

**WHITE WRITERS
AND
SHAKA ZULU**

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ABSTRACT

The figure of Shaka (c.1780-1828) looms massively in the historical and symbolic landscapes of Southern Africa. He has been unquestioningly credited, in varying degrees, with creating the Zulu nation, murderous bloodlust, and military genius, so launching waves of violence across the subcontinent (the "mfecane"). The empirical evidence for this is slight and controversial. More importantly, however, Shaka has attained a mythical reputation on which not only Zulu self-conceptions, but to a significant degree white settler self-identifications have been built. This study describes as comprehensively as possible the genealogy of white Shakan literature, including eyewitness accounts, histories, fictions and poetry. The study argues that the vast majority of these works are characterised by a high degree of incestuous borrowing from one another, and by processes of mythologising catering primarily to the social-psychological needs of the writers. So coherent is this genealogy that the formation of an idealised notion of settler identity can be discerned, especially through the common use of particular textual "gestures". At the same time, while conforming largely to unquestioning modes of discourse such as popularised history and romance fiction, individual writers have attempted to adjust to socio-political circumstances; this study includes four close studies of individual texts. Such close stylistic attention serves to underline the textually-constructed nature of both the figure of Shaka and the "selves" of the writers. The study makes no attempt to reduce its explorations to a single Grand Unified Explanation, and takes eclectic theoretical positions, but it does seek throughout to explore the social-psychological meanings of textual productions of Shaka - in short, to explore the question, *Why have white writers written about Shaka in these particular ways?*

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NOTE

Throughout I use the commonly accepted, modern spellings of "Shaka", "Dingane", "Zulu" and other names, except where I am quoting, in which cases I preserve the variants in the originals.

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INTRODUCTION

"*Zhi...zhi...zhi...*" Out of the clamorous dark the fiendish chorus swelled louder and ever louder, more merciless and more murderous. It reached Tshaka, where, slightly to the rear, he was directing the battle. Tshaka heard! Frank saw his smile; and it was the smile of Satan himself hearing the hiss of hell's flames and the dying agonies of the damned. To Tshaka it was the very sound of coming victory. (Watt 1962:130)

As top executives, we can learn a great deal about planned change, strategic management, decision-making styles and problem-solving, from the rise of the Zulu nation. On the eve of the revolution, Shaka and his senior councillors had to identify the problem and the internal and external environmental factors in Nguniland... (Chanaiwa 1989:3)

Against this backdrop
 with the sun
 an open fire
 we rallied
 on the steps
 of the ceramics factory
 blazed our rage
 about Soweto
 our deserts -
 yet to be irrigated
 our Shakas -
 yet to be resurrected
 and our victories
 soon to be celebrated!
 (Feinberg 1992:22)

In the first of these vividly different extracts, a South African historical novelist draws on a hundred and thirty years' accumulation of condemnatory rhetoric - drawing on a European stereotype of African monstrosity going back at least as far as Pliny - to juxtapose a bloodlusting Zulu devil with her squeaky-clean British naval hero. In the second extract, a black Zimbabwean academic and bureaucrat looks to a tough but impeccably organised, nation-building Shaka as a model for the local Institution of Engineers to follow in forging an "organisational culture". And in the third, a white African National Congress activist (ironically, given the widespread hostility between the Zulus and the ANC in 1990s politics)

appropriates Shaka to a trans-ethnic symbolism of revolutionary victory over apartheid rule.

Nothing is more frightening than the culture of institutionalised and endemic violence out of which such views have grown. Elizabeth Watt's novel projects the unacknowledged violence of white rule in South Africa; its pages are saturated with mingled fascination and disgust with "torrents of blood", the fear of black resurgence barely masked by the confident verbiage of a Christian self-righteousness. Chanaiwa's lecture, by contrast, endeavours to transcend the imputation of Zulu violence - not by denying it, but by assimilating the conventional icons of Shaka's militarism (the invention of the stabbing-spear, the regimental system) to a justificatory ideal of organised nationhood: "Zulu militarism was an expression of a deep cultural heritage and not simply a product of immediate wartime conditions or an instrument of Shaka's alleged tyranny" (5). Chanaiwa envisions a pragmatic kind of violence sanitised by the bureaucrat's rhetoric of "behavioural control systems", "centralised remuneration", and "human resources planning". Barry Feinberg's vision, like Watt's, revels in rather than masks violence. But, like Chanaiwa, he also justifies it. Feinberg's sanctification is the ANC's "people's cause" (15). In the service of this cause (as he voices it in another poem, "The Beauty of a Zulu Battle Line"), the images of the same "short broad stabbing spear ... thrust to catch a bared chest upward", the "flesh reared on thorns", the "feathered impi in full fury", become "beautiful", both sensually and because they can be conflated with the "new spears of gun drilled Tambo men", the vanguard of an implicitly and intrinsically moral ANC victory (14). Compare this with the report that some Zulu chiefs in 1990 called for the "liquidation" of ANC youth elements because they were "making King Shaka's land dirty", and displaying "constant disloyalty to the memory of Shaka and Dingaan" (*Weekly Mail* 6/20, 1-7 June 1990:1-2).

Violent rhetoric does not remain merely abstract: we are obliged to acknowledge "the

power of various presumptive fictions of reformation or of reprisal that, put into action, can turn any civil community of learning into a theatre of cruelties" (Berthoff 1970:263). In an apposite instance of such action, on 9 October 1990, one Howmore Ngcobo and four other Zulu men stabbed five whites at random on Durban's tourist-thronged beachfront. When Ngcobo came to trial, one of his possessions presented in evidence was "a photograph [sic] of Shaka", across which was written the word "Renaissance". Ngcobo called himself "Rennie", for short (*Weekly Mail* 8/19, 8-14 May 1992:8). Here is a clear instance of Shaka being perceived as the symbolic, indeed mythic, energising force behind an act of actual, "liberatory" violence. Interestingly, no such "photograph" of Shaka exists: it is possible that it was the well-known, ostensibly eye-witness depiction of Shaka that first appeared in Nathaniel Isaacs' *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* in 1836 - an etching itself cross-hatched with ironic connotations, a white man's fictional depiction for an English audience (see Appendix; Wylie 1994).

The ironies of these interlocking, often contradictory depictions are multiple, often tragic. How have such disparate views of this one man emerged? Of course, it is a commonplace that famous historical figures - particularly those about whom little is certainly known - are commandeered and reinterpreted to suit the needs even of radically opposing parties. Perhaps nowhere is this clearer than in the literary career of Shaka, yet his role in this syndrome, his place in the social and psychological fabric of South African history, though often invoked, has scarcely been examined. It is the central aim of this study to contribute to an understanding of part of Shaka's many-sided and mythic literary existence.

I stress *part*. It is clear even from the few examples given so far that "black" and "white" versions of Shaka feed continually into one another. Not even the most "mythic" elements in the story are entirely detachable from the impress of historical events; nor are

the most "Eurocentric" elements untinged or unconstrained by the Zulus' view of themselves (see Hamilton 1993). I aim, however, to isolate what seems to me a distinct lineage, a *relatively* self-contained genealogy of white men and women's writing on Shaka. The cohesion of this genealogy is in large part the product of a core of almost incestuously close friends: for instance, A T Bryant was friends with, and drew material from, the early twentieth-century Natal administrator James Stuart, to whom Rider Haggard's Shaka novel *Nada the Lily* had been dedicated; James Stuart's brother Philip produced his own bundle of Shaka horror stories in *An African Attila* (1928); James also edited Fynn's so-called "diary" (his co-editor, Daniel Malcolm, was nominated "attorney and agent" by Bryant for the latter's later works); and James' nephew Huntly Stuart produced his own Shaka play (1981), starring Henry Cele, who later acted Shaka in the notoriously inaccurate but widely viewed 1986 television series. So it is hardly surprising that a certain commonality of attitude should persist over this period. The stability of the genealogy may be further, very crudely illustrated by the repetition of certain unquestioned motifs through the literature; or by the stability over shorter periods of single authors' works: A T Bryant, for all his voluminous effort, scarcely changes his stance between the 1880s and the 1940s; Donald Morris propounds identical views in his works of 1965 and 1986; Geoffrey Bond could reissue his 1960 novel, scarcely altered, twenty-two years later (Langa 1982).

The core story of this lineage is not difficult to summarise, so stable are its essentials. Around 1787, Shaka is born illegitimately to Zulu chieftain Senzangakhona and Nandi; he and his mother are harried into a turbulent exile; smouldering with resentment, Shaka hones his military skills under Mthethwa leader Dingiswayo, who boosts him into the Zulu seat of power when Senzangakhona dies. Shaka then, through terrorist brutality, or martial genius, or both, sets about transforming an insignificant clan into a warrior nation. Within ten years, the Zulus have conquered and depopulated a vast tract of land, setting in train a series of

bloody migrations (in the twentieth century dubbed the "mfecane") which convulses the sub-continent. Shaka, however, devolves into some or other species of insanity, and in 1828 is assassinated by his half-brothers.

This outline scarcely does justice to the variation of detail and treatment in the texts. On the other hand, virtually no text deviates from it in any significant way: The lineage blurs, bifurcates, and has its aberrations (illuminating in themselves), and of course it overlaps with other strains. But it is as distinct as the reverse side of a coin from that view of Shaka as a kind of proto-liberation fighter and manifestation of a continental consciousness that informs black African writing from kwaZulu to Senegal (Burness 1980; Malaba 1986; Ridehalgh 1991). This solidity, it could be argued, is simply because the facts are indisputable. But they are not: their disputable nature has merely been suppressed. Moreover, I suggest, white writers' treatment of the "facts", disputable or not, whether enveloped in the stylistic conventions of history, fiction, poetry, or anthropology, function powerfully to reflect, even to cope with, underlying social and psychological attitudes. This aspect of the literature, in my view, is far more important, interesting, and dangerous, than the question of its putative fidelity to what "really" happened. In its language-use, its plot-lines, its generic boundaries, its ideological import, in short its social-psychological *meaning*, this lineage retains a remarkable consistency over one hundred and fifty years precisely because such attitudes have been everywhere sedulously preserved by a panoply of white supremacist structures.

In this study, then, I do not attempt to discover what the "historical truth" of Shaka might have been, though I will necessarily allude to some historical *probabilities* in order to place the literary stories in some kind of perspective. I regard the kind of textual scrutiny of the Shakan texts I practise here as a necessary prelude to such an attempt. I also have not

made too thoroughgoing an attempt to position this study in relation to theoretical schools. Studies of imperial literatures proliferate and need not be reviewed here. I suppose this work might very broadly fall under the auspices of "cultural studies", inasmuch as that polymorphous approach entails a penchant for the "interdisciplinary" alongside a critical attitude towards discipline itself, concerns itself with the "popular", and regards intellectual effort as interventionist rather than merely studious (and given Shaka's present prominence as political icon and touchstone of identity, this study can hardly fail to be interventionist; see Grossberg et al 1992:1-15). At the same time, my study is perhaps more literary, more text-based than most "cultural studies" find congenial. In this respect, my approach owes more to a "new historicist" kind of focus on the reciprocity of texts and contexts in the formation of historically constrained identities (Montrose 1992). The debt to post-Foucauldian, postmodernist perspectives of both these schools does not need to be underlined; on such perspectives I have drawn eclectically, following Nietzsche's dictum that "an isolated judgement is never 'true': only in the connection and relation of many judgements is there any surety" (quoted in Schacht 1983:67). So it will not be surprising if, in these pages, I seem to oscillate between an almost empirical approach, and a more thoroughgoing "postmodernist" stress on the primacy of textuality; or between the specificities of individual case-studies, and a Cartesian manner of categorisation. If there is a central point of reference for this study, it lies in the perception that all forms of knowledge and knowledge-making are "situated" processes, stable, if at all, for limited periods. In this situatedness, I take it, one finds a way to tread, with Donna Haraway, the awkward terrain between the need for certainties and terrifying relativism:

I, and others, started out wanting a strong tool for deconstructing the truth claims of hostile science by showing the radical historical specificity, and so contestability, of *every* layer of the onion of scientific and technological [or historical] constructions, and we end up with a kind of epistemological electro-shock therapy, which far from ushering us into the high-stakes tables of the game of contesting public truths, lays us out on the table with self-induced multiple personality disorder. (Haraway 186)¹

Haraway's allusion to a notion of *identity* is crucial here; it is around this concept, and the "situated" ways in which identities are constructed, that this study primarily revolves.

Within a broadly social-psychological, even anthropological approach to the Shakan literature, then, four main areas seem to me to invite investigation.

History

The isolation of "history" as a distinct genre of writing - *historiography* - in the Shakan literature is, even without post-modernist obfuscations, an unusually difficult prospect. Firstly, what has passed for historiography ranges from the problematic travelogues of the eyewitnesses, through antiquarian fragments enlivening missionary tracts, popularising epics of the Zulu nation, and scholarly journal articles, to distillations of all these in the more "formal" regional histories and alarmingly superficial school texts. Each of these forms presents different interpretative problems; many have been born of quite different impulses. Secondly, anecdotal, anthropological, dramatic, and especially fictional material has fed into the formal "histories" to an unusually high degree. Once we have described the complicated and incestuous genealogy of the white Shakan literature, it will be clear how multi-voiced - heteroglossal - even the most formalised of "historical" assertions turn out to be. As Mikhail Bakhtin asserts, "there can be no such thing as an absolutely neutral statement": every statement or utterance "is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication" (1986:85,91).

To give just one example: when James Michener writes in his novel *The Covenant* that "With sharp knives [Shaka] began to slice open their [pregnant women's] bellies to see for himself how life progressed", he is not making a simple statement of historical fact, nor a mere turn of fiction (1980:577). There *may* be an historically referential element to the

statement, inasmuch as the incident is related in certain turn-of-the-century oral traditions. Michener's account is also clearly in a fictional format. But it is neither pure invention, nor pure repetition: it is both imbued with, and goes beyond, the sarcastic disdain of its documentary source, a passage from A T Bryant's *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*:

Shaka's was a distinctly progressive type of mind, favouring every possible means for the acquirement of useful knowledge. As such he was a strong and early advocate of vivisection. In his study of human anatomy, he had the habit of having pregnant females opened alive, that he might learn "how the foetus lay!" (1929:649)

Michener's phrase "hideous experiment" echoes without repeating Bryant's words "useful knowledge", making the condemnation more brash, and the irony less chilling. Unlike Bryant's evocation of a customary cold-bloodedness, Michener explains the incident as the product of an unpredictable surge of insanity, a once-off orgy involving "more than a hundred women", and uses it as the plot-device which precipitates Shaka's assassination. The point here is, however, that Michener's account cannot be fully read, and the status of its individual voice assessed, without taking its genealogy into account.

The "expressive" content of Bryant's own gauche passage obviously tells us more about Bryant than it does about Shaka, and itself usefully illustrates the mingling of voices or discourses. Bryant has chosen this anecdote in order to illustrate how Shaka, "in gaining the world ... lost his own soul" (the echo of both Bible and the Dr Faustus story are contextually telling), where other writers have dismissed it as apocryphal character-assassination. He builds up to the incident itself through a series of deliberately misplaced nouns from scientific discourse (*progressive, useful knowledge, vivisection, anatomy*), signalling through the sarcasm of *distinctly* and *advocate* that his readership, precisely those people who would naturally (Bryant insinuates) utilise this discourse in its proper place, may regard themselves as contrastively superior, civilised, and sane. Bryant does not, as he does frequently elsewhere in his work, allude to, and throw aspersions on, the hearsay, oral nature of this story; his firm choice of tense itself signals his pejorative bias. Furthermore,

according to Bryant, Shaka is not unique, his mind is of a *type*. Nor is this event singular: it is a *habit*. In this way the racial bias of a whole society is made to speak - to "ventriloquise", in Bakhtin's vivid term - through Bryant's individual voice. And whose words are "*how the foetus lay!*"? The implication of the inverted commas is that they are Shaka's; the placing of the exclamation mark inside the inverted commas indicates the Zulu "demon's" excitement, not Bryant's surprise. But the quotation is neither sourced nor verifiable; in short, it is a fiction. In the light of the denigratory tone of the source, all subsequent usages of the incident become both empirically suspect and sociologically illuminating.

In the end, it makes interpretative sense to speak of historiography as a clearly bounded genre only to the extent to which we are interested in the literature as representational of "what happened", as a problem of verification rather than veracity. This is a problem essentially of what may serve as evidence (whether "true" or not), as opposed to material clearly invented - though even this rough distinction is in some cases problematic.

It is necessary, then, to distinguish "history" in another sense, as an attitude rather than as a form. As numerous recent theorists have taken pains to point out, there is no clear formal distinction to be made between the narratives of "fiction" and "history": there is no telling, on stylistic or formal grounds alone, whether the statement "Shaka cut open a pregnant woman" is fact or fiction. In one sense, there is clearly a profound difference in the implications of its *reception* as one or the other: to accept the statement as unimpeachably "true" is to integrate its import into one's life in a very different way from momentarily accepting it as necessary to the coherence of a fantasy. At the same time, however, a particular social-psychological attitude - of voyeuristic horror, or disdain at "congenital black

"violence", say - may be socially efficacious in either form. The fluid interpenetration of the two genres will be a prominent theme of this study.

Finally, as many post-colonial commentators have pointed out, history itself is a discourse deployed within political contexts, hence with implications in the wielding of power relations. "One 'fictions' history," in Foucault's Nietzschean terms, "on the basis of a political reality that makes it true" (Foucault 1980: 193). Or as Kellner expresses it more mildly, "That this [historiographical] tradition supports itself as a discourse of morality and a discourse of power by means of its image of itself, its history, is clear" (Kellner 5). This morality, developed in the nineteenth-century and intimately connected with the spread of Western imperial hegemony, permeates the Shakan literature. The historiography is, in short, an icon of cultural identity, constitutive and reflective of a particular order and authority, "one of those formal pacts made between the writer and society for the justification of the former and the serenity of the latter" (Barthes 1987:32-3).

The relationship between writer and society is not an area which has attracted much attention from commentators on the Shakan literature: none has pursued with rigour Collingwood's long-standing injunction to study the historian before studying the history. Neither the lives and predilections of the Zulu historians, from Nathaniel Isaacs to Leonard Thompson, nor the effects on their wielding of evidence of their personal and societal biases, have been treated seriously.

Indeed, the writing of the history of Shaka's time has in almost all respects been both neglected and naïve. Despite the popularity of Shaka himself as a cultural icon, historical accounts of the early Zulu have been hugely overshadowed by the well-documented glamour of the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879. Only a single, unsatisfactory monograph on pre-Cetshwayo

Zulu history has so far been published (Omer-Cooper 1966). Scholarly biographies of Shaka, Dingane, and Mpande remain unwritten. In the nineteenth century, accounts were openly intended as ammunition for the hegemonic requirements of colonial settlement and government; or as background to missionary autobiographies (Gardiner 1836; Colenso 1855; Grout 1862; Tyler 1891); or as merely ancillary introductions to early travelogues and amateur ethnographies (Harris 1839; Delegorgue 1847; Shooter 1857; Fynney 1880; Kidd 1904). There was seldom a clear generic distinction between these kinds of writing; all worked in concert to inform colonial administrators and settler attitudes, and all drew incestuously on a remarkably small pool of information, mostly derived from the two (then) known eyewitness accounts, Isaacs and Fynn. Subsequently, distillations of these earliest accounts were almost invariably included merely as a prelude to more substantial narratives of the 1879 war or 1906 rebellion (Gibson 1911; Stuart 1913; Morris 1965; Selby 1971; Guy 1982); or as a part of general histories of the Zulu (Roberts 1974; Ballard 1988; Taylor 1994; Laband 1995²); or of the establishment of colonial rule (Holden 1855, 1866; Mackeurtan 1930; Hattersley 1950; Brookes and Webb 1965); or as more or less cursory segments of numerous broad synthesising histories of South Africa, from Theal (1892) and Cory (1913) through to Davenport (1979, 1991) and Thompson (1990). Paradoxically, perfunctory treatment has gone hand in hand with extravagant claims for the importance of Shaka's endeavours to sub-continental history.

Three partial exceptions to this "tradition of marginalisation" ironically highlight the problem. The work of priest and anthropologist A T Bryant (1929, 1964), though not devoted exclusively to pre-1830s Zululand, includes a wealth of apparently detailed oral-traditional information. Much of this detail remains only patchily evaluated (Marks 1969). One recent, closer examination (Wright 1989), however, argues that Bryant's material is thinner and more problematic than has been recognised so far. Secondly, the sole substantial

historical monograph on Shaka's Zulu, Omer-Cooper's "Africanist" *The Zulu Aftermath* (1966), though a clear methodological step forward, also drew quite uncritically on the same very limited pool of stories, many so unsupported as to amount to mere rumour. A lack of critical inspection of the source material is characteristic of almost all these histories; rather, views of the Shakan period were quickly commandeered by a popularising approach consisting essentially of disconnected and sensationalist anecdotes. The manner in which mainstream historians have unquestioningly repeated these anecdotes, and invented still others, amounts to the most serious dereliction of scholarly duty in South African historiography.

The cynosure of this neglect is the third exception, E A Ritter's *Shaka Zulu* (1955), a romantic novel which, with an astonishing gullibility, was accorded instantaneous "historical" status, not least of all by Omer-Cooper. Indeed, Omer-Cooper's and thence many others' propagation of the notion of the so-called "mfecane" as the obverse of the Great Trek - that other propagandistic shibboleth of South Africa's Nationalist education system - is a process which can be shown to have developed and been accepted *in defiance of* the evidence. It is a central contention here that this view of "mfecane" violence is founded on a seductive but shaky view of Shaka himself as a Rankean "great man of history", on the notion of an alternately monsterised or romanticised "hero" which long masked all other possible causes.

The marginalisation of the early Zulu in historical accounts was thus, as Leonard Thompson pointed out a long time ago (Thompson 1960), not merely due to lack of evidence, though this was partly a factor. The much more thoroughgoing recent work of Julian Cobbing, John Wright, and Carolyn Hamilton in particular has been made possible in large part by the publication of the *James Stuart Archive* of oral material (Webb and Wright

1976-86). But this material has existed since the early years of the century, and was long ignored, even at times by Stuart himself; similarly, the crucial eyewitness account of Shaka's reign by Charles Rawden Maclean (1853/1992) remained untapped for over a century, as was considerable archival material. Indeed, as we shall see, critical elements of evidence were actively suppressed. The primary task here is to look for the underlying reasons for this.

The neglect of the Zulu was also methodological. Major developments in historiographical method have only very slowly been applied to the Zulu, despite penetrating studies of other African, and even South African, peoples. We still have no historical-anthropological monograph on the early Zulu of the standard of, for instance, Jeff Peires' work on the Xhosa, Peter Delius' on the Pedi, or the Comaroffs' on the Tswana.³ Neither have we had a published critical account of the ideological burden of the white historical writings on the Zulu to match, say, the work of Philip Curtin on West African colonial writing (1960), let alone Edward Said's on Orientalism (1978), or Christopher Miller's on Francophone Africanist texts (1985). Materialist perspectives, rather than textual, have dominated revisionist historiography, and continue to do so.⁴ The sparse, more literary-orientated examinations of major South African historians barely touch on their treatments of Shaka and Dingane (Saunders 1988; Smith 1988). This is, at first glance, doubly surprising, given the formative role Shakan violence is generally said to have had on the history of the subcontinent, and the gargantuan profile of Shaka as a cultural icon for both whites and blacks. In fact, it will be one contention of this study that the neglect and the fanfare are indissolubly linked, are constituents of a single attitude.

My main questions in the area of "history", then, are these: what precisely is the character and genealogy of this "historical" picture of the Zulu, and of Shaka in particular? Most important of all, why have historians found it necessary, expedient, or comfortable to

cling to a portrayal which seems from our perspective so patently inadequate? If an empirical fidelity to historical evidence has been lacking, what has in fact influenced and formed the picture? Why is there this dramatic disparity between Shaka's public profile and the lack of intensity of historical investigation? At bottom, in the words of Hayden White, the question is this:

What wish is enacted, what desire gratified, by the fantasy that real events are properly represented when they can be shown to have the formal coherency of a story? In the enigma of this wish, this desire, we catch a glimpse of the cultural function of narrativizing discourse in general, an intimation of the psychological impulse behind the apparently universal need not only to narrate but to give to events an aspect of narrativity. (White 1987:4)

Fictions

Our knowledge of the "what-happened" is, of course, totally dependent on texts - in Shaka's case, remarkably few. Those few texts constitute, even more than a body of empirical evidence, the core of a *story*, a narrative which has progressively ossified into a primary constituent of South African colonial views of the indigenous Africans. The multiple facets of these views are etched in the stylistic and narratological choices of every writer.

A stylistic and narratological perspective on the Shakan historical texts has scarcely been opened so far. Indeed, it is an embryonic field in South African historiography generally. Chris Saunders' local forays in this direction have not touched the sphere of the early Zulu. There have until recently been no detailed analyses of *any* kind of the eye-witness accounts of Shaka's reign; Julie Pridmore's unpublished work on Henry Francis Fynn still leaves something to be desired in this department; Stephen Gray's on Maclean is more thoroughgoing, though not yet assimilated into general scholarship. No such studies have been published on the missionary writers, A T Bryant, or E A Ritter, let alone on the minor historical accounts. Hence a good part of this study is devoted to a "literary" and stylistic analysis of "historical" narratives with a view to elucidating their ideological or psychological

dimensions and their position in broader literary and cultural currents. Nevertheless, this remains a preliminary investigation of an area crying out for extensive work.

This leads naturally to the closely related area of narratives which self-consciously promote themselves as *fiction*. There now exists a wealth of theoretical literature examining the differences - or lack of difference - between "historical" and "fictional" narratives (Ankersmit 1983, Seamon 1983, White 1986, de Certeau 1988, Weinstein 1990). It is not to my present purpose to add anything to this debate; suffice it to reiterate that the Shakan literature offers a case study in the ease of transfer between these two (very porous) genres. Rather I am interested in the attitudes which underpin both, or more accurately, inform the whole infinitely varied spectrum of textual types lying between them.

What unifies the "fictions" and "histories" of Shaka, in a crucial sense, is the almost exclusive confinement of both to "popular" modes of presentation. The histories of the early Zulu, such as they are, were written for the popular market (excepting only the necessarily truncated syntheses of historians like Davenport and Thompson). The popularity of Donald Morris's *The Washing of the Spears* (1965) is paradigmatic here. Ritter's *Shaka Zulu* is a persuasive blend of history and fiction. The large number of critically unexamined novels and stories about Shaka also almost invariably cleave, in only superficially varying ways, to the "popular romance" or "adventure" form. (Wide though this categorisation is, it is more precise, and more to my purpose, than the even more amorphous category of "historical novel", which would also cover most Shakan fictions). A distinctive lack of an empathetic realism in the fiction parallels the lack of scholarly analysis in the history: both rely on a superficial, remote, and almost uniform recounting of spectacular episodes. In the fiction, Shaka himself is almost *never* the central character; he is always viewed from a distance, through the eyes of another. At the same time, as in the histories, he is viewed as the

primary motor of change in south-eastern Africa in his time. The exact mechanisms of this personal force, however, are never adequately explained. It is precisely this *lack* of explanation, I suggest, that has enhanced the fluid interchange of fictions and histories.

Scholarly examinations of the largely romance/adventure-type fictions, poetry, and plays about Shaka are, if anything, even more scarce than commentaries on the histories. Stephen Gray published perhaps the first, rapidly obsolete article on Shaka as a literary theme in 1975; William Wörger published an insightful, but long-neglected and essentially historical article, pointing out some mythic elements in the Shaka portrayals, in 1979. The one published monograph by Donald Burness (1982) is both patchy and inaccurate; Russell Martin's groundbreaking thesis (1982) on images of the Zulus remains unpublished, and ends in the 1870s. Mbongeni Malaba's 1986 PhD, "Shaka as a Literary Theme", the only extensive work so far on this topic, is also unpublished and concentrates on black writing. Carolyn Hamilton's PhD, "Authoring Shaka" (1993), while alluding to "metaphors and models", is determinedly political in its approach, and, except for a section on Rider Haggard, has relatively little to say about Shaka's literary dimensions. A substantial collection of popular novels, though they lie closest of all literary genres to the heart of white South African culture - indeed imperial and Western popular culture more broadly (Green 1991:23) - remain critically almost untouched (a tangential exception is Gray [1982] on Alan Scholefield).

There is hardly any need here to defend the study of popular literature as socially significant; that defence has been cogently advanced by others (Frye 1986; Green 1991), and in any case we have no choice in the Shakan literature. There are also a number of studies now showing the close links between popular literatures and imperialism (see Mackenzie 1986). Two broad genres will concern us in this context: the folk-tale, and its modern

descendant, the romance. I argue that the very choice of these genres for the Shakan fiction has social-psychological significance, and that the "lure of the tale" has been so much stronger than any desire for the empirical "truth" that even the most formal of "histories" have been seduced towards the structure of the hero-tale. In the genealogy of this seduction, another thread of the construction of the Shaka "myth" can be traced.

The question again is: why, until the last ten years or so, has all this been the case? Why has scholarly material been subsumed in a tide of popular imagery? Why did white writers insist on writing this way? What precisely is it about the Shaka story that has generated his popular appeal? What does this popularity *mean*?

Myth

Stylistic analyses in themselves, of course, can carry one only so far; meaningful explanations of stylistic traits have to be embedded in wider social matrices. One of these matrices is a third area of neglect in Shakan studies: *myth*. Though much-abused and loosely-applied, the concept of myth is nevertheless a vital one in dealing with literature of this kind, in which so much material is drawn not from empirical evidence but from other reaches of the imagination.

Most studies of myth (far too numerous to be listed here, but see Ruthven 1976) have been either in terms of its "high literary", particularly poetic, deployment; or in terms of its function in non-literate societies (from Frazer to Lévi-Strauss). Both approaches stress myth's positive force in enhancing poetic creativity and resonance, or in supporting group identities in the face of the destructively democratising mediocrity of the modern global society. This positive force is undeniable. I want to stress a negative side to myth, however, a side more closely aligned with Roland Barthes' conception of modern myth as

a kind of textual screen for bourgeois power structures. This is a view of myth as an "empty, parasitical form", one which grows out of history but is necessarily incomplete, is accepted as truth but is effectively divorced from the contingency of events: "When it becomes form, the meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains" (Barthes 1982:103). It does retain just sufficient correlation with "what-happens" to continually reconfirm itself - "its function is to distort, not to make disappear" (107). Hence, for instance, an aberrant outburst such as that of Howmore Ngcobo, cited earlier, serves easily to solidify a myth of national and congenital Zulu violence going back to Shaka.

But essentially myth is a *value*, a social-psychological paradigm catering for an anxiety of society which, in Northrop Frye's words, "when it urges the authority of a myth and the necessity of believing it, seems to be less to proclaim its truth than to prevent anyone from questioning it". Thus myth, in this view, is closely cognate with the poverty of scholarship and empathy I have already noted. The Shaka story, in the simplistic repetitiveness of its genealogy, is precisely one of those mythic stories which "addresses itself to untutored minds, and so helps overcome the gap between the rulers who know and the ruled who must believe [or] have to be lied to". Myth operates in this way as "true indoctrination ... the real social function of literature" (Frye 1976:16,19).

In this argument - that the literary Shaka tale is an example of this Barthesian debased "myth" - I will employ two basic meanings of the word. The first denotes those stories and legends which have been inculcated in the western consciousness over hundreds of years, and which feed, often unconsciously, into all imaginative literature. Examples of such established legendary narratives, figures and motifs, or *mythemes*, with which I deal in detail in this study are those of monsters and heroes (Chapter Ten), and of versions of Paradise (Chapter

Eleven). The second definition of myth is that of an intrinsically untrue story built up *in the literature itself*, which comes to gain the currency of an unquestionable belief, an icon of group identity. In the case of Shaka, this might be applied to the white writers' collective identity as well as to that of the Zulus' own self-image. It is primarily the former with which this study is concerned.

"Mythic" approaches to South African colonial literature, in both the above senses of the word, remain disparate and unrefined. While the mythic status of Shaka in the popular imagination has not gone entirely unrecognised (Fernandez 11-12; Golan 1990), no in-depth study of either the manifestations or the basis of the mythology has so far been attempted. This study will therefore address these questions: to what extent has the portrayal of Shaka been affected by Eurocentric mythemes? To what extent has the constructed myth of Shaka become a self-contained and free-standing invention of the European mind, independent of the effects of localised politics, the gathering of new evidence, writers' personal predispositions and agendas, and the injection of Zulu-origin views? What does recourse to such European mythologies entail, and how do we explain it?

Social psychology

I have already alluded several times to the fourth area of investigation, that of *psychology*. It is now widely recognised that "history" is a form of writing, and more precisely a form of narrative, which is inevitably imbued with a mix of personal and societal voices, and that therefore the manner in which a particular "history" is constructed will have social and psychological implications. Similarly, the presentation of consciously fictional narratives about Shaka, such as the romance or adventure, will generate a discernible social-psychological meaning for its putative readership. I also argue that the deployment of mythemes in these various narratives is resonant with specific social-psychological import.

The same may be said of the other forms of discourse encountered in Shakan literature: poetry, drama, anthropology.

I have consistently linked the terms "social" and "psychological" to indicate, on the one hand, that a text may be seen as efficacious in the construction and expression of a wider societal identity as well as of an individual one; and, on the other hand, that the division of the two is partly artificial. Recent psychological perceptions have virtually destroyed, at least in theoretical circles, the notion of what Clifford Geertz famously termed the "Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe" (1979:229). As we shall see, it is difficult, if not impossible, to speak unproblematically either of the subject of the discourse ("Shaka", or "Phampatha"), or of the "self" of their creators ("Isaacs" or "Bryant"). The referential problem is the same.

Social psychology has also analysed to considerable depth the extent to which the individual "self" - and by extension the text which that "self" might create - is socially constructed. The perspective most apposite to my purposes here is that of J V Wertsch, in his development of the links between the social psychology of L S Vygotsky and the textual analysis of Mikhail Bakhtin. Vygotsky's starting-point, very crudely, is that the more sophisticated mental functions are essentially social in origin, and developmental or genetic in nature; and that the use of signs and tools mediate those mental processes (Wertsch 1990:113). Firstly, therefore, the production of a text may be seen as a "mediating action", a complex kind of "gesture" through which social-psychological meaning is expressed and created, and, from our perspective, may be discerned. Secondly, an historical or genealogical approach to texts is necessary. Wertsch warns that

universalism has come to dominate psychological theory to such a degree that little attention has been given to the historical, cultural, and social situatedness of mind. One of the results of this is that psychology has often produced ethnocentric

conclusions, thereby avoiding some of the most complex issues that we should be addressing. (1979:112)

However, I will demur from this to the extent that certain stable elements do seem to persist, at least over the period under examination here. As Ernest E Boesch notes:

In historical perspective cultures both develop, change, *and* remain constant as a result of individual actions and interactions, and yet the results of this process, the artifacts and ideational contents it creates, constitute an apparently constant or resistant framework for its inhabitants. (1991:31)

This framework, I take it, is fundamentally what I have called the "myth". R D Laing supports this, noting that "once certain fundamental structures of experience are shared, they come to be experienced as objective entities ... [a] social norm [which] may come to impose an oppressive obligation on anyone" (1967:65). This sense of "herd-like obligation" (the phrase is Nietzsche's) to an "objective" and identificatory story, I believe, deeply informs the static elements of the Shakan literature. The obligation expresses itself in recurrent gestures which may be identified, and whose social-psychological meaning at least roughly delineated.

