, The Best of African Folklore (See Appendix B; cf. the cover to her 1974 publication Bantu Folktales from Southern Africa). Interestingly, the tales themselves were unrevised, showing Savory's (and the publisher's) complacency with her original rhetoric. One tale in particular is worthy of mention: *The Founding of a Tribe: A true story from the area where Grahamstown now stands*. This aetiological tale, which explains the origins of the Xhosa 'tribe', abounds with witchcraft, superstition, and 'savage' violence, and is, in fact, a strong moral indictment of *sangomas*. Savory, as an admirer of James Frazer, was no doubt influenced by his formulations on the subject of superstition. Vail and White describe Frazer as 'an optimistic believer in the dynamism of evolutionary processes, [who] also saw Reason as struggling with Superstition, with the ultimate victory guaranteed to Progress' (1991:6). In this tale Savory maps a causal relationship between 'superstition' and violence, declaring at the end that this cultural trait was the cause of the Frontier Wars: 'The tribe fought many fierce battles against the British before they put down their arms to become the civilized and peaceful people they are today' (96). The message, which echoes the 'civilising' discourse of the colonialist missionaries, is that once the Xhosa were superstitious and fierce, but now, having

relinquished autonomy to the British, they are vastly improved.

Fourth, some of the first collections were classified as anthropology, including histories and ethnographies of the relevant cultures, providing glossaries and maps, sketches and then later, photographs. They were packaged so as to render the tales accessible to foreign readers, but, ironically, this encoding would have also exoticised the tales, presenting them as curiosities from ›other= and different cultures. This practice has survived and many of the ›modern= collections assume this pseudo-anthropological character. Almost all of Savory's collections contain ethnographic, historical or geographical material. In a more recent collection, Dianne Stewart's Daughter of the Moonlight and other African Tales (1994), each tale is accompanied by snippets of fascinating information (backcover:1994). For instance, a version of *The Milk Bird* in this collection is elucidated by an information panel on *amasi*, 'Milk of Africa' (1994:15). Even Poland, who has been singled out for her innovative style, includes a glossary of animal names in Once at KwaFubesi (1981). With the ›modern= collections the anthropological information is aimed at educating children about ›other= cultures. Ironically, this strategy is potentially divisive because it perpetuates the binarism between ›us=, the gazers/voyeurs and the ›other= cultures, the objects of speculation and enquiry.

Fifth, a particular 'rhetoric of authenticity' employed by colonial authors to imbue their texts with authority and secure epistemological status for them, abounds in the ›modern= publications.

Savory's rhetoric of authenticity is a crude and ingenuous one. The forewords and prefaces to her collections are often written by politicians or well-known literary personalities. For example, the foreword to Bantu Folk Tales from Southern Africa (1974) is written by Gatscha Buthelezi,

leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party and chief of the Buthelezi clan. The Little Wise One (1990) is represented as particularly ›authentic‹ because the foreword is by Alan Paton and the preface by Kenneth Kaunda. The word ›authentic‹ features strongly in her cover blurbs: **A**These delightful tales...are *authenticated* in a Foreword by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi of Kwa Zulu (1974:n.p.my emphasis); **A**This substantial collection of *authentic* folktales about the hare in all his guises was gathered by Phyllis Savory over a period of more than eighty years (1990:n.p. my emphasis). The effect of these emphatic claims is to create the illusion that *iintsomi* performances are fully reproducible in printed texts, that the essence of the culture which created them is somehow captured and preserved by Savory.

In a slightly more subtle bid for authenticity, Dianne Stewart tells us that her folktales are **A**true to the African oral tradition of storytelling (1994:backcover) or that they are **A**as true to the original as possible (1994:introduction). Here Stewart is using a **A**quasi-moral lexicon (Briggs 1993:396) to authenticate her versions of the tales. The combination of **A**true, **A**tradition and **A**original creates a mythologised authenticity which is based on a romanticised notion of an ›essential‹ African culture and is consolidated by Stewart's **A**image of intertextual transparency. But Stewart is not the only author to romanticise African culture. Briggs points out that it was actually nationalism¹¹ which prompted this practice of romanticising the ›folk‹

romantic nationalism thrived on a process of breaking off fragments of the past, creating and containing their meaning by placing them within schemes of classification, and framing them as representative specimens, synecdochic stand-ins for the cultural universe from which they were purportedly extracted

(1993:398)

The ›new nationalist‹ discourse, as discussed previously, has its roots in African Nationalism,

which attempted to reinvent a cultural identity for black people by romanticising pre-colonial Africa. At present, the discourse of the African Renaissance, as touted by president Thabo Mbeki, utilises a similar strategy. For example, the lost civilisation of *Mapungubwe*¹² is taken as a synecdochic stand-in for a glorious African past. This counter-discourse is aimed at rejuvenating African culture and reversing the damages of colonialist and apartheid discourses. Folklore too is held up as a symbol of the rich African cultural heritage which has to be recorded, preserved, and even revived. Those authors who draw upon a new nationalist also employ a rhetoric of authenticity.

Two collections by black authors, BL Leshoi and Nombulelo Makhuphula, are authenticated by references to the authors' grandmothers. Makhuphula states in the Author's Note to Xhosa Fireside Tales (1988): 'I remember my grandmother, Nokulila, as a good and kindhearted woman. ...I remember her, most of all, as a unique story-teller'. The book is dedicated to 'Nokulila, source of my inspiration' (n.p.). This sentiment is echoed on the backcover, where the reader is invited to collapse the oral/written interface: 'Nombulelo Makhuphula could be imagined as a grandmother encircled by her children and grandchildren as they listen carefully to every gem that pours from her mouth' (n.p.). Note that these tales are not infantilised, as both 'her children and grandchildren' comprise the audience. Leshoi's foreword to his own Iso Le Nkhono: African Folktales for Children (1989), written in the third person, states that 'the author has used examples of legends, folktales and fables told to him by his grandmother' (n.p.). What more reliable source than one's own grandmother? Here the rhetoric of authenticity operates to affirm African culture which is preserved in this organic way.

Thomas Nevin uses the same rhetoric as Savory to authenticate his folktales, sometimes using

even the same ›celebrities‹. The Quivering Spear (1996) has a foreword by Buthelezi, in which he expresses the belief that the book will foster inter-cultural understanding in Africa, as well as help the international community to understand (an essentialised) African cultural identity:

The culture of Africa is the culture of all the people who live in Africa regardless of race or colour. This book can only create more understanding amongst all the people of Africa ... I have no doubt that readers of other cultures will see into the African soul through this anthology. They will know us better as people of this part of Africa.

(n.p.)

Nevin's previous publication, Zamani: African Tales from Long Ago (1995), is ›authenticated‹ by a message from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, printed on the back cover for optimum visibility. His sentiments offer another trope of nationalism - the importance of pride in one's ›origins and cultural history‹ in the self-definition of a nation:

Zamani African Tales from Long Ago is important because it records some of those myths and legends for today's youth. May they grow strong in the knowledge that their origins are as rich in cultural history as those of any other nation. A nation does not have a future unless it understands its past.

(n.p.)

Nevin, despite (or because of) his overt nationalist stance, displays some other neo-colonial traits. He uses both colonial and neo-colonial sources uncritically. His bibliographies cite both Henry Callaway and Theal, as well as Savory and Partridge. But, significantly, even though he claims in a preface that ›fragments of traditional tales were gleaned from tribal storytellers‹ (1996:3), he does not cite any indigenous performer as a source. In the tale *The Tribe of Dead Warriors*, Nevin narrates the founding of the *Gqunukhwebe* clan of the *AmaXhosa*.¹³ Perhaps, here, within the actual tale, the intermingling of Nevin's neo-colonial and nationalist discourses, is

most apparent. The opening paragraph presents an idealised and romanticised description of the physical character and mental disposition of the AmaXhosa:

As they still are today, the men of the AmaXhosa were tall, handsome and powerful; the women graceful and very beautiful. By nature they were a peace-loving, hardworking folk, but they were fierce and skilful warriors if they were attacked.

(1996:53)

By reducing the description to a few, simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized (Dyer 1977:28) characteristics, Nevin recreates the stereotype of a noble Xhosa. In colonial times such a stereotype (of a noble savage) would have served to maintain a social and symbolic order favourable to the coloniser (see Appendix B). Here, Nevin is trying to create a positive image of the Xhosa which serves the nationalist aspirations of South Africa.

The new nationalist discourse does not represent its redefined, reinvented cultural identity to the nation alone, but also to the international community which has so avidly observed South Africa's drama of liberation and democratisation in the last decade. Here the new nationalist rhetoric attempts to capture and project to the world a distinctly African¹⁴ culture. For authors and publishers the challenge is to promote this unique quality of African folktales without alienating foreign audiences.

For example, Kathleen Milne's version of *Demane and Demazana* carries the following blurb:

The folktale enthusiasts might recognise some elements from Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel and The wolf and the seven little kids, but the story is completely Africanized, also in style and atmosphere (1994: n.p.). The western reader is given something to identify with but is also reassured of the authenticity of the tales. The packaging mirrors this strategy. The design is bold and bright, with imposing illustrations and stylised borders. The cover blurb describes

Brigitte Schroder's illustrating technique: 'Here she uses the earthy colours of Africa - even 'yellowish' pages - and a stylised style to portray the people and their story - and to create a remarkable cannibal who symbolizes the bad without being offensive' (1994). Even though colour is used as a synecdochic stand-in for 'earthy' Africa, the 'stylised style' bears a strong resemblance to Gauguin (see Appendix B), and is employed for a subtle form of sanitisation. Savory, too, simultaneously claims an international character for her tales whilst insisting on their rustic African identity: 'The tales are like fairy tales told all over the world, but they have a strong African flavour that is as real as the smell of rain on the hot earth' (1991:backcover).

Nevin's attempt to validate African tales by comparing them to European tales is crude and counterproductive:

Was there an African Camelot? I believe there was. In fact, there were many. And what about Africa's King Arthur, Robin Hood, Davy Crockett, William Tell, Gulliver and Rip Van Winkle? Where do we go to find them? We listen to the heartbeat of Africa ... Deep in the traditions of the people who share this land are the stories of their legendary heroes. Their adventures are no less exciting than Lancelot's or Gulliver's.