To concentrate on this core of stasis (commonality may be a better word), even in isolation, is not a simple gesture of reductionism. One of Bakhtin's contributions to the Vygotskian perspective is the notion of "multivoicedness". I have already noted that according to Bakhtin, sundry different voices combine even within a single utterance, let alone a many-layered myth. Moreover, a personal, individuated voice - that of a "Fynn" or a "Morris" - may itself be the vehicle for an older, as it were genetically implanted, mythic voice: the societally approved myth is "ventriloquised", speaks through an individual who may even in the next utterance transgress that very societal approval.

In our stylistic analyses, then, it becomes a crucial task to parse these sundry voices, to measure, in this way, the social-psychological alloys of conformity or defiance, of

defensiveness or openness, of retraction or progress. In my view, the Shakan literature tends towards the former of each of these antinomies, to conform to what Bakhtin calls a "speech genre" or "social language": "a discourse peculiar to a specific stratum (professional, age group, etc.) within a given social system at a given time" (quoted in Wertsch 1991:57). Such a social language is clearly crucial to the delineation of a community identity. In our context, sturdy links may be drawn with the many studies of the psychology of racial prejudice: as early as the 1960s, Bruno Bettelheim noted ways, then poorly studied, in which prejudice operates "as a defense against identity diffusion or total loss of identity" (Bettelheim and Janowitz 1964:59), and as a form of psychological projection. As Laing puts it: "The invention of Them creates Us, and We may require to invent Them to reinvent Ourselves" (1967:76). The Shakan story is a study in the process of such continuous reinvention.

A final caveat arises from Bakhtin's concept of "addressivity": the idea that since any utterance is implicitly addressed to a hearer, it has "dialogic overtones", is already implicitly a dialogue: "To understand another person's utterance means to orient oneself with respect to it, to find the proper place for it in the corresponding context. For each word of the utterance that we are in the process of understanding, we, as it were, lay down a set of our own answering words" (quoted in Wertsch 1991:54). The caveat is this: clearly the set of words that *I* lay down in response to, say, Isaacs' statements, will be very different to Fynn's in the 1850s, or Bryant's in the 1920s. Since this aspect of dialogicality is so dependent on the *addressee's* context, any one textual "gesture" is potentially infinite in meaning. We have the double task of continually setting the contexts of other addressees against our own. Boesch sums up:

Actions, therefore, are "polyvalent", and this term means both a multiple determination of actions, and a complex "appeal-quality" ... Action ... represents also both the external situation in which it takes (and took) place, and the internal experiences which it induces (and induced). This makes action broadly "symbolic"

...[I]maginations of action potential, symbols representing mastery or invulnerability are often coveted as much as factual performance. Therefore, symbolic mastery, positive self-images will often constitute highly valent goals. (1991:12; emphasis added)

The continuities running through the Shakan literature, I suggest, are a studied, but frequently unsuccessful, effort to suppress precisely such polyvalence; "symbolic mastery" refers to unusually narrow parameters, an imagining of simple antinomy.

A map

None of these theoretical views pretends to be new. Much of this study is descriptive in nature. Certainly it does not attempt to capture white Shakan literature under any one Grand Unified Explanation, though I seek throughout to find ways in which a social-psychological framework can enhance explanation. The study also has certain other limitations. It deals almost exclusively with literature in English, ignoring appearances of a Shaka figure in other European languages and in Afrikaans (which are in any case, to the best of my information, sparse; but see Rademayer and van Coller 1963; Strydom 1977). It deals only tangentially with the relationships between the texts and their contemporary political environments. This may give parts of the study a somewhat unfashionable "essentialist" air. However, I stress again that the *relatively* stable, "mythic" elements are only some of the many voices and presences in the Shakan literature. That stability has already been radically disturbed, though still in limited scholarly circles. Finally, I have a suspicion that an approach which concentrates on a genealogy of prominent published texts has almost missed the boat altogether. A Zimbabwean schoolgirl told me that her history teacher had once asserted that one of Shaka's entertainments was to grease sharpened poles, up which the victims of his cruelty were forced to climb to impale *themselves*. Though the literature is rich with such invented horrors, nowhere have I found quite this version printed. In other words, a great deal of the Shakan mythology, perhaps its real heart and power, very likely lies in such oral transmissions, no less in technological, textual "Western" circles than in the relatively

unlettered, traditional Zulu communities.

This "symbolic anthropology" of white Shakan texts is laid out as follows. Part One deals with the major eyewitness accounts of Shaka's reign. Chapter One deals briefly with the problem of the eye-witness and the nature of such autobiographical accounts, and with the initial accounts that filtered through to the Cape in the years 1824-32. Chapter Two examines the first major eyewitness account, Nathaniel Isaacs', and Chapter Three the accounts of Henry Francis Fynn, though the latter's published influence belongs more properly to the twentieth century. A third account, that of Charles Rawden Maclean, has scarcely impinged on the public consciousness yet, so is held over for a later chapter. As the more extensive annotation will show, the methodology of these two chapters, as well as those on Bryant and Ritter, is more empirical and archival in nature; other texts in this study would reward similar inspection.

Part Two covers what I have termed "The Missionary Years", up to and including the work of priest-anthropologist A T Bryant. Chapter Four gives an overview of the missionary influence on accounts of Shaka in the nineteenth century; Chapter Five examines the massively important work of Bryant in more detail. Chapter Six compares two contemporaneous, but utterly different long poems on Shaka from the 1930s. The missionary D J Darlow's portrayal reveals, in the starker terms of all the literature, the rhetorical techniques characteristic of the whole genealogy; the other, F T Prince's famous "Chaka", by contrast is a radical, but significantly unique, departure from it.

Part Three covers the rest of the twentieth century. Chapter Seven is an overview of the "historical" literature after Bryant, focusing on the manner in which folktale has made its mark on recent histories, especially the work of the well-known Donald Morris. This is

only a tentative beginning in re-examining the ways in which historiography "tells itself", following the exemplary self-reflexiveness of much recent anthropology (see for example Atkinson 1990; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Comaroff 1992; Geertz 1989). Chapter Eight examines another aspect of "the lure of the tale"; the adventure-romance novel. One work which lies on the cusp of these two categories is E A Ritter's hugely successful *Shaka Zulu* (1955); Chapter Nine is devoted to this crucial book.

"Mythic" perspectives occupy Part Four, comprising broader analyses of the influence of myths and mythemes in the construction of the Shaka figure. Chapter Ten extends thoughts broached in Chapter Seven, and examines myths of heroes and monsters; and Chapter Eleven reviews the ubiquitous influence of the mytheme of Paradise in its various permutations.

Finally, Part Five attempts to tie the threads together by firming the social-psychological perspective: Chapter Twelve re-examines the recurrence of a number of basic "textual gestures", or dynamic literary strategies, and correlate the categories derived from them with specific social-psychological stances or mechanisms. In an Appendix I add seven representative pictorial representations of Shaka, chosen from an extensive range, which complement and comment on the verbal texts in illuminating ways, a full study of which is rewarding but too extensive to include here.

The keystone of this study is the thesis that "Shaka", whatever we may think of his empirical, historical status, is *entirely* a textual construct. What we can learn from the way in which this construct was built, is also what we can learn about our own ways of rebuilding our perceptions of southern African culture now, a culture (or cultures) literally shot through with such imagined, warped heroes and heroisms, monsters and atrocities. My key question

is not *Who was the real Shaka?*, since that seems to me in an essential way unanswerable (though legitimate), but rather *Why was Shaka written about in this particular way?* - which is another way of beginning to ask, *How should we write about Shaka now?*

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Janet Varner Gunn for this reference.
2. Laband's *Rope of Sand* had just become available as this thesis went to print; it is easily the most scholarly account, though still relatively sketchy on Shaka (see also Jeff Guy's review, *Financial Mail*, 3 November 1995, 85). Thanks to John Claughton for bringing this to my attention.
3. A partial exception, which is purely anthropological and has negligible historical content, is Axel-Ivar Berglund's exemplary study, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*.
4. See, for instance, Tim Nuttall's comments on the latest broad work on South African history, William Beinart's *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Nuttall 1995).

PART ONE

I-Witnessing

"I was there." In the last analysis, history depends on the testimony of the eyewitness. But as any legal practitioner knows, eyewitness accounts may be a great deal less reliable than they seem.

We possess three central, white eyewitness accounts of Shaka's reign, which form the critical nodes of the history of white Shakan literature. Nathaniel Isaacs' *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (1836) was the only one published in book form in its author's lifetime. Its views of Shaka-as-monster dominated the literature until well into the twentieth century. Henry Francis Fynn's numerous writings were only cobbled together into a so-called *Diary* in 1950; this compilation, though some fragments of it had already been published, had a decisive impact on subsequent accounts. Charles Rawden Maclean's much slighter account, originally printed in 1853, was only really rediscovered in the 1990s; its revisionary potential has yet to be fully integrated into accounts of the time.

Both Isaacs and Fynn, as well as some of the other white adventurers in Shaka's Zululand, notably James Saunders King and Francis Farewell, fed brief accounts of Shaka to the Cape newspapers and officials between 1823 and 1832. In an examination of these earliest reports (Chapter One), the innate problems of the eyewitness in general, and of these eyewitnesses in particular, are starkly illuminated. Full chapters (Two and Three) are then devoted to Isaacs and Fynn (Maclean is dealt with in Chapter Eight). Isaacs and Fynn's texts present similar kinds of interpretative difficulty. One of these difficulties lies in their very coherence, which endeavours to mask or explain the difficulties and ambivalences of the earliest attempts to portray Shaka. Close textual analysis and historical contextualisation call into question not only the long-vaunted reliability of the witnesses, but their very status as individual "authors".

CHAPTER ONE

THE FIRST ACCOUNTS, 1823-36

The problem of the "I"

[Henry Francis Fynn and company] were brave men - some of them might be called great men (Colvin 1909:269).

[Fynn and company] lied, schemed and cheated their way into the confidence of the Zulu kings (du Buisson 1987:5).

Henry Fynn, Francis Farewell, Nathaniel Isaacs, James Saunders King, "John Ross" - on the scanty reports of this handful of disreputable adventurers the history of Shaka has fundamentally depended. They provide the only "eyewitness" accounts of Shaka's reign we have; they are a highly dubious collection of documents. They have, however, enjoyed an almost unshakeable reputation. In crucial ways, the reputation of these men in themselves has preceded, and been the foundation of, attitudes towards their primary subject, Shaka. The earliest Shakan literature is as much a study in how these men constructed their own place in imperial literature, as it is of the construction of an image of Shaka.

Subsequent writers also played their part in entrenching the eyewitnesses' reputations for admirable veracity. Before the era of African independence shepherded in a new spirit of self-questioning, even self-denigration, amongst Westerners writing about their own imperial past, many apologists like Ian Colvin rhapsodised about the "romance of Empire". Colvin was writing in 1909; his naïveté now seems extreme. He takes at face-value the accounts of the adventurers who pursued their fortunes on the turbulent margins of the British Empire; he praises, with even less subtlety and self-reflection than a Rider Haggard, the

heroic efforts of white men to carry the beacons of "civilisation" into the world's "benighted" quarters.

Eighty years later Louis du Buisson, writing what he calls a piece of "investigative journalism" about the same coterie of petty traders, admits to their courage but deplores their motives. However, he is no less dependent on those same men's writings than Colvin, and is hardly less carried away by the temptation to tell much the same rollicking story. When he does divert from narrative into analysis, he hints darkly at nefarious intentions and ugly silences, but seldom goes further to postulate cogent reasons for his subjects' suspected crimes. Colvin and du Buisson both exemplify the singularly shallow scholarship accompanying accounts of Shaka, condemnatory and adulatory alike: hoary tales are uncritically repeated, new distortions regularly spawned. Du Buisson misreads the eyewitness accounts frequently, conflating journeys and omitting others, for instance. T R H Davenport, perhaps the doyen of modern "liberal" historians, makes the unprecedented factual error that Shaka welcomed missionaries like "Owen, Adams, Lindley and Grout", who in fact arrived only in Dingane's time (1987:109). The extent to which certain of the eyewitnesses' observations have been ignored is as startling a feature of white Shakan literature as the readiness with which various stories have been accepted and spread. In both aspects, the selective and the gullible, the motivation for writing about Shaka seems often to have been something other than fidelity to the originals - and by *fidelity* here I mean also *critical* close attention. An exploration of these motivations is the core of this study.

The epigraphs and Davenport's error alike highlight the extent of our ultimate dependence on eyewitness accounts for the most "truthful" impressions of "what happened", no matter what retrospective, analytical scalpels are wielded to extract the "meaning behind their meaning". It is well known that eyewitness accounts are by nature notoriously

unreliable.¹ Those under review here are no exception: in a number of ways, they mask and omit as much as they disclose and contain. In the first place, there is the basic philosophical dilemma of whether such an essential "self" can exist at all: critics from Nietzsche through Foucault and Derrida to Clifford Geertz have stimulated a virtual industry of persuasive scholarship examining the ways in which notions of the self are socially constructed. This perspective underpins the social psychology of Vygotsky, too, on which I draw most strongly. Second, the adventurers' ostensible projection of the witness-view of a single-minded, integrated "I" does not prevent them borrowing, compromising with, and taking refuge in multiple other "voices", alien to both them—"selves" and their subject-matter. Indeed, as Paul John Eakin (1985) and others have argued in autobiographical studies, the narrative modes and voices of "fiction" and "self-invention" are unavoidable. Among these "ventriloquised" voices, then, we may expect to find conventions drawn from various genres ranging from penny-dreadful novels to travelogues.

So an initial kind of masking is virtually inevitable. All these works are rifted with the struggle to capture entirely foreign realities in an intrinsically ill-suited language. Descriptions of landscapes and peoples comprise complex interplays of linguistic innovation with half-despairing, half-relieved resorts to conventions and clichés of the literature with which the writers (and their editors) are familiar. In this way, the real confusion of experience is enacted; but also, unfamiliar sights and sensations are completed, domesticated, even replaced, by a mode of "attachment" (Pagden 1993) to the familiar terms and tropes. A simple example of this is Nathaniel Isaacs, relating a night on a Zululand beach, fending off "wolves" and "tigers"; despite the more localised names being familiar to other southern African travellers at the time, here the mythic nightmare of European legend (wolves had already vanished from Britain) and of the already internalised threat of Far Eastern tigers, displaces "hyenas" and "leopards". On more subtle levels, views of landscape, social

structure, the mentality of "the other", are similarly stylistically inscribed. The range of rhetorical devices and discourses - artistic, fictional, cartographic, scientific, ethnological - are numerous, sometimes powerfully in concert, at other times revealingly conflicting. If, as has frequently been argued, "style is inseparable from historical interpretation" (Woodman 3), even lack of linguistic innovation can serve as a crucial indicator of underlying motives, predispositions and mind-sets.

A second type of masking is more deliberate. It can be more than adequately documented that these self-proclaimed eyewitnesses were concertedly lying in order to cover their own nefarious deeds. In the absence of alternative accounts, they could say practically whatever they liked - though their fear of discovery frequently breaks through the fissures in their own texts. In short, their project (at least in the case of Fynn and Isaacs) was to recreate themselves into the image of societal approval. This they did with what appears - in the light of their initial reception outlined in the rest of this chapter - to be astonishing success. Absorbed into the fabric of subsequent accounts, the metaphors deployed by Isaacs and the others have achieved, in Roland Barthes' formulation, the status of "myth", a "type of speech chosen by history", a canonical manner of expressing an understanding of a crucial segment of the South African past. Within the metaphors' epistemological constraints, the object of the discourse is constructed. Once we can step back, however, and this historically transient *épistème* is transcended, the myth becomes visible in its "double system", presenting alternately "a language-object and a metalanguage, a purely signifying and a purely imagining consciousness" (Barthes 1982:94-116).

This shadow-play between referentiality and imagination, between object and discourse, has also been noted as a fundamental problematic in the autobiographical account generally, or in what Antony Pagden has termed the "autoptic imagination", with reference

to a very similar textual syndrome in early travellers' reactions to the newness of the Americas (1993:51ff). Since Isaacs, Fynn and Maclean are at least in part purportedly autobiographical, it is worth lingering on the implications for this genre.

Autobiography, as Avrom Fleishmann explains it, is "metaleptic", combining "history" (referentially signifying language-objects), and the "discourse" of the writer writing (the expressive, imagining, retrospective manner of narration) (1983:33). Frequently, these two aspects fall visibly out of alignment, and we are left with two related difficulties. Not only are "objects" (the figure of Shaka, a battle, a landscape) constructed, hence problematic for the historian to "retrieve" with certainty; so is the "self" who transposes the objects into writing. The self "expresses itself by the metaphors it creates and projects, and we know it by those metaphors" (Olney 1972:34). Thus the autobiographical text needs to be viewed as an "aesthetic object" which "does not represent or repeat a life but instead ... brings it into being" (Fleishman 1983:13). In this sense, all autobiography is "alibi", in Barthes's resonant term (1982:96), or *prosopopeia*, in Paul de Man's (1979:962). The "I" who writes is no longer the "I" described; the act of narration at once alludes to and disguises the "I"s involvement in the what-happened.

In this example from Isaacs' *Travels*, the writer laments a dispute between his comrades, Farewell and King:

This dispute, having arisen on matters of a pecuniary nature, between two formerly warm and inseparable friends, was a source of inconceivable regret to those who were with them, partaking of the fatigues and inconveniences of our common lot. For my part, I perceived, what I had long anticipated, that the warmth of friendship between my two companions was not of a durable character. ... To enter into the merits of the cause which ended in the division of friends, would be foreign to my purpose, I can only observe that I regretted it, and the death of Mr Farewell subsequently precludes my commenting on his conduct, as I conceive it my duty to abstain from remarks on those who cannot appear to defend themselves (I 135).

The circumambagious calm of this retrospective interpolation into what presents itself as the transcription of "memo's [sic] that [Isaacs] used to keep at Natal" (Isaacs to Fynn; Kirby 1968:67) reveals the hiatus between implied writer and event. The backward projection of a coolly marginalised but perspicacious "I-witness" involves a palpable evasiveness as to both the pecuniary "matters" and the present "purpose", and a strange protectiveness towards Farewell, who apparently had threatened to murder Isaacs' hero-figure, James King (RN II 38). In this contradiction we recognise the structure of the alibi, the part-truthful, part-masking restructuring of a group identity in the face of external threat. This process of restructuring inflects every facet of the portrayal of Shaka - and death did not protect *his* reputation.

To sum up so far: the eyewitness accounts of Shaka have not been read by historians with an eye to such discrepancies; they have not been read as *autobiographical* - that is, as a constitutive act, an *energeia*, in Foucault's term, in a life which is recreating itself in the process of writing, making an active intervention in the situation *at the time of writing*: the politics and power-structures, the narrative practices and metaphoric traditions, the markets, the readerships, the struggles of the writer's own psyche; in short, those multi-layered "conditions of possibility" which permitted the text to be written, and thence to be accepted as "true".

Commanding influences

The literary constituents of this matrix of possibility are diverse. One of these is fiction. As Edward Said (1993) has powerfully argued, the birth of the novel is inextricable from the evolution of Empire; even these earliest Shakan texts are shot through with the perspectives of Daniel Defoe. As early as 1828, James King was referred to in the Cape Town press as "a second Robinson Crusoe" (SACA, 13.12.1828).

Fiction grew out of and imbued a perhaps more important genre - the most popular form of "autobiography" in the early 1800s - the travelogue. A number of studies have examined European travelogues before, but they seldom include the period of our earliest accounts of Shaka (Adams 1983; Campbell 1988; Porter 1991; Pratt 1992). No major studies have been done on southern African travelogues (but see Coetzee 1987; Pratt 1985). Nathaniel Isaacs' book in particular (Fynn's and Maclean's versions are somewhat different cases) rises directly out of travelogue traditions and forms that often go back to mediaeval times. The kind of travel-lies so spectacularly epitomised by Sir John Mandeville's spurious, but widely believed, adventures were not altogether dead, as this 1829 Cape Town newspaper observation indicates:

Two enterprising individuals are, we understand, about to undertake the overland journey to Natal - undeterred by the romantic fables, respecting the dragons, hydras, and chimeras dire, with which weak fancies are always ready to people unexplored regions. (*SACA*, 31.1.1829)

This testimony to a society on the cusp of rational and superstitious modes of thought about exotic Africa is echoed in Isaacs' odd anecdote about his youthful and abortive search for a unicorn. (It turns out to be a cripple-horned goat.) J C Chase in 1829, apparently in all seriousness, asked Fynn for news of the same creature (Chase to Fynn, 17.11.1829; NAB A1382/1). The press's amused scepticism about the more grotesque legends did not always extend to less disprovable racial and social preconceptions, although the same newspaper actively engaged in the intense debates concerning the status of South Africa's indigenous peoples, even tending to be somewhat ahead of its time in its liberalism: "In the Hottentot we have an example at our doors, if any were wanting, that the Human Race is ONE" (*SACA*, 10.12.1828). But frontier conditions often bred a stubborn conservatism, an intensified desire to entrench European identity in the face of intractable difference; this conservatism would take the form not only of failing linguistically to grasp the real, but also of actively and atavistically suppressing it, in order to suit pre-established, almost entirely literary mental maps.

Our alleged eyewitnesses' texts bear all the marks of these various "voices". Moreover, they were produced at a particularly turbulent time in imperial and especially Cape history, when the British were still in the process of establishing hegemony in the colony, refurbishing the legal system, struggling for ways of containing frontier conflict, and beginning to cope with the local consequences of abolishing the slave-trade. At a time when, according to Clifton Crais, frontier society "teetered on the verge of destruction" (115), the discovery of still more alien landscapes and peoples, the troubled plantation of the 1820 settlers in the Eastern Cape, the growing disaffection amongst and with the Dutch, and the ambivalent position of frontier traders and missionaries - all served to make European identities freshly questionable, and, in large part, to make a reassertion of that identity an activity of paramount importance.

These conflicts are visible in the Shakan eyewitness accounts, as they are in all the travellers' accounts dating from this period, from Levaillant to Gardiner. Many of them drew uncritically on one another for anecdote, ethnological detail, and comparative support. This, too, quite apart from the poverty of sources any of these writers had available to them, was almost a tradition of travel writing; the guiltless plagiarism of one account by another, often many times repeated, was only just being challenged by a new sharpness of empirical observation and scientific exactitude (though, I shall argue, the "scientific" and "empirical" itself would be wielded as an identifying discourse). The crucial component here, of course, was the availability of differing accounts which could then be compared. The kinds of fiction which were rapidly becoming untenable in many colonised regions could persist in those parts where information remained extremely circumscribed. Zululand was one such place.

Opening glimpses

Though shipwrecked sailors' accounts of the area the Portuguese had long called "Fumos" stud the written record from the early 1500s onwards, they are scanty and inconclusive. Generally, such records as there are have been used to demonstrate that the inhabitants had changed little, or not at all, for three hundred years (Wilson and Thompson 1969:129,334). It is unlikely that such a conclusion can so readily be drawn; historical timing ensured that the earliest, widely circulated syncretic accounts of these scattered contacts appeared in conjunction with, and in the service of, demonstrating the dramatic impact of "the Zulu explosion". To question one is necessarily to question the other.

The earliest mention of the Zulu is in 1823, only a year before Fynn and company established themselves at Port Natal, which they themselves noted had been used as a slaving port a hundred years before. The 1823 accounts are suspect. One was written up by Fynn himself in the "diary", but much later; he recounts that he had heard of the Zulu and their great chief at Delagoa Bay, and made an abortive attempt to reach them overland (Fynn 1950:42). There is considerable confusion in his account over tribal names and allegiances: inexplicably, he calls the local terrors "Orontotes, or Hottentots", who "belong to the Zulu", and threaten Delagoa Bay, but appears to conflate them with Makhasane and the Tembe, who are clearly independent. Fynn claims to have reached a "Zulu" kraal, 50 miles south of Delagoa, but such an appellation is doubtful at best. Fynn was for a time companioned by a missionary looking for a station-site, William Threlfall. Threlfall left this view of the local inhabitants:

A powerful tribe, called Vatwahs, have lately overrun many of the little states in the vicinity of Delagoa Bay. All that I can learn of this nation is, that they are originally from the country adjoining to the sources of the Mapoota river, and the mountains west of English River. They are a very bold and warlike people, of a free and noble carriage... They have a manly openness of character, which is very prepossessing; and though certainly great invaders and oppressors to the weaker tribes, it is said that they never attack an enemy without sending previous notice of their intention, and the time when they will appear (Thompson 1827:173).

George Thompson, in whose 1827 work *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa* this letter was reproduced, immediately conflated Zulus and "Vatwahs", though the geography indicates that this is an error (they were almost certainly Ndwandwe or Gaza). These pieces of information are typical of persistent confusions over tribal identities and boundaries. To take just two later examples: in his diary for 1834 Andrew Smith reproduced a common elision of Mzilikazi's followers (who probably had no name for themselves at all yet) with "Zoolas", and even seemed to accept unremarked the application of "Chaka", by then six years dead, to his successor (Kirby 1939:127,133,266). Similarly, and not unusually, David Livingstone much later called people way to the north-west "Zulus", because of imagined generic similarities in their general appearance and warlike behaviour (Holmes 160,183).

The other early mention of Shaka also purports to have been written in 1823, but appears in a book also retrospectively edited and published only in 1833. The account is presented as the journal entry of a British officer aboard Captain W F W Owen's Royal Navy survey vessel, the *Barracouta*. The sneering acerbity of the account arouses suspicion, since it was not until 1827 and 1828 that the first negative reports of Shaka emerged, and then, as we will see, under highly irregular circumstances. Initial reports from the Port Natal adventurers who actually met Shaka were in fact startlingly favourable, by comparison with this officer's:

At this time the work of depopulation, was carried out with savage rapidity by the merciless and destructive conquests of a tyrannical monster named Chaka, whose bloody proceedings promised soon to leave the whole of the beautiful country, from the River St John to Inhamban, totally desolate. (Owen 71)

Here we find the exaggeration of the extent of Zulu depredation uncannily close to that unfounded assertion of Fynn's that Shaka had "ravaged and depopulated" an area stretching "300 miles to the westward, 200 miles to the northward, and 500 miles to the southward" (Fynn 1950:18). This was absurd, and is contradicted by Fynn's own account as well by all the evidence which had come to light in the meanwhile. In the same vein,

Owen's assertion that the commandant of Delagoa Bay "was in some dread" of Shaka, is contradicted by another statement, that Shaka (actually Zwide) had expelled his uncle "Loon Kundava, and upwards of 5000 of his adherents", and that it was these latter who threatened the Bay (Owen 255,80). Neither Fynn nor Owen had any evidence whatever that Shaka had raided anywhere near Inhambane, some 400 kilometres further north-east of Delagoa Bay, and a thousand kilometres from Port Natal.

Moreover, Owen's officer clearly has an ideological axe to grind, as he continues directly by engaging in one of the bitterest debates of the day:

The state of these countries, which have scarcely had any intercourse with civilised nations, is a direct proof in refutation of the theories of poets and philosophers, who represent the ignorance of the savage as virtuous simplicity - his miserable poverty as frugality and temperance - and his stupid indolence as a laudable contempt for wealth. How different are the facts! We ever found uncultivated man a composition of cunning, treachery, drunkenness and gluttony. (Owen 71)

This broadside at Rousseau and his "primitivist" acolytes, replete with the conventional racism of its final line (and utterly at variance with Threlfall's favourable vision), is inseparable from the description of Shaka and his destructiveness; it is surely arguable, if not conclusively provable, that the first dictated the second. The circumstantial case for this being concocted evidence is, I think, strong.

In any event, whether or not solid information had been received about Shaka prior to 1824, when Fynn and Francis Farewell made their initial, and initially disastrous, landings at "Port Natal" (Durban), the first eyewitness reports about Shaka were eminently favourable. As Carolyn Hamilton (1992) has argued in a sharper, but still problematic essay on the Port Natal traders,² the only two negative accounts of Shaka to emerge before his death were almost certainly dictated by, which is to say invented under, specific and highly exceptional circumstances.

The most interesting of these was written by King, appearing in the *South African Commercial Advertiser* in June 1826. The first part of this report confirmed King's own previous, fragmentary information: Shaka had succoured the white settlers in a number of ways, granting land, people and cattle, inviting them on an elephant hunt, and generally displaying "good humour". King describes him admiringly as "upwards of six feet in height, and well-proportioned: he is allowed to be the best pedestrian in the country; and, in fact, during his wonderful exercises this day he exhibited the most astonishing activity". Much heroic detail would later be built on this scanty description. Then King's tone changes abruptly:

History, perhaps, does not furnish an instance of a more despotic and cruel monster than Chaka. His subjects fall at his nod. He is acknowledged to be the most powerful ruler for many hundred miles. ... He has reigned about eight years, during which time he has conquered and laid waste the whole country between the Amapondas, nearly 200 miles S.W. of Natal, and the southern and most western parts of Delagoa: ... The following fact will convey some idea of Chaka's despotism: - Several months before my departure from Nathal [sic], he was informed that a chief, who had under him about 450 men, had proved himself a coward (which was in reality nothing more than having been overpowered and defeated). The king sent for him and all his people to his own kraal, where every man was put to death: the lives of the women and children only were spared, and many of them were added to his seraglio. Of this establishment it would be almost impossible to estimate the extent, - yet he will not allow that he cohabits with them; and to prove to his people this fact, when any of the women appear pregnant, they are instantly killed. ... I could relate many other instances of his barbarity, but they go to such an enormous extent, I feel unwilling to mention them, lest they should be discredited.

No further evidence of Shaka's "barbarity" is given. The "fact" of the massacre is at best hearsay, since none of the self-proclaimed eyewitnesses, including King, could claim to have seen it; at worst, it is pure invention. The killing of pregnant women seems likewise unlikely: if this was Shaka's method of concealing his sexuality from his people (itself an improbable scenario), how could it have been such general knowledge that King would have heard of it? The assertion cannot be supported by any other source, either, though the anecdote has been sedulously repeated down to the present day, the cynosure of some kind of warped sexuality. Finally, King's closing statement seems decidedly evasive: did he doubt his credibility precisely because he was lying?

At any event, King's paragraphs contain the seeds, paradoxically, of both the pejorative and the adulatory strains in the Shakan literature. King's self-contradictions may be explicable, as Hamilton has argued (1992:50), in terms of a spontaneous manipulative ploy to gain financial backing for a return to Port Natal: King bluffed that the traders remaining there were in desperate need of rescue and supplies - which by their own account they obviously were not. He succeeded, despite the suspicion with which he was regarded by the Cape authorities (Owen, possibly siding with Fynn, would remark how King had "endeavoured to throw a stigma upon our services" by trying to bribe the Admiralty into giving him a lieutenancy [254]). Moreover, by virtue of its length rather than its coherence, this same account found its way into an appendix to George Thompson's *Travels and Adventures*, and so to a wider readership.

This double publication may well have been partly responsible for the flurry of panic which accompanied King's subsequent visit to the Eastern Cape in mid-1828. King had already planted the seed of a threat from Shaka on the eastern colonial frontier (though not quite expressed as such) by recording in 1826 Shaka's alleged ambition to "direct his course to the frontier of the Cape Colony, and not leave a living soul, nor rest until he reaches the white people" (Thompson 1827:414). In 1828 King arrived back at Algoa Bay (Port Elizabeth) with two "ambassadors" from Shaka, more or less coinciding with a spurious panic along the frontier as rumours flew of a Zulu invasion. The episode has yet to be adequately explored and explained; it is fraught with multiple deceptions. King was regarded with intense suspicion by the authorities: the *Commercial Advertiser* later noted that "Chaca conceives he has good reason to complain of Mr King's conduct to himself and his Messengers, on that occasion, as well as since his return to Port Natal" (SACA, 15.11.1828). In collaboration with Isaacs, King suddenly after two months produced an alleged land-grant from Shaka which was certainly a forgery. At the same time, British forces under Dundas

and Somerset raided across the border after the putative Zulus, executed the so-called "Battle of Mbolompo" against a hazily-identified band of refugees - and incidentally discovered the presence of a white man amongst a southward-marauding band, who was probably none other than Henry Francis Fynn (see Cobbing 1988a).

This is not the place to tease out the multiple strands of this highly controversial incident. Suffice it to say that King's vengeful condemnation of Shaka was not taken at face value. A correspondent from Uitenhage probably rightly sneered at the whole 1828 fiasco, with the Frontier Authorities, "in search of *ignis fatuus*" and seized by "the spirit of Quixote", futilely pursuing "Chaka, when he was quietly seated on his own hearth" (*SACA*, 13.12.1828). More pointedly, several writers offered sceptical commentary:

The character and objects of Chaka it is not expected should be favourably represented by the tribes he had ruined, or threatened to destroy, and considerable caution is therefore requisite in weighing the evidence only procurable through prejudiced channels; from sources of this kind the Invader is declared a determined, a systematic, and a practised plunderer, raising no corn, breeding no cattle, and procreating no children (*The Colonist*, 19.8.1828; Hamilton 1992:56).