(1996:np)

Nevin's anxious comparisons imply the need for a European benchmark against which the African tales have to be measured, and then pronounced worthy. The mention of famous 'western' characters of legends and folktales reveals Nevin's intended audience - a 'western' audience well-versed in the lore of the 'west', and which, it seems, requires convincing of the quality of African tales.

As argued previously, a tension exists within the central aim of the 'new nationalist' discourse: the

aim to establish a unifying national culture which at the same time represents the aspirations of all of South Africa's people. For authors of folktales, tackling this tension begins with cross-cultural education. The folktales texts are seen as a means of cultural expression from which valuable lessons about differences and similarities may be learned. In a school reader containing Leshoai's tale *Madiepetsana and the Milk Bird*, Diale Rangaka, the compiler and editor, explains the aim of the anthology:

The aim of this anthology is to introduce you to stories that speak about the life you live and know. This will help you to see this life in a different way, show you how other people live it and hopefully make you enjoy seeing these pictures of your own life. From this it will be easier to understand and enjoy the stories that other people tell about their own lives, to see and appreciate the differences and similarities.

(1989:vi)

The tale itself, *Madiepetsana and the Milk Bird*, differs from other versions of the *Milk Bird* tale type (such as those examined in Chapter Three) in that it offers great deal of contextual detail regarding village life, the famine and cultural practices. In this way the tale is conspicuously didactic. The beautiful pure milk white bird (44) that befriends the heroine, Madiepetsana, does not undo work in the garden or trick children, but it becomes a sacred symbol of hope, kindness and generosity. In keeping with this the bird does not shit or make *amasi*, it produces *amasi* by purging pure white curdled cow's milk (47). Leshoai also writes ethnographic information into the tale. For example the practice of singing is explained concurrently with the unfolding of the plot: The braver women neighbours also began to sing Mannini and her daughters in cutting and biting mocking songs ...To be sung in this manner is worse than to be ignored (43). Thus we learn that singing is an acceptable form of criticism (similar to the *izibongo* tradition). The text abounds with performance elements such as songs and Sotho

epithets. Leshoai's tale, as part of this collection, is certainly being presented as a cultural as well as a moral lesson.

One has to wonder how much genuine commitment to the project of harmonious cultural relations does exist, and how many of the folktale publications are ›bandwagon‹ texts, playing the humanitarian tune for commercial dividends. Certainly, some authors have exhibited an unswerving, passionate and discerning commitment to the understanding, preservation and enjoyment of written and oral indigenous folktales, either through creative writing, scholarship or performance. One such author is AC Jordan, whose collection, Tales from Southern Africa, was published posthumously in 1973 (the same year as Partridge's collection). The front flap describes the exiled Jordan as having a constant and genuine interest in his own roots. AOne manifestation of this concern was his deep interest in the oral narrative performances of the Xhosa people, the ancient narratives transmitted through the generations by countless sophisticated artists@

The publishers are also adamant that these tales are not Averbatim texts of oral performances@ but that the author has Acreated new and fascinating written versions@. The blurb is remarkable for its insight into the limitations of transcription and translation processes, and its grasp of the ›hybrid‹ status of Jordan's folktales:

The themes remain Xhosa themes, the structures of the performances remain Xhosa structures in many respects, but the hand of the accomplished artist A.C. Jordan is also there, and the result is a kind of *hybrid art-form* that borrows from written traditions in an effort to communicate the intellectual substance, some of the artistic vividness and many of the images of the oral traditions.

(1973:n.p.; my emphasis)

Leshaoi too, despite the veneration he holds for his grandmother's art, admits that 'much more flesh and blood have been added to Nkhono's skeletal stories' (1983:2) in order to render them an interesting reading matter. Jordan does not make claims to authenticity and none are made on his behalf. Instead, Jordan's realisation that tales have to be 'recreated' for the written medium, is stressed. Rather than devalue the tradition, this enhances and extends it by combining some of the artistic elements of an oral tale with the aesthetic form of a written narrative. The result is a hybrid text which is best described by Dell Hymes as a 'convergence [which] implies not only approximation, nor mixture even, but *creativity*, the adaptation of means of *diverse provenience to new ends*' (1971:76; emphasis in original).

Jordan's tales are preceded by a foreword by Pallo Jordan¹⁵ and an introduction by Harold Scheub. Pallo Jordan's foreword takes the form of an ethnography of what he terms 'traditional society' (ix). This ethnography does not include biological observations or descriptions of racial characteristics. Rather, it takes the form of a lament for the demise of 'traditional societies'. In particular, Pallo Jordan is concerned with 'European colonization and conquest [which] had the most dire effects on the role and position of artists in African societies' (xix). Significantly, he comments on early African nationalists' efforts to contest these effects :

They sought to redefine the African past and the present in the light of both 'official' history and the oral African tradition, and thus reassert a community with pride in itself and its past, but looking in the direction of 'modernization'... Modern African Nationalism in South Africa is the ideological offspring of this generation of men and women.

(1973:xxii)

Pallo Jordan's ethnography, like Thea's, seeks to inscribe a subjectivity for the object of his study. But, unlike Thea's, its (counter) strategy is aimed at validating, empowering, and

positively representing the African subject.

Scheub's introduction is a summary of his structural theory of Xhosa *iintsomi*. In this introduction he is vehement that the transcription of an *iintsomi* is a terrible injustice to the performer and the tradition. ... The written text becomes a mere outline, a scenario - nothing more (11). He is at pains, though, to point out that Jordan did not attempt to merely record an *iintsomi* performance:

Jordan did not attempt to do this, because he knew it was impossible. Instead, he fleshed out the scenario with words. He used techniques of the short story to bring life to the skeletal outlines, and he thereby moved away from the original *iintsomi* performances into the hybrid art form...

(1973:13)

It follows, then, that Jordan's specific hybrid art form is a conscious, creative convergence of the *iintsomi* and short story genres. Jordan also combines tale types - in this collection, the *Milk Bird* tale type and *Demane and Demazana*, are integrated into one tale called the latter.¹⁶ In this tale, two main elements are derived from the *iintsomi* genre: the themes of community spirit and family life; and the structure, which is shaped by the core-clichés in the form of utterances or songs. For example, the utterance of the bird that undoes the weeding - 'The weeds of this field, go scatter! Scatter!' (36) - is central to the action of the first section of the tale, which takes place at the home of the twins. Also, other performance elements are retained. Xhosa epithets with English translations in parenthesis abound in the text e.g. *ASo-mawele* (Father-of-the-twins), and ideophones such as *Ampr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!* infuse the text with liveliness and colour.

A few tools of the short story are also employed by Jordan, some of which are directly influenced by the content. First, Jordan adds descriptive details of character and scene. These are details the oral performer would have found superfluous. For example, in the opening paragraph, Jordan presents a detailed description of village life, explaining the division of labour:

In the village where the twins lived, the men used to hunt, the boys used to look after the live-stock, and the women and girls used to cook at home and, in the proper season, till the lands with hoes, sow the seed, and hoe the ground again to clear away the weeds.

(34)

Not only does this provide background information for the foreign reader, but it also sets the scene for the bird's magical undoing of work which follows.

Second, he explains and motivates action. This is for the benefit of readers who are unfamiliar with the *iintsomi* repertory. For example, the bird who helps the children is characterised as a mother, and thus the reader is given a motivation for her kindness: *How do you think I would have felt just now if I had found my little ones gone? I would have wept, and I would still be weeping...* (53). Often, in other versions of this tale, such as Thea's *Story of the Bird that Made Milk II*, the rescuing bird is just a magical bird that appears suddenly, reunites children and parents and disappears again, without character details (even in Leshoi's tale, the bird does not develop into a rounded character, but remains a symbol). The author also compensates for non-verbal elements, such as gestures and facial expressions by interpolating comments of his own: *The twins looked at each other and smiled. But they looked down the tree and their faces clouded* (53). Although spontaneity is sacrificed (the performer would probably have mimed this scene), Jordan is able to convey the pathos and the drama of the scene.

Third, the repetition so characteristic of *iintsomi* performances is muted in this tale. For example, the *Zim* declares, *I can't eat you now, because I'm too full, too full* (48). Repetitions such as this one are infrequent, although songs (core-clichés) with the original Xhosa printed alongside, are repeated to further the plot. All digressions and irrelevant episodes have been excised from the text. Fourth, Jordan tries to infuse the text, with the energy generated in the performance context by the dynamic interaction between teller and audience. He introduces a variety of dialogue styles, humour and emotion. In this exchange between the twins and their play-mates, Jordan conveys both the excitement of the children and the danger of the situation:

*A*It's in the clay pot,*@*said the twins, pointing.

*A*Just take off the mat and let's have a look.*@*

*A*No! We were warned never to uncover the clay pot.*@*

*A*We shan't tell.*@*

Demane took off the mat and the playmates crowded round the clay pot and looked at the bird.

(41)

In the following description of the *Zim*'s actions,¹⁷ Jordan captures in print the animation and the melodrama which would characterise the performance of such a scene.

Demazana pointed at the calabash, too terrified to speak. The *Zim* picked it up, opened his large mouth very wide, threw his head back and poured the water down his throat. Then he held the empty calabash before his hideous face for a moment, as if debating in his mind whether to swallow it or not. Again he looked at the girl.

(48-49)

Scheub's comment that Jordan's tale texts are *more homogeneous, less personal, less vivid and colourful* (1973:12) than a performance, is no doubt valid. But bearing in mind Jordan's project, the tale successfully combines the *iintsomi* and short story genres in a manner which is entertaining and informative without being didactic. Jordan successfully employs a *three-way*

dialectic between print, performance and ... orality@ (Gunner 1989:55) to create an effect which is very different to the dry and flat quality of the Kaffir Folklore (1882) tale texts, discussed in the previous chapter.

Jordan's specific hybrid tale form embodies the sentiments of the >new nationalist= discourse in that it represents the convergence of different literary traditions in a new, unified, aesthetic form, indeed a >great collective symbol@ for unity in diversity. Pallo Jordan, in the foreword, recognised the political currency of Jordan's tale texts:

In colonial societies, where the majority of the people are, as a matter of policy, kept semi-literate, the >folk@ can be a revolutionary concept employed for the reaffirmation of a *national identity*. Jordan, therefore, chose the Southern African tale - with its oral tradition, and hence not limited to a reading public - as the medium through which to express his protest against the existing order. He sought to transform the tale into a *great collective symbol* around which the African people could be mobilized for social and political change.

(xxii; my emphasis)

This chapter has focussed on written folktale texts today, and has shown how they are employed in a >new nationalist= discourse to represent a unified cultural identity for the >new= South Africa. I have also argued that these texts are sometimes part of a neo-colonialist discourse which exoticises and essentialises African culture. Common to both discourses is the view that the tale texts are able to bridge gaps and heal rifts in our society. This ameliorating role of folktale texts can only be achieved if both the risk of eliding difference, and the challenge of positively rearticulating difference, are forcefully tackled.

One way of tackling both of the above is to highlight the benefits of synthesising differences into something new and progressive. This is something that AC Jordan was able to achieve in his tale texts. Another success story is Gcina Mhlope. Charismatic and dynamic, Mhlope realises the potential of cultural and aesthetic hybridity by collapsing genres, embracing different traditions, and utilising a variety of media. She owes her interest in story-telling and her substantial *iintsomi* repertoire to her grandmother from whom she learnt the art as a child. She did her informal apprenticeship whilst working as a domestic worker and nanny to four children in apartheid South Africa. Today, Mhlope works as a performer, drawing heterogeneous audiences to her theatre performances of tales. She also publishes tales which are cleverly crafted to combine ~~traditional~~ structural elements with current or socially relevant themes and plots. Her tale, The Snake with Seven Heads (1989), has been translated into five African languages, and the English edition has been placed in school libraries nationwide. She is also concerned with establishing storytelling as an artistic profession in South Africa, and she has thus founded the *Zanendaba Institute of Storytelling*. Also part of Mhlope's vision is a technologised folktale - a television programme incorporating puppets and narrators, or even an animated folktale (Interview, Grahamstown: April 2000).

What Jordan and Mhlope have in common is that they both recognise and embrace heterogeneity. In doing so they are able to use the resources of different literary and performance traditions as the basis for their respective, unique, creative fusions. Their hybrid tale texts, and the tale texts of others too, occupy a carved-out, in-between space in which differences converge, but are not smothered. This space symbolises the success of one form of cross-cultural literary activity in South Africa, and the potential for more encounters with the hybrid in

other spheres.

Endnotes for Chapter Four

1. A detailed definition of the term unfolds in Section III. See also Introduction.
2. See *A Note on Terminology*, Introduction.
3. »black« here refers to indigenous African people
4. »Model Kaffir« - taken from the conclusion to JA Chalmers' biography - Tiyo Soga: A Page of South African Mission Work (1877).
5. All Black Consciousness organisations, for example, the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), were banned on 19 October 1977. Steve Biko was the founder and first president of SASO. Note that AC Jordan's Tales From Southern Africa was published in 1973, the year Biko was banned.
6. BL Leshoai spoke vehemently against the harm the Christian Church had done to the great art of story-telling (1977:3). His works are also analysed in Section III.
7. Interestingly, and alarmingly, this view mirrors neo-colonialist discursive strategies.
8. The new coat of arms, unveiled by President Thabo Mbeki in April 2000 carries the Khoi San slogan !KE E: /XARRA // KE (»Unity in diversity«).
9. Conference paper, »Making stars sing« delivered by Poland at Towards More Understanding, University of the Western Cape, 1992).
10. Theal's texts have found their way into international collections. Paul Radin's African Folktales (1983) contains an almost verbatim copy of KF II, and Roger Abrahams' African Folktales: Traditional Stories of the Black World (1983), contains a verbatim copy of KF III. Neither scholar comments on his use of Theal.
11. Briggs is of course referring to nationalism in nineteenth century Europe.
12. *Mapungubwe*, in the Limpopo valley, is where Southern Africa's first city and greatest kingdom (»cradle of civilisation«) is said to have flourished about a thousand years ago.
13. This is the same tale type published by Savory under the title *The Founding of a Tribe: A true story from the area where Grahamstown now stands*. In comparison to Savory's version, Nevin focuses on the individual evil of the *sangomas* in question, rather than the iniquities of the cultural practice in general.
14. Ironically, the epithet given to this new cultural identity is often »African« rather than South »African«. I see two reasons for this: a generalisation stemming from colonialist discourses; and the deliberate unifying strategy of Pan Africanist discourse.
15. Pallo Jordan is the son of AC Jordan. He was the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in South Africa, before becoming the head of parliament's Constitutional Review Committee in 1999.

16. This combined tale text was also published by the Readers-Digest in a collection titled The Best of South African Short Stories (1991). The tale here is accompanied by information panels which describe Xhosa culture, and illustrations and a picture feature of ATranskei - home of Xhosa tradition.
17. Cf. The ~~stiff~~ and formal *Zim* in The Story of Demane and Demazan, discussed in Chapter Three.

Conclusion

This thesis has shown that indigenous folktale texts have been used in a colonialist discourse to shape identities for both the coloniser and the colonised. It has also described how folktale texts are used today in a reconstructing narrative of the nation aimed at creating a national cultural identity. The central value of this recognition of the role of folktale texts in colonialist and nationalist discourses lies in the awareness that this type of literary activity in South Africa is a cross-cultural practice. The confluence of voices which constitutes these folktale texts, reveals that our stories are intertwined.

In the past, the discourses of colonialism and apartheid controlled the formation of the diverse and hierarchised cultural identities of South Africa. But this is not to say that alternative stories of self-fashioning and cultural self-determination did not exist. In the folktale texts of writers such as Mhlope, Jordan, and even in Thea's colonial collection, different media, different literary heritages and styles, converge to create narratives which speak of cross-cultural interaction and the empowerment of the black voice.

In post-apartheid South Africa, there is an even greater opportunity to reshape stories, to recreate selves, and to redefine intercultural relations. This thesis has outlined how some of those stories, which use folktale texts as their central trope, are constructed and commodified. Not only do these reinvented folktale texts embody the heterogeneous cultural influences of South Africa, they also have the potential to promote, first, the understanding of cultural differences, and second, the acceptance of the notion of cultural hybridity in our society. This potential of the

folktale texts can be realised if cultural difference is first rearticulated in positive terms. For this task the synthesis of postcolonial and folklore studies is required. Postcolonial theories and folklore methods in tandem provide the necessary tools required to trace the trajectory of folktale transcription and re-telling from colonial times to the present day, showing how authors respond to and represent cultural difference. The historicisation and theorisation of the written folktale genre contributes to the understanding of how discourses ascribe subject positions to different cultural groups, and how these positions may be contested or supported.

For instance, this study has problematised the truism of a ›rainbow nation‹ by pointing to the paradox at the heart of the ›new nationalist‹ discourse. By describing how folktale texts are employed to promulgate the myth of a single homogeneous cultural identity which also allows for the expression of differences, this study has shown that policy-makers, authors and publishers run the risks of either eliding differences, or exoticising them further. Rather, to facilitate the reconstruction of cultural identities, the challenge of positively rearticulating difference has to be met and the lesson of embracing heterogeneity has to be learnt. And, of course, without the redress of material inequities, any narrative of a ›nation‹ will remain a myth.

It is hoped that this thesis has, in some way, contributed to the theorisation and historicisation of the written folktale genre in South Africa. But this story, of how different cultures combine in a specifically hybrid literary form, is just one of a myriad stories to be told about the multitudinous ways in which we interact in order to become ourselves.

Appendix A

Story of the Bird that Made Milk I (KF I)

THERE was once upon a time a poor man living with his wife in a certain village. They had three children, two boys and a girl. They used to get milk from a tree. That milk of the tree was got by squeezing. It was not nice as that of a cow, and the people that drank it were always thin. For this reason, those people were never glossy like those who are fat.

One day the woman went to cultivate a garden. She began by cutting the grass with a pick and then putting it in a big heap. That was the work of the first day, and when the sun was just about to set she went home. When she left, there came a bird to that place, and sang this song:

AWeeds of this garden,
Weeds of this garden,
Spring up, spring up;
Work of this garden,
Work of this garden,
Disappear, disappear.®

It was so.

The next morning, when she returned and saw that, she wondered greatly. She again put it in order on that day, and put some sticks in the ground to mark the place.

In the evening she went home and told that she had found the grass which she had cut growing just as it was before.

Her husband said: AHow can such a thing be? You were lazy and didn't work, and now tell me this falsehood. Just get out of my sight, or I'll beat you.®

On the third day she went to her work with a sorrowful heart, remembering the words spoken by her husband. She reached the place and found the grass growing as before. The sticks that she stuck in the ground were there still, but she saw nothing else of her labour. She wondered greatly.

She said in her heart, AI will not cut the grass off again, I will just hoe the ground as it is.®

She commenced. Then the bird came and perched on one of the sticks.

It sang:

ACiti, citi, who is this cultivating the ground of my father?
Pick, come off;
Pick handle, break;
Sods, go back to your places!®

All these things happened.

The woman went home and told her husband what the bird had done. Then they made a plan. They dug a deep hole in the ground, and covered it with sticks and grass. The man hid himself in the hole, and put up one of his hands. The woman commenced to hoe the ground again. Then the bird came and perched on the hand of the man, and sang:

¶This is the ground of my father.
 Who are you, digging my father's ground?
 Pick, break into small pieces;
 Sods, return to your places.¶

It was so.

Then the man tightened his fingers and caught the bird. He came up out of the place of concealment

He said to the bird: ¶As for you who spoil the work of this garden, you will not see the sun any more. With this sharp stone I will cut off your head!¶

Then the bird said to him: ¶I am not a bird that should be killed. I am a bird that can make milk.¶

The man said: ¶Make some, then.¶

The bird made some milk in his hand. The man tasted it. It was very nice milk.

The man said: ¶Make some more milk, my bird.¶

The bird did so. The man sent his wife for a milk basket. When she brought it, the bird filled it with milk.

The man was very much pleased. He said: ¶This pretty bird of mine is better than a cow.¶

He took it home and put it in a jar. After that he used to rise even in the night and tell the bird to make milk for him. Only he and his wife drank of it. The children continued to drink of the milk of the tree. The names of the children were Gingci, the first-born son; Lonci, his brother; and Dumangashe, his sister. That man then got very fat indeed, so that his skin became shining.