Though apparently not intended directly as such, this might equally have applied to the "prejudiced channel" represented by King and Isaacs. We are bound to ask, albeit as something of an empirical aside in this study: Was this impression based on nothing at all? Hamilton argues, less convincingly than in the rest of her article, that the traders derived their negative portrait from current *Zulu* oral traditions; there were, according to Hamilton (and as the above 1828 correspondent indicates), both derogatory and eulogistic traditions already in circulation in the 1820s. This is possible, but highly speculative, since Hamilton is arguing on the basis of traditions collected only in the *early twentieth century* - by which time the traditions were heavily corrupted, often by European influences. In any case, the highly selective, if not purely imaginary, nature of these negative reports is thereby reinforced - one prejudiced channel feeding into another. A second contemporary writer made a similar point:

The frightful stories told of King Chaka, and which have for several years appeared in the English newspapers uncontradicted, are, we have reason to believe, mere fabrications. His enormous army, his shocking barbarities, and his projected conquests, partook too much of the marvellous, not to gain easy credit among people fond of excitement. There are very few monsters in the world. HUME's rule on such subjects was a sensible one: "When I hear of a prodigy," he says, "I ask, whether it is more likely that this gentleman, the narrator, is deceived or wishes to deceive me, or that nature should change?" ... If Chaka cut down his subjects like hay, we suspect his army would dwindle to something less than thirty thousand men. (*SACA*, 15.12.1828)

This writer seems to indicate more widespread stories of barbarity than have been found to exist - perhaps setting up a skittle for himself to despatch - and his appeal to the authority of Hume is hardly conclusive argument. Nevertheless, he perceptively demurs at the alleged scale of slaughter, and shows a keen sense of the susceptibility of the public to the sensational. If the argument of this chapter is granted - that the initial, negative reports of Shaka are at best dubious, perhaps entirely imagined, and in any case that even at the time these negative accounts were widely disputed, and the case therefore hardly settled - we are left with the question: How then did the derogatory side gain such ferocious hold? A large part of the answer surely lies in the last reporter's point about "people fond of excitement". The propensity of purveyors of "frontier exotica" to cater for the *literary* tastes of a voyeuristic readership will be examined in numerous forms throughout this study. Here it will suffice to broach the point with reference to two or three further examples of early reporting, the reports of Shaka's assassination.

Coming in the wake of the 1828 frontier scare, news of James Saunders King's and Shaka's almost simultaneous deaths in about September that year produced a flurry of interest. There was sympathy on the one hand for King, partly due to his rough handling by the Cape Government after the "embassy" fiasco; there were insinuations that they were partly to blame for giving him "a broken heart" (*SACA*, 31.12.1828). Another correspondent (probably Farewell) averred that the problem was a "liver complaint" (*SACA*, 27.12.1828). The doubt is important inasmuch as it is closely tied to perceptions of Shaka. The former

correspondent, writing from Algoa Bay (Port Elizabeth) and probably informed by Isaacs (if it was not Isaacs himself), blamed all on a runaway slave, known as "Jacob Msimbithi", who had joined the Zulus in early 1824. Jacob had, this writer alleged, informed Shaka that

"Capt. King was an outcast; that he was not an Englishman, and not known by [King] George's people; that the presents sent by the Government had been appropriated by Capt. King to his own purposes, and that he was an impostor." These circumstances, with the savage Chaka's wrath against him, were imprudently communicated to Capt. King, at that time confined to his bed: his manly heart could not brook the shock; he endeavoured to rally, it was in vain, his heart was too full. - it burst! malignity can do no more.

This sounds like Isaacs' adulation of his father-hero King (see Chapter Two), perhaps accounting for the implausible melodrama. The imputation of "malignity" to Shaka is almost at once countered, however, by the report that "immediately Chaka heard of his [King's] death, he sent for the surviving friends, and bursting into tears, acknowledged that he had been imposed upon by others" (*SACA*, 31.12.1828). There are possible hints here of reasons for Shaka's impending assassination, complex in its political ramifications: the simplistic explanation that took hold, however, was that his murder was "occasioned by his excessive and increasing cruelties" (*SACA*, 27.12.1828). According to one report, Shaka had "ordered a thousand women to be put to death as an expiatory sacrifice, which was partly carried into effect, but the executioners having seized some women belonging to his brother, this latter [Dingane], in concert with some other chiefs, rushed upon Chaka and put him to death" (19.12.1828; Cory, *Colonial Archives*, 94). The *Commercial Advertiser* carried a lengthier, and rather different version:

On the 23rd September, he [Shaka] was assassinated by his own brothers. It appears, that when Chaka contemplated any murders, he always pretended that he had dreamt that the parties who were to be his victims had entered into a plot against him. On this occasion he had told his most confidential domestic Boper [Mbopa], "that he had dreamt that his father was going to serve another king, and that therefore he must kill both him (Boper) and his father:" the circumstance probably accelerated his own death; for the same evening, just as the sun was sinking to the horizon, Chaka's younger brother, Dingaan, said to him, "You shall never see the sun set again," and at the same time thrust his assegai into the back of Chaka; the act was followed up by Umslangaan, another brother, and the servant Boper, until they despatched him. ...The body of Chaka was left that night to be devoured by wolves, but finding it

unmolested in the morning, they gave him burial, saying that wolves would not eat a kin. (*SACA*, 31.12.1828)

The obvious empirical problems of the discrepancies between these versions - and there were others³ - need not be dwelt on here. The important point is that these stories could only have been generated by the handful of white adventurers, none of whom had apparently witnessed the event,⁴ but who had everything to gain from the demise of a chieftain evidently turning against them. The reasons are not far to seek: Farewell wrote to the Cape Government, "I have no doubt but Chaka's death will add greatly to the happiness of the nation and, from their being permitted the liberty to trade (which they were not under Chaka), will increase the benefits accruing from being on friendly terms with them" (19.12.1828; *RN* V 61). Four years later Nathaniel Isaacs would allege that Shaka had threatened his life: "Chaka, fortunately for humanity, was deposed and put to death by his brother, the present King 'Dingaan'; by these means my life was saved, Chaka having said that he would kill me, and afterwards sent a message to Capt. King by his apprentice, - that he would give 30 elephants' tusks to have me killed" (*SACA*, 13.6.1832; the last intriguing detail was omitted from the more melodramatic version in the published *Travels and Adventures*, I 243).⁵

In this flurry of (hardly surprisingly, but also significantly) contradictory reports, a new intensity of derogation can be discerned. Out of the fragmentary details, some would be selected, others dropped, and still others invented, distorted, and embellished, until the true evidential status of the details became entirely lost to sight. The assassination, irresistibly attractive subject-matter, became a staple component of the Shaka legend, capable of almost infinite variation. As early as 1836, it was the only aspect of Shaka's career on which the missionary Allen Gardiner was interested in dwelling:

At this time, 1829 [sic],⁶ two of his own brothers, Dingaan and Umthlangaan, conspired against his life, assisted by Satai [?], a principal domestic of great influence. Diverting his attention by driving from his presence some men ... he

received an assegai wound in the back.... He immediately rose and attempted to throw off his ingoobo (skin mantle), but fell in the act. His last words were, "What have I done to you? - children of my father!" Although Dingaan was present and consenting, it is not believed that he took an active part in this murderous deed.... These two unnatural brothers are said to have drunk, on the spot, the gall of the chief they had conspired to assassinate! (Gardiner 90-1; cf. Fynn 1950:157)

In the same year, Isaacs himself produced yet another, very similar version, but adding the crucial detail that Shaka "fell at their [his assassins'] feet, and in the most supplicating manner besought them to let him live that he might be their servant" (I 258). This apparently invented - or at least at the time entirely uncorroborated - cowardice suited the purposes of quite a number of white writers after Isaacs.⁷

Out of considerable fragmentation and dispute, then, an increasingly solid portrayal of Shaka would emerge. While the published "eyewitness accounts" would in some degree contribute further controversy, they also served to override in the popular consciousness the dubious nature of much of the early reportage. And as already noted, Maclean's account, written in 1853-5, remained buried until the latter half of the twentieth century, as did the larger portion of Henry Francis Fynn's. The literary stage was left all but entirely to Nathaniel Isaacs.

Establishing habits

The quality of these earliest accounts - their paucity of detail, their contradictoriness, their journalistic embeddedness in localised political agendas as well as wider identity-debates - illustrate the justice of Janet Varner Gunn's observation that "the *first* questions of autobiography ... are questions of an anthropological, not a literary, nature" (11n). Their treatment by subsequent commentators, however, also illustrates the ways in which recognisably literary influences become part of the "anthropological situatedness" of those commentators themselves; their every linguistic gesture mediating their own contemporary anxieties, as well as the "anxiety of influence" about their precursors. The two major

precursors, crucial in their contribution to the *habitus* (the term is Pierre Bourdieu's) - the conglomerate of rhetorical gestures which are at once structured by circumstance, durable, and generative of further practice - of Shakan literature, are Nathaniel Isaacs and Henry Francis Fynn.

NOTES

1. Were scientific evidence required, experiments made in the 1970s can be cited to indicate an accuracy of less than 25 per cent in the reporting of even very recent experiences. Related tests also revealed the importance of eyewitnesses' personal agendas and biases. In a classic experiment conducted by G W Allport of Harvard University, subjects looked briefly at a line drawing of a train carriage in which a white man, armed with a razor, confronted a black man. Fifty per cent of the viewers recalled the razor as having been in the black man's hand. This is a simple but telling version of the same kind of racial biases one encounters in South African frontier literature. A further set of tests showed respondents' tendencies, after the passage of time, to fill out and complete diagrams and accounts according to what they thought *ought* to be the case, rather than what they originally saw (Buckhout 1974; Woodman 1988). Again, this uncomplicated insight is a useful reminder in reviewing the Shakan eyewitnesses, all of whom were writing at varying distances in space and time from the original events.
2. For earlier, less critical studies, see also Okoye (1972), Cubbin (1983). Gorham (1991) provides a brief and unpublished, but suggestive critique.
3. See eg. Aitchison to Bell, 19.12.1828, conveying Farewell's version: "During the absence of this force [sent eastwards] Chaca fancied he could with impunity go greater lengths in acts of cruelty than he had ever yet ventured upon and ordered 2000 females to be destroyed at the rate of about 300 p[er] diem. These atrocities at length aroused the feelings of the long oppressed Zoolahs who set about a plan for murdering the tyrant. In this they were countenanced by 6 or seven of the king's brothers and on the 23rd of Sep[tembe]r a chief named Boper carried their wishes into effect... Sotobe [a chief who went on King's "embassy"] has also suffered a similar fate from an idea that he was sent by Chaca to get drugs to poison the Zoolahs and thus save the trouble of stabbing them" (*RN* V 60). This is a very new note of tyrannical oppressiveness. The *Commercial Advertiser* version quoted in the main text above is quite different from those published by both Isaacs (I 258) and Fynn (1950:156-7), so the author remains unknown.
4. Cobbing (1988b) has argued that the adventurers were actively involved in the assassination; they certainly had the motives, but the evidence seems to me too tangential for certainty (but see Laband 1995:45).
5. Isaacs sent a number of letters and ostensible journal extracts to the *SACA* in 1832. Apart from a denial that he was gun-running, an account of how he came to land in Natal, and the section just quoted, little of this material relates to Shaka's reign. See *SACA*, 2.6, 9.6, 13.6, 14.7 and 6.10.1832.
6. This is probably impossible, but there is no certainty about the precise date of the killing. J A Farrer noted in 1879 that dates were still being "given with wide variations, but it would seem that Dingana's accession took place in the year 1828" (Farrer 19).
7. This cowardly version was dropped until rather oddly revived by Laband (1995:xiv), on the strength of a single late oral tradition (*JSA* II 295). Laband offers a syncretic and dramatised account of the assassination for a dramatic prologue to his survey of the nineteenth-century Zulu, implying that this is a fundamental facet of Zulu kingship, that "no settled principle of succession would ever become established in the Zulu kingdom" (xv).

CHAPTER TWO

"NO REDEEMING QUALITY": Nathaniel Isaacs

Chaka seems to have inherited no redeeming quality; in war he was an insatiable and exterminating savage, in peace an unrelenting and a ferocious despot, who kept his subjects in awe by his monstrous executions, and who was unrestrained in his bloody designs.... The world has heard of monsters - Rome had her Nero, the Huns their Attila, and Syracuse her Dionysius; the East has likewise produced her tyrants; but for ferocity, Chaka has exceeded them all; he has outstripped in sanguinary executions all who have gone before him, and in any country. (Isaacs I 275)

Nathaniel Isaacs' two-volume *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (1836) presents itself as the autobiographical narrative of Isaacs' residence in Natal during the last years of Shaka Zulu's reign, and the first of his brother-successor Dingane's. As I have adumbrated, even such an eyewitness account is not unalloyed "autobiography" in the sense of tracing the development of a deliberately confessional inner sensibility; nor is it purely "history" in the sense of being a study, couched in the assertive linguistic constructions of that discourse, of past events by a (textually) detached commentator pretending to objectivity about pre-existent events. The text is more fruitfully regarded as a travelogue, autobiographical to the extent that the writer is narrating a segment of his *own* involvement in past events. The writer has inevitably a considerable stake in presenting *himself* in a (to him) satisfactory, that is constructed, perspective. Isaacs' textual presentation of his "self" is a crucial issue here.

The influence of *Travels and Adventures* on subsequent views of Shaka can hardly be understated. There were occasional demurrs: an 1836 review in *The Athenaeum* argues that "the original accounts of [Shaka's] cruelties came from a very suspicious quarter, and bear obvious marks of exaggeration" (Martin 50). In 1855, William Holden finds Isaacs "an author on whom [he] cannot rely" (1855:42). A T Bryant, while basing his portrait of Shaka solidly on Isaacs'

foundation, demurs on some points (eg. 1929:51-2). Donald Morris notes in 1965 that Isaacs was "utterly untrained in observation", but nevertheless that he had "surprising insight" (1965:84). In 1969, in their *Oxford History of South Africa*, Leonard Thompson and Monica Wilson cautiously note that "there is reason to believe that [Isaacs'] account has many distortions" (1969:337). Brian Roberts notes that he is "full of contradictions" (1974:157). By the 1980s, it is becoming almost *de rigueur* to condemn Isaacs and his comrades as "fraudulent" villains who "lied, schemed and cheated", as Louis du Buisson does (1987:3; cf. Ballard 1988:13, Saunders 1988:86).

But these tentative misgivings did little to dislodge the essential portrait of Shaka as Isaacs established it. Until recently, the *Travels* has been accorded the same kind of priority now tendered to African oral traditions as source material, being variously regarded as "very complete" (Theal 1908 II:300), "fascinating" (Colvin 1909:269), and "illuminating" (Mackeurtan 1930:127). A younger Guy Butler (he would doubtless be more sceptical today) includes Isaacs in his collection of paeans to settler heroes, *When Boys Were Men* (1969). E V Walter praises Isaacs for being "the closest to immediate experience, for he quoted directly from his journal, in which he had made detailed, sometimes daily, entries" (1969:130). Beyond providing the core of the Shaka myth, Isaacs would also be used to support entire anthropological theories. The classic case is Sir James Frazer utilising Shaka's alleged obsession with Rowlands Macassar Oil, sedulously exaggerated by both Fynn and Isaacs, to buttress a tenuous theory that it was a widespread custom for "primitive" kings to be killed once they started aging. As Frazer puts it with presumptive jocularity: "The writer to whom we are indebted for this instructive anecdote of the hair-oil omits to specify the mode in which a grey-haired and wrinkled Zulu chief used 'to make his exit from this sublunary world'; but on analogy we may conjecture that he did so by the simple and perfectly sufficient process of being knocked on the head" (Frazer IV 36-7).¹ Nor has this propensity ceased: 1990 saw the publication of Chalk and Jonassohn's *The History and*

Sociology of Genocide (1990:223-9), which uses extracts from E V Walter, including his uncritical quotations from Isaacs, to display Shaka as an exemplar of a genocidal ruler.

To sharpen the point: Isaacs' portrayal has remained virtually unquestioned as having an unproblematic, representational relationship with "what happened". This is despite a widespread disregard for various items of "fact" (or at least admissible evidence) about Shaka, contained in Isaacs but subsequently ignored. Rather, it is the *metaphoric* burden of the *Travels* - those portions which most readily intersect with the fictional and sensational, exemplified by the epigraph and its controlling tropes of monstrosity, excess and Eurocentric comparison - that has been repeated and paraphrased from William Cornwallis Harris's plagiarisms in *The Wild Sports of Africa* (1839), through Charles Eden's *An Inherited Task* (1871), D C F Moodie's *Battles and Adventures in Southern Africa* (1888), and Graham Mackeurtan's *Cradle Days of Natal* (1930), to James Michener's novel, *The Covenant* (1980). Even where Isaacs' raw images of savagery, duplicity, and superstitious credulity fade beneath the more sombre prose of recent historians, they metamorphose into the genocidal, Zulucentric, subcontinental violence conceptualised as the "mfecane".

Several strategies are available for a clearer picture of Isaacs and his work, none definitive or self-supporting, but in concert, I think, suggestive. These are essentially stylistic, documentary, psychological, and cultural. I have already suggested that, within a social psychological paradigm such as that of Vygotsky and Wertsch, these are inseparable, but a somewhat artificial division at this stage will enhance clarity.

"A superficial glance"

In its construction and style the *Travels* falls roughly into two kinds of writing. The greater part

consists of purported transcriptions of Isaacs' "memo's [sic] that [he] used to keep at Natal" (Isaacs to Fynn, in Kirby 1968:67). With the possible exception of a single page,² these original "memos" have not been found, and it must remain doubtful to what extent they ever existed. Some material had appeared initially in the *South African Commercial Advertiser* in 1832 (see Chapter One, note 5, above). These latter entries contain tense changes and retrospective interpolations showing them to have been themselves worked up for publication:

[17 April 1831] By this time a multitude of warriors had formed a half-circle about the king; he desired one of them to find us a hut. I was much surprised that he did not mention anything respecting the report we heard on the road, particularly as the messenger had arrived; and what added to our suspicion was, the fact of the harbinger being out of the way; and the king gave us nothing, which is very unusual; as we proceeded to our hut the Umpoachlers (young warriors who are generally employed to kill people) followed us, and every thing had a treacherous appearance. My feelings may be better imagined than described, at this unexpected reception. However they went their way, and we retired to the hut, but were in horrible suspense all night. (*SACA*, 14.7.1832)

In the *Travels*, this clumsy syntax is further refined, relatives and connectors supplied, the vocabulary enriched, sequences rearranged, the warriors' threat more subtly narrated, information suppressed, added, or distorted, and a less hesitant, more perceptive "self" presented:

By this time a large body of warriors had arrived, and formed themselves into a circle in front of the king, who desired one of them to find us a hut. I was somewhat surprised he did not say anything on the subject of the communication made to us on the road. Knowing the messenger had arrived, we thought it looked suspicious that we had not seen him. As we went towards our hut, the young warriors followed us, which made me apprehend that some treachery was going on; I, therefore, did not like to dismount: but on reaching our hut they went away, and we entered. The king did not send us anything to eat, which was an unusual occurrence, and, we thought, forbode something wrong. We were, therefore, in dreadful suspense all night (II 186-7).

Other, obviously retrospective, interpolations ("Here I was destined to remain two years and nine months..." [26], for instance) are numerous and need not be dwelt on. It is worth resting on one further example of stylistic doctoring, concerning the journal of Isaacs' companion James Saunders King, which both he and Charles Rawden Maclean quote (the original now apparently lost, if it ever existed³). A comparison of the two transcriptions - the original is now apparently lost - reveals Isaacs' bias:

The harbour was now my object, although if we failed in getting over the bar, the chances were that every soul might have perished, or otherwise left destitute and at the mercy of the

natives. Not a living soul was to be seen on shore, which added much to our distressed situation. Had the natives come boldly out of the bushes, we should have been under no apprehension in landing, having only the violence of the sea to contend with, which might have been surmounted; but to experience all the fatigue of shipwreck, and at last be obliged to give ourselves up as their prey, was by no means a pleasant idea. (Maclean 1992:42)

The harbour was now my object, although, if we were defeated in our attempt to get over the bar, the chances were that every soul on board might perish, or be left destitute, and at the mercy of a horde of savages. To increase the horror of our peculiarly unfortunate situation, not a living soul was to be seen on this desolate coast. Had the natives come out from the jungle and recesses, with which the shore abounds, we should not have been assailed with the apprehension which we foreboded, namely, that when we landed, they would rush down upon us, and make us a prey to their savage propensities. The fatigue which invariably attends the shipwrecked mariner, however, in some measure, was borne without murmuring... (Isaacs I 10)

The substitution of "horde of savages" for "natives", the interpolation of "jungle and recesses" with its sinister connotations, the addition of "savage propensities", and other intensifying words such as "defeated", "horror" and "assailed", the laconic generalisation about the fatigue of the shipwrecked mariner, and the strengthening of the fortitude of the *Mary*'s passengers, are so close stylistically to the rest of Isaacs' account that it seems most probable that Isaacs rewrote it from a more sober original, rather than that Maclean copied and toned down Isaacs' version. In either case, the psychological import of Isaacs' revisions hardly needs explication: the defensive denigrations backhandedly reinforce an image of himself as brave, "civilised", and vulnerable in a landscape recognisable to his readers from earlier "jungle" travelogues. This is a more marketable "self" recreated at least in part in relation to the prejudices of a putative readership.

There are also more pervasive indications of inauthenticity. Throughout the *Travels*, Isaacs' refurbished "journal" entries narrate sundry unenlightening journeys through attractive or thorny Zululand:

8th [December 1825] - As the dew fell heavily during the night, travelling early was neither pleasant nor advisable. We waited, therefore, until the sun began to shed its influence a little; after which, we commenced the day's march, and at noon forded the Ootoogale. Feeling languid and disposed to eat, we killed a calf, and made a fire on the margin of the river in order to cook a portion of it, which we accomplished, and I sat down and partook of it with a zest that none but the hungry can enjoy. At three P.M. we again proceeded, soon crossed the Nondotee, and reached the kraal of Nongasis, where we remained for the night. (I 64)

This elliptical, empty narrative is conspicuously devoid of the unpolished curiosity and sharp observation of, say, Isaacs' contemporaries George Thompson or Andrew Smith. It presents an "Isaacs" central to the action, but whose personality is unindividuated, the sensations unengaged. Such marginalisation of the self was a travelogue convention (Pratt 1986:143), and it is possible that this is simply bad writing by an unobservant traveller - as in the extract in Note 2, below. After all, similar examples can be found in numerous works. An analogous West African instance, Denham's "naive and superficial" *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries* (1826), of which "Isaacs" was aware (I xxiii), is cited by Curtin (1967:208). Almost certainly most such texts were also partly edited into banality by publishers' rewritings. It is worth glancing at a similar passage from Andrew Smith's unedited diary of 1834, and noting the sharper, almost telegraphic style, with an instance of a discourse not only scientific in its precision, and so reflective of Smith's interests and learning, but expressive of local particularities to which Isaacs' text seems largely oblivious:

Started at daylight and reached False Fountain about ½ past nine a.m. Till about noon rather chilly; sun very powerful at ten; about midday thermometer in shade 84. Light winds with occasionally strong partial gusts. Heat very oppressive. Flies extremely troublesome, particularly in wagons. Too hot to grind; forced to use entire corn. Hottentots prefer it boiled to rice. Dogs and men seek where they can escape from the rays of the sun. It is with difficulty that the former can be kept from under the wagons.

Boers took up their residence here last year and opened the spring. [It] discharges at present a considerable quantity of water rather brackish and with a slight sulphurous smell and taste. Few birds seen since leaving Phillipolis; *Corvus scapularis*, Korans; blue and Bushman *Otis soleii*... (Kirby 1939:I 189)

But in Isaacs' case, other intentions are also indicated by the radical nature of the rewriting, as in this contrivance:

[W]hen I took a superficial glance at the country, and viewed only the occasional hut, the shape and construction of which was not only singular, but "passing strange"; when night had closed in, and all seemed still around, the solitude of the place awakened in me feelings not easily described. The well-known lines of the poet struck me as peculiarly applicable to the scene, and being in unison with the sensations which at the time pervaded me, I involuntarily exclaimed,

Oh solitude where are the charms
That sages have seen in thy face!... (I 20)

This manifestly fails to embody "real" huts or credible emotion: style itself is the alibi, behind

which a clear sense of a writer "who was there" vanishes. On this evidence alone, the probability is that it was not written by an "I-witness" at all.

These passages adumbrate the second broad style of the *Travels* - circumlocutory, vague, over-ornate even for the day - most clearly seen in extensive retrospective insertions. Parading objectivity but exposing mendacity, judgemental pronouncements parallel the reduction of the "I-witnessing" presence to an occasional personal anecdote. Unsubstantiated accusations, such as that Shaka "compelled the agonizing father to be the executioner of his own son, and the son to become an inhuman mutilator of his own mother" (I 271), contradict the claim to be providing "aught but that of which [Isaacs] had ocular demonstration" (xx). In the pounding repetition of derogatory phrases (on page 271 alone: *terrible declination of the head, revolting deed, inhuman savage, atrocious remark, poor dead and mutilated creature, destroy, booty, horrible deeds he perpetrated, so horrible and detestable a savage, deluged, innocent blood, inhuman mutilator, monster's deeds*), the stated "purpose of allowing [his] readers to draw their own conclusions" is wholly abrogated.

Nowhere are these pervasive tropes of lack of restraint and human-ness more "poetically embellished" than in the chapter, "History of Chaka" (I 262-86), from which the epigraph, and this even more impressively improbable description of Shaka, are taken:

Thus the eve of going to war was always the period of brutal and inhuman murders, in which he seemed to indulge with as much savage delight as the tiger with his prey. When once he had determined on a sanguinary display of his power, nothing could restrain his ferocity; his eyes evinced his pleasure, his iron heart exulted, his whole frame seemed as if it felt a joyous impulse at seeing the blood of innocent creatures flowing at his feet; his hands grasped, his herculean and muscular limbs exhibiting by their motion a desire to aid in the execution of the victims of his vengeance: in short, he seemed a being in a human form, with more than the physical capabilities of a man; a giant without reason, a monster created with more than ordinary power and disposition for doing mischief, and from whom we recoil as we would at the serpent's hiss or the lion's growl (I 281).

This is narrative dislodged from "history"; metaphor subsumes event; overwrought invective, stylised monstrosity, and Gothic hyperbole struggle with unwilling hints of the heroic; animal vies

with supernatural, as if the writer "has momentarily accepted the "superstition" he scorns elsewhere. The "Isaacs-writing" has liberated himself into fiction, obliterating both the "Isaacs-written-about" and a sense of the Zulu "reality". In its aggressive denial of Zulu identity, the *Travels* is similar to misogynist and anti-Communist German Fascist texts of the 1920s and '30s whose mentality is "alien to any linguistic posture that respects the integrity of its object or takes it seriously"; the "particles of reality" taken up in the language "lose any life of their own"; the rhetorics "acts imperialistically against any form of independently moving life", and can be called, Klaus Theweleit argues, an "antiproduction" (215-6).

The passage just quoted contradicts other descriptions of executions in the *Travels*, where the restraint of the language is more persuasive (though not necessarily more "true") and where Shaka is described as merely giving "some sign" (62) or a "mere nod" (114), and as "indifferent" and "unfeeling" (96). The *Travels* repeatedly fails to cohere in this way. In order to demonstrate Shaka's innate caprice and "want of temper to discriminate objects", it is related how Shaka "beat his mother with inconceivable cruelty, and to the astonishment of all, as he had ever manifested towards his parent a strong filial affection" (I 103); but at another juncture, though again to stress that Shaka was "a dissembler and a most professed hypocrite", it is argued that people were forced to mourn for Shaka's deceased mother "for whom, in his lifetime, he displayed no filial affection, and towards whom he was insensible and indifferent" (203).

This sacrifice of consistency to the demands of opportunistic character-assassination is extended to the views expressed of the Zulus as a whole in the conventionally appended "ethnographic" chapter (some of which was plagiarised from George Thompson's *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa* [1827:203; cf Isaacs, II 251]). At one point, we find the allegation that the Zulus' "insatiable thirst for the blood of their enemies is inherent" (II 231), but at another that they "have nothing of the sullen, morose, atrocious vices of the inhuman warrior in their

nature" (236); at one point that the Zulus had no "inherent courage" but "fought to avoid being massacred" by their own king (I 267), but at another that their "ferocity is almost unrestrainable [and they] keep the monarch always in awe of their power, and goad him to the commission of deeds" (II 231).

Other assertions, projecting a "self" unimpeachably knowledgeable, founder on their own hyperbole: Shaka is the worst tyrant "in any country"; the Zulus are "the finest race of people which Southern or Eastern Africa can furnish" (II 236), or have "indisputably the most incomprehensible government with which any known nation on earth is conversant" (244; it is then roundly judged to be nothing more than murderous despotism). These unsupportable absolutes are shot through with suspicion of the fundamentally *unknowable*:

They are, *doubtless*, the most extraordinary people in existence, if we *look into* their peculiarities of character, and it is difficult to determine whether we should pity their ignorance or guard against their duplicity; for although they are *proverbially* in a state of *perfect* simplicity, yet *there is* a cunning about them, and an *irrevocable* desire for indulging in *all* their savage propensities, that makes it quite necessary, *in their present condition*, to be on the watch against their designs (II 243; emphasis added).

Very occasionally, a self-reflective awareness of this "anomalous description of Zoolas - savage yet hospitable", surfaces (102); or language acknowledges inadequacy ("barbarous cruelties" are "too revolting to detail"; Zulu government "defies description" [I 92, 269]). But this is a *refusal* to comprehend, reifying incomprehensibility itself. Thus Shaka's or Dingane's caprice is made an irreducible trait, to which the writer reacts "*knowing* that the monarch, *like all savages*, acted without reason or deliberation" (II 227; emphasis added). Generalising tropes of the irrevocably extreme, of a perfectly condemnable darkness, are consistently used to banish insight and individuation.

This violent certainty is contradicted by the equally intense insecurity conveyed by the Introduction (I xxiii-xxxiv), whose very structure enacts the jinking of a mind ill-at-ease: it is repeatedly interrupted by abject protestations of humility and inadequacy extreme even for a time

when the traveller-writer's self-deprecation was conventional. This "Isaacs" confesses to a "very limited education", is "young and inexperienced" (three times), "can lay no claim to the acquirements of literature"; his "humble labours [are] not actuated by any vain hope of acquiring fame", "do not aspire to distinction"; "vanity had no share in the design"; he "humbly send[s] forth" his "humble diary". Nevertheless, he does not, he claims, "wish to offer any lengthened apology". He insistently uses the words "submit" (nine times), "succumb", "yield", "trust", "presume", "confess", and similarly cowed half-retractions and double negatives: "It is not without inconceiveable apprehension", "I am not without unhappy forebodings", "no inconsiderable degree", "It is, I believe, generally admitted", "I may be permitted, I hope". He also reveals deep uncertainty over the reception of his material, submitting it "somewhat reluctantly" as being "somewhat incredible", but is "somewhat sanguine" that it "may not be unacceptable". The same defensiveness surfaces elsewhere in the *Travels*, too, significantly at points (eg. I 272; II 324) where the racist or commercial propaganda peaks.

Precisely at these intersections of hesitancy and arrogance the "alibi", the "autobiographical" mask of the veracious participant-observer, fractures. The *Travels* is undisguisedly a broadside in a campaign for British annexation and settlement of Natal (eg. I xxxiv; II 325-9). This purpose permeates the numerous descriptions of "productive" lands "which would amply pay the labour of tilling" (eg. I 26, 57, 149, 153; II 66), and provides the matrix for the derogation of the Zulus. It helps explain the presentation of a morally unimpeachable I-witness whose witnessing is nevertheless without clarity or interest, so supporting an otherwise problematic reading of circumlocutory-prose-as-mendacious, spare-prose-as-credible.

Hence, as a narrative "representation" of either "events" or a "self" the *Travels*, on its own grounds, is massively suspect; its very authorship must be open to question. Its "truth" must be sought on another level, that is, among those "conditions of possibility" within which it was

conceived. On this level, its contradictions (far from exhausted above) are seen to be precisely the point, *are* the "organising principle" of the work's constitution, and not merely "so many superficial elements that must be reduced" to an imposed order: the text, "in spite of itself", brings into play "incompatible postulates, intersections of irreconcilable influences, the first diffraction of desire, the economic and political conflict that opposes a society to itself" (Foucault 1972:150-1).

Isaacs' life

One way of contextualising the *Travels* amongst these multiple influences is to locate it within the trajectory of Isaacs' life as reconstructed from documentary evidence. This normal historiographical procedure is, of course, to raise another, antagonistic narrative, comprised of statements of the kind taught us as "truthful representation", and predicated on documents each, in miniature, demanding the same cautious acidity accorded a book like the *Travels*. The narrative sketched here, in being drawn from multiple sources, at least has the merit of greater probability.

Born in Canterbury in 1808, ill-educated, sent to an uncle in St Helena at fourteen, shipwrecked with James Saunders King's brig *Mary* at Port Natal at seventeen, and enveloped in a violently alien culture, Isaacs was hardly in a position to record or remember his experiences with accuracy and objectivity. Leaving Natal in 1831, Isaacs gravitated to London, trading and lobbying for the British annexation of Natal (and for a portion of land there for himself). He issued a "Prospectus" to attract emigrants: Isaacs' shipping partner, G C Redman, was a one-time chairman of the South African Land and Emigration Association (Kirby 1955:181-241). By the 1840s, he was ensconced in Freetown, Sierra Leone, owning properties and trading groundnuts, probably in return for smuggled rum. He bought a small island, Matacong, north of Freetown and beyond the reach of Customs; made treaties with mainland chiefs and flourished on duty-free

trade; kept mistresses and married twice, the second time to a formidable, slave-trading Afro-American. He came repeatedly under suspicion for slaving, and in 1854 the Governor of Sierra Leone despatched an arresting officer. Forewarned, Isaacs escaped, abandoning on Matacong his slaves, their jail, and his instruments of torture. The incriminating evidence, however, was lost when Governor Kennedy's ship, bound for England, foundered; Isaacs cannily evaded trial, and the case collapsed. Isaacs continued to visit and to regard Matacong as his own property, willing it to a son-in-law in 1868. He died in Egremont, Cumbria, on 26 January 1872 (Hermann, in Isaacs I vii-xiii; Fyfe 1962:239-40, 249, 258, 275-8; Kirby 1968, 1969).

This Isaacs was devious, violent, unscrupulous: markedly different from the ingenuous, unlettered, irrepressible, patriotic, and defensively honest youth delineated in the *Travels*. Some things he evidently saw no necessity in hiding: in his Natal period, he describes himself delivering a "wholesome flagellation" (II 132) to a recalcitrant underling, and even death sentences (94). He did not admit to fathering, and subsequently abandoning, at least two mixed-blood children in Natal (Kirby 1969); he fought as a mercenary in Shaka's raids; he and other whites ran guns into Natal, and propagated the fictitious tale of an impending Zulu attack on Cape frontier tribes in 1828. As we have seen, the Cape authorities were deeply suspicious of the adventurers' motives, and the *Travels* is a litany of denials of official accusations (eg. I 174, 223; II 75, 175-8, 224; cf. *RN* II 87).

Suspicion is supported by a particularly glaring omission from all the whites' accounts: that of any detailed explanation of *why they were in Natal at all*. That they were in distress and danger of annihilation, as they claimed, is contradicted by their refusal to be rescued and their persistence in returning; their claim to be searching for ivory is contradicted by their patent lack of success in finding it, and by the paucity of elephant-hunting scenes in their accounts.⁴ Having acquired their own chiefly kraals, harems, and armed forces, alone might have been sufficient

grounds for evasiveness. There is also some evidence of the adventurers' involvement in the slave trade. Henry Fynn admitted to *Zulus* trading in slaves (Fynn 1950:48, 55-6); there are several documented Portuguese visits to Zululand, including a slaving vessel running aground at Port Natal (Isaacs I 58; II 10, 113); the South African *Chronicle* (6.6.1826) reported the loading onto French vessels of slaves from the northern Transkei, precisely the area in which Fynn and Farewell were then operating; John Cane and others made at least four ill-explained trips to the slave-station at Delagoa Bay; Isaacs himself travelled precisely along the slaving route to the Comores in 1831, making contact with a known American slaver, the *Complex* (II 305), and in 1832 made a bizarre proposal to the Cape Government to permit the military occupation of Natal by one Ramanataka, a Madagascar prince almost certainly implicated in slaving (*RN* II 226-231). The case for slaving remains circumstantial,⁵ but it is the most powerful explanation we have for the *Travels'* evasiveness and lies.

In this perspective, the book is in part the commonplace criminal's alibi, the construction of an alternative "self", presenting an alternative "history" against real and possible accusations: a self-serving intervention in a specific nexus of political developments and conflicts, immediately contingent upon the Cape Government's reluctance to intervene in Natal, balanced against its worry about an American presence there (stimulated by Isaacs himself), its exaggerated fear of Zulu invasion, and its condemnation of the ongoing clandestine slave trade.

But why did Isaacs not simply keep quiet? Why the vicious prose, which introduced into white writing on the South African blacks a strain of vituperation well in excess of its predecessors, and contrary to the powerful anti-slaving strain of writing? Possibly the campaign for annexation was impelled by personal animus against the Zulus and other detractors. The problem here, already noted, is that Isaacs almost certainly did not (or did not solely) write the *Travels*. Isaacs was semi-literate. Governor Kennedy of Sierra Leone, though "often reckless

in ... defaming those he wanted to put down" (Fyfe, pers. comm.), described him in 1855 as "deficient in education" and unable to write letters unaided, and the letters from Isaacs we have, aided or not, show no ability to achieve the stylistic convolutions of the *Travels*. The book was certainly ghost-written; by whom is unknown. This was common practice: Thompson's *Travels and Adventures* was written by poet-settler Thomas Pringle, for instance (Thompson 1827:xx).

We need to know a great deal more about the mechanics of the *Travels'* compilation. That Isaacs himself was to some degree involved in its writing is implied by his now-infamous letter to Fynn of December 1832, noting his intention to publish and clearly linking it to his efforts to excite British annexation: "and should I succeed in getting Natal settled it will be a fortune for you as well as for myself". The latter part, though a crucial connection, is less frequently quoted than the following, in which he urges Fynn to fabricate his own account of Shaka and Dingane: "Make them out to be as bloodthirsty as you can and endeavour to give an estimation of the number of people they have murdered during their reign, and describe the frivolous crimes people lose their lives for. Introduce as many anecdotes relative to Chaka as you can; it all tends to swell up the work and make it interesting" (Kirby 1968:67).

A case of projection

If we assume that Isaacs indeed bore a substantial responsibility for what emerged in the *Travels*, we can postulate that his psychological predilections must in some way visibly scarify the text. To discern the "real self" behind the text is as problematic as discerning an original "event": there is no "self" other than that which is synthesised in the text or constructed from other sources, "an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers" (Foucault 1977:146). The "Isaacs-who-writes", no less than the "Isaacs-written-about", is an Isaacs-written-down, a literary construct, an inference. Nevertheless, the *Travels* is the "voice of someone", responsible for a violence of representation, an hysteria of tone which urges a psychological explanation.

This scenario, then, can be constructed: Isaacs, a boy, fatherless from an early age, sent to sea at fourteen, abused by his first ship's captain (quite how is unclear [I xxviii]), bored to tears in St Helena, and shipwrecked into wilderness, finds only violent means to survive among squabbling, violent adventurers. Still, he is content to remain there for six years, despite the persistent "sting" (the word is Elias Canetti's) of authority from a (to him) incomprehensible Zulu chieftain. He even attempts to acquire solid tenure, and so produces a book transparently campaigning to this end, trumpeting ideals which he himself has never upheld, indeed has multiply transgressed; he has embraced "civilisation's" antithesis - the wilderness - which he is now obliged once more to repudiate. In its potential for guilt, repression, frustration and retrospective vengeance, this situation appears fertile ground for *projection*.

Projection is defined by André Green as a "primary defence mechanism fundamentally defined by the action of expelling, of casting out" something already "introjected", has the effect "of placing outside ... something judged undesirable (or excessively desired)". It is "inextricably linked to perception", and by extension to expression (1986:85-6), so comprising "the symbolic construction of the other as a mechanism of self-cohesion" (Theweleit xxii). Hence the obsessive denigration of Shaka, even at points where he is being shown as merciful: this is Shaka as scapegoat, as the projection of Isaacs' own violence, as Isaacs' "alibi". Hence the vehemence and apparently unwitting inconsistency of the language, though it is difficult to distinguish unconscious (projection in the technical sense) from deliberate (the criminal alibi).⁶

Projection also helps explain the exaggerated contrast drawn between King and Shaka. James King is presented unreservedly as "gallant" (compulsively repeated), "estimable", "correct", "enterprising"; he behaves with "great coolness and intrepidity", "calm confidence", and "infinite honour"; his "discrimination" is "minute and perfect"; his "mind soared above the littleness of

paltry prejudice ... and never descended to caprice or inconsistency" (I 247). Shaka is the too-perfect antithesis: a "dissembler and most professed hypocrite", "an arrant coward", a "merciless savage", "without discrimination", "revengeful and unappeaseable"; he is described as "inhuman", "barbarous", "savage", "insatiable" or a "monster" in over fifty instances in the first volume, an obsessive level of repetition supportive of that psychoanalytic dictum that "excessive passion signals an underlying conflict in which an opposite passion is secretly in play" (Gay 1985:198). The comparison is drawn directly, as Africans arrive to bewail King's death, and "nor were their exhibitions of grief constrained as at the death of a native chief, to save themselves from being massacred by their savage and ferocious king; they were real, emanating from their hearts and evinced by their looks" (248).

Neither portrayal is credible. Isaacs admits that Shaka treated the whites generously; yet he is monsterised, ostensibly on behalf of the "poor innocents" executed by him - the same people Isaacs himself shot, whipped, sentenced to death, enslaved. Nor does King appear angelic, a speculator in unspecified "business" (supported by Isaacs), who almost certainly torpedoed Shaka's embassy to the Cape in 1828 (supported by Isaacs), and forged his land-grant from Shaka (with Isaacs' connivance) (*RN II* 7-41,92).

Thus the *Travels* reveals Isaacs, having fallen between two moralities, wavering between self-effacement and self-assertion, neutralising himself, presenting himself as adventurous but without initiative or effect, and projecting both his ideals and his horrors onto others. He recreates an idealism he knows he does not possess by inventing a character (King) who epitomises the ideal and under whose care and tutelage he unreservedly places himself; he denies the violence he knows he has perpetrated by inventing a character (Shaka) who epitomises the evil and under whose influence he is unwillingly forced. The "alibi" betrays itself.

Of course this scenario is somewhat simplistic and problematic, and runs the risk of inferring tautologically a pre-existent "self" in conformity with the text. As Marie-Louise von Frantz warns, "a projection cannot be unambiguously established by the judgement of an outside observer" (1980:6). It also risks imposing too rigid a set of psychoanalytic metaphors, so screening out as much as we hope to expose. Finally, it must undoubtedly be only one of numerous psychological impulses at work. If Isaacs played little or *no* part in the making of the *Travels*, this thesis diminishes, and a different order of projection is foregrounded.

Ventriloquism

The *Travels* was ghost-written by a Londoner, or another jaundiced colonial, or a group of annexationists (Isaacs was certainly in contact with the latter), none of whom could have set foot in Zululand. With or without Isaacs' active collaboration, he/they wrote not in an attempt to present the what-happened, but to create another picture which inevitably drew on a vast cultural nexus of literary conventions, metaphoric stereotypes, and genres fundamentally rooted in Europe. This is the final aspect of the "alibi", in which even the "autobiographical" frame erodes. The text does not elucidate an integral "self" collaborating with "events"; it narrates the crystallisation of an impersonal culture in a political purpose. The boundaries of the book itself dissolve: inherited fears, predilections, guilts project themselves through "Isaacs'" text, cohering in the transference onto other lands and people the darkness and madness Europeans detest in themselves. Thus Carl Jung: "It would almost seem as though this fragment of humanity (Europe) had projected upon peoples still sound in their instincts an unconscious 'mental derangement'" (quoted in Mannoni 108).⁷ The *Travels* thus reflects that "European discourse at odds with itself", to recall Christopher Miller's words: "The gesture of reaching out to the most unknown part of the world and bringing it back as language ... ultimately brings Europe face to face with nothing but itself, with the problems its own discourse imposes" (5).

This "cultural projection" - another way of putting Bakhtin's "ventriloquism" - has multiple strands. Some involve deeply inherited influences and almost automatic responses. For instance, the literary genre of travellers' narratives from Africa and elsewhere, for which there was a burgeoning market and hardening conventions in the 1830s, prescribed a manifold of shipwreck and adventure (in part the legacy of *Robinson Crusoe*) authorised by "ethnographical" appendages. This overlapped with popular English readers' hunger for vicarious violence of the "Gothic" variety, in which undisturbing, because exotically located, bloodshed and coy eroticism were combined. Even the contrast of King and Shaka, noted above, echoes a Gothic convention, of which Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) is typical. This is an area to which we will return in subsequent chapters.

Such fictional envelopes used metaphoric stereotypes sometimes derived from antiquity. One example is the *Travels'* presentation of beneficent landscapes, invariably described in the Burkeian language of aesthetic approachability: they are "beautiful and picturesque ... a scene for the pencil of the painter and the pen of the poet" (I 3), or "pleasantly diversified" (25), or "grand and imposing" (84), or "Arcadian" (153). But there is an opposing landscape of threat, comprising an Africa "vast", "inhospitable", "baneful", "pernicious", "trackless", "impenetrable", "almost measureless", "uninhabited" - the last despite (or, confusedly, because of) the place being full of "savage", "barbarous", "wild", "noxious", "ignorant" people. Of these, Shaka is the simplistic epitome, being described almost uniformly in the epithets of the mythologised "Wild Man", a figure going back at least to the Middle Ages: "in a morally disordered world, to be wild is to be incoherent or mute; deceptive, oppressive, and destructive; sinful and accursed; and, finally, a monster, one whose physical attributes are in themselves evidence of one's evil nature" (White 1978:162).⁸

In the opposition of Shaka to James King, the conventional metaphors enact their imperialist

gloss, rectilinear and appropriative: The portrayal of King precisely echoes that of the idealised European explorer-hero described in the *Travels'* Introduction as "able and indefatigable", "eager and sanguine", "intrepid", "enterprising", "cool and practical" in his "laudable zeal" and "diversified talents". His mission is to achieve an Africa "accurately described", "delineated", and "minutely investigated" with "precision" by a "general and comprehensive" mind, resulting in a "stock of information" "elaborately and clearly laid down" (I xxiv-xxxii).

The incursion of immediate ideological projections - the manufacture of scapegoats for violence, justifications for invasion and evangelisation, the elimination of the individual, the reification of the incomprehensible - thus come close to the individual's projection; indeed, may embrace it. Abdul JanMohamed's discussion of "imaginary" colonial texts incidentally traces with precision the trajectory of "Isaacs'" literary production:

The emotive as well as the cognitive intentionalities of the "imaginary" text are structured by objectification and aggression. In such works, the native functions as an image of the imperialist self in such a manner that it reveals the latter's self-alienation. Because of the subsequent projection involved ... [i]n describing the attitudes or actions of the native, issues such as intention, causality, extenuating circumstances, and so forth, are completely ignored ... the writer of such texts tends to fetishize a nondialectical, fixed opposition between the self and the native. Threatened by a metaphysical alterity that he has created, he quickly retreats to the homogeneity of his own group. Consequently, his psyche and text tend to be much closer to and are often entirely occluded by the ideology of the group. (JanMohamed 1986:83)

But there is a circularity here, since the "cultural" generalisations are themselves based on readings of texts "like" the *Travels*; the relationship between text and culture is totally symbiotic. In reverse, JanMohamed's discussion points to ways in which cultural paradigms inform the individual text. But it fails here to bring into account the individuality of a text like the *Travels*. Whoever wrote the *Travels* made a choice amongst a vast range of possible metaphoric constructs and levels of abuse or acceptance, as comparison with Thompson or Barrow or Pringle shows. "Nathaniel Isaacs" (the inverted commas are now virtually obligatory) launched a uniquely vituperative strain of thought into South African history, the repercussions of which are still being felt.

With "Isaacs", the groundwork for the monstrous Shaka was laid. There is little evidence here of an unmediated transmission of local oral stories, even ones antagonistic towards Shaka; on the contrary, there is a great deal of evidence of fictionalisation. If Isaacs' personal involvement in the actual writing of the book was to a greater or lesser extent excluded by editorial processes, the intersection of cultural and individual psychologies with the stylistics of literary antecedents becomes a primary focus of attention. In tracing the influence of this and similar texts on later accounts, we become interested not only in whether Isaacs was historically correct or not, but in why the monstrous image was so readily and consistently adopted. Why, if the *Travels* invites being read as autobiographical, but on just such a reading self-destructs, has this mendacious, neo-fictional work remained so unexamined for 170 years?

Utilising Isaacs

Arriving at some social-psychological answer to this question entails a close look at the actual ways in which Isaacs' text has been utilised by his successor writers. I have made a tentative start elsewhere (Wylie 1992) on examining particular stylistic gestures which writers on Shaka have repeatedly used: in various ways, they exhibit "anxieties of influence", to use Harold Bloom's fruitful phrase, in copying or plagiarising, swerving from, or attempting to "complete" the accounts of their precursors. Examples of these gestures will emerge in subsequent chapters, but it is worth adumbrating one or two essential reasons before we examine Henry Fynn's accounts.

Evidently, the *Travels*' metaphoric tenor has remained congenial to a substantial portion of the collective psyche behind South African literature (including historiography). Part of the

congeniality is "logographic" - a term of Thucydides describing the "entertainment quotient" of an historical work: the pleasurable sensationalism of travelogue and popular fiction alike, as we shall see, has had an enormous effect on the Shakan accounts. The Gothic content of the *Travels* itself reveals this. The psychological defensiveness of logographia - of finding the most terrifying aspects of Zulu history the most entertaining - rather than the inheritance of any empirical value from the *Travels*, has been the primary response. And partly the congeniality must be political: in a country founded on racial antagonism, whose power-structures, internal divisions and identities are sutured by mutual denigration, the guilts and fears fostered in imperial times have sedimented and hardened. The persistent metaphors are examples of what Marianna Torgovnick calls a "rhetoric of control, in which demeaning colonialist tropes get modified only slightly over time" (245). Further, the gestures harden in this particular formation partly because of Isaacs' book: it has created the lineaments of the context as much as it was informed by them. As Edward Said has famously pointed out (for "Orientalism", one can substitute Zulu, even African, history):

Any system of ideas that can remain unchanged as teachable wisdom ... from the ... late 1840s to the present [as the Shaka story has] must be something more formidable than a mere collection of lies. [It] is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice ... an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness.... It is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts... [The literature] is, rather than *expresses*, a certain will or intention, to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world, [and] is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power [political, intellectual, cultural, moral] ... And these representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding. (Said 1978:6-22)

NOTES

1. In a curious extrapolation of this, Edward Boyd, in his 1957 preface to Haggard's *Nada the Lily* (1892), could use Frazer's authority to make a backhanded critique of the novel: "In common with many primitive people throughout history, the Zulus had a custom of slaying their kings when they showed signs of age and failing strength;

so that the actual, historical slaying of Chaka, which Haggard depicts in *Nada the Lily* as a vendetta murder, is probably to be understood in terms of ritual. From a rigidly ethnological point of view then, *Nada the Lily* is almost certainly a great deal less than pure Zulu story" (Haggard [1892]1957:11). Here of course Boyd was right, but for all the wrong reasons.

2. This is an intriguing, if rather unimportant account of a skirmish between the "boys" belonging to King and Farewell, which was omitted from the published book; it may relate to the dispute skimmed over in the quote made in the last chapter (Isaacs I 134). The sheet also bears on the reverse an accomplished sketch-map of the bay, almost certainly drawn by King, written over, again probably by King, with part of a deposition on the *Mary* wreck. If it is in fact Isaacs' writing, the "boys" account reveals both the obvious discrepancy in stylistic facility and the slippery relationship generally with the published *Travels* (he may have lost it; hence its remaining in Natal). It is a belaboured farce which bears all the hallmarks of a simplistic and youthful obsession with narrative detail, devoid of interpretative comment. I venture to give the document in full here, since it has apparently never been aired, and may be the only example of Isaacs' own, unmediated style:

Sunday 27th [possibly August 1826]. Arose early this morning and went to the kraal, returned at midday. While at dinner Capt. King received a note from Mr Farewell making some observations of Mr Farewell, Thomas [,] Michael and himself. Captain King requested Mr H Flynn and myself to go over to the Point to witness what Michael and Thomas [two Hottentots] had been telling Mr Farewell. We saw a posse of people at the Point and thought they were Umsegas's people waiting to get a passage to the opposite side. However, to our surprise and astonishment, we found them to be a party of Mr Farewell's boys sitting with their sticks and shields. On enquiry, the boys said that they had come to fight Capt King's boys. Capt King immediately took one of their sticks and was going to drive them away, but afterwards he called them back and asked their motive for coming to fight, and if they got Mr Farewell's permission for such proceedings. The boys replied and said they went to Mr Farewell and Ogle was present when Mr Farewell said, "Go and if any of you run away you shall not come to my place again." With this Capt King said, "Well, if Mr Farewell wants to fight then I will gratify him," and sent his boat to call his boys. In the meantime he requested me to take a note to Mr Farewell. The water being too high I returned and went and asked Mr Farewell's boys if Mr Farewell really sanctioned their coming to fight and that I did not think he would allow such a thing today as it was Sunday, but the boys swore what they before asserted. After some time elapsed, John Cane, Michael and Thomas came when we sat down and conversed. Afterwards the boat arrived with Captain King's boys when Capt King asked John if it would not be best to allow the two boys [sic] to fight alone (that was the cause of the quarrel) when he agreed. Mr Farewell's boy refused, when it was agreed upon that six of Capt King's smartest boys should fight the same number of Mr Farewell's boys. After our boys beating them off we went towards the wreck [of the *Mary*] to find some nails, from thence to the opposite side. The next morning, Monday the 28th, was excessively hot. I visited Tars Retreat in the afternoon, when Capt King requested me to call all the boys together to go on the opposite side to fill four hogsheads with water, at the same time he desired that they would carry no sticks as he observed they had been fighting and if they carried sticks it might occasion Mr Farewell's boys to attack them again.

Tuesday 29th. This morning I went to muster the boys and went to the kraal, returned in the afternoon to Tars Retreat and in the evening came home with all the boys ready to repair to the opposite side to get water. This evening was spent in singing and dancing. The next morning Wednesday the 30th, this being a fine day, I sent our party over to get water when I remained with the others until the boat returned, then crossed and was going up the beach when we met our boys they had been driven back by Mr Farewell's boys and severely beaten, one was so bad he could scarcely walk. Besides they took his vessels from him (it appears our little boys went to get the casks, when they met with the party of Mr Farewell's people. They stopped and asked our boys where they were going, when they replied "We are come to get water, there are the casks before you." A man of Mr Farewell's (the principal one) said "Why do you have your sticks behind you when you know we are the enemy?" Our boys replied "What shall we do with sticks when we are sent for water?" Santany, the principal said to Mr Farewell's boys, "What are you standing for? Why do you not beat them when you know Mr Farewell is very angry at home to think Capt King's boys beat you, go on and beat them, now is the time for you, they have no sticks." Immediately Mr Farewell's people rushed on our boys and thrashed two of them severely, the others ran away. One of Mr Farewell's Hottentots came and called our boys afterwards and said "Return and get water. Mr Farewell is angry." With this the boys

returned and met me on the Beach going towards Mr Farewell. They stood before me and some of them cried and related as above. I immediately sent Jack my companion [presumably Charles Rawden Maclean] to Mr Farewell with one of the boys who had been beaten to complain of such conduct, when Mr Farewell replied, "I know nothing of it, I was in my bed and did not know of it until it was over." When the boys heard this they said, "Well as Mr Farewell will give us no satisfaction, what are we to do? Captain King will not allow us to have our own satisfaction which we will have now; we will not be trampled on in this manner." I said, "We will not say anything about it now as we are sent to fill the casks with water and I will relate the circumstances to Capt King[]. After going to the watering and finding very little water we returned and when the boys got home I made their complaint to Capt King in the presence of Mr Fynn, Rachel and Mr Hutton, when Capt King called John Cane and spoke to him on the subject. He observed it was most shameful conduct on the part of Mr Farewell's boys. In the evening Capt King's people came to me and requested that I would go to Capt King and say they were determined to have satisfaction. John Cane said it was best for them to fight it out as Mr Farewell's boys said they would never leave them alone. The [moon?] that was near full would trample upon them and the next morn [?] they would kill them. At this Capt King called Thomas Brown and asked him what he thought of it in the presence of Mr Hutton, Mr Fynn and myself. He said as they had been so ill treated it would be best to let our boys have their own satisfaction, which Mr Hutton, Mr Fynn and myself agreed to and said, as it was a quarrel of their own they had better settle it among themselves, especially as Mr Farewell would give them no satisfaction. Accordingly the next morning, Thursday, all the people collected when I gave them small shields to defend themselves and they again asked permission to fight. Captain King would give them no answer. In the afternoon two of Mr Farewell's boys came with a note accompanied by two Zulus, when they gave our boys another challenge and said none of the boys should get water. "If the Malongos [white men] wanted water they must come and fetch it themselves, or go to the other side." (NAFP A1382/17/8; also typed, as though Fynn's, into his draft "Diary", KCM 24997, 50-3).

3. Brian Roberts notes that apart from this account of the wreck of the *Mary*, all quotations of King could have been taken from *SACA* articles, and that King himself was probably "barely literate" (1974:158).
4. Little or no ivory seems to have left Natal until the 1830s: Henry Ogle is reported bringing 1500 lbs into the Cape in 1832 (*SACA*, 6.10.1832).
5. For a broader picture, see Cobbing 1988a, 1990; Madieros and Capela 1989; Campbell 1981.
6. Freud and Jung both noted that projection cannot operate in a vacuum, but "this process of projection, which turns a dead man into a malignant enemy, is able to find support in any real acts of hostility on his part that may be recollected and felt as a grudge against him: his severity, his love of power, his unfairness". However, this external "hook" alone "cannot explain the creation of demons by projection ... the true determining factor is invariably unconscious hostility" (Freud 1913:XIII 63).
7. L P Curtis noted the same "almost mechanical way in which Anglo-Saxonists assigned to the Irishmen those very traits which were deplored or despised among the respectable middle and upper classes in Victorian England" (Street 1975:49). Norman Cohn (1975) examines an analogous syndrome among sixteenth-century witch-hunters.
8. Similarly, Isaacs' vindictive comparison of Shaka to Nero (I 275) is a highly conventionalised one widespread even among England's lower classes. To take just one area, 1830s transportees to Australia's penal colonies repeatedly invoked the Nero-figure to characterise their brutal overseers (see Hughes 1987:376, 463, 504).

CHAPTER THREE

"PROPRIETOR OF NATAL": Henry Francis Fynn

If ever South Africa could boast of a Robinson Crusoe of her own, as affable, shrewd, politically sagacious, courageous and large-hearted as Defoe's, here is one to life..."Mr Fynn" (Fynn 1950:117)

[Fynn is] a greater ass and Don Quixote than one could possibly conceive. (Harry Smith to Benjamin D'Urban, 30.11.1835; *RN III 7*)

The fictional referents in these diametrically opposed judgements of Henry Francis Fynn (1806-61) alert us to the constructed nature of the reputation of this most famous of Shakan eyewitnesses. Although Nathaniel Isaacs' *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (1836) first introduced Shaka and his Zulu people to the British reading public, and had easily the profoundest influence on popular conceptions, Fynn was the more widely acknowledged "expert" on the Zulu. Having pursued an extraordinarily tortuous, violent, and well-documented career through forty formative years of South African frontier history, he left a body of writings which belatedly attained authoritative status in Shakan historiography. Until the appearance of Bird's *Annals of Natal* in 1888, Fynn's influence was more in the nature of an "orature". Despite this, it seems fitting to examine him alongside Isaacs at this point in the study. Since 1950, Fynn's so-called "Diary" has become the paramount, and until recently largely unquestioned, source on Shaka's famous reign (c.1815-1828).

This chapter draws on recent revisionary work to offer a preliminary reassessment of *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn* and its role in the mythologising process. As with Isaacs' book, internal analysis of the text of the *Diary* itself reveals problems of interpretation and authenticity still inadequately recognised. Secondly, relocating the "diary" as a direct

product of Fynn's personality and career, the outlines of which bear little resemblance to the accepted version of that career, indicates the extent to which the mythologising of Fynn and Shaka have become inseparable. The voluminous originals also expose the complex process of the editing of the *Diary* as indeed, as Cobbing expressed it, "one of the major disasters of South African historical literature" (1988a:510n).

A social-psychological bias to these conventional (but to date patchily applied) approaches will again emphasise how the psyche and circumstances of Fynn himself, insofar as we might reconstruct these from the full panoply of sources, resulted in textual "symbolic actions" which addressed his own agendas, and also deliberately or inadvertently "ventriloquised" the voices and mores of a turbid, developing settler society. Even on this level, the text is many-voiced. It is further complicated by the editing process: "The printing history of any work," Jerome J McGann writes, "implicitly narrates the stories of its polyglottal existence" (McGann 125).¹ The *Diary* is more polyglottal than most: early nineteenth-century utterances from a medley of sources have been juxtaposed with, overlaid by, even transformed into, the twentieth-century utterances of editors James Stuart and Douglas Malcolm, and of *their* society.

In no sense, then, can the *Diary* be regarded as transparently or empirically "referential", or even as containing isolatable "nuggets of truth" embedded in obscuring rubble. In general terms,

To resolve history into a simple antinomy of myriad expendable details and a single irreducible essence is precisely to refuse history - to refuse history by utterly effacing its *constitutive* differences, by effacing those complex historical formations in which not only the details but also the essences are produced, revised, challenged, and transformed. (Montrose 394-5)

The *Diary* does not consist of "facts" which may be pared away from "lies" and juggled into new empirical patterns; each utterance is diachronically "expressive", sometimes multiply and

contradictorily so, rather than transparently representational of a single essence. This is not to jettison, so much as to enrich the document as historical source; the *Diary* offers an unparalleled insight into a whole century's textual projections of a sometimes carefully, sometimes willy-nilly, sometimes fraudulently constructed colonial *mentalité* fatally at odds with itself.

"Faithful and unvarnished"?: Shaka and the *Diary*

Fynn's depiction of Shaka in the *Diary*, as the following critique of the published document seeks to show, is even internally deeply problematic. The quality of Fynn's material, as it appears in the *Diary* (and appearance, in our context, is critical), is markedly different from Nathaniel Isaacs'. The prose is more polished and less florid, more direct and less given to abrupt variations in register. Offering the densest portrayal of Shaka in the literature, it has carried commensurate authority, and appears stylistically close to Fynn's stated intention of presenting "a faithful, circumstantial and unvarnished detail of incidents as they met his eyes" (Fynn 1950:xv). So it has generally been perceived, even by more sceptical recent historians.²

The *Diary* opens its 34-page "Historical Introduction" with a detailed history of Shaka's predecessor and mentor, Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa. This is of course not an eye-witness account, but nevertheless feels distinctly more solid, detailed and credible than Isaacs' parallel "History of Chaka".³ This is followed by an embryonic version of Shaka's youth (exile with his mother and early military prowess under Dingiswayo) that has become so commonplace as to seem impregnable (though it can be challenged from alternative sources in almost every detail). Be that as it may, Fynn then begins a sustained attack on Shaka's brutal character, with such single-mindedness that it temporarily obscures his stated aim "to give an insight into the revolutions the various tribes have undergone and the rise

and progress of the Zulu nation". Although Fynn outlines a number of attacks on surrounding tribes, in their supposed order, this is subordinated to anecdotes of Shaka's brutality. Several stories appear here for the first time, if we remember that they were written before 1861: Shaka practising stabbing-spear drill with reeds; some aged women bound in grass and set alight; men having their eyes plucked out; the "no[t] uncommon occurrence" of "a regiment of soldiers and another of girls [being] surrounded and slain on the slightest suspicion of intercourse [when] sometimes not less than 3000 people would suffer"; the killing of an infant Shaka suspects to be his progeny; "60 boys under 12 years of age dispatched before breakfast" (15-29). Only this last, it might be noted, did Fynn claim to have seen, but it is not an incident recounted in the body of the "diary".

Fynn seems to be at a loss as to how to present Shaka's alleged brutality, asserting on the one hand that the "recital of his cruelties, though horrid, is necessary, for the omission might leave him entitled to be regarded only as a savage [?]", but on the other that "it is needless to dwell on the enormity of his cruelty". Similarly, Fynn grapples unsuccessfully with the radical contradictions in his presentation of Shaka's personality:

It required some offset to gloss over this [cruelty], his predominant feature. He seemed to possess qualities that might do so, and these, though only assumed, were sufficient for the ends he had in view. When the feelings of his heart were appealed to, he was by no means deficient in kind expression, and tears appeared to be always ready at his command. Excessive liberality gained for him that ascendancy for which he was esteemed above all before him. His despotism made the lives and property of all his followers exclusively his own. ... The successes that had always attended him in his numerous wars, and his own pretensions to superiority, led his followers to believe he was more than human; and in this light he was ever adored by his subjects. (19-20)

Fynn seems uncertain as to whether this kindness and liberality is cunningly "assumed" or real, whether the tears are genuine or can be summoned on "command". Having attributed Shaka's success to super-human adoration, in almost the next breath Fynn states that "by his tyranny and barbarous acts, Shaka secured the most abject submission to his will" (21).

This irresolution does not in itself necessarily impugn Fynn. However, as with Isaacs, there are grounds to suspect that the brutality has been considerably exaggerated. As we will see, Fynn clearly inflated other aspects of Shaka's rule. He had, in addition, a habit of expanding into a generalisation what he elsewhere recorded as a single incident: in one rendition he relates an incident on "One day", in which an *inyanga* condemns three men to death; in a parallel account, about the same journey, the executions by *inyangas* are observed "frequently" and on "several occasions" (70). Secondly, although the chronology of the *Diary* can hardly be relied on (it is not made clear, for instance, that two substantial portions of time are simply omitted: October 1825 to May 1826, and October 1826 to March 1827 [122,131]), it is legitimate to question what basis Fynn had for judging Shaka, since by his own account he was only in Shaka's presence for a combined total of about two-and-a-half months.⁴ The degree of ignorance is indicated by one anecdote, in which "we observed Shaka gave orders for a man standing close to us to be killed, *for what crime we could not learn*" (75; emphasis added).

More credible - or at least less refutable - than the generalisations or hearsay stories in the "Historical Introduction" are Fynn's eyewitness anecdotes about Shaka in the narrative body of the "diary". These anecdotes, throughout the literature, form the essence of the Shaka story, and contribute to a characteristic fragmentation in presentation and explanation; they have generally been permitted to remain in their episodic and contradictory state, since this has reinforced European views of Africans generally, and Shaka in particular, as hypocritical and inexplicable, indeed hardly worth explaining. As Fynn himself put it: "Such opposed kinds of conduct in one person appeared to me strange, but I afterwards became convinced that both the contradictory dispositions, delicate feeling and extreme brutality, were intimately blended in him" (151-2).

But against the generalisations of brutality Fynn does present a number of more positive observations, eagerly seized upon by post-1950s "Africanists". In several places Fynn fleetingly notes Shaka's acumen and perspicacity, though often grudgingly: in telling how on his first visit he had to give way to Shaka's arguments, Fynn blames his unfamiliarity with the language (76-82). However, Fynn betrays no hesitation in relaying what Shaka said, to the extent of reproducing an entire conversation in drama-form: it is an open question how accurately Fynn was remembering these "actual words", and how accurately they were being translated at the time. Nevertheless, some of these conversations would become staples of Shakan literature, especially those which criticised the whites (for having vulnerable feet, pale skins instead of black, prisons instead of executions). In many of these anecdotes, an undercurrent of covert sarcasm runs, as Fynn retains a belief in his own intrinsic superiority ("my wisdom was applauded by all present" [77]). This is particularly the case with the famous anecdote of Shaka's desire for Macassar oil to hide his greying hairs; this would be further exaggerated as an all-consuming belief in the oil's capacity to grant "eternal youth". At other points Fynn refers to Shaka's "good humour", "most affable manner", "intense interest", "lively and pleasant conversation" - and to the now best-known demonstration of Shaka's kindness to his grandmother: "he frequently washed her eyes and ears which were in a sad state because of her age; he also pared her nails and otherwise treated her as a father might his child" (119,138,121). Finally Fynn, relating another arbitrary execution, writes that at the "moment the assegai pierced the body Shaka averted his head, his countenance betraying something like a feeling of horror, but we had not proceeded more than a mile when two other unfortunates experienced the same fate" (152).

These instances aside, the stories presented in the *Diary* are deployed to confirm Fynn's final justification of Shaka's assassination: "his independence of all self-control would have hurried him to such acts as would have compelled the nation to revolt and destroy him,

or suffer in some terrible way" (161). Though much more nuanced than Isaacs' gothic portrayal, Fynn's account appears still strongly swayed by Isaacs' own appeal to Fynn to "make [Shaka and Dingane] out as bloodthirsty as you can ... it all tends to swell up the work and make it interesting" (Isaacs to Fynn, 10.12.1832; Kirby 1968:67).