The girl said to her brother Ginci: ¶Why does father get fat and we remain so thin?¶

He replied: ¶I do not know. Perhaps he eats in the night.¶

They made a plan to watch. They saw him rise in the middle of the night. He went to the big jar and took an eating mat off it. He said: ¶Make milk, my bird.¶ He drank much. Again he said: ¶Make milk, my bird,¶ and he drank till he was very full. Then he lay down and went to sleep.

The next day the woman went to work in her garden, and the man went to visit his friend. The children remained at home, but not in the house. Their father fastened the door of the house, and told them not to enter it on any account till his return.

Ginci said: ATo-day we will drink of the milk that makes father fat and shining; we will not drink of the milk of the euphoria to-day.@

The girl said: AAs for me, I also say let us drink of father's milk to-day.@

They entered the house. Gingci removed the eating mat from the jar, and said to the bird: AMy father's bird, make milk for me.@

The bird said: AIf I am your father's bird, put me by the fireplace, and I will make milk.@

The boy did so. The bird made just a little milk

The boy drank, and said: AMy father's bird, make more milk.@

The bird said AIf I am your father's bird, put me by the door, then I will make milk.@

The boy did this. Then the bird made just a little milk, which the boy drank.

The girl said: AMy father's bird, make milk, for me!@

The bird said: AIf I am your father's bird, just put me in the sunlight, and I will make milk.@

The girl did so. Then the bird made a jar full of milk.

After that the bird sang:

AThe father of Dumangashe came, he came,
He came unnoticed by me.
He found great fault with me.
The little fellows have met together.
Gingci the brother of Lonci.
The Umkomanzi cannot be crossed,
It is crossed by swallows
Whose wings are long.@

When it finished its song it lifted up its wings and flew away. But the girl was, still drinking milk.

The children called it, and said: AReturn, bird of our father,@but it did not come back. They said, AWe shall be killed to-day.@

They followed the bird. They came to a tree where there were many birds.

The boy caught one, and said to it: AMy father's bird, make milk.@

It bled. They said: AThis is not our father's bird.@

This bird bled very much; the blood ran like a river. Then the boy released it, and it flew away. The children were seized with fear.

They said to themselves: AIf our father finds us, he will kill us to-day.@

In the evening the man came home. When he was yet far off, he saw that the door had been opened.

He said: AI did not shut the door that way.@

He called his children, but only Lonci replied. He asked for the others.

Lonci said: AI went to the river to drink; when I returned they were gone.@

He searched for them, and found the girl under the ashes and the boy behind a stone. He inquired at once about his bird. They were compelled to tell the truth concerning it.

Then the man took a riem and hung those two children on a tree that projected over the river. He went away, leaving them there. Their mother besought their father, saying that they should be released; but the man refused. After he was gone, the boy-~~tried~~ to escape. He climbed up the riem and held on to the tree; then he went up and loosened the riem that was tied to his sister. After that they climbed up the tree, and then went away from their home. They slept three times on the road.

They came to a big rock. The boy said: **A**We have no father and no mother; rock, be our house.@

The rock opened, and they went inside. After that they lived there in that place. They obtained food by hunting animals, - they were hunted by the boy.

When they were already in that place a long time, the girl grew to be big. There were no people in that place. A bird came one day with a child, and left it there by their house.

The bird said: **A**So have I done to all the people.@

After that a crocodile came to that place. The boy was just going to kill it, but it said: **A**I am a crocodile; I am not to be killed; I am your friend.@

Then the boy went with the crocodile to the house of the crocodile, in a deep hole under the water.

The crocodile had many cattle and (much) millet. He gave the boy ten cows and ten baskets of millet.

The crocodile said to the boy: **A**You must send your sister for the purpose of being married to me.@

The boy made a fold to keep his cattle in; his sister made a garden and planted millet. The crocodile sent more cattle. The boy made a very big fold, and it was full of cattle.

At this time there came a bird and circumcised the boy. The bird said: **A**Your sister has performed the custom, and as for you, you should enter manhood.@

The crocodile gave one of his daughters to be the wife of the young man. The young woman went to the village of the crocodile. She went to be a bride.

They said to her: **A**Whom do you choose to be your husband?@

The girl replied: **A**I choose Crocodile.@

Her husband said to her: **A**Lick my face.@

She did so. The crocodile cast off its skin, and arose a man of great strength and fine appearance.

He said: **A**The enemies of my father-~~s~~ did that; you, my wife, are, stronger than they.@

After this there was a great famine, and the mother of those people came to their village. She did not recognise her children, but they knew her and gave her food. She went away, and then their father came. He did not recognise them either, but they knew him. They asked him what he wanted. He told them that his village was devoured by famine. They gave him food, and he went away.

He returned again.

The young man said: "You thought we would die when you hung us in the tree."

He was astonished, and said: "Are you indeed my child?"

Crocodile then gave them (the parents) three baskets of corn, and told them to go and build on the mountains. He (the man) did so, and died there on the mountains.

Story of the Bird that Made Milk II (KF II)

The following is another version of this story of the Bird that made Milk, as current among the Barolongs, a tribe speaking the Sechuana language, and residing beyond the Orange River. It was written down for me by an educated grandson of the late chief Moroko.

IT is said that there was once a great town in a certain place, which had many people living in it. They lived upon grain only. One year there was a great famine. There was in that town a poor man, by name Masilo, and his wife. One day they went to dig in their garden, and they continued digging the whole day long. In the evening, when the digging companies returned home, they returned also. Then there came a bird and stood upon the house which was beside the garden, and began to whistle, and said:

AMasilo's cultivated ground, mix together.@

The ground did as the bird said. After that done the bird went away.

In the morning, when Masilo and his wife went to the garden, they were in doubt, and said:

AIIs it really the place we were digging yesterday?@

They saw that it was the place by the people working on each side. The people began to laugh at them, and mocked them, and said: AIIt is because you are very lazy.@

They continued to dig again that day, and in the evening they went home with the others.

Then the bird came and did the same thing.

When they went back next morning, they found their ground altogether undug. Then they believed that they were bewitched by some others.

They continued digging that day again. But in the evening when the companies returned, Masilo said to his wife:

AGo home; I will stay behind to watch and find the thing which eats our work.@

Then he went and laid himself down by the head of the garden, under the same house which the bird used always to stand upon. While he was thinking, the bird came. It was a very beautiful bird. He was looking at it and admiring it, when it began to speak.

It said: AMasilo's cultivated ground, mix together.@

Then he caught it, and said: AAh! is it you who eat the work of our hands?@

He took out his knife from the sheath, and was going to cut the head of the bird off.

Then the bird said: APlease don't kill me, and I will make some milk for you to eat.@

Masilo answered: AYou must bring back the work of my hands first.@

The bird said: **A**Masilo's cultivated ground, appear,@ and it appeared.

Then Masilo said: **A**Make the milk now,@ and, behold, it immediately made thick milk, which Masilo began to eat. When he was satisfied, he took the bird home. As he approached his house, he put the bird in his bag.

When he entered his house, he said to his wife, **A**Wash all the largest beer pots which are in the house,@ but his wife was angry on account of her hunger, and she answered: **A**What have you to put in such large pots?@

Masilo said to her: **A**Just hear me, and do as I command you, then you will see.@

When she was ready with the pots, Masilo took his bird out of his bag, and said: **A**Make milk for my children to eat.@

Then the bird filled all the beer pots with milk.

They commenced to eat, and when they were finished, Masilo charged his children, saying,

ABeware that you do not tell anybody of this, not one of your companions.@

They swore by him that they would not tell anybody.

Masilo and his family then lived upon this bird. The people were surprised when they saw him and his family. They said:

AWhy are the people at Masilo's house so fat? He is so poor, but now since his garden has appeared he and his children are so fat!@

They tried to watch and to see what he was eating, but they never could find out at all.

One morning Masilo and his wife went to work in their garden, and about the middle of the same day the children of that town met together to play. They met just before Masilo's house. While they were playing the others said to Masilo's children:

AWhy are you so fat while we remain so thin?@

They answered: **A**Are we then fat? We thought we were thin just as you are.@

They would not tell them the cause. The others continued to press them, and said: **A**We won't tell anybody.@

Then the children of Masilo said: **A**There is a bird in our father's house which makes milk.@

The others said: **A**Please show us the bird.@

They went into the house and took it out of the secret place where their father had placed it. They ordered it as their father used to order it, and it made milk, which their companions drank, for they were very hungry.

After drinking they said: **A**Let it dance for us,@ and they loosened it from the place where it was tied.

The bird began to dance in the house, but one said: **A**This place is too confined,**@**so they took it outside of the house. While they were enjoying themselves and laughing, the bird flew away, leaving them in great dismay.

Masilo's children said: **A**Our father will this day kill us, therefore we must go after the bird.**@**

So they followed it, and continued going after it the whole day long, for when they were at a distance it would sit still for a little while, and when they approached it would fly away.

When the digging companies returned from digging, the people of that town cried for their children, for they did not know what had become of them. But when Masilo went into the house and could not find his bird, he knew where the children were, but he did not tell any of their parents. He was very sorry for his bird, for he knew that he had lost his food.

When evening set in, the children determined to return to their home, but there came a storm of rain with heavy thunder, and they were very much afraid. Among them was a brave boy, named Mosemanyamatong, who encouraged them, and said:

ADo not be afraid; I can command a house to build itself.**@**

They said: **A**Please command it.**@**

He said: **A**Houses appear,**@**and it appeared, and also wood for fire. Then the children entered the house and made a large fire, and began to roast some wild roots which they dug out of the ground.

While they were roasting the roots and were merry, there came a big cannibal, and they heard his voice saying: **A**Mosemanyamatong, give me some of the wild roots you have.**@**

They were afraid, and the brave boy said to the girls and to the other boys, **A**Give me some of yours.**@**

They gave to him, and he threw the roots outside. While the cannibal was still eating, they went out and fled. He finished eating the roots, and then pursued them. When he approached, they scattered some more roots upon the ground, and while he was picking them up and eating, they fled.

At length they came among mountains, where trees were growing. The girls were already very tired, so they all climbed up a tall tree. The cannibal came there, and tried to cut the tree down with his sharp and long nail.