Further problems abound. To take one limited but often crucial area, Fynn's numbers are frequently dubious. His estimates of distances are often inflated, or inconsistent. At one point he states the distance from Port Natal to Shaka's kraal is 200 miles, at another only 125. At another juncture two parallel accounts state "several hundred" and "100" people respectively. During his first journey to Shaka, he says he is accompanied by 100 "natives", but in a "note" by only 30. On arriving at Shaka's place, he in one account is confronted by "80 000 natives in war attire", in another by "12 000 men in their war attire". (The editors explain this away by assuming that in the first figure Fynn "includes regiments of girls, women, servants, etc., as well", but one wonders how they could possibly know this [45,70,90,67,68,71]. In any event, Farewell, who was also present, put the numbers of armed men at "eight or nine thousand" [Gewald 11; Bird 191]⁵.) Introducing the land grant allegedly given by Shaka to Farewell, Fynn says in the text that the grant extended 50 miles inland; the "grant" itself, on the same page, states "one hundred miles backward from the sea shore". Writing of the Zulus' attack on Sikhunyana's Ndwandwe in 1826, Fynn alleges 40 000 Ndwandwe deaths in 90 minutes, an impossible casualty rate which exceeds even that of the British on the first day of the Somme (Fynn 1950:87,126).

Such examples may serve no more than to cast some doubt on the accuracy of Fynn's memory, but mean, at least, that a sceptical eye needs to be cast on his other figures - the "2000" people of the original Zulu polity, the "7000" slaughtered after Nandi's death, the sizes of armed contingents, the numbers of "refugees" he claimed to have saved. A more

serious misuse of figures, however, points to deeper motives. In an exaggeration which would become crucial to the growth of Zulu mythology, Fynn avers that Shaka dominated "the country to a distance of 300 miles to the westward, 200 miles to the northward and 500 miles to the southward" - an area extending well beyond Delagoa Bay, as far north as present-day Johannesburg, and over the then Cape Colony frontier. This obviously cannot be sustained: Fynn himself asserts that the "Zulus" furthest from Port Natal, the "Orontontes, or Hottentots", were to be found 50 miles *south* of Delagoa Bay, and it is clear that Shaka never went anywhere near the Cape Colony (18,42).

The geographical inflation accompanies the other staple exaggeration of settler historiographical mythology: the depopulation of the region. This issue has now been addressed in numerous publications, and increasingly debunked as the fantasy of a justificatory settler ideology.⁶ It is worth reinforcing the fragility of the notion as it is presented in the *Diary*, given its bearing on Shaka's character. On no evidence whatsoever, Fynn claims the number of people killed by Shaka's conquests "exceed[s] a million", and the whole area of conquest, "exceed[ing] the Cape Colony in extent ... is, for the greater part quite void of inhabitants". Fynn had certainly not travelled over anything like that area, and his notion of depopulation is contradicted in his own and others' accounts. He claims that the 225 miles between Port Natal and the Mpondo (a doubling of the actual distance) contained "no inhabitants", and that only north of the port could the marauding Zulus plunder grain. This is contradicted, for example, by James King's account of the immediate vicinity of Port Natal, inserted by the editors a few pages earlier, in which King notes that "Indian corn" was being grown there "in abundance" (20,64,54). One might cite also the missionary Allen Gardiner's 1837 letter to the Cape government:

The territory alleged [by the Europeans at Port Natal] to have been made over to the white people as a free possession by Charka and subsequently confirmed to them by his successor, Dingarn, was merely the right of hunting, an assertion which requires no other demonstration than the simple fact that Zoolu towns and villages were

scattered over the whole district between the Zugola and the Umgani rivers, viz. within 9 or 10 miles of Port Natal, *until after the accession of Dingarn to the supreme government.* (Gardiner to Bell, 13.6.1837; *RN* III 178-9; emphasis added)

Fynn's tendency to exaggerate is also indicated by the tone of melodrama which enters his rendition of the supposed consequences of Zulu predation: "thousands were left for years to linger on the slender sustenance of roots - some even of a poisonous kind ... [I]f the cravings of starvation led to a disregard of caution ... [i]nsanity was the inevitable consequence. In this state they cast themselves down from mountain cliffs or became helplessly the prey of wolves or tigers". As J-B Gewald (20) points out, this tone of hyperbole enters particularly when Fynn is relating hearsay stories, or events which apparently no other white witnessed but himself. It may also show Fynn's catering for the tastes of his putative readership, since he apparently "had publication always in mind". Thus one cannot take at face value, say, Fynn's statement that he witnessed "six thousand unhappy beings ... driven by their hungry craving in many instances to devour their fellows", particularly as this is the prelude to his self-exculpatory assertion that he "saved" 4000 refugees from Shaka's campaigns (21,xiii,22-4).

The refugee question, as a central facet of Fynn's subsequent reputation for humanitarianism, merits closer attention. The following is one of many confused passages in the *Diary* which so defy logic that one suspects deliberate obfuscation:

The excessive liberality of Shaka in his gifts of cattle to the European party enabled them to do much in alleviating the distress which they witnessed around them; the first attempt, however, in affording relief was attended with obstacles. The safety of the party would be endangered by Shaka's displeasure, and, moreover, as Europeans had never before been seen in the country, the motives of their offers of help were misconstrued by these victims of misery, who fled from them as from destruction. The treatment experienced by the first of the natives who accepted relief soon brought the remainder to Port Natal - above 4000 of both sexes were saved in this way - and Shaka, hitherto implacable in their regard, became softened and, feeling a deep interest in forwarding the views of the Europeans, he encouraged rather than discountenanced the protection afforded to the distressed, and he spared the lives of those of his subjects who, having been sentenced to death, had made their escape and fled to Port Natal. (Fynn 1950:22)

Shaka's "excessive liberality" (also alluded to elsewhere in the *Diary*), and his "deep interest in forwarding the views of the Europeans", is frequently contradicted as Fynn portrays himself as having suffered innumerable hardships. It also rests uncomfortably with the monstrosity of which Shaka is repeatedly accused. No explanation is given as to why Shaka should have "softened" in this particular case, or how these refugees could be regarded as having been "saved" if Shaka had spared them anyway.⁷ As we will see, there is little evidence that Fynn was so selflessly philanthropic. The explanation is surely the Europeans' concern to portray themselves as an "oasis in the moral wilderness", as Isaacs put it (I 272), and as a highly privileged, because innately superior, people. The portrayal of Shaka himself is thus intimately tied to, is largely a product of, this self-identification, riven with the same internal contradictions. Hence, too, Fynn immediately appends a two-page explanation of the analogous fragmentation, and European "rescue", of the "Mfengu" in the Eastern Cape; Fynn clearly wishes to align his own activities with humanitarian settler ideals being expressed in the Colony proper:

I endeavoured to explain [to Shaka] the reasons for the attempt I had made [to reach the Mpondo] by saying it was customary with my countrymen to try and become acquainted with the manners and customs of other natives with a view to self improvement, and, in return, to strive to benefit those with whom they come in contact by teaching them something of British manners and customs (Fynn 1950:93).

If this is quite clearly Fynn "ventriloquising" idealised mores of a larger society, only fully contextualising this symbolic utterance can expose the mendacity of the humanitarian alibi and allow accurate alignment of the text's voices against one another. The foregoing, necessary annotation of the text's internal fractures can likewise go little further than pointing up empirical difficulties, until fuller contextualisation of individual utterances, each within its "conditions of possibility", in the Foucauldian phrase, unfolds their layers of symbolic import. To make a start, by rounding out the picture of Fynn's career and reputation, within which the *Diary* was necessarily constructed, I question not only the reliability of Fynn as historical witness, but the very notion of "Fynn" as individual author.

Reputation as alibi: Fynn's career

Most published accounts of Fynn's life are sketchy and hagiographic: B J T Leverton's outline in the *Dictionary of South African Biography* (1968) typically praises Fynn's "courage ... and his unfailing good temper, to say nothing of his humanity", his "unceasing activity and steady determination" in the service of "civilisation". With only mild exaggeration, though, Leverton adds, "until his death he was regarded both in and out of Natal as the final authority on matters relating to the natives of Natal, and it was said by many that his knowledge of the Natal tribes was even greater than that of Theophilus Shepstone" (Leverton 1968:305-6). As in Isaacs' case, however, the documentation suggests a more complex, and less simplistically adulatory, picture.

Little is known of Fynn's early life. He was born, probably in London, on 29 March 1803; the sole record of his education was a brief spell, aged 13, as a "lob-lolly boy", as Fynn himself termed it, in Christ's Hospital (Fynn 1950:66n). He spent the period 1824 to 1834 in Natal, carving out his own minor chiefdom between the Zulu and the Mpondo; worked as an interpreter for the British Army around Grahamstown; spent a year as government agent among his old neighbours the Mpondo; was in 1837 appointed Frontier Agent among the Tembu on the north-east frontier; was sent again to the Mpondo in 1850; and spent the last ten years of his life in various magistracies in Natal's Lower Umkomaas and Durban areas. Of this turbulent and illuminating career, I focus on the way in which the character of the man, and his relationship to government and to the tenor of his time, have been cumulatively masked by the construction of his reputation.

Fynn early slotted into the violence characteristic of an intensely racist frontier situation, in which the manipulation and murder of Africans passed as routine. The border official C L Stretch was sure in 1843 that his fellow-agent was "the same Fynn that was in

charge of the P.Off. [sic]" perhaps at Bathurst,⁸ where he was alleged to have "robbed the store at Bathurst and fled to the Zoolas where he lived for many years as a Zoola chief".⁹ This would have happened around 1822. If the insinuation is true, every statement that Fynn subsequently made about his motivations for the Natal venture needs to be reassessed. Later, Fynn lied more subtly about his role, making out in one case that he was "in charge" of the vessel, in another that he had been the sole initiator:¹⁰ he was certainly neither.

In Natal itself, Fynn "went native", fathered several known children of Zulu "wives",¹¹ took part in Shaka's wars, and generally joined the pattern, not only of local "petty warfare", but of the established European plunder-systems, by which "The prisoners taken by each tribe are purchased by the Portuguese to become slaves" (Fynn 1950:44). About what he was plundering himself Fynn is generally evasive. His occasional allusions to ivory are unsupported by actual accounts of elephant-hunting, and little ivory appears to have filtered through to the Cape before the 1830s.¹² The *Diary* contains instead numerous vague references to "business" and "transactions", the nature of which are never specified (22,110,111); in later years, too, Fynn told William Bazely cryptically that he "would have been a rich man" had it not been for "certain specie" which was due to be "shipped at Cape Town but wasn't" (*JSA* I 58). This is diametrically opposed to the myth fostered within the Fynn clan, that Fynn was purely "a traveller and a pioneer", and never pursued "mercenary ends".¹³

Cobbing has postulated that Fynn's evasiveness is negative indication that the Natal traders were slaving. For this there is some, but as yet inconclusive evidence.¹⁴ Slaving seems, at least, a more plausible motive than any other available for, say, the "Zulu" raid towards the Cape frontier in 1828. This as yet imperfectly investigated fracas created a major panic, resulting in the gratuitous destruction of the Ngwane at Mbolompo and the

discovery that the raid was in fact led, or at least accompanied by, Fynn himself (see Cobbing 1988a; Hamilton 1992; *RN* II 1-112). Shaka was mendaciously blamed, and the story invented that Fynn had been held as a hostage - an early instance of white violence being projected onto Shaka.

Whatever the truth of this particular episode, certainly Fynn and his companions initiated the general pattern into which the subsequent settlers, a "set of lawless vagabonds", fell (Smith to D'Urban, 28.11.1835; *RN* III 6). By 1828, when Shaka was killed, Fynn was an effectively independent force ensconced between the Zulu and the Mpondo. Whatever deference the whites had had to show initially was rapidly counter-balanced by the growing influence of their firearms. Though they claimed they were forced to join Shaka's raids, it appears rather that they were soon able to maintain a kind of amicable balance of power with Shaka, whereby Shaka could occasionally enlist assistance. The so-called "refugees" whom Fynn claimed to have rescued from Shaka's own depredations, were also people increasingly attracted by this power; accordingly, like other local chieftains, Fynn did not hesitate to mete out capital punishment to alleged turncoats. In the *Diary* he laconically relates how in 1831 he shot a Zulu defector and "personal servant", Lukilimba, for allegedly betraying him to Dingane (Fynn 1950:205; evidence of Bazely, *JSA* I 61; Kirby 1955:73). At least two others were likewise killed, according to Bazely, who graphically confirmed the murder of Lukilimba. Also in this period, Fynn sent an *impi* to kill Mzoboshi, another previous adherent accused of reneging on him, and was even bold enough to threaten Dingane himself with his pistol (*JSA* I 55; II 295). In short, there were excellent reasons for the name given to Fynn's people, the *iziNkumbi*, Locusts, and equally good reason to credit Andrew Smith's 1832 translation of Fynn's "native" name, Mbulazi or Mbuyazi, as "killer".¹⁵ The latter was later translated rather as the innocuous "long-tailed finch", "prince of the Bay", or "he who returns often"¹⁶ - a synecdoche of the re-creation of Fynn's wider reputation.

Almost certainly Fynn became increasingly embroiled in local internecine disputes, and though he became confident enough to launch raids on the Zulu themselves (*JSA* IV 15), finally ran foul of them, and left or was chased out in 1834 (this episode, too, needs further investigation, current accounts being over-dependent on Fynn and Isaacs themselves). Returning to the Eastern Cape, Fynn seemed unable to break the raiding habit. In any case, his ability to muster African "troops" frequently meshed neatly with British military requirements. He accompanied Thomas Holden Bowker's candidly murderous cross-frontier patrols from Grahamstown in 1834,¹⁷ and was sent in 1835 by Governor Benjamin D'Urban (as Fynn melodramatically described it) "confidentially to discharge a very delicate duty in preserving the faithfulness of the tribes in the rear of the Kaffir enemy" (Fynn to Grey, 5.11.1855; *NEC* IV 247), by which was meant fomenting Mpondo aggression in order to catch the Xhosa in a pincer movement. The cavalier fashion in which he performed this duty elicited from Colonel Harry Smith, then frontier commander, the vitriolic comment, cited in the epigraph, that Fynn was "delighted with his situation" amongst the Mpondo and was "a retrograde Christian and a progressive barbarian," and "a greater ass and Don Quixote than one could possibly conceive".¹⁸ Smith hastily extracted Fynn, "who has so far exceeded his original instructions as to [be] injurious to the general cause of peace" (Smith to D'Urban, 15.12.1835; *RN* III 23).

Thereafter, in both his north-east Cape and Natal posts, Fynn was so repeatedly accused by local settlers and missionaries of exacerbating violence, committing murder, and illegally raiding, that though Fynn was never convicted by law it is difficult not to credit at least some of it. In 1843 the missionary James Read described him as "'Sir Benjamin's creature' & did his 'dirty work' during the war", and wrote to John Philip that "The Boers have all left the neighbourhood. Fynn is the cause, altho' he brought them there. They told me that if they had to do with Fynn they would all leave - if anyone would take up the cause

the most awful things would be brought to light". Among these "awful things", Fynn was accused of trying to implicate Read himself in "the affair which caused [a local chieftain] Makelima's murder". What actually happened, according to Read, was that Fynn "had been the first to propose that Read against his intentions should receive Makelima to [his mission station at Kat River] with all his followers - later he disapproved of the station. Afterwards Makelima is murdered in cold blood by Fynn, without trial". Moreover, "[East Cape Lt.-Gov.] Col. Hare treats the case with perfect indifference".¹⁹

This government collusion was not absolute: on two occasions, Fynn found himself arraigned before a Court of Inquiry. In 1845, amid a welter of settlement disputes between Boers, San (Bushmen), and missionaries, he was peremptorily suspended during the defence of Shiloh, and never got his job back, despite being officially "completely exculpated" from the charge of "improper appropriation of cattle" (Montagu to Lt-Gov, 21.8.1845, NAFP/12). Fynn was moved back to Faku's Mpondo, where competition for land and cattle generated similar problems of murder, untraceable raids, and virulent rumour. Faku had signed a treaty with the Cape Government granting him jurisdiction over peoples in fact outside his control; Fynn himself lost Faku's confidence and finally requested transfer (Fynn to Pine, 9.1.1851, NAFP/2). Meanwhile, he had to face Natal Attorney-General Walter Harding's inquiry into allegations of "a most wanton and unprovoked attack"²⁰ on an innocent people, and the removal of over 1000 head of cattle to the Natal Colony, which later had to be returned. The case dragged on for three years, and finally, with the intervention of Natal Governor B C C Pine, also "cleared [Fynn] from all blame" (Pine to Fynn, 20.1.1850, NAFP/10). These were far from the only questionable incidents, however. Fynn's own statements are at times contradictory enough to support suspicion.²¹ The gathering of another (Zulu) force to threaten the Xhosa in 1851 generated a similar flurry of queries, and there were further hints that the Fynns were gun-running.²² Harry Smith, now Governor,

who had called for the Zulu force in the first place, grumbled: "Mr Fynn is a man of very romantic temperament, carried away by the force of his own conceived exertions ... I expect no Zulus" (Bramdeow 66). This incident contributed to Fynn's making a "bungling mess" of a mission to Mpande in 1857; Fynn wanted, the Zulu suspected, "only to steal away the people" (Bramdeow 86) - one can only surmise as slaves of some kind.

The moral mask perceptibly cracks in other ways, too. Most striking today, perhaps, is the frankness with which Fynn relates his own violence. In the "diary", despite it deliberately omitting much other morally reprehensible detail, he felt no need to conceal his supercilious attitude towards the local Africans. The northern Natal people, for instance, since they were "more industrious than the Kaffirs [the Xhosa]", he "should recommend as being at once procurable and adaptable to the labour requirements of Natal". They, like Shaka himself, "could not help acknowledging our [Europeans'] superiority". In a revealingly defensive note omitted from publication by Stuart, Fynn wrote that

under a just but rigid Master Kafirs are either as servants or subjects, active and faithful and ever interested in their master's welfare ... but on a Kafir leaving his servitude, under whatever pretence I from that moment anticipate his treacherous character will be displayed either in the plunder of my property or as opportunity may offer. (NAFP/17)

As both white man and local potentate, Fynn felt doubly justified in administering violent coercion: "we were obliged temporarily to increase our party by three women *obtained* from the bush, to help carry the things"; "Finding the man who was there disinclined to give it [milk], I took it by force" (Fynn 1950:46,82,94,97; emphasis added). Similar paternalistic violence characterised his magistracy.²³ William Bazely related the following incident, told him by Fynn himself:

[While they were fleeing from Dingane] Kofiyana or someone else came to Fynn and told him there was a man amongst them who was a spy and had been trying to loiter behind to bring the enemy on. This made Kofiyana suspicious. Fynn said, "Kill the dog," but one of Fynn's wives - possibly [his daughter] Nomanga's mother - said, "But why kill him; what harm has he done?" Fynn got angry, turned around, and

picked up a dry stick ... and hit her with it, saying... "Women have no business to mix in men's affairs". (*JSA I* 59)

William Leathern gleefully told a similar story:

A kaffir came past. Fynn had a sjambok in his hand, one he always carried. The kaffir did not greet him, and Fynn asked him why... The kaffir was cheeky ... [Fynn] then gave him a downright good thrashing... This did a great deal of good. (*JSA I* 277)

These commonplaces of colonial racism, of course, did not alloy Leathern's judgement of Fynn as "a very honest, straightforward man", or Bazely's that he was "as kind-hearted a man as ever I have known", moreover "respected and loved by every native in the country". This is the reputation-as-alibi in miniature.

It is scarcely necessary to point out how widespread such attitudes were, beyond quoting Harry Smith who, expressing his concurrence with Fynn's own views, asked Fynn to "always remember me to every well-disposed fellow among them [the Thembu], while you hold me up as a terror to the more uncontrollable among them" (Smith to Fynn 6.10.1837; KCFP 22887). To manage "the naturally unstable and restless disposition of my quondam children," Smith added, "what they required was one determined spirit to rule them by vigour and kindness" (Smith to Fynn, 18.12.1837; KCFP 22887). We need not deny absolutely Fynn's capacity for this paternalistic species of kindness, but the kindness was dependent on tractability, and tractability, in the final analysis, on force.

Of course, Fynn was no more unmitigated monster than Shaka was. The correspondence is also replete with letters of praise for the "judicious" manner in which Fynn handles various crises, the competence of his reports, his friendship - all threatening to create an equally contradictory portrait. If we can believe one letter, even Fynn's "native" charges sometimes appreciated him.²⁴ It was a very defensive Fynn who had an amanuensis write out the notes of approbation received over several years - all from government colleagues:

D'Urban, Pine, and especially Harry Smith (NAFP/10). Clearly he often did his job well. Though he was not always in agreement with policy,²⁵ equally clearly approval came because even his disreputable methods were sometimes in accordance with government's own: officials occasionally forgot propriety and exhorted Fynn, or his surrogates, to "plunder the Enemies Cattle *[sic]*", or assured Fynn, "your army will come in for some of the spoil" (T C Smith to Fynn, 10.6.1846; NAFP/1; W S Gordon to Fynn [n.d., c.1851], NAFP/2). Hence, while some of the above negative counter-narrative remains more report than proof, it more than suffices to dislodge the conventional adulation.

The consolidation of a deliberately distortive individual reputation is a microcosm of the broader struggle between "civilising" moral precepts and the exigencies of real invasion. Nowhere is this clearer than in the issue of Fynn's bids for his own land, with which a large proportion of his correspondence is concerned, and which incidentally shows the limits of government approval of Fynn. Early on Fynn had applied for a Kat River plot; despite D'Urban's support, this failed. Similarly, the Natal Executive Council snubbed a later request, made on the grounds that Shaka had made the 1824 land grant to him. The NEC somewhat superciliously noted Fynn's previous bids for land, in 1843 and 1856, when he had claimed 2000 acres; he was now claiming 6000 acres on the strength of Shaka's grant. But as the NEC was aware, this grant was "not made ... to Mr Fynn himself but to Mr Farewell, and only witnessed by Mr Fynn in his capacity as supercargo".²⁶ When he finally retired to a small house on Durban's Bluff, Fynn's reward was to die on 20 September 1861 landless, his widow destitute (see Christiana Fynn to Natal Legislative Council, 4.8.1862; KCFP 22889).

This ambivalence towards Fynn, and earlier negative appraisals in the literature,²⁷ rapidly disappeared from the collective memory. Fynn himself, largely in the interest of his

hunger for land, and as a defence against the persistent calumnies, had laid the foundation for the glowing myth of the humane pioneer which quickly took hold. He had placed particular, and mendacious stress on his relationship with Shaka. His central claim was that he had inspired Shaka with such a "feeling of confidence" in him that he had managed to rescue the victims of Shaka's own predations; indeed, Shaka was

so convinced of the disinterestedness of [my] motives in thus helping these wretched people that he supplied [me] with cattle and corn and urged [me] to assume the chieftaincy of the country of Natal, ceding to [me] the territory from the Umlaas to the Umzimkulu... [I] undertook this charge and continued in that position until 1834, in the hope that the British would take possession of the port... (NEC IV 247)

As already noted, Shaka's alleged respect for "disinterestedness" jars so violently with the brutality of the rest of the portrait that one or other trait must surely be inaccurate, if not both. Fynn's modest undertaking of this "charge", conveyed here as if reluctantly fulfilling a beholden duty, also, as we have seen, contradicts the evidence; the adventurers showed no desire for British annexation until after they had left.

The canard of a formal land grant from Shaka, and "rescue" of refugees, was later closely tied to Fynn's alleged medical expertise. This, as even Fynn acknowledged, was minimal. His apparent efficacy in the "bringing back to life" of a sick woman, which supposedly endeared him to Shaka, is by Fynn's own account nonsensical; his treatment of Shaka's stab wound with camomile tea in 1824, in itself an unverifiable story, was self-confessedly ineffective (Fynn 1950:66,84). The only account of medical "expertise" outside the *Diary* indicates that his skill derived from "kaffir medicines", not from Western science (JSA I 60). Nevertheless, Fynn's medical prowess was elevated by subsequent commentators to a central place in Fynn's "humanity" towards the locals. Thus a Rhodesian descendant, Ivy Crause Fynn, would write that Fynn "was able to cure Shaka of a disease", this going hand in hand with another fiction, that he was "sent by the Imperial Government to form a settlement at Port Natal".²⁸ Further, Fynn's reputation as a Zulu "expert" was assiduously

exaggerated: the portrayal of liberal humanity and compassion became indivisible from a reputation for unimpeachable accuracy. In this way, errors were stitched together into a seamless mythology, and were further entrenched by the editors of the *Diary*. Fynn was rapidly transformed into the epitome of the colonial moral mask, a disingenuous alibi, even more for subsequent settlers eager to whitewash their past than for Fynn himself. If not in material acquisitions, in textual terms Fynn did indeed become, as one correspondent called him, the "Proprietor of Natal" (Phillips to Fynn, 13.9.1833, NAFP/1).

In sum, like many frontiersmen of the period, Fynn was a ruffian who made good, espousing - and perhaps partly growing into - a moral outlook he had repeatedly transgressed. He epitomises the ambivalent status of the border official whose racist violence was an unacknowledged qualification for the job, but whose position demanded the exercise of legalities he had himself defied. A sedulous if unaccomplished writer, Fynn was well able to defend himself against accusations which bedevilled his whole career, and to mobilise government friends into creating a largely spurious reputation for selfless humanitarianism.

The subsequent "production" of "Fynn" has been extensively reviewed by Pridmore (1990, 1994) and need only be summarised here. The motif of Fynn's "deep compassion for this deserted land where only fear remained" (Watt 97) is reiterated and romanticised throughout the literature, bolstering the manufacture of the colonists' self-image as civilisers. As Fynn's editor-to-be put it, in the kind of sonorous language we have already encountered:

It was Fynn, who by unceasing activity and a steady determination helped most *ab initio* to lay the foundations and make it possible for the colony of which we are now so proud, to become not only nominally but actually and continuously a portion of the British Empire. (cited in Pridmore 1990:21)

In a similar absorption of Fynn into the sweep of the Empire's "moral genealogy", anthropologist-historian A T Bryant, in tones redolent of Walter Scott, eulogised the adventurers as "worthy scions of the good old stock, a bold and merry crew fired with the

ancient spirit of adventure and quest of fortune, which made the empire" (Bryant 1929:566). This, too, echoes the frequent "Robinson Crusoe" parallels.²⁹ In turning to the *Diary* itself, then, Fynn's reputation as *the* authority on Shaka's Zulus needs consistently to be read in the light of his fictionalisation as romantic hero, the jewel amongst the "knight errantry" of Natal, as Graham Mackeurtan admiringly called them (1930:128).

"Deletions and alterations": constructing the *Diary*

The *Diary* was not the first writing of Fynn's to meet the public eye: apart from occasional newspaper correspondence, Andrew Smith had aired some of (if P R Kirby is correct) Fynn's original notes, subsequently lost;³⁰ and J C Chase had included specially commissioned Fynn material in his 1843 collection of Natal documents.³¹ More importantly, John Bird's *Annals of Natal* (1888) included extensive pieces by Fynn;³² only these, somewhat modified, were added to the Natal Archives Fynn papers to form the basis of the *Diary*. Space does not permit a full examination of the many discrepancies between these writings and the published work; the essential point is that from the start the *Diary* was compiled from a relatively narrow selection of Fynn's full œuvre. The following discussion focusses on the editors' - Stuart and Malcolm's - handling of this narrower selection alone.

In its architecture, the *Diary* is no less problematic than Isaacs' *Travels*. The volume is not a "diary" at all, but a palimpsest of various writings, produced between 1832 and 1861, many being active and self-serving interventions into Fynn's own life and career. Although Fynn allegedly, like Isaacs, kept a detailed journal at the time, this was (the story goes) accidentally buried, wrapped in an elephant ear, with his brother Frank, and could not without causing serious offence be retrieved (Fynn 1950:xii). Fynn himself avoided mentioning this awkward fact. The fragments then rewritten from memory were retained by an indifferent family³³ for many years before being passed to James Stuart for editing.³⁴

Three scripts marking the progression towards publication are extant: (a) a handwritten notebook, written post-1840 [hereafter *D1*]; (b) a bound volume of typewritten copies of various Fynn papers from the Natal Archives, presumably prepared by Stuart, or typed up from Stuart's papers [*D2*]; and (c) a typescript little different from the published *Diary*, presumably as worked up by Malcolm after Stuart's death [*D3*].³⁵

Stuart himself noted the initial difficulties. Fynn's accounts were "compressed and disconnected", and he had clearly received "literary assistance" from "four or five" discernible hands.³⁶ Some of the notebooks [*sic*: there is only the one in the Natal Archives] were "damaged and, in some cases, well-nigh indecipherable" (Fynn 1950:xiii). As he put it in an early proposal dated 14.9.36, the papers were "for the most part, fragmentary, hence extremely difficult to piece together in such a way as to become a coherent whole" (CAMKJ/103; also KCM MS1053), and in a draft preface for the book stated that they were "from a literary point of view ... in a distinctly unsatisfactory and discouraging condition...". In this same draft, omitted from the published version, he wrote:

In 1834, Fynn obtained the services of an amanuensis to edit and arrange his material in book form. The fullest use was accordingly made of the above note book as well as of other material; a separate MS was prepared therefrom and divided into seven chapters, parts of two others and 13 smaller pieces for insertion at places to be determined. Fynn himself revised this reconstructed version ... for some reason or other, publication was withheld.³⁷

This statement, like the published preface, still substantially conceals Stuart's editorial role. Much of the *Diary* is in fact derived from the earliest notebook, *D1*, which was probably written no earlier than 1840,³⁸ and not from any revision by Fynn. In *D2*, a six-chapter rearrangement of some of the material can be found in typescript alongside Stuart's unordered copies of most (but not all) of the fragments from the Natal Archives, but this rearrangement is incomplete, and some of the *Diary* is in any case taken from the other fragments. Since originals of these "revisions" do not appear to exist, it is not clear which, if any, were in fact undertaken by Fynn; "chapter VI" was reproduced in part in Bird's

Annals, so must have been Fynn's, but there are indications that even at this stage Stuart was making his own interpolations.³⁹ In any event, what finally emerged in the *Diary* was an indiscriminate mixture of the extant versions; or rather, discriminations were made for reasons other than authenticity, chronological order, or substantiality of source.

Several other documents indicate that the major part of the reconstruction work was in fact Stuart's, and that this involved much more than "very slightly touching the original", as he claimed. Firstly, Stuart intensified Bird's concern with the public image, also deeming it "advisable to introduce much the same modifications of diction" (Stuart, draft preface, KCM MS 1487a); to publish the papers as they stood, Stuart noted in his 1936 proposal, would have been "unfair not only to the Author but to the public, as well as prejudicial to the success of the venture".⁴⁰ On this proposal Stuart's widow Ellen added, "a very great deal more has been done to the manuscript since my late husband wrote this paper" (her comment dated 26 April 1944, two years before Douglas Malcolm's intervention). James Stuart's brother, Philip, commented that "the major portion of the manuscript is James Stuart's work, *based on* the Fynn papers" (le Mare to Malherbe, 23.7.1945; KCM 2348/2; emphasis added). Finally, Killie Campbell noted that Stuart "scored and scored his MS to get the right way of saying it and was just not content to let a phrase go past that he did not think was quite correct," and that "the last ten chapters had to be written up again as it was difficult to make out as Mr Stuart had scored out so much" (Campbell to Beatrice Marx, 14.9.1946, 14.2.1947; CAMKJ/103).

This is borne out by the manuscripts themselves. *The Times* noted that after Stuart's death in 1942 were found

111 sections of Fynn's diary in separate folders, each of them copied in neat handwriting or typescript, and carefully annotated from the result of Mr Stuart's researches at the British Museum, and among the records of the Church Missionary Society.⁴¹

These must be the 111 sections, all typewritten and numbered as such, copied and bound into the *D2* volume, and noted as received by Killie Campbell in 1946, prior to being passed on to Malcolm. It also appears that Stuart had compiled what was deemed one "publishable" script of a projected two volumes from the 111 sections, plus the segments from Bird - presumably a typescript which was worked on by Malcolm. This is not the *D3* script, which is too close to the published version;⁴² the intermediate script does not appear amongst Stuart's papers, so the full details of his intervention remain blurred.

In any event, even this "publishable" version remained unsatisfactory and selective; not even all of the original notebook had been copied out by Stuart, and Malcolm considered that this "first draft ... has many deficiencies and will need a good deal of rearranging. There are quite a few incidents and items in the original diary which ... would I think improve it" (Campbell to Marx, 17.2.1949; Malcolm to Marx, 16.2.1948; CAMKJ/103). Malcolm, for his part, while claiming to preserve Stuart's work more or less intact, found "a rearrangement of the chapters was required", as well as the inclusion of additional material and an unspecified number of "deletions and alterations" (Fynn 1950:ix). Although some of Malcolm's own rough notes on his modifications concern mostly the "ethnographical" sections (KCM 1054a), Pridmore perhaps underestimates his role in claiming that his intervention was largely orthographical, and his attitude towards the historical material one of an "uninformed passive acceptance"; he seems to have been responsible for more than just the final reordering into "historical introduction", the "diary", and "notes on customs" (Pridmore 1993:20).

Whatever the precise details, three crucial points are clear. First, the eventual architecture of the *Diary*, Stuart's claims notwithstanding, bears no resemblance to anything Fynn himself compiled. Secondly, the editing process decisively obscured the embeddedness

of Fynn's notes in his own life and circumstances: at least one account was originally addressed to the Governor, being a demonstrably self-interested bid for favour and land.⁴³ Thirdly, Stuart and Malcolm's stylistic alterations decisively elevated Fynn's often clumsy and obscure writing to an unrepresentative level of intellect and competence. The changes to a modernised orthography of Zulu names (though, unlike the stylistic alterations, the originals are usually footnoted) is a synecdoche of this process, incidentally adding a persuasive ambience of scholarly discrimination. There is little question that the *Diary* would have had dramatically less popular and historiographical impact had it not been welded into a more or less seamless, stylistically fluent narrative. As it happened (though initially rejected by Oxford University Press and Longmans), the *Diary* sold well (Marx to Campbell, 28.12.1950, KCSP, file 47, 24017; Shuter & Shooter to Marx, 1.2.1951, CAMKJ/103). Professor Hattersley's solitary negative review was dismissed as "sour grapes" and "niggardly" and was buried in the general enthusiasm (Malcolm to Marx, 31.1.1951; Campbell to Marx, 2.2.1951; CAMKJ/103).

One example will suffice to illustrate the process. The following extract from the *D1* notebook, recounting Nandi's death, reveals Fynn's stylistic lack of polish:

Chaka requested me to pay her a visit and cattle ordered to be killed as offerings to her spirits on my arrival at her hut which was crowded to excess with native doctors several of which had to move out before I could enter it being an exceeding hot day sufficient to sicken one of the strongest constitution I recommended at least half of her medical attendants and nurses to make room for a little air which being done gave me an opportunity of seeing my patient which I perceived had little or no hopes of living being then in her last stage of dysentery... (KCM 24997, 273).