Then the brave boy said to the girls: **A**While I am singing you must continue saying, >Tree be strong, Tree be strong!**!-@**

He sang this song:

AIt is foolish,
It is foolish to be a traveller,

And to go on a journey
With the blood of girls upon one!
While we were roasting wild roots
A great darkness fell upon us.
It was not darkness,
It was awful gloom!@

While he was singing, there came a great bird and hovered over them, and said: **A**Hold fast to me.@

The children held fast to the bird, and it flew away with them, and took them to their own town.

It was midnight when it arrived there, and it sat down at the gate of Mosemanyamatong's mother's house.

In the morning, when that woman came out of her house, she took ashes and cast upon the bird, for she said: **A**This bird knows where our children are.@

At midday the bird sent word to the chief, saying, **A**Command all your people to spread mats in all the paths.@

The chief commanded them to do so. Then the bird brought all the children out, and the people were greatly delighted.

The Story of Demane and Demazana (KF III)

ONCE upon a time a brother and sister, who were twins and orphans, were, obliged on account of ill usage to run away from their relatives. The boy's was Demane, the girl's Demazana. They went to live in a cave that had two holes to let in air and light, the entrance to which was protected by a very strong door, with a fastening inside. Demane went out hunting by day, and told his sister that she was not to roast any meat while he was absent, lest the cannibals should discover their retreat by the smell. The girl would have been quite safe if she had done as her brother commanded. But she was wayward and one day she took some buffalo meat and put it on a fire to roast.

A cannibal smelt the flesh cooking, and went to the cave, but found the door fastened. So he tried to imitate Demane's voice, and asked to be admitted, singing this song:-

ADemazana, Demazana,
Child of my mother,
Open this cave to me.
The swallows can enter it.
It has two apertures.@

Demazana said: ANo. You are not my brother; your voice is not like his.@

The cannibal went away, but after a little time came back again, and spoke in another tone of voice:

ADo let me in, my sister.@

The girl answered: AGo away, you cannibal; your voice is hoarse, you are not my brother.@

So he went away and consulted with another cannibal. He said: AWhat must I do to obtain what I desire?@

He was afraid to tell what his desire was, lest the other cannibal should want a share of the girl.

His friend said: AYou must burn your throat with a hot iron.@

He did so, and then no longer spoke hoarse. Again he presented himself before the door of the cave, and sang, -

ADemazana, Demazana,
Child of my mother,
Open this cave to me.
The swallows can enter it.
It has two apertures.@

The girl was deceived. She believed him to be her brother come back from hunting, so she opened the door. The cannibal went in and seized her.

As she was being carried away, she dropped some ashes here and there along the path. Soon after this, Demane, who had taken nothing that day but a swarm of bees, returned and found his sister gone. He guessed what had happened, and followed the path by means of the ashes until he came to Zim's dwelling. The cannibal's family were out gathering firewood, but he was at home, and had just put Demazana in a big bag, where he intended to keep her till the fire was made.

Demane said: **A**Give me water to drink, father. **@**

Zim replied: **A**I will, if you will promise not to touch my bag. **@**

Demane promised. Then Zim went to get some water; and while he was away, Demane took his sister out of the bag, and put the bees in it, after which they both concealed themselves.

When Zim came with the water, his wife and son and daughter came also with firewood.

He said to his daughter: **A**There is something nice in the bag; go bring it. **@**

She went, but the bees stung her hand, and she called out: **A**It is biting. **@**

He sent his son, and afterwards his wife, but the result was the same. Then he became angry, and drove them outside, and having put a block of wood in the doorway, he opened the bag himself. The bees swarmed out and stung his head, particularly his eyes, so that he could not see.

There was a little hole in the thatch, and through this he forced his way. He jumped about, howling with pain. Then he ran and fell headlong into a pond, where his head stuck fast in the mud, and he became a block of wood like the stump of a tree. The bees made their home in the stump, but no one could get their honey, because, when any one tried his hand stuck fast.

Demane and Demazana then took all Zim's possessions, which were very great, and they became wealthy people.

Story of the Girl and the Mbulu (KF IV)

THERE was once a widow woman who had one son and two daughters. On a certain day she went to her garden, taking with her one of the girls. While she was away the boy quarrelled with his sister and killed her.

In the course of the day the woman sent the girl that was with her to the hut, and when she came there a fly told her what had happened. She did not believe it.

Then a mouse told her the same thing, but still she did not believe it was true.

Afterwards the fly told her to look in a certain place, and there she saw the head and the bones of her sister.

When the woman came home and found out what had happened, she killed her son. Then she gave the girl a stick, and told her to go to her uncle's house, saying that when she got there she must strike the ground with the stick, and all the clothes and other things that belonged to her would then rise up out of the earth. The woman said she was now all alone, and therefore intended to kill herself.

The girl was very sorry, but she did as her mother told her. When she was a little way off she looked back and saw smoke coming out of the hut, from which she knew that her mother had burned herself and was no longer a person under the sun.

After this she met an old woman, who called to her, but she took no heed and walked on. Next she met a mbulu at a place close by a river. The mbulu said that whoever wet any part of the body in crossing the river must go in and bathe. The girl was standing on the bank, and the mbulu struck the water with its tail and splashed it into her face, so that she had to go in and bathe. Then the mbulu took her clothes and put them on.

When the girl came out of the water she asked for her clothes, but the mbulu said: **I** will give them when you are dry.®

So they went on together. After a while the girl asked again, and the mbulu said: **I** will give them when we get to the village.®

But when they arrived there the mbulu said: **You** must tell the people here that you are my servant, and that I am the daughter of a chief.®

The poor girl was so afraid that she promised to do so. They were well received at the village, because the people believed that the mbulu was a great person. They wondered at her voice, but she told them she had been sick and her throat was not yet well.

After a time one of the men of that kraal married the mbulu, and the real girl was sent to the gardens to drive the birds away from the corn. While engaged in this occupation she used to sing about the mbulu taking her clothes and passing itself off for a person, until the women who worked in the gardens took notice of this song of hers.

Then they made a plan to find out if what the girl was singing was the truth. They said: *!The tail of a mbulu will want mice and fat,* so they set snares to catch the mice. In the night the tail was pursuing mice, and itself got fast in a snare. The mbulu then asked the man who was married to her to go and get some medicine, as she was sick, and when the man went she took off the snare.

After this they made another plan. They said: *!The tail of a mbulu will seek milk,* so they dug a hole in the ground, put milk in it, and required every one in the village to jump over the hole. The mbulu was unwilling at first, but they urged her. She tried to jump quickly, but the tail could not pass the milk. When it went down the people saw that this was a mbulu, so they killed it and buried it in that hole.

After this the same man who had married the mbulu took the girl to be his wife. She had a child, and one day, when it was playing, a square pumpkin came out of the ground where the mbulu was buried, and tried to kill the infant. But the people chopped the pumpkin into pieces, and burned it. They afterwards threw the ashes into a river, so that nothing more could come of that mbulu.

Performance 27: A Bird Defecates Amasi (Scheub I)

A *ntsomi* says -

There was a woman who hoed in the fields. She hoed on the first day. When she arrived in the fields on the second day, she arrived and could not see the plot of ground where she had hoed! She began all over again, she hoed, she hoed and hoed, she hoed.

Her husband arrived, he arrived and asked, **A**Where's the plot that you've been hoeing for so long?@

His wife said, **A**Well, Father of So-and-so, the plot was over there, but now I don't see it! So I began again from the beginning.@

During the day, a bird arrived. This bird arrived, it sang and said,

AClose up ranks! Move close together! Leap across!
 Close up ranks! Move close together! Leap across!
 Weeds of this field, get up! *Vukuthu!*
 Weeds of this field, get up! *Vukuthu!*@

The weeds sprang up. The woman again began from the beginning.

This man said, **A**You see, Masibani, you must dig me a deep hole here, so that I can seize this bird!@

Well, his wife agreed. She dug it, she dug it, she dug it, she dug this hole.

He said, **A**Cover me up!@He took three kernels of corn and put them in his hand. Then he exposed his hand a little. His wife covered him up, then she went home.

The bird arrived, it said,

AClose up ranks! Move close together! Leap across!
 Close up ranks! Move close together! Leap across!
 Weeds of this field, get up! *Vukuthu!*
 Weeds of this field, get up! *Vukuthu!*@

The weeds sprang up.

The bird saw these kernels here in the hand of this man. It came and picked them up, it picked them up. When it had picked them up, when the bird had picked up the last one, the man seized it. Then the man got out of the hole, and when he got outside, he said, **A**Please do it, my bird that shits *amasi!*@It produced *amasi - batsha!* The man lapped it up. He said, **A**Please do it again, my bird that shits *amasi.*@It produced - *batsha!* The man lapped it up. Then he went home.

The bird repeated,

AClose up ranks! Move close together! Leap across!
Weeds, get up! *Vukuthu!*@

They abandoned it, they went home. When they got home, they arrived and the bird was not there!

AHey, Children! Where's the bird?@

ANo, we don't know! We took the bird down and put it above the kraal! It flew away!@

Their father pursued them all, the three of them. He brought weapons, and he pursued them. They ran, they ran, they ran and ran, they hid. They arrived above a river. They arrived there above the river, there were some bushes there. They arrived and stayed in these bushes. They slept there, they woke up there.

In the morning, an animal came. The animal asked, AWhose children are you?@

They said, AWe're Magongoloshas children.@

It asked, AWhat did you do that you've come to stay here, away from your parents?@

These children said, AWe took our father's bird that defecates *amasi*, and it flew away. It roused all the weeds in the fields.@

The animal said, AThen you can stay here for good!@

It travelled, and in the afternoon it returned. It arrived, it sat with them, it kindled a fire. Then it took the first child and threw him into the fire. It roasted him, it ate him. When it came to the second one, the children began to run. They returned to their home.

When they arrived, their father asked them, AWhere's the other one?@

They said, AWell, he was taken by these animals!@

He said, ASit down. From today, when I put a thing anywhere and you take it, then you'll end up with the animals!@

The *ntsomi* is ended, it is ended.

Performance 8: Furuani and Demazana do battle against a Zim (Scheub II)

A *ntsomi* said:

Furuani and Demazana travelled, going to their uncle's place. They travelled, they travelled, and came to a rock. When they came to this rock, they said,

ARock! Rock-of-two-holes!
Open! that I may enter!@

The rock opened. They went inside, they arrived there. On the inside was the meat of an ox.

When they found this meat, Furuani said, ADemazana, don't eat that meat! I'm going on, I'm travelling to our uncle's place!@Furuani went on his way.

A Zim arrived, it said,

ARock! Rock-of-two-holes!
Open! that I may enter!@

Demazana said, AGet out, you! You aren't my brother!@

The Zim. journeyed, it went to some other Zims. It said, AMen, what would you do if you found an animal?@

The Zims said, AHeat up an axe until it's red hot! Then swallow it, it'll come out below!@

The Zim heated-the axe, it swallowed this red-hot axe. Then, when it came to the rock, it said,

ARock! Rock-of-two-holes!
Open! that I may enter!@

The rock opened. The Zim went in, it slashed into the meat, and ate. As it was eating, Demazana saw that the meat was almost finished, and she called a fowl.

She said, AFowl! What'll you say if I send you [to my brother]?@

The fowl said, AI'll say, Xkukurukuru!@

APig?@

The pig said, AI'll say, Xre!@

Furuani said, AHey! That's my sister!@He left the milk on the ground. Then he took a pail of paraffin, a gallon of it. He also took some fire. He said, AI am brave! I am brave! Look at what I'm doing!@Then he travelled and came to arrive far away at that rock. He arrived and poured paraffin on top of the rock. The Zim blazed, the hair of the Zim was on fire!

The Zim said, ADemazana! Demazana, what's that always going ZZZZZZZZZZ?@

Demazana said, ANo, Grandfather, it's just the clouds gathering.@

The Zim ate, the Zim. ate. Its hair went on burning, but she had said that the sky was just clouding up. The hair of the Zim was burning, and now it got near to the skin of the Zim's head!

The Zim got up! It said again, ADemazana! Demazana! What's that always going ZZZZZZZZZZ?!

Demazana said, ANo, man! Grandfather, eat that meat! The sky is clouding up.

The Zim got up, it felt the skin of its head already burning! It ran, it went out of the house and threw itself into a marsh. Its buttocks stuck into the air, its head disappeared!

It happened that some children were journeying, they had gone to gather some firewood.

One of them said, AGod! Here's a beehive! There's a lot of honey here! The bees had produced a lot of honey. She ate it, and called the others. The children ate, they came and ate the honey here in the buttocks of the Zim. They did not know that it was the buttocks of the Zim, and that there are its feet, sticking up in the air! They ate and ate. Then one of the children scraped, and her hand disappeared! It stuck tight, she tugged this hand, but her hand stuck tight! It was clear that her hand would not come out of the Zim's buttocks! They despaired, they cut it off there!

Now, when people talk about the cutting off of this hand in this hole of the Zim it is said that it is here where the Zim died.

The *ntsomi* ends there.

Performance 28 (extract): A Boy Murders his Sister (Scheub III)

Well then, true enough, the little girl departed. When, according to the instructions of her mother, she beat the ground with the whip, all the cattle disappeared. She went by the right path, and she walked and walked. She walked, she walked. When she was far off, she said, *AKwek!* I don't understand why I should go on until I disappear without having seen this fable told me by my mother! I've never heard of a person who burned herself up together with a house! Let me at least see the smoke - even though I can't pull her out because she is burnt, she is burnt, truly my mother is burnt!@She looked back, and when she looked, she saw the house as it burned completely and collapsed. She went on her way, crying.

Well, she pushed ahead, Limelekudeni travelled, she walked and walked and walked until it became necessary that she cross a river. Before she crossed the river, she stood looking for some berries, almost bursting into tears, not yet having made the decision to eat. She at last got herself under control, and she wanted to eat these berries because she was very hungry - in fact, she was starving. She threw herself at the black berries, those she could fill up on quickly, and she ate and was satisfied. While she was having a second morsel, a *mbulu* suddenly rose up over there in that berrytree, just as she was having her second morsel, as she was eating!

The *mbulu* said, *AHey! You're eating me! I'm not a berry!@*

She didn't pay attention to the *mbulu*, she took to the road.

It said, *AIn going where you're going!@*

She took to the road, she went on. The *mbulu* went parallel to her all the time. Finally, as she now crossed over this river, when she came to a place above that river, the *mbulu* said, *ANo! No! Stop! Stop! Before this river can be crossed, we must first wash!@*

She too, because the sun had quite scorched her, she too thought that she should cool her body a little and wash. She took off her clothes then, those beautiful clothes that she wore, and she put them to the side. Limelekudeni washed her body. She washed, she washed, and as she was still washing, this *mbulu* was busy putting on those clothes of hers, putting them on, hurrying to clothe itself in those clothes of hers. When she finally finished washing, she said, *AGive me my clothes now, so that I can put them on and we can get on our way! It's late, I must go!@*

The *mbulu* said, *ANo, I'm dressed now. Please dress yourself in my rags!@*

Well, Limelekudeni coaxed this *mbulu*, but no, the *mbulu* did not give in. They went on. The *mbulu* was parallel to her the whole time, following after her on a journey which the *mbulu* knew nothing about.

It was parallel to her now, and she was already not a human because of the ugly clothes of the *mbulu* which she wore, and because her own had been snatched away by the *mbulu*.

She travelled, she walked and walked, she walked and walked, and she came to the home of her mother's parents. When she arrived at the home of her mother's parents, someone asked, 'Where have you come from? Where have you two come from?' because now they were two, this *mbulu* having kept up with her until the time of their arrival.

The *mbulu* hurried to speak. The *mbulu* said, 'Well, we come from home!'

'Mm mm.'

'Well, we thought that we should just come here to see the people, because as you know I came from here long ago!'

'Yes, but who are you?'

'Well, I'm a niece of this family!'

'Oh? Why do you speak as you do? Your speech - what has happened to you? You didn't lisp at one time.'

'I was very ill! I nearly died!' It said, 'The back of my tongue was cut off.'

'Oh!'

'Yes.'

'Why was it not thus reported here at our place? Why were we not told that you had become so ill?'

'I don't know! The old people have their own minds, they wouldn't have to be told by me!'

Well, it was left at that.

'What about this person with whom you're travelling, the one who's dressed in such ugly rags? Where did this person find such clothing?'

The *mbulu* said, 'Well, it's a poverty-stricken wretched man that I met along the way. It's clear that these things are hungry, and they've sometimes heard that there is the possibility of being satisfied here at my mother's parents' home.'

They said, 'Oh!'

Well then, food was dished out for them. They ate. They ate and ate.

The *mbulu* said, 'Please don't let her eat with the people. Let this thing eat with the dogs! It's not a thing that should eat with people!'

Well then, food was dished out for the girl and she ate with the dogs. The *mbulu* ate with the people, it ate with the people and ate good food.

Time passed. Time passed, time passed, time - here at home, the corn was being cultivated. The corn had to be watched so that it would not be eaten by the birds. Well then, the girls of this home - a daughter of this place watched the corn. Now then, these people considered it necessary that there should also be a person who might assist her. She also watched that corn then, so that it would not be eaten by the birds. That poor thing went along, it was said that it would be this wretched thing who would watch the corn! This wretched thing went then, she was the corn watcher in the fields. She went, she was not eating well. This wretched thing watched then, watching, getting up at dawn in the frost. It was cold when she went to watch the corn, this ragged thing. It was this *mbulu* that stayed over there; it was happy in the house, eating good things.

This girl remained now in grief. As the days went by, this girl watched the corn, and was treated badly at her mother=s parents=place because it was said that she was a *mbulu*. That *mbulu*, the real *mbulu*, behaved like a human. Then one day, this girl took off her clothes, because this field was over a river. This girl took off her clothes, she washed and washed, she washed. She beat the ground, and said, **A**Part, Earth! I have no mother, I have no father!@The earth parted. Food, plenty of food appeared, food which was very good, and other things, other things. She ate, this girl ate, and she was satisfied. Again she beat the earth with the whip, with that whip of hers. When the *mbulu* had snatched the clothing of this girl, along with all the things that belonged to this girl, she would not let go of the whip that she had been given by her mother. She did not give it to the *mbulu*. Well then, she beat the ground and those things again disappeared. And again, she put on these rags. She watched for the birds, she watched for the birds, she watched for birds until dawn.

On the following morning, the following things occurred on this day that followed: this girl was now the watcher-of-corn. It is this *mbulu* who is the human, eating things over there at home, even though it is a worthless thing. And this girl became thin then, because she remained in grief here at home. Now when the morning had come, there was an old man of this place, he was old, an aged man of home here, and he loved to walk over there in the fields, constantly (305) going to look at the fields. At dawn, this girl arrived.

The old man said, **A***Tsay=tsay=bo!*@

The girl took a stone, she took a stone from the ground and threw it near where the old man stood, this girl not seeing the old man.

She said,

*A**Tsay=tsay=bo!*

Tsay=tsay=bo!

Tsay' tsay' bo!

Tsay' tsay' bo!

I met a *mbulu* !
Tsay=tsay=bo!
 It snatched my clothes!
Tsay=tsay=bo!
 I was going to my grandparents=place
 in the far-off land of Mbo!
Tsay=tsay=bo!@

So sang this girl.

Kwok! As soon as the girl had spoken, this old man (well, he wasn't really all that old) recognized that voice. It resembled that of his sister, the sister of this old man who was the mother of this girl! The girl today was grief-stricken because she had to be a *mbulu*, her clothes had been snatched by a *mbulu*! This old man went home, this matter not causing him, however, any inner happiness. He had not been seen by the girl, and he moved stealthily and went home. When the old man got home, he confided this matter to his wife. *ANozibani.@*

His wife replied, *AYes?@*

AWell, I'm not satisfied with this person here at home.@

AOh? Not to be satisfied means what?@

AWell, this is not the child who is our sister!@

AHow so?@

AShe's the one who went along with the child who is our sister! She's the one over there! We've made her watch the corn! We've made her eat with the dogs!@

AWhat are you complaining about?@

He said, *AThis child was singing, and when she sang, her voice was that of our sister! This child, her voice - it's our sister! She tells a story of sorrow. This child says that when she was coming here, she met a *mbulu*. The *mbulu* snatched her clothes when she was coming here to her mother's parents=place at Mbo!@*

AOh? You must wait, so that I too can walk softly tomorrow, and I'll listen for myself. It's possible that when the girl spoke - you have ears of age, Sobani! Perhaps there's no problem at all! Perhaps you just didn't hear well!@

The old man gave in. They slept.