The lack of punctuation, spelling errors, and awkward syntax were partially eliminated by Stuart in the typescript. Secondly, this notebook extract was transcribed directly into the "Chapter VI" of Fynn's ostensibly revised version in *D2*, which Stuart claimed to be following. But in the published version, only a small snippet of this extract finds its way into the footnotes, while the main text carries a different version altogether:

Shaka now requested me to visit his mother. I went, attended by an old chief, and found the hut filled with native doctors and nurses, and such clouds of smoke that I was obliged to bid them all retire, to enable me to breathe within it. Her complaint was dysentery, and I reported at once to Shaka that her case was hopeless and that I did not expect that she would live through the day. (Fynn 1950:132)

We need not belabour the multiple changes in concrete detail, the greater economy, or the carefully heightened drama. The point is, no such version appears in Fynn's papers - though there is a third, even shorter version to which the editors refer only tangentially:

... once healing Chaka when seriously wounded, I was on this occasion requested to visit his mother, who expired an hour after my arrival.⁴⁴

This is possibly an earlier version, and highlights the process of embellishment and selection, culminating in Stuart's rewriting.

Similar collages of different versions occasionally compound confusion: the date of Shaka's assassination (a crucial empirical "fact" if ever there was one) was given in Fynn's earliest (c.1837) version, partially reprinted in Bird, as "October", even though the earliest reports had given 23rd September, and Andrew Smith had cited the 24th; probably to conform to Isaacs, this last was the date settled upon by Fynn himself. Inexplicably, however, the editors of the *Diary* elsewhere footnote the date as "29th October" (respectively NAB A1382/17/4; Bird 100-1; SACA 27.12.1828; Kirby 1955:89; Isaacs I 257; Fynn 1950:156,159n).

The editors' selectiveness frequently went further than the irregular admixture of detail from unspecified sources. They omitted, for instance, accounts of the internecine conflicts amongst the white adventurers (eg. KCM 24997), a suppression of complexity which parallels their excision of the following opinion of Fynn's:

[Shaka] was inflexible in his resolves severe in his discipline and the terror of his enemies[. O]f the soldiery notwithstanding his atrocities he was the Idol and to a conquered enemy where he had no suspicion of witchcraft he was liberal and lenient. The sacred character of Embassadrie from his most inveterate enemie even in the [heat?] of the conflict he always respected and ensured their safety [. T]o the brave

he was liberal to an excess - to the cowardly merciless and cruel. Vain, haughty, imperious, and cruel to his subjects, to the Europeans he was affable, and kind, anxious to know all their wants only to alleviate them, possessing a perpetual thirst for knowledge which he received with caution, and conversed, with a shrewdness and policy which would not have disgraced many civilized beings... (NAFP, file 88; cited by Martin 61-2).

This closely echoes a note by Bishop Colenso who, while repeating other exaggerations of Fynn's and Isaacs' and evidently persuaded that Fynn really was Shaka's "Privy-Counsellor", believed that Fynn

regards the memory of Chaka, notwithstanding his great cruelties, with some respect, and considers him to have been a man of spirit and genius, and not merely a brutal and abominable despot, like his brother Dingaan. He thinks that his severities were, in a manner, almost necessary - like those of Napoleon or Robespierre - to maintain his power. (Colenso 1855:224-5).

These indicate a more balanced and complex view than Stuart and Malcolm were prepared to contemplate publishing, and highlight the extent to which the image of Shaka was being reconstructed as an antithesis to Fynn. In the same way, the editors omitted this intriguing sidelight on the whites' reception at Shaka's court (scratched out by Fynn but still legible):

on calling the interpreter [a former slave, Jacob Msimbithi] who was in a hut close by and could not help but hear me made no answer after several times calling on my repeating to call him he asked me insolently what I wanted with him he proceeding on with me I reproached him for his insolence when he told me we were not in the Colony now... (NAFP/16, 6).

Excluded, indeed, were almost all intimations of the nastier aspects of Fynn's career, though Stuart unquestionably knew of them. Further - as Pridmore notes but inadequately stresses - neither Stuart nor Malcolm made use of Stuart's own huge collection of oral traditions, from which a very different view of Shaka can be derived. In short, Fynn's editors proffer a fraudulent view of what Fynn's papers a.e: contradictorily fragmented, deeply tinted by Fynn's personal agendas, stylistically clumsy, and incomplete. Concealing their own selectivity and their role in making the account coherently narrative and stylistically polished,⁴⁵ thereby projecting an authority and learnedness clearly very different

from the original Fynn's, they recreate not only the "history" to serve their own ideals, but "Fynn" as notional author as well.

"Bring back his spirit": inscribing a new identity

So what were the editors' ends? Beneath the account of Nandi's death, Stuart and Malcolm footnote that "Fynn had been with Shaka for some time and, from various cases wherein he had been successful in restoring health to sick natives and once healing Shaka when severely wounded, implicit confidence was placed in his abilities" (Fynn 1950:132). The significance of such myth-making annotation goes beyond mere exaggeration or inaccuracy, and beyond even uncritical reinforcement of Fynn's established reputation. The document must be seen, rather, as a kind of "meta-narrative" of almost an entire settler culture's sustained attempt to create a coherent identity for itself. In choosing to further entrench Fynn in his status of heroic pioneer, in defiance of evidence they had themselves compiled, and indeed of attitudes they both expressed elsewhere, the editors created a role model on whose example colonial society could and did, even in the 1940s and '50s, found attitudes and policy. In attempting to "bring back his spirit", as Stuart puts it, he implicitly agrees with Fynn (if indeed Stuart himself did not write this),

sincerely deplor[ing] the horrid despotism by which they [the Zulu] are governed, to this he imputes the majority of their vices, and ventures to predict when such despotism yields, as it will soon do, to the progress of opinion and civilization, and benefited by an intercourse with Europeans, they will ascend to the rank of a high spirited, brave, ingenuous, and civilized people. (Fynn 1950:xv)

As other literature of the period amply shows, white fears of such a resurgent Zulu despotism, and fears that the Zulus had not yet been entirely "civilized", were by no means quelled.

Stuart and Malcolm's adulation of Fynn shows in a number of ways. They do not hesitate to interpolate outright praise, as in the epigraph to this chapter; they co-opt the Zulu

themselves, who are "proud to apostrophize [Fynn] as

*Jojo, wokhalo, owavel' emaMpondweni
Wahamba angathi kasayi kugoduka.*" (xiv)

Such eulogies are designed to serve the *editors'* needs, as this footnote reveals:

The first meeting of Shaka with Farewell, Fynn, and the rest of the party was manifestly a unique and memorable occasion. Instead of the formal, stiff and constrained ceremonial customary at such a moment, Shaka, whose heart had been mysteriously touched by the advent of British settlers to his shores, converted the occasion into a grand and dramatically planned festival. We cannot but think these warm-hearted exhibitions of regard should be attributed in the main to two influences seemingly trivial in themselves: (a) Jacob's previous lengthy contact with worthy officers of the Royal Navy; (b) Fynn's discreet, courageous and humane bearing during the weeks he was striving to open up communication with Shaka. His spontaneous humanity straightway disarmed all suspicion and even caused him to be taken as typical of the race he belonged to. Thus, through the agency of Fynn and Jacob, the British people henceforth began to stand in a favourable light. Shaka, despot though he was, one of the greatest the world has ever known, took them to his heart and ... never failed to treat them as friends. More than this, the conviction then arrived at as to their friendliness has, after many sad and trying vicissitudes of later years, been honoured down to the present time. (76)

Jacob Msimbithi (as the earlier quotation implies) would have had little good to say of the British. The exaggerated effect attributed to Fynn's "trivial" but heroic "humanity", and his pseudo-mystical influence on "one of the greatest [despots] the world has ever known",⁴⁶ exemplify a characteristic "imaginative leap from social relationships and events to mind or mentality" (Weinstein 31); on this transgression of any empirically verifiable cause-and-effect is founded the wilful self-deception in that last sentence.

Germane double-standards evident elsewhere in Stuart's writings have been noted, but not developed, by Pridmore; and Carolyn Hamilton, in offering a riposte to Cobbing's trenchant critique of Stuart, avoids the discrepancy altogether (Pridmore 1993:11; Cobbing 1988b:116-121; Hamilton 1993:chs.7-8). Although Hamilton demonstrates Stuart's opposition to many aspects of colonial policy, she underplays the paternalistic envelope within which such opposition occurred, and fails to note that Stuart, when pandering to European audiences, avoided making recourse to his own massively rich collection of Zulu

oral accounts, gathered even as he was administering Zulu institutions out of effective existence. In England, Stuart actively participated in the spectacular but essentially demeaning public displays of Zulus (such as the Wembley Exhibition of 1924),⁴⁷ and in lectures about Shaka reverted to the clichés already in circulation. In 1924, for instance, he called Shaka the "great radiator of war", the "scourge of God", the initiator of "an age of terroristic violence, an age of stupendous holocausts", full of "the savage fury, commotion, *abandon*, the heartlessness and the horror" - the pulsing, Haggard-like language of a voyeuristic relish for the fictionalised "primitive". It is difficult not to see this as a radical projection of the European psyche recoiling from the "stupendous holocausts" of the First World War, of which these epithets *are* an accurate description. In fact, Stuart explicitly made such projective, ethnocentric analogues, averring for instance that "Bolshevism was only the spirit of Chaka operating in another manner" (lecture to the Royal Colonial Institute, London, Dec 1923; KCSP, KCM 24034). Similarly, Stuart's *History of the Zulu Rebellion, 1906*, published in 1913, aimed to satisfy European prejudices to the extent of calling Shaka's reign "catastrophic", the "storm-centre" of "appalling exodus" by which "The country was transformed into a howling wilderness, overrun with lions, hyenas and wolves", its inhabitants "converted into expert and voracious cannibals" (Stuart 1913:2n, 8).

The underlying attitude here only seems opposed to the critical stance voiced elsewhere, even in the same work. Stuart's criticisms of policy, and praise of the Zulu, were not to be made at the expense of an idealised European-settler identity, but in the service of it, as this passage shows:

The Zulus are a noble race of savages, but none the less deserving of our consideration because they are savages. The headlong collapse of such a people is a tragedy of the first magnitude. That it should be taking place before our very eyes, without reasonably adequate steps being taken by the State to resist it by providing the most natural and effective machinery for controlling it, is a crime. If this mischief is permitted to go on, it requires no prophet to predict heavy retribution, and in the near future, on those responsible. Such will probably be, not only in the forms

of rebellion and civil strife, which can be quelled, but in miscegenation..., complete effacement of the two races, and general degradation of the whole. (537)

The patrimony of European power and assumed superiority displayed here is *upheld*, not undermined, for European readers by these discrepant approaches. Thus Stuart could feed the oral traditions he had collected back into the Zulu consciousness in the form of Zulu-language school readers, as a means of preserving that distinct consciousness, while on the other hand supporting his brother Philip's appallingly bloodthirsty and Eurocentric fictional book about Shaka, *An African Attila*, which would be prescribed for white schoolchildren.⁴⁸ The division is enacted, in part, by the division of the *Diary* itself into linear, dynamic narrative, and static, museum-display ethnographic observations.

The *Diary* is a similar tool for the preservation of an idealised settler face; it consolidated the adulation of Fynn, and of his "warm friendship" (Stuart 1913:3) with Shaka, begun by Stuart in earlier pieces. In the 1924 lecture, Stuart adverted to the "satisfactory relations" between Zulus and whites, established "largely through the exertions of Fynn (an old Blue Coat Schoolboy of London)". Here in microcosm is the clannish, or clubbish, consolidation of a common European identity in the face of a highly-coloured "outside" threat, which is equally at work in the construction of the *Diary*, though partially veiled there by the rhetoric and paraphernalia of scholarship.

Interested knowledge

Methodological disagreements over the *Diary* so far boil down to the question of whether certain bits of it can be utilised in a simply referential manner. But as Jerome J McGann has pointed out, "No historical critic of any standing ever understood this referential connection in ... simple empiricist terms" (124). My own approach has begun from Frederic Jameson's perception that "history is inaccessible to us except in textual form" (1981:82); an historical text is therefore a "socially symbolic act" with manifold social-psychological import. Any

such act is even initially heteroglossal, representing conjunctions of private and public, authority-laden "speech genres" which defy the isolation of a "disengaged image of the self" such as a "Fynn". This is even more true with a text such as the *Diary*, whose complex editorial history means that even "a historicist reconstruction or glossing of [its] originary referential field" is inadequate: a total criticism involves also the multiply shifting ways in which the fragments constituting it have been re-read and refurbished in order both to reflect and to create *meaning* in wider communities (McGann 125).

What is finally striking, and most important, about the *Diary* is its fundamental narrowness, how it has been constructed to obscure the complexity of its putative author, the moral issues of his day, and the process of its rewriting to converge with the "speech genre" of a coherently narrative history, complete with scholarly apparatus, which, together with the very form of the "diary", moulds itself to Western civilisation's "taste for the reality effect". As Roland Barthes famously phrased it, this kind of history is "not so much *the real as the intelligible*" (Barthes 1986:139-40). In its style and its architecture, the *Diary* represents a closing of the linguistic horizon, though it is *presented* as an expansion of disinterested knowledge. The idealised colonial self-image implied by this kind of "intelligibility" is a simplified gesture of defence against the more complex, dangerously disordered reality of colonial fears, pretensions and power relations. Only with this in mind can a full reassessment of the *Diary*'s historical validity, utterance by utterance, really begin.

NOTES

1. In the following argument, I am glancing at a methodological dispute within the 'mfecane' debate, in which Carolyn Hamilton accuses Cobbing of deriding the *Diary* as a source, then selectively quoting from it (see also my discussion in Chapter Seven). Neither scholar has taken full account of the *Diary*'s textual history.
2. For instance Noel Mostert, while noting that historians now treat Fynn's account "with particular reservation", still accepts inaccuracies such as that Fynn "settle[d] himself at Shaka's court" (1992:603) - and incidentally throughout his book continues to use the overblown rhetoric of the "mfecane". Also Louis du Buisson, in *The White Man Cometh* (1987:4), describes Fynn and company as "disreputable", but does not

escape from using them as sources.

3. Isaacs I 262-84. Fynn's credibility is flawed, however: in one account, he relates Dingiswayo's death at the hands of Zwide of the Ndwandwe, without involving Shaka; in another, he maligns Shaka as having betrayed Dingiswayo into captivity (1950:8-15).

4. Charles Rawden Maclean, who spent more time actually at Shaka's court than the rest of the whites put together, never even mentions Fynn's presence (see Gray 1992).

5. Many of the inconsistencies I note here have been pointed out by Gewald in his unpublished paper, though he did not make use of the original Fynn documents.

6. Eg. Shula Marks 1981, Wright 1989. I suspect it is not quite so easily dismissed, as several travellers independently reported it, but its causes and extent remain highly debateable; certainly it remained a mythic cornerstone of Natal land policy even long after the "depopulated" areas had been reoccupied.

7. cf. Fynn 1950:130. As we saw earlier, the earliest commentators were suspicious of the antinomy: "[Shaka was] a Cruel Ruler, and his miserable end was probably well merited. To Europeans, however, he was uniformly kind, which is proof both of his discernment and their discretion; and it is rather at variance with the reports respecting his general character" (*South African Commercial Advertiser*, 27.12.1828).

8. Stretch to Read, 18.5.1843, Macmillan Papers, Rhodes Library, Oxford (hereafter MP), 1334. Thanks to Julian Cobbing for these references.

9. Read to Philip 8.5.1843, MP 1340. I have been able to confirm only that Fynn was in the Bathurst commissariat at the time; see Thomas Phillips to Fynn, 13.9.1833, Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg, A1382 [hereafter NAFP], File 1. Most of the original Fynn papers here are in a somewhat disorderly state. Many of the "letters sent" appear to be rough drafts, some by amanuenses, and cannot be assumed to be what the addressees received. Most, but not all, the sundry notes were typed up, often inaccurately, and bound in no particular order in 4 volumes for the Killie Campbell Library, among the Fynn Papers [hereafter KCFP]. These voluminous papers badly need thorough re-editing.

10. Fynn to Grey, 5.11.1855, NAFP/13; cf. the contradictory accounts in Fynn to Hare, 20.8.1841, NAFP/2, and *Diary*, 36. A wholly unfounded family myth was even developed that Fynn's father (also Henry Francis) had been to Port Natal before anyone, starting the interest; see H F Fynn jnr, "Notes on the Life of Henry Francis Fynn", KCFP 30104 (iv).

11. See eg. testimonies of Bazely, in Webb and Wright, eds, *JSA* I 59; and of Christian Cane, *JSA* I 77; H F Fynn jnr, "Notes", KCFP 30104 (iv), 14. Fynn legally married twice, to Ann (d.1839), and in 1841, to Christiana.

12. Gardiner to D'Urban, 24.11.1835, *RN*, III 19.

13. H F Fynn jnr, "Notes", 23.

14. Cobbing 1988a; the *South African Chronicle*, 2.6.1926, reported slaves being loaded onto French vessels from Fynn's area of northern Transkei.

15. *JSA* III 41,74,194; Kirby 1955:33,38. Cf. evidence of John Ogle ka Wohlo, Killie Campbell Library, Stuart Papers [hereafter KCSP], 23404: "Mbuyazi was the one given permission to kill others."

16. E.g. the "Zulu praise poem" that prefaces the *Diary*; Julie Pridmore (1994:9) suspects this was written by Stuart himself; cf. B E Camp (n.d.:3). Thanks to Cathy Gorham for this reference.

17. "The War Journal of Thomas Holden Bowker", 29.9.1835, in I Mitford-Barberton 1970:161.

18. Smith to D'Urban 28.11.1835, *RN*, III 6; 30.11.1835, *RN*, III 7. These comments cannot perhaps be taken as seriously as they sound; at least Smith later became Fynn's firmest supporter, and used the term "Quixote" for both the Fynn brothers with evident affection (Smith to Fynn, 6.10.1837, KCFP 22887). When crossed, however, Smith's letters could turn icily formal, eg. Smith to Fynn, 29.3.1846, KCFP 22887.

19. Read to John Philip, 22.5.1843, MP s.218/1343, and 29.5.1843, MP 1346. This was not the only version of the story, however, and Read himself, in an undated, but probably later, document, possibly a transcript of the subsequent Court of Inquiry proceedings, indicated that another chief had done the actual killing (NAFP/10). All this needs to be seen in the context of Fynn's expressed support for D'Urban's pernicious "system" of annexation combined with undermining chiefly powers (Fynn in *Graham's Town Journal*, 4.10.1851).
20. *Graham's Town Journal*, 26.5.1849, 13.7.1849. Fynn tried to pretend he had called the inquiry himself (Fynn to Jenkins et al, 13.11.1849, NAFP/2), but he must have known that the *Graham's Town Journal* had done so months before (9.6.1849).
21. Thus, for instance, Fynn clearly had a large number of adherents, gathered over the years, who retained the name "Izinkumbi" even into his son Duka's time (see J Perrin to Sec. Native Affairs, 25.5.1857, NAFP/14). Yet Fynn wrote plaintively in 1850 that he was "quite at a loss to understand how any natives can use my name ... I have only 6 men in my service and they alone are justified in calling themselves mine" (Fynn to Wakeford, 26.7.1850, NAFP/2). However, not a year later, angling for influence with the Bishop of Cape Town, he claims several tribes "who attach themselves to my name" (Fynn to Bishop, n.d., ?1851, NAFP/2). The Natal Executive Council noted the same evasiveness in Fynn's communiqués from Mpondoland in 1850 (? to Capt Gordon, 21.12.1850, NEC 260-2).
22. On the 1851 episode, see especially Fynn to Pine, 3.3.1851, 23.5.1851; H G Smith to W Fynn, 20.5.1851 (all NAFP); Pine to Gov.-Gen., 4.7.1851, NEC III, 286-9. Certainly on this occasion Fynn also fell foul of governmental miscommunication, being stiffly reprimanded by Smith for carrying out orders delivered by Pine. On accusations of gun-running, see Camp n.d.:5; a trader in Fynn's magistracy was also caught (W M Fynn to H F Fynn, 4.11.1851; *GTJ* 10.10.1851). One of Fynn's amanuenses around 1852, "a clerk named Nkayitshana" was "connected with gun-running" (H F Fynn jnr, "Notes", 7).
23. "Mr Fynn gave point to his sentences by producing his snuff box and taking a refresher, while Tuta and his men took the culprit aside a convenient distance, spreadeagled him on the sand, face downwards, and counted out the stripes with a sjambock on his back and shoulders. Prisoner, on his release, would writhe into his blanket, hold up his hand and shout a respectful 'Inkosi' to the dignified white chief, while walking past to resume his employment" (cited in Bramdeow, "Fynn", 80). This sounds suspiciously like the tyrannical obedience Shaka was supposed to have demanded.
24. Eg. Warner to Fynn, 9.11.1848: "The Tambookies [Thembu] inquired after you, and wish you back". See also Alexander to Fynn, 8.3.1836; Andrew Smith to Fynn 8.12.1836; H G Smith to Fynn 18.3.1837; Porter to Fynn, 15.12.1843; H G Smith to Grey, 8.7.1848 (all NAFP). Offering particular insight is his relationship with Theophilus Shepstone; when both on the eastern Frontier, Fynn evidently bailed Shepstone out of some romantic scrape with a "Miss B_____" by acting as "Scapegoat"; a lonely young Shepstone called Fynn his "only real remaining friend" (Shepstone to Fynn, 5.10.1836, 6.10.1836, NAFP/1). In Natal, rivalry soured the relationship: see eg R E Gordon 1968:184-8; Shepstone to Christiana Fynn, 4.11.1861, NAFP/13.
25. See eg. his disagreement over settling Zulus in Mpondo territory, Fynn to Governor, 4.10.1848, Cape Archives GH 26/209, 48-9; and his reasons for resigning, Fynn to Allen, 15.2.1858, KCFP 22887.
26. NEC IV 86; Elliot to Murdoch 22.11.1856, NEC IV 90-92. The text of this grant, whose validity is highly questionable, was inserted by Stuart into the *Diary*, 87.
27. Eg. Kay 1833:400-401, against whose accusations of "going Native" the adventurers vigorously protested; Holden 1855:42-43; see also Bramdeow 53.
28. Davies 1974:49; the notion was repeated by the 1986 television series, *Shaka Zulu*. The family continues the myths, as in Fynn's great-great-nephew Robert Fynn's recent novel *The Lost 'Bone'* (1993:31).
29. Indeed, Fynn made the parallel himself, *Graham's Town Journal*, 29.11.1832; James Stuart toyed with a number of titles for the Fynn volume: "A Nineteenth-Century 'Robinson Crusoe'; A South African 'Robinson Crusoe'; Robinson Crusoe in Natal" (draft preface, "Early View of Natal", 24.4.1938, CAMKJ/103).
30. Kirby, ed, *Andrew Smith and Natal*, 51, 84-87. Smith's anecdotes of Shaka were uniformly scurrilous; among important discrepancies, Smith's version of the assassination of Shaka is closer to Isaacs than the subsequent Fynn; he also indicates that Shaka went into exile not as a child but as a young man, banished "for drowning his younger brother while bathing".

31. J C Chase, *The Natal Papers* (1843). The material may have been sent prior to 1834, see Chase to Fynn, 17.11.1829, asking for information: "Give as many details of Chaka as possible - his original country, his genealogy - his habits and manners - wars - dress - wives & everything connected with his history, his death ... as many anecdotes as possible -"; in the same, apparently serious breath, Chase asked for news of the unicorn! An ms. must have been received well before Chase to Fynn, 14.11.1834, NAFP/1. Of particular interest is an account by Fynn, sent to the Governor through a "Major Charters", in which Shaka is described as an "Attila" - not an appellation which appears in the *Diary* - and is also said to have personally assassinated his mentor Dingiswayo, as opposed to the less direct, though duplicitous, role given Shaka in the *Diary* (15). This was possibly the "Kafir History" sent in 1838: see Fynn's draft, dated 6.6.[1838?], "acquiescing with the request of His Excellency the C Chief it was not without considerable diffidence that I proceeded to the task being fully aware of ... my deficiencies as an historical writer" (NAFP/17); receipt acknowledged by Charters to Fynn, 22.7.1838.

32. Bird (66-124) included a history of Dingiswayo and, in part, of Shaka; the first assassination attempt; the 1826 campaign against Sikhunyana; the death of James Saunders King and Shaka's assassination; and some evidence submitted to the 1852 Aborigines Commission.

33. Grant, J M, unpubl. diary, "General's Escort", vol.5, 104-5 (Cory Library, Grahamstown, MS 17099), Sunday 12 July 1874, recording Fynn's voluminous papers and that H F Fynn Jr "does not know what they contain, never apparently having felt any inclination to read them through". Thanks to Cheryl Young for this reference.

34. The complex route of the papers towards publication is outlined by B J Leverton 1964; Pridmore 1993:2-4; also CAMKJ/103; Carl Faye papers, NAB A 131/12/30; KCSP MS 1487a, MS 1053.

35. These are at respectively, NAFP/16; KCFP 24997; and KCFP Ms1487a.

36. The effects of these amanuenses must remain largely a matter of speculation. Pridmore (1993) notes only R B Struthers in 1852-61 as one; Fynn's son also cites James Perrin, a trader who was tried for murder but was acquitted and became a chief clerk (H F Fynn jnr, "Notes", p.7; also Stuart papers, KCM 30104/8, evidence of William Smith), and the clerk Nkayitshana. An 1830s amanuensis remains elusive.

37. Dated 24.4.1938, CAMKJ/103; also KCM MS 1487a. Stuart wrote in the same draft preface that "the proper course seemed to be always to select the best extant material as the basis of the narrative, then blend therein (placing it within square brackets) all fresh, instructive, and interesting particulars drawn from the repetitive and redundant pieces". I have found no indication that Fynn attempted further publication in his lifetime.

38. If Frank Fynn died in 1841 (see Isaacs to Fynn, 7.9.1840, NAFP/1; Bramdeow 100), presumably the rewrite would not have begun before then.

39. At p.247, for instance, Stuart notes: "NB. From here onwards ... Fynn's own MS is followed", implying that the foregoing was *not* from Fynn's own MS.

40. KCM MS 1053. A further somewhat ambiguous statement shows Stuart's overriding concern with publication potential: "Not possible to do justice to papers & at the same time publish them in such a way as to be a profitable venture, though they can be published so as to be self paying, nothing worth considering would be made out of them" (draft preface of 14.9.1936, CAMKJ/103).

41. *The Times*, 17.5.1944; KCM 24046. The British Museum and CMS annotations were lost in the published version, but appear to have been largely the extracts from the *Graham's Town Journal* relating to after 1834 (Campbell to Marx, 14.9.1946, CAMKJ/103).

42. The 111-section volume is KCM 24997; the later script, including the draft preface already quoted, being otherwise very close to the published version, is KCM MS 1487a. See J C Medley to R C Stuart, 5.2.1946, "Your father has left a complete manuscript, Volume 1, which is in a state fit for publication [and] includes the narrative part of the Fynn papers (KCM 24052). Beatrice Marx compiled a list of Stuart's works, both complete and proposed, which included "(a) an early view of Natal 1826-1833 (Fynn's papers); (b) an early view of Natal between 1824 and 1861 (Fynn's papers)", with the note, "(b) appears to be (a) greatly supplemented"; it is clear here that the "Early History of Natal and Zululand", the basis of the "Historical Introduction", is Stuart's own work (CAMKJ/103). Cf. Ellie Stuart's memory of the content's of Stuart's chest,

KCM 24049.

43. KCM 24997, 29ff: "As to attempt to give a description of Chaka's policy or of the subjection under which the Zulus are held would take too much of your Excellency's time..."; this was completely refurbished, cf. *Diary*, 141-3.

44. KCM 24997, 33. This version is adjunct to an explanation of why the 1828 attack on Matiwane by the colonists happened, a clearly self-exculpatory account in which he falsely claims that "During the absence of the [Zulu] army I was constantly with him [Shaka]" (37).

45. An unidentified reader of the MS of the *Diary* complained that "changes from the Author's to the Editor's hand occur fairly frequently ... without any indication that a change is being made" (? to Malcolm, 15.12.1947, CA). These were not all eliminated; see eg. *Diary*, 131.

46. This kind of appropriation (rather, invention) of inexplicable Zulu adulation runs through much of the Shakan literature, eg. the notion of *ubukosi* in E A Ritter, *Shaka Zulu* (1955).

47. The anecdote was circulated that at the Wembley Exhibition, a Zulu dancer getting stage fright, the "extremely austere and reserved" Stuart himself "painted his body, donned beads and feathers, waggled, wiggled, and leapt and was 'a howling' success" (Durban's *Daily News*, 22.5.1944)

48. Stuart 1927; Shuter & Shooter to Marx, 1.2.1951, CAMKJ/103. Douglas Malcolm (of whom there is less documentation) demonstrates the same split: he went along with Stuart's defence of Fynn, while privately admitting that "we [Europeans] have lost our position as gods. Our feet of clay and hearts of greed have been revealed only too plainly"; Malcolm to Marx, 16.2.1948, CAMKJ/103.

PART TWO

The Missionary Years 1836-1938

Missionaries played a fundamental role in the early dissemination of information about Shaka. They were far from being the only channel, of course, and they had a far from simple relationship with the administrators, travellers and settlers who also played their part in constructing the white man's myth of Shaka in the century after his assassination.

However, the presence of a broadly homogeneous missionary voice is unavoidable. As the most (and sometimes first) literate and literary settlers, they were amongst the first to translate from the Zulu, gather data on Zulu society and history, and write memoirs of their experiences. For a long time they were the most prominent and widely-published reporters on the Zulu. By contrast, administrators like Theophilus Shepstone and James Stuart, while hugely influential in their own fields, and indubitably more knowledgable, never in the same way published books which entered the mainstream of Shakan lore.

So it is not surprising that the first proto-ethnography and the first histories were written by missionaries (Henry Callaway and William Holden), and the first novel featuring Shaka (Charles Eden) centred on missionary protagonists. It is less explicable that missionary accounts generally ignored the oral evidence available to them both from within their own ranks (notably Callaway himself) and from the sedulous collectors of lore amongst the administrators; they depended almost uniformly on Isaacs, Allen Gardiner (another missionary) and Fynn. It also needs to be asked why this missionary voice, laden with the moralistic import of its cosmology and evangelistic purpose, carried so late into the twentieth century. The influential works of two more missionaries, A T Bryant and D J Darlow, examined in Chapters Five and Six respectively, are cases in point.

It does need to be noted, however, that by the end of the nineteenth century a parallel strain of writing, stimulated by the growth of the new academic institutions of history and anthropology, was emerging. Though these writers' hegemonic settler views in crucial respects complemented the missionary outlook, the documentary histories of Cory and Theal marked a subtle change; as did the essentially non-Christian, if ultimately imperialist-supporting fiction of Rider Haggard. The poetry of F T Prince, though still Christian in world-view, also marks the possibility, if not the actual beginning, of a departure from blunt evangelism.

CHAPTER FOUR

NINETEENTH CENTURY FOUNDATIONS

For the first hundred years, the literary portrayal of Shaka underwent little fundamental change. Certain elements of Nathaniel Isaacs' account were discarded, but the essential note of condemnation remained. To be sure, faint hints of admiration were heard, or at least attempts to explain the monstrosity away, but these were in tandem with, not displacements of, the derogation. Essentially, the image of satanic monstrosity was embellished and recycled to suit a number of different purposes - the most prominent of these being the tightening colonial administrative grip on Zululand, and the determined inculcation of Christian values by the missionaries. Rather than a critical empiricism, the coalition of metaphor with hegemonic purpose, part of which was the composition of a particular version of "settler" identity, determined the general persistence of Isaacs' dubious portrayal. Only towards the end of the century, with the publication of Bird's *Annals of Natal* (1888), containing extracts from Fynn's papers, was new detail injected into the picture.

The image stabilised despite - or because of - dramatic events during this period. The 1840s saw the formal imposition of colonial rule over the Natal region. The sense of looming threat from a relatively cohesive Zulu polity to the north remained a pervasive white fear that affects all the literature. In Natal at least, the moral validity of the tightening legal and spatial stranglehold on African physical, economic and political mobility was confirmed in the successive military encounters of the 1879 Anglo-Zulu war and the 1906 uprising. These, the lesser flurries of violence in between, and the almost continuous friction of "civil" strife within the "Zulu"

polity, served adequately to entrench Isaacs' and his immediate successors' images of endemic disorderliness and threat to white-engineered peace. The picture of impending bloodthirsty chaos jibed uneasily with the other pervasive image of unflinchingly disciplined *impis* - Shaka's special invention - which only made the threat more terrifying. This more or less constant sense of menace alone was enough to permit, indeed to make obligatory, some monsterisation of the "Other" in order to consolidate the whites' own speech-community, one based on a sense of beleaguered "civilisation". As Crais puts it, "the discourse of the Other, in addition to legitimating the development of a racial capitalism in South Africa, ultimately underpinned an emergent colonial identity" (125-33).

This may be broadly true, but the emergence of more complex strands in the portrayal of the Zulu, outlined by Russell Martin (1982), making models of Manichean "othering" only partially tenable, also needs to be recognised. However, the image of Shaka himself remained stable in the public mind despite the Zulu generally being assimilated, with varying degrees of understanding or condemnation, into the emergent discourses of anthropology, history, and fiction. In other words, these discourses, in any case implicated in the dynamics of imperial development, did not serve to any great extent as levers to a reassessment of the Shakan material and sources. Rather the writers picked up the current stories and rephrased them in the kinds of prose appropriate to their stated intellectual endeavours. For instance, the anthropologist Sir James Frazer utilised Isaacs' stories rather than the verbatim transcripts of Henry Callaway (1870). In fiction, Rider Haggard likewise expanded on the snippets of legend current amongst his administrator friends like Shepstone and Fynney, without really furthering anyone's imaginative insight into the Zulu (though significantly it was *believed* he had done just that). Similarly, syncretic historians like Theal and Cory would begin the transformation of anecdote into grand historical theory, without ever apparently querying their sources. A T Bryant brings this period to a close by failing to bring a vast amount of work into a truly critical perspective. His blend

of ethnographic gleanings, linguistic speculation, and a kind of academic antiquarianism is locked into a framework of supercilious arrogance and a sensationalised prose derived from romantic fiction; in this way he builds on and refurbishes, rather than reassesses, the work of his predecessors. In short, the various voices and discourses, whether "scientific" or not, were generally wielded to the same justificatory and self-affirming ends. This critical hiatus both points to and creates Shaka's growing symbolic status.

In some ways, the shift from the very early period of contradictory fragments to a succeeding era of synthesising and consolidation of "evidence" parallels the process noted in the Eastern Cape by Clifton Crais. Crais' delineation of an abrupt switch from approbatory, neo-primitivist views of the blacks along the Eastern Cape frontier, to one of outright condemnation, is perhaps too simplistic. However, he does provide some evidence of a definite upsurge in derogatory comment on the Xhosa as soon as conflict was heightened in the 1830s and 1840s - precisely the period in which Isaacs' book emerged, and in which the Cape government began to make the first tentative moves towards a more secure occupation of Natal.

"God's scourge": The first of the missionaries

The closeness in attitude and in more pragmatic concerns between Cape frontier and Natal frontier settlers is clearly revealed in Stephen Kay's *Travels and Researches in Caffraria* (1833), the first missionary publication to deal with the Zulu. Kay deplored the situation in "fine but depopulated" Natal where "public example is heathenish, and heathenish only; lust and vice are almost wholly uncontrolled; virtue has no support; the very atmosphere itself seems as if dense with moral evil" (Kay 400). Kay, without acknowledgment, closely echoes the earlier characterisation of Shaka, in comparison to whom "history scarcely furnishes us with a more complete despot" (401). Kay reinforces the "awful degree of barbarity of which this wicked chieftain was capable" with some "appalling and well-attested facts", these being the Zulu chief's unflinching massacre of 70 or 80

innocent children, 400-500 men whose wives were added to Shaka's "seraglio", and pregnant women (405). Shaka is said to be the "son of Menzi", his name to mean "battle-axe", his position on the Zulu throne to have been acquired by "treachery", to hold "about fifteen thousand warriors in constant readiness", and "to execute the most hazardous and sanguinary orders" (403).

All this was written, as Isaacs and Charles Maclean would gleefully point out in their own published accounts, without Kay having set a foot in Zululand. Ironically, some of Kay's material was clearly plagiarised from Isaacs' published accounts of 1832; but he made the mistake of pointing out an unpalatable truth, that the white settlers at Port Natal had "gone native", had entirely lost their capacity to have any civilising influence on the natives, had indulged in joining in Shaka's battles, and "whose domestic circles, like those of the native Chieftains themselves, embrace[d] from eight to ten black wives or concubines!" (401) - and so provoked some aggressive and evasive responses (Isaacs I 174; Gray 1992:64,104). Equally ironically, some of Kay's details (such as "Menzi" being Shaka's father) were conversely worked into Isaacs' *Travels* (I 263): a symptomatic tautology.

Despite Kay's and others' attacks, then, Isaacs' portrayal survived. His most lurid descriptions were plagiarised by William Cornwallis Harris for *The Wild Sports of Southern Africa* (1839), who again described this "fiend in human form" whose "strength became Herculean, his disposition turbulent, his heart iron, his soul a warring element, and his ambition boundless", and "from whose withering glance men recoiled as from the serpent's hiss or the lion's growl" (Harris 95, 99); and through Harris, entirely unacknowledged, it reappears word for word in the first novel involving Shaka, Charles Eden's *An Inherited Task* (1871), which is examined in detail below. Eden's fiction is another manifestation of the combination of "civilising" and evangelical motives behind the missionary literature through which the portrayal of Shaka was largely propagated until the last decade of the century, and in some ways beyond it.

Allen Gardiner's missionary account, published in the same year as Isaacs', holds the same moral stance, concentrating largely on the assassination (hereafter an obligatory staple of the Shaka story); Ferdinand Krauss, a German traveller, claimed in 1842 to be repeating original oral sources but his account too closely parallels Isaacs' for it to have been derived from anywhere else. Even John Colenso, for all his sympathy for the Zulu, hardly varied the portrayal in his *Ten Weeks in Natal* (1855). Writing in the wake of the 1838 Piet Retief massacre and the battle of Blood River, he too quotes Isaacs, repeats the depopulation idea, calls Shaka an "inhuman tyrant" and the "South African Attila", and regards Shaka as the epitome of that assumed irrepressibility of the Zulu who, if the "tide of passion [remains p]ent up within the bosom of the race, ... will either stagnate in sullen hatred, or burst forth again ere long in another terrible outbreak" (Colenso, ix, xxxi). This fear that the spirit of Shaka would live on to focus an uprising persisted strongly until well after the 1906 Rebellion,¹ and would play its part in the plot of Buchan's *Prester John* (1910). Indeed, it has by no means disappeared. It is worth reiterating, however, that Colenso did speak to Fynn himself, and came away with an impression which, as we have seen, is missing from the latter's published *Diary*, such sympathetic opinion having been edited out: the impression of Shaka as a "man of spirit and genius, and not merely a brutal and inhuman despot, like his brother Dingaan", whose "severities were, in a manner, almost necessary - like those of Napoleon or Robespierre - to maintain his power" (224). Interesting to note, here, is the comparison with Dingane, which frequently, from an early stage, provided a point of leverage from which to begin, however grudgingly, to praise Shaka.²

A notable, though slight, tendency to deviate from Isaacs' portrait of unrelieved cruelty, or to reinterpret those cruelties in the terms of a more pragmatic politics, recurs in some other works of the period. The missionary Lewis Grout, in *Zulu-land: or, Life Among the Zulu Caffres of Natal and Zulu-land* (1862), exaggerated the extent of Shaka's influence and repeated some of the stories, notably that of his alleged habits of massacring his own defeated soldiers. But he also

added that "cruel and bloody though this mighty African conqueror is reputed to have been, or as he really became in the progress of his triumphs, his policy, especially at first, was not so much the utter destruction of the neighbouring tribes, as to subdue, and incorporate them with his own" (Grout 72). Any subsequent departure from this pragmatism Grout vaguely attributes to Shaka's mind being not "at rest" (74), and he ends on an unprecedently eulogistic, if slightly ambivalent, note: Shaka is a "prodigy of a prince" whose name "will not be forgotten so long as there shall be a Zulu-Kaffir to talk of CHAKA'S greatness or to swear by the terrors of his memory" (75).

Another missionary, Joseph Shooter, in *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country* (1857), had, like Colenso, alluded to the standing of Fynn as an authority on the Zulu, and makes "great use" of Isaacs, to the extent of paraphrasing him: at Shaka's orders "the father would execute the sentence of death on the child, and the son 'become the inhuman mutilator of his own parent'" (Shooter 268). He includes the already established stories of massacres of whole regiments, and so on, but, like Grout, avoids the more virulent of Isaacs' epithets, and includes another early hint of a more heroic aspect of Shaka: a faint admiration for the "founder of the Zulu-dynasty" (249).

Shooter also claims to have consulted old local men "of standing and respectability" (vi): a strategy which will remain with white writers on Shaka until long after such oral traditions are almost hopelessly compromised, reaching a tendentious apotheosis with Charles Ballard's consultations with Mangosuthu Buthelezi in the 1980s (Ballard 1988).³ Though even those items not derived from Isaacs were mostly from other written sources (the account of Shaka's death is derived from Arbousset [Shooter 302]), certain of Shooter's details do lend some credence to his claim - as they do to the similar claim made by missionary and amateur historian William C Holden.

Holden wrote two books, the nearest we have to modern anthropology and thoughtful history in this period: *History of the Colony of Natal* (1855), and *The Past and Future of the Kaffir Races* (1866). Both books are over-determined by Holden's zealous Christianity, but his tone shifts markedly in the second, and it is worth lingering to compare them. In the 1855 work, to his credit, Holden finds Isaacs "an author on whom [he] cannot rely"; Isaacs' account is one he is "utterly unable to understand" (Holden 1855:42). But this reserve is predicated on Holden's condemnation of the early settlers having "gone native", and he repeats the view of Shaka as a "perfect despot", a "modern Attila", and a "desolating scourge" who depopulated the countryside in a "deluge of blood", ruling by treachery, caprice and violence. He does allow that Shaka's "physical form was tall and well-proportioned, his appearance, commanding, and, when excited, terrific", and that his "mental powers were not at all inferior", but this margin of admiration is quickly eroded again by the assumption that Shaka's "baser passions at once assumed the reins, and the intellectual powers became the servants of suspicion, jealousy, hatred, revenge, lust, and ambition, producing relentless cruelty and unbounded ferocity".

The lesson that Holden feels it morally necessary to elicit from this horror-story is that Shaka was the "Scourge of God"⁴ and the Zulus "a fearful picture of fallen, depraved humanity!", and that Shaka met his end "in a manner which was a fit consummation of his career of blood and death, and which proves that 'there is a god that judgeth upon the earth'" (48,57). This moral attitude is more trenchantly expressed in the later *The Past and Future of the Kafir Races*, with all the judgmental paternalism encapsulated in that title. The people of Natal, according to Holden, dwelt in serenity until the advent of Shaka, after which their "days were numbered, unless in the wonder-working providence of God it should rise again in a new and enduring form under the fostering care of Christian Britain" (Holden 1866:25), and Holden explicitly repudiates "the idea that civilization must precede Christianity" (42). In few other places are these early Victorian prejudices more confidently displayed:

Utshaka was indeed "the scourge of God", but was it as "God's sword", merely to desolate nations, and "pour out the vials of his wrath" upon offending man? Or, was it to prepare the way for a new part to be acted upon this portion of the South African stage? Probably both. Doubtless these heathen nations deserved the chastisement they received; but, at the same time, the righteous Governor of the universe determined ... that a new and brighter era should open upon this dark, pagan land. (42)

This apparently overweening confidence in the efficacy of God's plan to accommodate even the most horrific of events and people is mitigated to some extent by Holden's awareness of the deficiencies of his own civilisation, and by his acknowledgement that "despotism, whether personified in the individual Utshaka, or the multitude in France in the Revolution of 1790, is the same". An extended (itself ethnocentric) comparison of these two varieties of tyranny results in this realisation: "Is this thy work, boasting reason? Are these thy conquests, high-sounding philosophy? Are these thy trophies, refined civilization? If so, then we know not which has the advantage, the civilized or the savage" (45).

This ambivalence registers in the way Holden presents Shaka. The Zulu chief is hardly less brutal than in the earlier account, but there are significant changes in story and tone. Shaka is still called a "modern Attila", but a much stronger emphasis is placed on parallels with Napoleon. Shaka has that same "military magic about his words, actions, and bearing, which usually attends great commanders" (12), and the "army of Napoleon Buonaparte was not more regularly officered and systematically equipped" (14). He is still the "proud and pitiless despot" dispensing his "merciless wrath", but now the account of it is delivered in an epic simile. He is compared to Caesar in the way he "came, he saw, he fought, he conquered" (23); he is "a fine specimen of physical perfection" who was "never beaten, never lost a battle, never fled before a foe" (10). Through these orotund exaggerations, Shaka is retrospectively lionised in a way apparently impossible for the earlier writers. Shaka is now a "majestic savage" and a "mighty warrior" whose reign was characterised by both "horrible and revolting conduct" (9) and a "chivalry" which "far exceeded anything connected with civilized nations" (15).

Holden, like Shooter, uses "living memories" to correct previous misconceptions, citing as source one Abantwana, who had fought with Shaka. "I have," he writes, "been brought into contact with some of the oldest and most intelligent natives themselves, enabling me to look at what transpired *from their own stand-point*, and record events in the light in which *they beheld them*", and so to "correct many errors which have found their way into other works, and have been handed down from one to the other, until they have become almost stereotyped" (7). On the strength of this, Holden forcibly denies stories that Shaka had attained power by treachery and that he murdered Dingiswayo. More than any previous writer, he stresses Shaka's greatness, with some reservations: "he was great in every respect *except goodness* ... great in mental grasp and physical development; great in the vastness of his conceptions, and the successful execution of his plans; great in boundless ambition and dauntless courage ... great while he lived, and greater still after he died". Holden sees his end as tragic, his name (which he prefers to translate as "Break of Day") a "magic" which had "for the last fifty years spell-bound myriads of Amazulu ... revered, honoured and obeyed as a hero; after his death he was extolled, adored, and invoked as a god" (9). While repeating Isaacs' assertion that Shaka "implored mercy" at his death, Holden ends on a note of high adulation which nevertheless betrays an essential falseness in its abrupt plunge back into the prosaic:

Utshaka the great is fallen, the mighty warrior lies weltering in his gore; he who made the nations to tremble is stretched powerless in the arms of death. This event took place on the Umvoti River, not far from the present site of Mr Grout's Mission Station. When the Colony was taken by the British, this place was given to a Dutch farmer of the name of T Potgieter, the farm measuring 6030 acres in extent. (42)

Holden's text epitomises the ambiguities and dichotomies that characterise, in more or less evident form, the entire corpus of white writing on Shaka: deeply western prejudices concealed behind appeals to oral tradition; paternalism uneasily shackled with the claim to be presenting the Zulu viewpoint; a revelling in the "exciting scenes" of violence and "the eloquence of the action" (20) struggling with moral condemnation; the alien commandeered to familiar cosmologies and comparisons but mystified by a nostalgic fictionalising; an epic style warring with the claim to be

revealing truth. Many of these antinomies can also be seen in the first substantial fiction on Shaka, Charles Eden's *An Inherited Task* (1871).

Travel Literature and the Growth of Imperial Romance: Charles Eden

Two major genres informed and structured the Shakan literature: travel and romance/adventure. The latter grew, in crucial ways, out of the former, and both affected other categories, notably the histories. As I will argue in Chapter Eight, virtually all the Shakan fictions accommodated themselves to the romance pattern. *An Inherited Task*, in its very crudity, demonstrates the polyphony out of which this trend emerged.

Percy G Adams has outlined the multiple paths by which travel literature made its influence felt in seventeenth and eighteenth-century fiction (see also Porter 1991; Pratt 1992). *Robinson Crusoe* was of course the greatest of fictions to benefit from the real-life reports of Alexander Selkirk and other marooned sailors, and, as Martin Green says, "the adventure tales that formed the light reading of Englishmen for two hundred years and more after *Robinson Crusoe* were ... the energizing myth of English imperialism" (Green 1980:3). Travel literature itself had been influenced by the fictive norms derived from classical works, and a vast number of pseudo-factual texts fed archetypal patterns and prejudices that would in turn nourish the imperial adventure story. Thus a pseudo-factual travelogue of 1569, *Aethiopica*, not only imitates "the more ancient Greek epic but it contains certain patterns that become standard - ships, travel, exotic lands, pirates, shipwrecks, handsome lovers separated and remarkably reunited, feats of bravery and strength almost superhuman, and recognition of the aristocratic birth of supposed commoners" (Adams 29). Already there are echoes of Shaka's story as well as that of the white settlers who meet him.

Historiographers and travellers, mendacious and actual alike, from the Renaissance onwards urged "a moral theme for history" (Adams 30), and these moral lessons were frequently absorbed into fictions ostensibly not about travel at all; by the end of the eighteenth century, according to Adams, "we arrive at two chief types of fiction; the domestic narrative and the adventure narrative, the static and the dynamic" (148). If this is roughly true, it is almost sufficient reason for the energies of British imperialism to have attracted to itself the forms of romance and adventure rather than that of the serious domestic novel. (Once again, however, as Patrick Brantlinger warns, "these apparently antithetical genres do not have separate histories, but influence and shade into each other in countless ways" [Brantlinger 13].)

There were deeper reasons, too, why the "inferior" genres of romance adventure became the locus of imperial fantasies. One was that the romance had always been the genre in which utopian or nightmarish fantasy of "the other" had been dealt with and displayed, "a realm of imaginative licence" (much as, say, India was for Elizabeth Gaskell and the younger Tennyson) where "the fantastic becomes possible in ways that are carefully circumscribed at home" (Brantlinger 13). The actual penetration of Africa by white explorers in the mid-nineteenth century provided fresh impetus to popular tales previously catered for by the Gothic and historical novel: both those subgenres were in decline when imperialism hit its stride. The Gothic tale lost popularity in the early 1800s, when Sir Walter Scott was elevating the historical novel to artistic heights. By the 1870s Scott himself was being relegated to children, "a sure mark," as Green says, "of relegation to the periphery of literature, though that very shift may be a move to something like the centre of culture" (1980:110). The centre of culture, indeed, was then becoming increasingly bellicose, its pseudo-Darwinian racism more virulent, anxieties about industrial society in England more intense even as technological advances made Englishmen more certain than ever of their innate superiority. But imperialism, closely allied as it was to the Puritan moral revolution, bred a dichotomous morality: in some crucial ways, the system spawned

an anti-imperialist morality of freedom, tolerance and enlightened peace (Green 1980:10) directly opposed to the "new tradition of Christian militarism, militant athleticism in the public schools, and a recreated and perverted 'medieval' chivalry" (Mackenzie 1986:3). Hence the tendency for the serious domestic novel to shy away from the question of imperialism, which thus arrogated to itself the "inferior" genres: thus "to celebrate adventure was to celebrate empire" (Green 1980:37).

Almost all these tensions are evident in *An Inherited Task*. Travellers in Africa in the mid-1800s were well aware of their rhetorical heritage (see Gray 1979:72-92). Conversely, the first fiction-writers frequently mimicked the travellers, and until imperial adventure fiction really burgeoned in the latter half of the century, fictive works, especially for the young, were "especially inclined to moral preaching," frequently "merely boiled down selected passages from the explorers," and "combined exhortation with an easy disregard for the facts" (Curtin 216). *An Inherited Task* stands instructively on this tentative and as yet ill-defined boundary between travelogue, moral tale, and adventure.

The plot of *An Inherited Task* is simple. Guy Hamilton, a young missionary in the making, inherits from his debilitated father the zeal to evangelise on the Dark Continent, and leaves his recently-acquired wife to set up a mission station in the heart of Shaka's country. Having received permission from the savage despot, Guy and his companion, hunter-adventurer Arthur Merton, "worked indefatigably, established a school ... visited the sick and aged ... and employed himself in translating the New Testament into the Zulu tongue" (72). The attractive missionary scene is disrupted, initially by a disgraced chief, Macooquan, seeking shelter with them and thus exposing them to danger; secondly by the arrival of Guy's young wife Amy, to whom Shaka takes a fancy and endeavours through a cunning plot to kidnap into marriage. Her defiant refusal is about to result in the impalement of her staunch companion - another Englishman - when rescue

arrives in the nick of time in the persons of Dingane and Mhlangana, who, "the seizure of Mrs Hamilton [having] filled the cup to overflowing" (120), assassinate the tyrant on the spot. All thus ends well, despite the deteriorating reign of an almost equally despotic Dingane.

Spliced into this story, sometimes at the most inappropriate junctures, are several lengthy interpolations on the Hottentots (quoting Robert Moffat) and the Bushmen, on the honey-guide and the water-root and the construction of a waggon. Eden's narratee is evidently the credulous English schoolboy who knows nothing of southern Africa: hence frequent interpolations such as, "some description of these [waggons] will be here necessary to enable the reader to understand what manner of vehicles they are" (24), and "But it is time that I explained what kind of people these Hottentots are" (35). That the excitement of a suspenseful plot is not Eden's primary aim is evidenced not only by the obstacles to the narrative flow these didactic passages present, but by the long insertion of Amy's account of her ordeal to her husband *after* the felicitous outcome is already known to the reader, and the essential elements of the ordeal obvious. Clearly the plot is a vehicle for other concerns.

One very obvious concern is to reinforce the lineaments of the ideal Englishman. Other races are systematically denigrated. The Hottentots are "hopelessly drunk" (27), "cowardly" (46,49), and "monkey-faced" (42), all in all "a sadly worthless set" (37); the Dutch or Boers are "lazy" (21), "churlish", "brutal", and "apathetic" (100); the Zulus are "fine, powerfully built men" (45), but also, of course, "savage" and "ferocious" (69). These much-belaboured stereotypes are given added authority by repeated rhetorical intervention from the author, who generalises, for instance, that Hottentots "need no incentive to spur them towards a place containing liquor" (26) or that "it takes a great many knocks on the head to quiet a Zulu" (85). Eden's young narratee, then, is one who (the text demands) is both open to being "educated", and

capable of colluding in numerous snide and racist jokes, which depend upon a preconception of the stereotype for their effectiveness.

But the primary contrast is the bluntly drawn one between Guy Hamilton and Shaka. Guy is a "tall, handsome young man" (8), an "ardent, chivalrous lad" (14) of "firm determination" (15), a "singular aptitude for mechanical pursuits" (73), and "a character as open as the day" (92). Physically, he is the classical ideal, having

a frame lightly but strongly built, and seemingly capable of enduring great fatigue; blue eyes, light brown hair curling naturally over a small head, neatly poised on a broad pair of shoulders, a well-cut mouth, always wearing a pleasant smile; and an expression of countenance that seemed to demand confidence as a right... (15)

Guy's classical lineaments (Amy, too, has the "classical features of the Grecian Aphrodite" [16]) are echoed by Shaka's. Eden echoes James Saunders King in describing Shaka as standing "upwards of six feet in height, with every limb in most perfect proportion. His head was small, and beautifully set on his shoulders, while his features, when undistorted by passion, were rather winning than repulsive" (59). But, as the reference to "passion" shows, all similarity ends when it comes to character: Guy's "profession was one of peace" (44), Shaka's that of compulsive war, "habitual ferocity" and an "insatiable love for blood" (64); Guy's "open" and undeceptive nature is contrasted explicitly with Shaka's "duplicity and cunning" (89); his touching and sentimental concern for his kidnapped wife is set against a footnote reminding us that Shaka killed his pregnant mistresses (but, paradoxically, wants Amy to bear his progeny, so emphasising both Amy's attractiveness and Shaka's diabolical sexual threat). These contrasts are reinforced by others, such as the close juxtaposition of the calm courage of John Sinclair, about to be impaled, and the "most abject terror" of Shaka, simultaneously about to be assassinated (119).

Everything in Eden's book is designed to underscore this antithesis. His heroes' religion produces an "air of homeliness and comfort" (69), founded on an unshakeable belief in the "soothing efficacy of prayer" (116); "how much a messenger of peace and goodwill was needed

in Chaka's kingdom was brought home to the travellers with appalling rapidity" as Shaka orders arbitrary executions (56). By contrast, the Zulus' "grotesquely dressed" (57) sorcerers are "a class of impostors who are a sore thorn in the side of a missionary" (74). The very landscape is a reflection of the antithesis. "Our friends" (Eden leaves his narratee in no doubt about where his sympathies ought to lie) leave their home in "dear old England" whose "villas, surrounded by ample grounds, bordered the margin of the noble river". As I will show in more detail in Chapter Eleven, the correlative description of the "Nu-Gariep" river is a "fallen paradise", haunted by "cunning" fox and "insidious" serpent - direct premonitions of Shaka's personal wiles. This landscape thus functions subliminally as a parody of the English scene, in the same way as African figures parody English ideals: Eden smugly and sarcastically describes Shaka parading "childlike in his delight", in an English helmet, "with the wrong side foremost, in which guise he stalked forth" (60), and a comical Dingane who "capered off" with accompanying "sable lunatics" (107), for example. A clumsy interpolation about the attractiveness of insects to "the entomologist" - there are no entomologists amongst the characters - betrays Eden's own fantasies. In short, the landscape is the direct projection of both the moods and situations of the story's heroes at particular junctures, and (particularly here where the perceptions of characters and author are at variance) of Eden's own proclivities and prejudices. It is also a setting designed for the maximum effect of the missionary presence, as is Shaka's reign itself: "the knowledge that there were at least two Englishmen in the party, would it was hoped produce a salutary effect on the cruel despot, ... an account of whose enormities had reached even England, and convinced Guy that no country presented a better opening for his maiden efforts" (19). It is the harsh landscape of the vicarious testing of English mettle, and it highlights the drama, the difficulty, and the quiet glory of imperial and evangelical success. Eden perceives no contradiction between those two strands of conquest: Guy Hamilton hoists the British ensign over his station when attack impends; settler encroachment is precisely the vehicle by which "Christianity spread[s] slowly but surely" (126); the innate violence and fallenness of the African is justification for both conversion

and the use of violence in return. Given the Hottentots' despicable nature, Arthur Merton's lashing is appropriate, and even the mild-mannered Guy "was not disinclined to see what effect a little salutary castigation would produce amongst the knavish followers" (44). As Patrick Brantlinger writes: "Empire involved military conquest and rapacious economic exploitation, but it also involved the enactment of often idealistic though nonetheless authoritarian schemes of cultural domination. The goal of imperialist discourse is always to weld these seeming opposites together or to disguise their contradiction" (34).

Guy Hamilton is in some ways an extreme example of what, in his discussion of the "hero as instrument" in the historical novel, Harry E Shaw calls the "disjunctive" protagonist. "Disjunctive form," Shaw proposes, "employs the hero primarily as as an access to historical particularities that are aesthetically irreducible to larger movements" (Shaw 1983:211). To cite Shaw's comment on the eponymous hero of Walter Scott's *Quentin Durward* (Quentin, like Guy Hamilton, is used to bring out the character of a despot, in his case Louis XI): "Our pattern of fears and hopes for him ... does not strongly translate into a developing set of historical propositions" (160) or imply much about the nature of "historical process". In *An Inherited Task*, there is no sense of historical process at all, until perhaps the final pages, when it is implied that history consists of the Christian reduction of all alien savagery to the dull serenity of Guy Hamilton's return to England and the parish embrace of the "Bishop of -----". Racial types are regarded as static and innate; so are individuals (as the phrenological observation of one character's "bump of curiosity" indicates). This is the polar opposite of the Bildungsroman, the "conjunctive form", which "throws the emphasis on historical process, about which the protagonist's career creates an argument" (211). There is no argument in *An Inherited Task*, only foregone conclusions; its hero does not act as "a counterpoint to the historical vision" of the novel - the strength of the disjunctive form (166) - so much as a pawn to an unwavering bias, and his adventure a readable thread on which to hang didactic descriptions. This manifests a

"conjunction of realism and allegory" which, according to Christopher L Miller, "is a peculiarly Africanist form of discourse" (1985:14). The novel is an example of that imperialist discourse which, in Brantlinger's words, "treats its subject as universally understood, scientifically established, and therefore no longer open to criticism by a political or theoretical opposition" (174). Indeed, it is far from being the only work of its kind: Marryat's *The Mission* (1849) and R M Ballantyne's *Snowflakes and Sunbeams* (1856) both demonstrate how the writer is "anxious to substantiate his fiction with fact [which] leads to interlarding his narrative with commentary" (Hannebuss 56). Eden's novel also falls prey to what Shaw identifies as a danger of the disjunctive form, its tendency to "break into pieces" (176); in its heavy reliance on travel literature and poorly digested passages of "sightseer" curiosity, its tone is of superficial spectacle rather than of meaningful absorption in history.

Nada the Lily and Imperial Gothic

Both Eden's and Holden's works are half-way to the epic-style adventure and romance of the first influential novel of Shaka, Rider Haggard's *Nada the Lily* (1892). By then, Shaka was solidly established as the most famous and ferocious African chieftain on the subcontinent, and the standard by which all other putative African despotisms would be measured.⁵ He was unquestioned as the centre of the self-generated storm which had conveniently swept the subcontinent bare of opposition to the white influx, and of having imparted in his short life-span all of his ferocity and most of his military discipline to the "Zulu offshoots" such as Matiwane and Mzilikazi. (The usual story that Mzilikazi was one of Shaka's "generals" is not borne out by the evidence.) Haggard's view of the brutality was, to be sure, set against an attitude of mingled admiration, avowed nostalgia, and self-protection, as evidenced by this letter to James Stuart, written on 12 October 1912:

Now everything is changed, or so I hear, and doubtless in the balance this is best. Still we may wonder what are the thoughts that pass through the mind of some ancient warrior of Chaka's or Dingaan's time, as he suns himself crouched on the ground, for example, where once stood the Royal Kraal, Duguza, and watches men and women of the Zulu blood

passing homeward from the cities or the mines, bemused, some of them, with the white man's smuggled liquor, grotesque with the white man's cast-off garments, hiding, perhaps, in their blankets examples of the white man's doubtful photographs - and then shuts his sunken eyes and remembers the plumed and kilted regiments making that same ground shake as, with a thunder of salute, line upon line, company upon company, they rushed out to battle. (KCSP File 48, 24031)

This kind of ambivalence is symptomatic of that affecting the imperial enterprise generally, perhaps particularly sharply, after the 1870s. The situation in southern Africa had changed dramatically since 1871: Africa had been successfully divided among the European powers over the table in Berlin; the Zulu war had marked the apparently permanent demise of Zulu military might; one Anglo-Boer war had been fought following the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877, in which Haggard, under the wing of Theophilus Shepstone, had played the symbolic part of raising the British flag; another war was brewing; Rhodes had sent the Pioneer Column into Rhodesia and was hatching the Jameson raid. British control over South Africa was all but paramount, and black African societies, if not the Boer, had been more or less quelled, in practice if not in the popular imagination.

Africa still presented itself, at least to the British reading public, as a suitable field for adventure stories, an imaginary arena on which fantasies of violence, sexuality, and the occult could be played out. As late as 1911 the explorer Richard Burton could write, in *The Sentiment of the Sword*: "We are fast returning to those fine old days, still preserved in Asia and Africa, where every free-born man was a born man-at-arms, when every citizen was a soldier, and our falling-back on the wisdom of antiquity in this, as in other matters, is not one of the least curious features of the age" (Brantlinger 169). This coalition of militarism, freedom and antique wisdom is precisely what fuelled the romance genre's fires of vicarious violence and nostalgia for a lost age of chivalrous and licentious excitement. Moreover, Africa, despite the penetrations of the explorers (even, Brantlinger suggests, *because* of them), was projected as the Dark Continent, a convenient crucible of mystery for fiction writers. Edgar Wallace wrote in *Sanders of the River* (also 1911): "There are many things that happen in the very heart of Africa that no man can

explain; that is why those who know Africa best hesitate to write stories about it. Because a story about Africa must be a mysterious story and your reader of fiction requires that his mystery shall be in the end X-rayed, so that the bones of it are visible" (quoted in Street 22). Haggard's pervasive concern with occult presences in his fiction is just such a deliberate mysteriousness, though it is arguable whether he, unlike Wallace, ever intended the mystery to be fully "X-rayed". This image is a modern version of the white explorer-adventurer's gentlemanly penetration of Africa in search of treasure or knowledge, one of Haggard's central themes. In those novels, Haggard does at times lapse, like Charles Eden, into the amateur ethnographer's version of the X-ray (as in his lengthy digression into the customs and history of the fictional Zu-Vendi tribe in *Allan Quatermain*).

Nada the Lily, however, is an interesting partial exception, one of an uncommon type pioneered by William Scully in his *Kafir Stories* (1892), which Hammond and Jablow cite as "one of the few novels [sic] of this period in which Africans have more than a minor role" and so "broke some new ground" (111). In Haggard's romance, as in Scully's, the white man is marginalised: the Port Natal traders, for example, are confined to a couple of references late in the story, and play no effective role in the plot. The white traveller to whom the story is narrated remains nameless and passive: Haggard pointedly subjects him to Zulu occult wisdom, as the narrator Mopo correctly but utterly inexplicably predicts where the traveller will recover his lost cattle. The framing device of this encounter prepares the narratee for a story in which prediction, spirits and sheer providence largely motivate the plot. The fantasy element in *Nada the Lily* is integral, where "superstitions" were unequivocally condemned in the rationalistically-plotted *An Inherited Task*; in the tragic outcome of Nada's unconsummated love, which thwarts the novel's central quest and resolution, Haggard implicitly criticises the facile, propagandistic "happy and perfect peace" which ends a novel like Eden's, and which implies that Africa, like the convert Macooquan, "is a perfect ally because it is perfectly malleable" (Miller 35). In order to draw

closer to his idea of the essence of an incorrigibly "other" Africa, Haggard takes advantage of a more general "loss of faith in Christianity and dissatisfaction with science" which permitted "a willing credulity about African supernatural powers" (Hammond and Jablow 145). So Mopo puts it, in one of *Nada the Lily*'s more thoughtful passages:

Say, my father, why does the Unkulunkulu who sits in the Heavens above allow such things to be done on the earth beneath? I have heard the preaching of the white men, and they say that they know all about Him - that His names are Power and Mercy and Love. Why, then, does He suffer these things to be done - why does He suffer such men as Chaka and Dingaan to torment the people of the earth, and in the end pay them but one death for all the thousands that they have given to others? Because of the wickedness of the peoples, you say: but, no, no, that cannot be, for do not the guiltless go with the guilty - ay, do not the innocent children perish by the hundred? (204)

Mopo's own answer is that "Perchance it is but a part of the great plan, a little piece of that pattern ... on the cup that holds the water of His wisdom". One little piece of this plan, doubtless, is the necessary subjugation of the African peoples by the white. At the end of *Nada the Lily*, Mopo, symbolic of that other world rich in violence and occult wisdom, dies; the white man lives on, wiser and in power - indeed *empowered* by new knowledge. But in the last analysis, Mopo says, "Wow! I do not understand, who am but a wild man, nor have I found more knowledge in the hearts of you tamed white people" (204-5).

There are several strands to this. One is the criticism of the superficiality of conventional Christian theodicy - or at least, the suggestion that the Christian world-view was only one of a number of possibilities. Beneath that, secondly, is Mopo's intimation that perhaps, come death, "I shall be wiser than all of you", that he will have access, precisely because of his "wildness", to a deeper spirituality than the Christian, in the realm of the "Unsearchable". This ethereal mysticism, in paradoxical contrast to the muscular action of the book, parallels a third strand, the theme of the "wild man" whose life of raw adventure and Old Testament vengeance is viewed in an almost amoral glow of nostalgia: Umslopogaas's view of his own life is also Haggard's of the progress into dullness of European civilisation. For Umslopogaas, "now he was great and there

was nothing more to win, and at times a weariness of life came upon him, and then he must up, and together with Galazi hunt and harry with the wolves, for thus only could he find rest" (194).

On this level, the contrast with the moral world of *An Inherited Task* is dramatic. Most of the burden of commentary in *Nada the Lily* is borne by the transference of many of those qualities of the chivalrous English venturer (the Guy Hamilton figure) to black characters, Mopo and Umslopogaas in particular: that is, by the resurrection of a positive anachronism for Haggard's day, the "noble savage" figure.