In the morning, it was said in the morning that it was necessary that the girl do her work of watching the corn. And so she worked, watching the corn. When the girl arrived here in the corn fields, she took off her clothes and washed. She washed, she washed quickly. She put on her clothes. She had a strong desire

to beat the ground today so that she might eat, so that food would appear and she might eat. And yet, her body was apprehensive now. She had already decided that she must kill herself, because she had been left behind by her parents, in grief. And even at her mother's parents' place, where she had come to stay, she found that it was a burden even heavier than the other one! She now chooses to kill herself, seeking a plan whereby she might die of starvation. She did not beat the ground with the whip, so no food appeared. She went again when she had finished washing. She continually went round the field, watching for those birds. In the grass was this woman. In the grass - she had hidden herself beneath some pumpkin vines which were planted in the field. The girl returned. She hurled a clod of earth, she took a clod from the ground and threw it in the field.

She said, *ATsay=tsay=bo!* Turn round the other way, Dogshit!@The girl sang,

ATsay= tsay=bo!
Tsay=tsay=bo!
Tsay=tsay=bo!
Tsay=tsay=bo!
 I met a *mbulu!*
Tsay=tsay=bo!
 I was going to my grandparents' place
 in the far-off land of Mbo!
Tsay=tsay=bo!
 It snatched my clothes!
Tsay=tsay=bo!@

So she said, and then the girl stopped.

Well, she heard, and having heard, the woman beneath the pumpkin vines did not even wait for the girl to finish. She broke the corn down as she ran. The girl noticed this, and she looked all around, hearing the cracking twigs and leaves. But it was this woman! She runs and goes home to her husband. When she got home, out of breath, this woman said, *ASobani!@*

Her husband replied, *AOh, you frightened me!@* So he said. *AOh, why did you frighten me?@*

AThat matter you spoke of - in that place in the grass beneath the pumpkin vines, the thing you heard on my side of the field! It is the child of Sisilo, my sister-in-law! your sister! Truly, that's the child of your sister over there! It is a mbulu that we honour here at home! The one for whom we slaughtered a hamel!@

The old man said, *AI have said so. I'm aged.@*

It happened that he did not have a solution for her, and his wife was already disgusted with the whole affair, she was already going to get the child to bring her here in a great hurry. The *mbulu* had done this! The old man stopped her.

He said, "No, don't despair! Stop! She'll return when it's time for her to return from watching the corn. I'll try to think of a plan whereby we might snare this *mbulu*! So, it would destroy my homestead with such great sorrow!" So he said, and the old man sat down.

The girl returned from the corn at sunset. When the girl returned, the woman had already prepared the food, she had made a lot of food. There was a lot of it, covered by dishes, on the other side of the homestead. She had also slaughtered some fowl, realizing that, "Well, the meat of the sheep would take too long to prepare." She covered it when the girl entered. She said, "I'm taking this over there. Here's your food. Eat!"

The *mbulu* was in the doorway, just entering, appearing from another house. It stared at this food which was being taken to the girl - as much as that! and the meat of fowl as well! That animal over there was envious, the animal which was a *mbulu*. "If this food is given to this girl, she won't eat it! She's used to the food thrown to her with the dogs now! But the girl ate, she was happy. And she sought within her soul as to why, today, she should be given such good food! She ate, although for days this girl had been eating dirty food, although even now her heart was black, it was closed, because she no longer ate any good food. Even though she was a human, she had been eating the food of dogs. She soon had had enough, even though she had not finished the food. The *mbulu* was surprised, it snorted with anger, concealing its tail as the tail slipped down under the clothes which made the *mbulu* human.

At that juncture, the old man called his wife to the side of the house, along with a man of the village who was a neighbour of his, to discuss the plan conceived by the old man because of what was going on here at home. This old man came there, he of the same age as this other old man, he came to listen to his neighbour. They gathered together then at the side of the house, in a corner, with his wife. This old man also asked that the wife of the neighbour come along. They examined this plan. Well then, Friends, when they were at the side of the house, the old man began to discuss this matter.

The old man said, "It's about this thing that has occurred here, Sir. Some strangers, two people, came here, but we did not believe that one of the persons was exactly a human - she seemed to be an animal, because of the way she dressed herself. She had dressed herself, and smeared mud on her body. Then we recognized this thing, we recognized that it was a *mbulu*! We decided then that this *mbulu* should assist that girl over there in the fields, keeping the birds from the corn. In short, then, Sir," so said this old man to the other old man, "this is the *mbulu* that we have settled here in the house! This is the daughter of our sister we sent to watch the corn and to eat dirty food with the dogs! But then, by the luck of God, I am a person who loves the fields! I overheard a song that she made up in the fields, I heard the voice of this person, and I knew her - it is my sister, my sister is a person who has a voice like that! My wife denied

this, she disputed it at that time. I allowed her to go herself, so that she could just listen for herself, so that she could hear for herself the things that this girl sang about when she sang her song in the fields. Again by luck, my wife saw more than I saw, because she hid under the pumpkin vines. She hid above the place in which the girl would wash, this land of mine being above a river. The girl undressed completely, and she washed while my wife sat and watched her. Well, she finished washing, and when she finished, she sat facing the sun. Then again, she smeared the mud on her body, she took these rags and put them on. This wife of mine hurried to come to tell me at home. I saw her entering, out of breath, doing thus, doing thus, you can see that even now she's not quite right. Here then is the plan, Sir, about which I called you here to my home, because of this event which has befallen me. Because the *mbulu* is an animal, we will not seize it with our hands. We cannot set the dogs on it, because it looks like a human. I have a plan, then, which I have mentioned, a plan which I thought of here, and we should now move by means of it. We should say that it's necessary that the *mbulu* become the wife of my son here at home. Now according to the belief of the sisters=and daughters=children of here at home, when she arrives, she who is to become the wife must also pay respect, she must put on the things of womanhood, it must be clear that she is a woman! We will travel then, and she too, along to the cattle-kraal. There, they will jump over the corn-pit. And in that corn-pit, Sir, I'll do this - as you know, it is also a *mbulu*, and thus it can be snared with meat-fat. I'll put some fat over there in the corn-pit over which everyone will jump. When this *mbulu* falls in, we'll set fire to it, we'll put bundles of grass there and set them on fire so that the *mbulu* burns there and dies!@

Kwok! The old man of the other homestead agreed. He was astonished, he had never seen such a thing!

He said, *A*Well, you have a good plan, Neighbour! We'll see now if it works. We must try hard so that we succeed!@

Well then, it was said that the women must come out. All were gathered together, all were collected, everyone who was a woman here at home. It was said that there was a custom that was going to be fulfilled, especially by the females here at home. Whenever a person arrived, it was explained that *A*Today, we want this *mbulu* to become the wife of our son, according to the belief of our home. This sister's child here is desirable, she should be made a wife of our home so that we might enlarge our friendship.@

Oh, the *mbulu* was made very happy by this! It shouted assent, happy that it would have the glory of becoming a wife here at home!

Well then, Friends, as soon as that was said, someone explained what would be done here at home. *A*It is necessary that each woman here at home leap across that corn-pit! All must jump! jump! jump! jump! jump! jump! Because she has just come, she must not jump alone. She will be accompanied by the others. Everyone will jump! She should not enter alone over there.@Well, this matter was acceptable even to the

mbulu, the *mbulu* must not be put into the cattle-kraal alone, it will jump with everyone else! That corn-pit contained many things to ensnare a *mbulu* - old corn which had become sour, together with meat-fat which had been placed over there in the corn-pit. The *mbulu* likes these things very much. Well then, they were brought, and they were made to leap. The women were made to leap, they were made to leap, they were made to leap. When they were in the midst of this leaping, it became necessary that the *mbulu* leap.

The *mbulu* jumped - but first it took a quick look into the hole, and its glance went straight to the meat-fat: there was a lot of it, and it was spread out there below! The *mbulu* strongly desired the meat - and it smelled this old corn too! It strongly desired to strip off just a little of this fat when it leaped. The *mbulu* jumped - *tsiiiiiiiiiiiiii!* It jumped inside here, it jumped wanting to strip off some of this fat and then leap to the other side and eat a little.

When the *mbulu* jumped - well, they covered it then with a rock! Then they ran and sent for some strong men, that they should come with two bundles of grass. There was an old house that had already fallen down. These bundles were fastened there, because for a long time it was known that this thing would be done here at home. The young men came running *gqi gqi gqi gqi gqi* with the bundles of grass. They dropped them, they carried the bundles, they dropped them, they carried the bundles. The bundles of grass were forced into the pit, and they were set on fire. The *mbulu* burned, the *mbulu* died.

But before it died, the *mbulu* made a final effort. When it came out of the corn-pit, they seized it. Now the rock was removed, and when the hole was uncovered, grass was put inside. When it was first set on fire, when it initially met the flames, the *mbulu* jumped up. There were some huge dogs here at home. They caught the *mbulu* when it leapt, they stripped it.

The *mbulu* said, ÆEven though I have been burnt, for a long time I have been eating the best!@

The dogs caught the *mbulu*, and then it was taken by the young men and put over there into the blazing fire. Then the *mbulu* died.

The *ntsomi* is ended, it is ended.

Illustration 1. Border designs and illustrations from GM Theal's Kaffir Folklore (1882)



Illustration 2. Images of Africa prevalent in the popular media of nineteenth century England

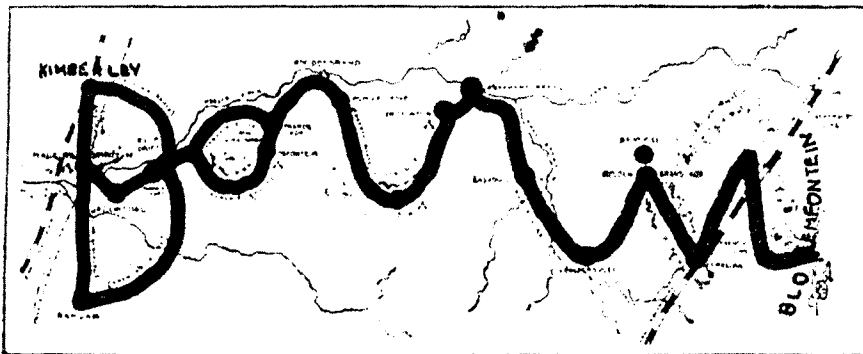


The first step towards lightening
The White Man's Burden
is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness
Pears' Soap

is a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth as civilization advances while amongst the cultured of all nations it holds the highest place: it is the ideal table soap.



THE EVENT OF THE YEAR.



How Lord Roberts wrote **BOVRIL**.

Appendix B

Illustration 3. Colonialist stereotypes of African people

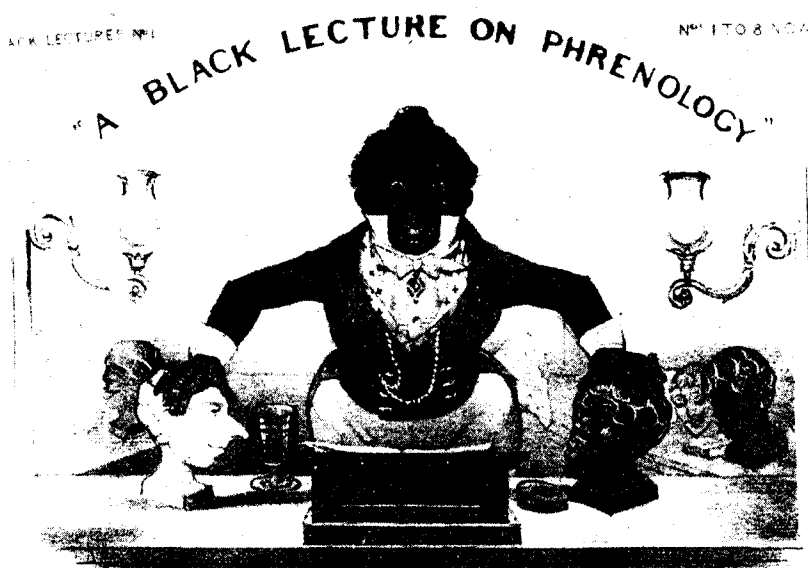


Illustration 4. The cover of Phyllis Savory's Bantu Folk Tales from Southern Africa (1974)

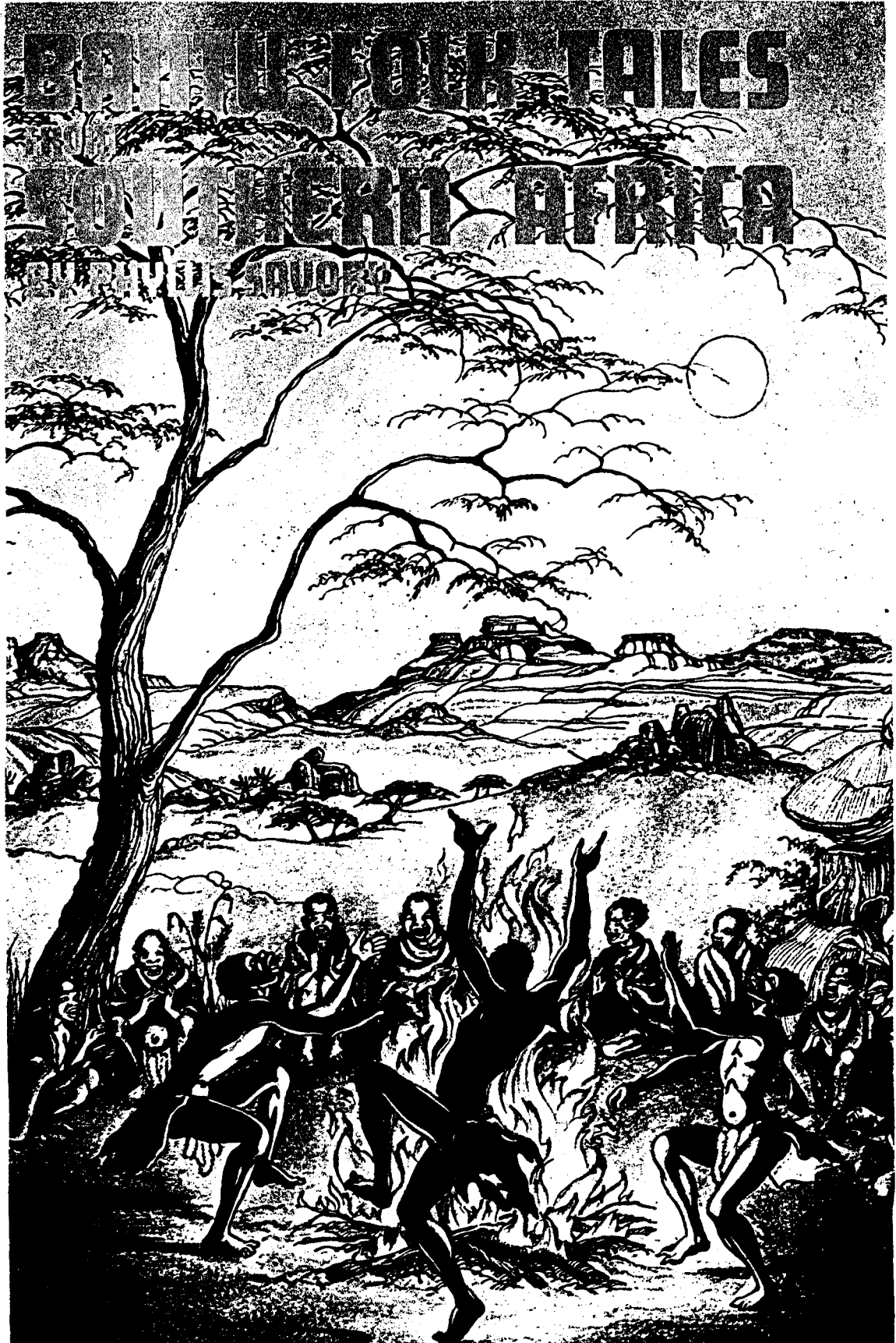


Illustration 5. The cover of Phyllis Savory's The Best of African Folklore (1991)

The best of
**AFRICAN
FOLKLORE**

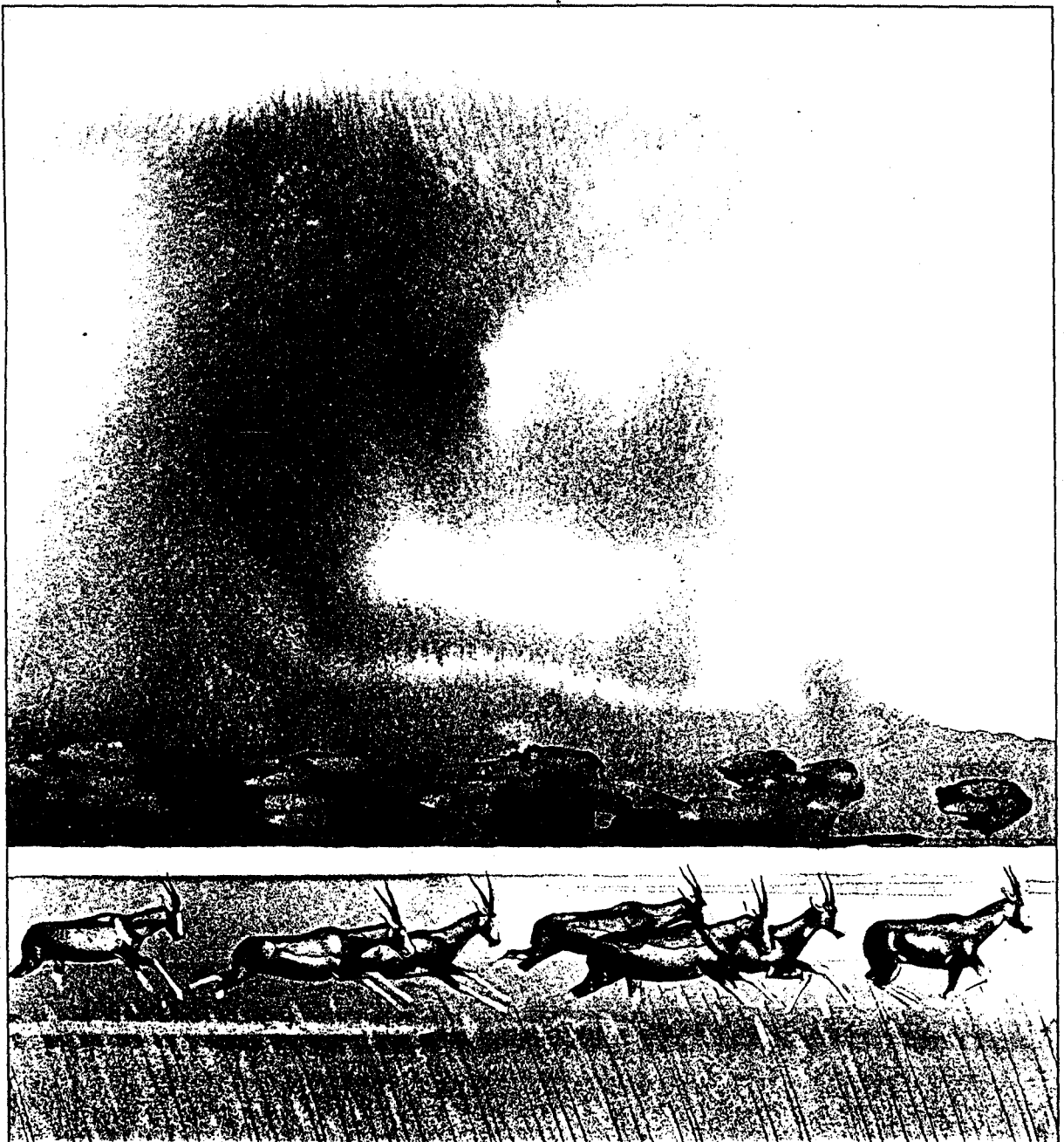


Illustration 6: The cover of Kathleen Milne's Dema and Demazana (1994)

DEMA & DEMAZANA

Kathleen
Milne

Brigitte
Schröder



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