The actualities of often violent contact with Africans had served substantially to scuttle the ideal of the Noble Savage, invented primarily by Abolitionist propaganda and, according to Hoxie Neale Fairchild, "a dying convention" by the 1830s (Fairchild 363): the accounts of Isaacs and Fynn are typical in this regard. But once tribes like the Zulus had been subdued, commerce apparently had debilitated opportunities for genuine heroism, and late Victorian utilitarian and evangelical optimism had been damaged by poor results, the door opened for a nostalgic revival. In part, the revival was compensatory, "an attempt to reclaim a waning heroism or an adolescent romanticism before the frontiers shut down" (Brantlinger 38). Also, as it had always been, the Noble Savage is being used by Haggard to level criticism at his own society (Weston 1984). As Mopo puts it in *Nada the Lily*, "It is better to slay a man in a fair fight than to suck out his life's blood in buying, selling and usury". This closely echoes one of Haggard's white adventurers, Sir Henry Curtis, who proclaims that "a gentleman does not sell himself for wealth" (quoted in Street 20), indicating how much has been transferred to black characters in *Nada the Lily* - and how far romance fiction acted to mask the real money-grubbing that characterised the colonial frontier.

But this condemnation of European society - loosely, this primitivism - is not without ambivalence. The Noble Savage motif conceals the preservation of underlying values not so

different from Eden's. The very fact that *An Inherited Task* and *Nada the Lily* share the locus of "savage" southern Africa, the reign of Shaka, and the themes of quest, love, battle and revenge common to all imperial romance novels, implies that some supporting attitudes will be similar, too. For instance Mopo, notwithstanding his fierce and mystical independence, calls his anonymous, younger, and apparently unimportant white listener "my father", hinting at the paternalism that still predicates Haggard's approach. A clear colour prejudice informs Haggard's making Nada's beauty "rather as is the beauty of the white people than of [the Zulus]" (47). Mopo's own morality, while displaying the imperial romance's usual lack of pity for the victims of the action (except, of course, that of the heroine, Nada) and motivated primarily by the "thirst for vengeance" (he assassinates Shaka to avenge the death of his wife and sister, and Dingane to avenge the death of Nada), in crucial respects emulates that of Guy Hamilton. Despite his nostalgia for days of action, Mopo deems the past "evil", and draws a specific contrast with Shaka's Dukuza kraal:

Where the gate of the kraal was built there is a house; it is the place where the white man gives out justice; that is the place of the gate of the kraal, through which Justice never walked. Behind is another house, where the white men who have sinned against Him pray to the King of Heaven for forgiveness; there on that spot have I seen many a one who had done no wrong pray to a king of men for mercy, but I have never seen but one who found it.

Instead, Mopo continues, now the white man "goes to and fro about his business of peace where impis ran forth to kill; his children laugh and gather flowers where men died in blood by hundreds" (157). In essence, Mopo condemns the reign of Shaka no less than does Guy Hamilton, just as he deplores the murder of Retief's party by Dingane; the Zulu chiefs play in both novels the part of demonic foils to the justifiably vengeful, if not angelic, central characters. While apparently revelling (as his contemporary critics deplored) in the depiction of a world of unceasing battle and bloodshed, Haggard shows through Mopo an underlying awareness of the possible distortions of a nostalgic view of such a world, having Mopo say, "For now that Chaka was dead, people forgot how evilly he had dealt with them, and remembered only that he was a

great man, who had made the Zulu people out of nothing, as a smith fashions a bright spear from a lump of iron" (179).

Little of this greatness is evident in the ways in which Shaka actually affects the plot of *Nada the Lily*. He plays in substance the same role as he does in *An Inherited Task*, that of initiator of violence and therefore of revenge for violence; he commits the barbarities which Haggard accepted from the record: the slaughter of regiments, the attempted killing of his offspring, the vengeance for childhood slights, the filling of the Tatiyana Gorge with bodies, the exposure of the witchdoctors, the prompting of his assassination through his own tyrannical acts. The portrayal is only slightly blurred at the edges. Haggard does permit Shaka a modicum of feeling: "When the king heard that Baleka was sick [i.e. pregnant] he did not kill her outright, because he loved her a little" (38); and an occasional hint of the Noble Savage sparks through: "Chaka died as he had lived, a brave man" (173). But essentially he is the incorrigible warmonger, the untrustworthy dissembler, the lover of idle cruelty - "he does but play with me as a leopard plays with a wounded buck" (88) - and in superstition a coward.

In short, Haggard's innovation lies not in the portrayal of Shaka himself, but in the manner in which he embeds Shaka in a much more intricate plot and a finer, if not less improbable, integration of history and fantasy - "Mopo", after all, is an historical character (Mbopa, who is traditionally said to have helped assassinate Shaka - but also to have been subsequently murdered by Dingane, not vice versa, as Haggard has it). Mopo's own metaphor for his story, which "is long and winds in and out like a river in a plain" (91), is a fairly accurate one for Haggard's view of the passage of history and of the ways in which even cultures intermingle, not excluding those of Mopo and his white narratee.

Thus, rather like the paintings of Paul Gauguin, *Nada the Lily* cannot be interpreted simplistically as either a "Romantic yearning for return to a primal, raw form of truth, beyond the taint of all our acquired cultural conventions", or, in its pursuit of the notion that European and aboriginal cultures might share common roots, "as a smokescreen for the West's desire to ignore the real differences between cultures, and impose its own values globally" (Varnedoe 183). Rather, *Nada the Lily* represents an ambivalent admixture of, on the one hand, the reviving strain of eighteenth-century Rationalist thought which, with "generous, but potentially tyrannical" vision, allowed that "natives" might share the essentials of Enlightenment intelligence; and, on the other, the Romantic view that allowed for difference within a "true, pluralistic tolerance" but hovered on the brink of imposing a racist or moralistic hierarchy (189). Like Gauguin, Haggard drew on European models for his forms, colour and style (his orotund language, for instance, being that blend of the Biblical, Macpherson's Ossian, and Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake* which had been largely developed for the American Indian). He cobbled together borrowed elements of outer form in order to express what he regarded, with Andrew Lang, as universal and mythic concerns - what Jung would call archetypes (Brantlinger 245). In this way he resembles the late nineteenth-century art theorist Aby Warburg, who "changed the way people thought about art, not just by analyzing the survival of certain key antique motifs" (the equivalent of mere source-study), but "by considering such survivals as evidence for the persistence of basic psychic investments that linked the high Western tradition to the art of primitive cultures". Significantly, Warburg linked this closely to the "previously belittled expressions like children's art and popular ads" (Varnedoe 191). Haggard's sheer popularity indicates that in his jerry-built structure of motifs dating back at least to Homer, a romance form at least mediaeval, and its adolescent tenor, he struck a wellspring of Western psychic response. In doing so, he creates something not quite new but startlingly potent. As Kirk Varnedoe writes of a Gauguin painting:

The observable message of the canvas ... is that both art and primitivism can get innovative power from jury-rigging together a patchwork of borrowings. This picture is not an advertisement for purity, and if there is something "raw" and "crude" in it, it is the baling

wire and paper-clip splicing of the disparate parts. This we should argue, is the real basis of primitivism. (193)

An essential difference, then, between *An Inherited Task* and *Nada the Lily* is that Haggard's villain is built into a world altogether more resonant with psychic conditions and projective possibility, to this extent echoing W D Howell's pronouncement that "American literature was not derived from the folk-lore of the Red-Indians, but was ... a condition of English literature" (quoted in Keating 374). Hence, this world is altogether more chaotic, less reductionist and safe (or, like Eden's convert Macooquan, saveable), more *Gothic*. The pervasive presence of occult occurrences - especially prophecies, central among them Shaka's own of the domination of the white man - alerts us to motifs in Haggard's, and subsequent, fiction which can be termed "Gothic". As Edith Birkhead notes, many of Haggard's African romances "belong to a large group of supernatural tales with a foreign setting" (Birkhead 226). The Gothic novel as such had waned in popularity in the early 1800s, but much of its predilection for exotic locales had transferred itself to the imperial adventure. In Gillian Beer's words, "In the Gothic romance, pastoralism changes into gloomy forests and awe-inspiring mountains. The natural scene now represents no sunny ideal of social harmony but the underside of consciousness" (Beer 57). *Nada the Lily* is darkly redolent with rugged and forested landscapes; the "Ghost Mountain" performs the same function here as deserted ruins did in mainstream Gothic tales. Gloomy and fearful landscapes reflect the Gothic world which, according to William Patrick Day, is "one of unresolved chaos, of continuous transformation, of cruelty and fear, of the monstrous that is the shadow and mockery of the human" (Day 8). One such shadow in *Nada the Lily* is the characterisation of Galazi the Wolf, reminiscent of ancient lycanthropic legends common to Gothic fantasy. There are no outright metamorphoses here; transformations occur rather at the level of dramatic plot-twists, providential voltes-face, victories and defeats. But other animal-like characteristics, particularly as applied to Shaka, signal his role in this "Imperial Gothic" frame (the term is Patrick Brantlinger's) as a "mockery of the human". To describe Shaka, to take one of many examples in *Nada the Lily*, as "like a great buck ... and like a buck he sniffed the air,

scenting the air of slaughter" (34), is, in its ambivalent mix of the noble and the murderous, to align him closely with the Gothic anti-hero. Shaka here represents what Brantlinger, following Joseph Schumpeter, calls the "atavistic" or regressive character of both imperial and Gothic fiction (Brantlinger Ch.8). Shaka's animality is a reflection, or a further extension, of the white fear (or desire) of "going native", a regression that is at once Rousseau-esque, youthful (hence, in part, the adolescent tenor of such romances' very language), dangerous, and attractive. Haggard put it this way in *Allan Quatermain*: "Nineteen parts of our nature are savage, the twentieth civilized, but the last is spread over the rest like the blacking over a boot, or the veneer over a table; it is on the savage that we fall back in emergencies" (16). A romance like *Nada the Lily* is in effect a single, elaborate emergency, playing on numerous otherwise unexpressed fears and desires in the European mind. Fundamentally, such works operate on what Day calls "the dynamic of sadomasochism", by which "One asserts one's power either by inflicting or enduring pain, or both" (Day 19). This is a kind of dialectic encapsulated in the scene in *Nada the Lily* of Shaka forcing Mopo to hold his hand in the fire (82), and one diametrically opposed to that propagated by a Christian-based morality.

Thus, Brantlinger contends, "Imperial Gothic expresses anxieties about the waning of religious orthodoxy, but even more clearly it expresses anxieties about the ease with which civilization can revert to barbarism and savagery and thus about the weakening of Britain's imperial hegemony" (229). Shaka represents a barbarism to which only counter-violence is an answer, the level to which all those within his orbit necessarily fall. In part, the regression seems an attractive reversion to an age of comparative simplicity, where choices are dramatic and starkly meaningful; but no European reader in his right mind would willingly immerse himself in such a world. From Jekyll to Kurtz, characters who do that are always described as insane. The Gothic genre signalled such tensions in society, but, as Day points out, it "was not a call to revolution, but at best a gesture of revolt, a momentary break with the values and attitudes of

everyday life" (169). Because it "always makes its own artificiality and fictiveness clear" (13), the Gothic stressed its own aim of entertainment and voyeuristic escape. Whatever societal problems it sprang from and expressed, "their solutions would exist in reality, not in art" (169).

This link with the Gothic should not be pushed too far. William Day argues that the Gothic, set in its world of chaos, was primarily a "fable of identity fragmented and destroyed beyond repair, a fable of the impossibility of identity", in which "the hero never recovers his identity" after (as in *Dracula*) "submitting complicitly to the Other" in a "metamorphosis of the self into its opposite" (6-7, 21). Haggard's story runs directly counter to this; his heroes and heroines *never* lose their identity: rather, their heroism consists precisely in a successful resistance of the evil forces of "the Other", the representative of the Underworld. While problems of identity are not explicitly the problems of the imperial romance, they are the undeniable motive.

Haggard is one of the numerous writers who created a mythology out of personal contact with Zululand and the Zulus. He derived much of his information from men who worked there, in particular F B Fynney (see Haggard 1926:I 56), whom he knew well, and whose short work *Zululand and the Zulus* (c.1880), contained both some refutations of previous stories about Shaka and established some new ones. In the first place, Fynney denied that Shaka slaughtered indiscriminately: "After destroying the head of a tribe, Tyaka showed great consideration for the people, supplying them liberally with cattle"; hence he "was literally worshipped". Fynney also asserted, in response to the allegation "that when stabbed, Tyaka begged most pitifully for mercy", he had "not been able to obtain any testimony which would bear out this statement" (8). On the other hand, Fynney repeated the story of the regiment massacred for cowardice, asserted that Shaka "stabbed his mother to the heart with a small, or toy, assegai he always carried", tried the experiment of filling up the Tatiyana gorge with people, and exposed the charlatanism of his

witchdoctors by sprinkling his own hut with blood and then revealing their erroneous interpretations (10-11).⁶

All four of these stories find their place in *Nada the Lily* (the first and the fourth to become almost indispensable in later works, the murder of his mother remaining in dispute, and the Tatiyana gorge story fairly quickly dropped). For Haggard, Shaka was still ambivalently the "Zulu Napoleon, one of the greatest geniuses and most wicked men who ever lived" and who slaughtered "more than a million human beings" (Haggard 29n; the figure probably derived from Fynn). Although there "was only one good thing in the cruel heart of Chaka, that he would always save the life of a brave man if he could do so without making his word nothing" (56) - a self-serving virtue at best - Shaka is still a physically heroic figure, "a great man to look at" (53). He is murderously capricious, but faces his death with a tragic and admirable courage, uttering the prophecy of the coming of the white man that would also become a staple of the assassination story: "I hear a sound of running feet - the feet of a great white people. They shall stamp you flat..." (195).

Carolyn Hamilton (1993:330-47) has argued that such prophesying is a sign of Haggard drawing on Zulu oral historiographies, and thus demonstrating one limit to European invention and projection. Such prophecies doubtless occur in Zulu lore - and Theophilus Shepstone used this one to its full in supporting his own posturing "as Shaka" in the 1873 "coronation" of Cetshwayo. But they are also common to just about every European hero-myth since Hercules; the commonality would have been one reason for the novel's popularity. Similarly, such popularity is not explained by Hamilton's thesis that *Nada the Lily* is fundamentally shaped by three contemporary, very localised political developments: "Shepstone's enactment of Shaka in the development of a model for Natal native policy; the second, the invocation of Shaka-the-tyrant as the reason for British involvement north of the Thukela; and the third, a return to the emphasis

on Shaka as a source of order and discipline" (1993:337-8). As Hamilton notes, Haggard's debt to Shepstone personally, and his (apparently uncritical) recognition of Shepstone's attempt to pass himself off as a "white t'Chaka" (Haggard 1882:182), is evident in the eulogistic dedication to "Somseu" in *Nada the Lily* (in a quite common gesture among white writers, Haggard employs a "Zulu" voice to enhance his accolade). But it is another thing to say that the novel is somehow embodying a "Shepstonian" view of power, especially since, as Hamilton herself points out, the "good" qualities which Shaka *might have* embodied, are in effect invested in his son Umslopogaas, who "eschew[s] power" altogether (Hamilton 1992:354).

Hamilton makes too much, I think, of differences between Shepstone and his contemporaries such as Bartle Frere: Frere frequently reverted to intemperate allusions to Shaka as an embodiment of the Zulu threat: like Shaka, every Zulu warrior was a "celibate, man-destroying gladiator", Zulu organisation "the result of a perverse and unnatural development of brute instincts" (cited in Martin 169,171), and Cetshwayo was "anxious to emulate the sanguinary fame of his uncle Chaka" (cited in Hamilton 1992:299): "To emulate Shaka in shedding blood is as far as I have heard his [Cetshwayo's] highest aspiration", Frere wrote (cited in Taylor 193). To be sure, Shepstone drew, with greater ethnographic knowledge and less ferocity, on the more disciplinary aspects of Shaka's rule to create his own paternalistic model for indirect colonial rule,⁷ but this emerges only tangentially in Haggard's portrait of Shaka. As the title of James Shuttleworth's essay (1992) suggests, subsequent positive images (even self-images) of the Zulu were more of "sons of Umslopogaas" than of "sons of Shaka". Hamilton may be right to question the vaguer Jungian explanations of Haggard's popularity, but her focus on immediate political influences obliges her to omit the far more important literary antecedents of content, genre, myth and imagery. Edward Boyd, in a preface to the novel, records that "Andrew Lang described a character in one of Haggard's other books as a 'Norse Umslopogaas'. In this he was making a twist in time; for Umslopogaas was never at any time a Zulu but always a black Norseman".

Certain details, like Umslopogaas' resonantly-named battle-axe, certainly sound more Norse than Zulu, though Callaway (1870) recorded similar weapon-naming amongst the Zulu: the point here is that Haggard chose such parallels precisely because they conformed to a European preconception of what pre-literate warrior tribes were like. The constraint on his invention is less the tenor of local conditions, then, than the generic and imagistic resources of his intended readership - the first real mass-readership in history. Boyd goes on to suggest that the supernatural content of *Nada the Lily*, including such staples as Shaka's dying prophecy of white rule, implied "that this right [of conquest] was accorded a supernatural sanction by the natives themselves" (as Shepstone well recognised):

On this basis, *Nada the Lily* is simply a monumental epitaph; and Rider Haggard may well have esteemed it as such. Yet *Nada the Lily* is more than just a splendid funeral oration. It is a statement of the classical contradictions of the colonial situation. It is, from one angle, a work of expiation in which the conqueror assuages his feelings of guilt towards the conquered by the payment of an elaborate tribute; but this very tribute, on the other hand, can be taken as the subtlest form of inferential boast.

It is surely no coincidence that this anecdote of prophecy emerges in the literature precisely, and only, when white hegemony over the Zulus becomes an unavoidable issue.

None of this is to demean Haggard's clear sympathy for the Zulu; he was appalled by the manner in which Frere and Wolseley brought about the 1879 war, and by some of its consequences.⁸ Paradoxically, it was the Zulu defeat, spiced with their undeniable courage, which enabled a resurgence of the "noble savage" motif in his novels. This is the primary source of subsequent lionisations of Shaka himself, rather than the less sensationalist, more ethnographic tenor of Shepstone's writings, which for a long time remained much more obscure and scarcely affected the popular view. Even the voluminous A T Bryant scarcely refers to him, though Wright (1989a) makes it clear that his chronology of Zulu expansion was based largely on Shepstone's. On the other hand, Bryant did go so far as to refer to Shaka's mother Nandi as the original "Nada the Lily"! As numerous commentators have noted, Haggard's influence on subsequent literature is massive, determining the course not only of subsequent fiction but in part

of the "histories" as well. And although Haggard himself might have questioned the validity of the Christian cosmology being foisted onto the Africans, missionaries contemporary with him also benefited from his popularisation of a Zulu image - and generally agreed with his negative portrait of Shaka.

The Last of the Missionaries

The importance of *Nada the Lily* lies not in its fidelity to Zulu culture, of which it has remarkably little, but in its injection of a self-confessedly fictional mode into treatments of the Zulu. It was rapidly followed by a number of romantic adventure tales, such as those of Bertram Mitford, some of which touched lightly on Shaka, and William Charles Scully's 1895 story "The Quest of the Copper". Scully incorporated the current exaggerations about Shaka into a story in which his central character travels north of the Zambezi, searching for highly-prized copper in faithful obedience to the tyrant.⁹ Scully's Shaka is tangentially admirable, a "Peter the Great" of "magnificent build", but he also fatally shares "to the fullest extent those superstitions which form such a salient characteristic of all the Bantu tribes"; this unfortunate trait impels Shaka to send men on an impossible quest, with disastrous consequences:

All the splendid valour displayed, all the incomparable devotion and endurance manifested, had been wasted - poured out like blood on the sand - sacrificed to the senseless suspicions of a brutal, irresponsible tyrant.

Suspicion is Shaka's fatal flaw, in Scully's story: he "possessed the faculty of inspiring loyalty to a high degree, but" - unlike the Shaka of almost all other fiction, and rather implausibly - "he was unaware of this. Being of a highly suspicious nature he sacrificed to his groundless apprehensions numbers of his loyal and faithful adherents" (Scully 1895: 92-126). Where most writers, as a strategy for redeeming the "tribe" for colonial purposes, preferred to separate Shaka from his people by making him fundamentally *anti*-superstitious, Scully substitutes another kind of "senselessness", but with similar effects: that is, to reinforce late-Victorian virtues such as statuesque physical presence, sturdy warriorhood trammelled by absolute obedience, a sexually-

restrained moral rectitude - precisely those qualities attributed by many writers to Shaka's regimen, but happily most useful to colonial rulers. This over-indulgent and improbable quest and trial adventure framework deeply determined the course of twentieth-century fiction on Shaka (see Chapter Eight).

Equally importantly, the romance-adventure model inflected other genres which professed quite different ideals, including anthropologies, memoirs and histories. Only John Bird's collection of documents, *The Annals of Natal* (1888), could pretend to objectivity - but even here, as we have seen with reference to Bird's treatment of the Fynn papers, a studied selectiveness was practised to protect Fynn's legendary reputation, and to preserve Shaka's malign one. The few European sources in circulation, no more than a collection of more or less sordid anecdotes, were sedulously repeated. Though with the growth of the European population in Natal the role of the missionaries was proportionately waning (indeed they were frequently regarded with suspicion by other settlers), they still provided an important conduit of information.

Josiah Tyler's memoir, *Forty Years Among the Zulus* (1891), is a good example of the established story masquerading as genuine tradition:

Chaka, the most renowned of Zulu kings, not improperly called "the Buonaparte of South Africa", began to reign about the beginning of this century. His name awakens deep emotions in the native mind. As it is little more than fifty years since his death, there are natives living who knew him personally, and they are never tired of rehearsing his mighty deeds. I have often heard them repeat with genuine delight a song which his warriors were accustomed to sing to his praise:

Thou hast finished the nations.
Where wilt thou go to battle now?
Hey! Where wilt thou go to battle now?

Unlike other South African chiefs, he was in the habit of fighting in person at the head of his braves, and it is said that he never fled before a foe or lost a battle. His name is regarded by the Zulus as sacred, and is never mentioned except to give solemnity to an oath or to nerve the warrior for battle. At the time of his death he had a standing army of thirty-six regiments...

During the reign of Chaka, which lasted only nineteen years, he extended his conquests far and wide, and swept away no less than three hundred tribes, slaying all who would not submit to his authority.

His nature was cruel. He stabbed his mother to the heart, and then called on the nation to mourn her death. At an assembly of his leading men he was once speaking of a tribe he was about to attack, and he laid a wager that their dead bodies would fill a certain ravine. The tribe was slain; but the king's wager was lost, for the ravine was not filled.... (Tyler 212)

With the intriguing exception of the reign of "nineteen years", there is not a single item of information here that had not appeared already in Isaacs or Fynn, Gardiner or Fynney. Elsewhere he repeats the story of the blood-sprinkling trick (101). Tyler's very slender grasp of the facts is revealed more than once: he erroneously claims, for instance, that Gardiner himself met Shaka and was ceded the territory of the Port by him (212,269). Like many white writers, he was also quick to generalise from a single incident:

Like most African chiefs, Chaka fell at the hands of assassins. Three of his own brothers rushed into his kraal one day, and seeing him unprotected stabbed him with assegais, and are said to have drunk on the spot the gall of the chief they had conspired to assassinate. Chaka, as he was about to expire, is reported to have uttered these prophetic words, "You kill me; but the white race, a race you do not know, shall occupy this land". (213)

As we have seen, this also repeats previously published details; and the words of the prophecy are interestingly nonsensical: the Zulu were thoroughly acquainted with whites by 1828.

The embeddedness of such views in a self-confident Christian framework is exemplified by a well-known Natal administrator, R C A Samuelson, who shows how the missionary ethic sometimes did collaborate with the structures of colonial rule and was carried over well into the twentieth century. Samuelson's *Long, Long Ago* (1929) opens with a dedication, "For God, King and Country", and a frontispiece which depicts the Prince of Wales, "the fragrant flower of Britain's throne /Which looked at evokes love and devotion", and extols "his genuine love for all regardless of colour". Likewise, the poem which comprises the Preface calls on men to follow God among "Principalities unlitup" and "Unselfishly apply God's teachings / Regardless of Colour, Class or Creed". Make no mistake, however: those of colour (Africans) are intrinsically "weaker, less fortunate, and dependent", providing a God-given opportunity to "enable the Ruling Race to act with wisdom in dealing with them".

Samuelson's Eurocentrism is demonstrated in a curious bit of reverse logic in which he addresses his rhetorical question, "Were the Zulus Roman Gladiators?" (recall Frere's appellation). Samuelson replies: "History is clear as to the fact that the Zulu ancestors came into contact with the Romans and were used as Gladiators in the arena at Rome; it seems quite clear also that the Zulu ancestors came into contact with the Greeks and Jews" (388-9). In support of this, Samuelson notes the similarities between Malawian Ngoni language and the Zulu, reading the "mfecane" dispersal exactly in reverse. From this perspective, Samuelson retells the conventional story of Shaka, including the slaughter of regiments (which he attributes to an 1892 informant named Sukuzwayo [402]), and the newer idea that Shaka "had bestowed on the vulture the appellation 'My Bird' years before, and often caused his subjects to be killed to feed his vultures" (4n). But his outline of Shaka's motives is a more pragmatic one, echoing Colenso and Shepstone rather than Isaacs or Haggard:

In the early days the Zulus used not to be such a fighting machine; a war between the tribes, before the time of Tshaka was soon over ... When Tshaka came into power circumstances had so altered that war to the knife had to be waged, and as time passed and encroachments of people seeking lands increased, the armies increased in order to fight for what the country possessed. This was the natural course of things.... Tshaka was the so-called Napoleon of Africa, and carried out the most devastating war against the other tribes of South Africa with cruelty and effectiveness born of the feeling that he must be master for good.... His methods, however, in the light of the wars carried out by civilised nations against one another, and against barbarians subsequently, specially by the Germans against France, Belgium etc. cannot be found fault with, though taken by themselves without the examples set by other nations they could not be too strongly condemned. (396)

Perhaps nowhere is the defensive ambivalence of a European nation after the horrors of the First World War more obvious - though typically Samuelson holds back from condemning the British directly. Once again, Shaka's cruelty is not denied, merely realigned amongst different "circumstances". A similar ambivalence affects the work of Samuelson's exact contemporary, A T Bryant, whose work on the Zulu is so important that I devote the next chapter to him. While Samuelson and Bryant in many ways represent the last of a discernibly "missionary" stance in writing about Shaka, they were already beginning to incorporate less sensationalist views of Zulu society. Their work overlaps, too, with a somewhat different school of history, launched just

after the turn of the century by the amateurs George Cory and George McCall Theal, which belongs more to the discussion of twentieth century contributions examined in Chapter Seven than does the atavistic Bryant.

NOTES

1. This lies behind James Stuart's 1913 account, *A History of the Zulu Rebellion, 1906* for example. For Stuart, the Zulu military system was "Tshaka's system" (1913:68), and the "principal arbiter of savage warfare in South Africa was the Zulu sovereign" (8). Hence, in 1906, the rebels "knew too much of Tshaka's successes to do otherwise than realize that they were weak, and see what such weakness was due to. That is why Dinuzulu's personality and presence was so much in demand. To have a visible leader and to submit to his direction, that was the height of their ambition" (412).
2. Amongst the earliest reports, for instance, were two contradictory accounts, probably equally expedient and instrumental, which came in the wake of Shaka's assassination: John Cane's report that Dingane was "mild and peaceable" (Aitchison to Bell, 19.12.1828; *RN* V 60); but on the same day, according to George Cory's notes, Cane was characterising Dingane as "weak, cruel, and capricious, and even more sanguinary than the monster that has been put to death" (Cory, *Colonial Archives*, IV 94; Cory Library, Grahamstown).
3. Carolyn Hamilton (1993) has argued at length that such traditional historiographies powerfully constrained Eurocentric "inventions of the Other". There certainly is evidence to support this thesis, though on the whole I think Hamilton, because she has deliberately focussed on "marginal", and particularly political texts, has not demonstrated the extent of this that she claims.
4. Though originally Biblical, the phrase "scourge of God" also appears as a description of Tamurlaine in Marlowe's play (IV.iii.9), an epic-villanous treatment which would feed into D J Darlow's poem (see Chapter Six).
5. Cf for example Thomas Ross Beattie, *Pambaniso: A Kaffir Hero, or, Scenes from a Savage Life* (1891). This Haggard-like novel's hero Pambaniso is "the flower of Kaffir chivalry - the Robin Hood of Kaffraria" (41). One of his encounters is with Tshiwo, "the greatest tyrant that ever existed among the Kaffirs" who, like Shaka, allegedly threw his victims over precipices: "He seemed to take a delight in tyranny and in putting people to death, so that he might gloat over human suffering. In this respect he was like Tshaka, the King of the Zulus, who, when he saw a flock of vultures hovering around, would even order ten or twenty people to be killed for food for them" (42-3). Beattie also expounded on the "Kaffirs'" propensity for blindly following even the most vicious of despots, "men who domineered over them like princes of darkness [with] the demon nature that burned over them" (43) - and "they continued to follow in the footsteps of the savage and wicked, until the outside world came to their rescue" (thus echoing Holden's stance and a theme common in the Shaka myth).
6. This anecdote had however been mentioned by Henry Callaway in his *The Religious System of the amaZulu* (1870:120). It becomes one of the great staples of the Shaka story, down to this entry in the 1975 *Guinness Book of Records*: "The greatest 'smelling-out' recorded in African history occurred before Shaka (1787-1828) and 30 000 subjects near the River Umhlatuzana, Zululand (now Natal, South Africa) in March 1824. After 9 hrs, over 300 were 'smelt out' as guilty of smearing the Royal kraal with blood, by 150 witchfinders led by the hideous female *isangoma* Nobela. The victims were declared innocent when Shaka admitted to having done the smearing himself to expose the falsity of the power of his diviners. Nobela poisoned herself with atropine ($C17H23NO_3$) but the other 149 witchfinders were thereupon skewered or clubbed to death" (McWhirter 195). These entirely fictional figures derive from Ritter's novel (216-8); notice how the aura of science is tightened with the addition of the chemical formula. The story would even be transferred to entirely other peoples, as in Stuart Cloete's story "The Time of the Fox" (Cloete 1964).
7. For a more acerbic view of Shepstone, see Taylor 1994:184ff.

8. Haggard wrote to a Mr Chesson, for instance, that his own book *Cetywayo and his Neighbours* was designed "to expose the cruel injustice that has been inflicted on the Native races in Zululand" (7.7.1882; NELM 87.16.3). At the same time, however, Haggard clung to an idealised vision of the benefits of British rule; although he regarded Cetshwayo as "less bloodthirsty than Chaka if more so than Panda [Mpande]", he "never thought that his private interests ought to be considered for one moment as compared to to [sic] those over whom he rules. Now nobody can argue that a Zulu monarchy is exactly the form of Government that best conduces to individual or national happiness - hence, to a great extent, my advocacy of the exclusion of Cetywayo and the introduction of English rule - the only rule under which natives are really justly treated" (Haggard to Chesson, 12.11.1882; NELM 87.16.5). Here is evidenced a common tendency to pare away the "despotic" monarch from what can then be perceived as a noble but malleable Zulu people. Note, too, the rather contradictory stress on "individual" and "national" rights; the rule of men like Shaka and Cetshwayo is seen as antithetical not to *Zulu* notions of moral and political structures, but to European ideals.

Thanks to John Senior for alerting me to this source, as well as other Haggard tidbits, and to the National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, for permission to quote.

9. The story does seem to have some currency in the oral traditions of peoples further north (see von Sicard 1955).

CHAPTER FIVE

"INEXPLICABLE SWARMS": A T Bryant

The hypothesis of an external world exactly correspondent to those images or modifications of our own being, which alone ... we actually behold, is as thorough idealism as Berkeley's, inasmuch as it equally (perhaps in a more perfect degree) removes all reality and immediateness of perception, and places us in a dream world of phantoms and spectres, the inexplicable swarm and equivocal generation of motions in our own brains. (*Biographia Literaria*, Ch.viii)

Whether or not one fully agrees with Coleridge, his perception of the epistemological problem underlying all historiography is highly pertinent to this study. As was noted in the Introduction, the philosophical and linguistic issue is intensified radically in the cross-cultural situation we encounter in the Shakan literature, in which empirical "accuracy" becomes visibly as limiting and delimiting a convention of perception as the invented, culture-bound chimaeras we have already seen at work. "History" is, albeit evolving in its methods, no less than "myth" a set of conventions through which alien peoples are seen and interpreted. Like myth, history is another means by which European settlers manufactured an identity for themselves in the face of (to borrow Eric Wolf's term) people apparently "without history". A Eurocentric history was nevertheless challenged by (and often in turn resisted) the unavoidable and gritty realities of alien cultures like the Zulu. Nowhere is this tension - this "equivocal generation of motions" - more startling than in the works of Arthur Thomas Bryant, whose views and explanations of Shaka's Zulu resemble nothing so much as a largely inexplicable swarm of volatile and deadly Brazilian killer-bees.

The work of A T Bryant (1865-1953) stands at the very centre of Zulu studies, both in its volume and in its timing. Nathaniel Isaacs dominated the nineteenth century, not so much in terms of facts about Shaka as in attitudes; Bryant dominates the twentieth, less in

terms of attitude than in terms of what he entrenched as "fact". As far as his treatment of Shaka is concerned, he went a long way towards solidifying Isaacs' demonic portrait, largely by enveloping that portrait in an unprecedentedly dense matrix of ethnographic and linguistic detail. Despite the consequent aura of plausible scholarship, in essence Bryant added very little to the received picture of the Zulu leader, rather reinforcing it with his inimitable admixture of fictionalising, florid description, and droll humour. In later literature, much of the detail, though increasingly less of the demonisation, would be based on Bryant. At the same time, he was probably the last genuinely "missionary" writer on Shaka (though not the last "settler Christian").

One passage from *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929) succinctly establishes Bryant's foundation:

Had the British Army in 1879 found Zululand occupied, not by a single united nation requiring only a single concentration of attention, but by a hundred independent kingdoms, each demanding separate treatment; and had it been equipped with a single assegai per man and lacked all commissariat, we should have been enabled to understand more clearly the vastness and the complexity of the task undertaken single-handed and accomplished without hitch or hindrance by the mighty Shaka in his conquest, not only of Zululand, but of the whole region between Delagoa Bay and Mtata. We are no longer surprised at his activity. To achieve such a tremendous result, and that within the space of a short reign of less than a decade of years, uninterrupted warfare was of absolute necessity. (1929:537)

As we will see in Chapter Seven, this "mfecane"-like paradigm is simply untenable - even on the strength of some of Bryant's own evidence. On this basis, however, Bryant found it appropriate, even necessary, to continue to impute to Shaka unbridled, insane ferocity, to label him "gory celibate" and "Satanic majesty" (1905:45,49), "ogre" and "wild animal" (1929:537). Many of the ambivalences in Bryant's work arise from disjunctions between this kind of rhetoric and the tendency of some of his actual evidence.

Yet Bryant's influence on Zulu historiography can hardly be overstated. No scholarly work since 1929 has failed to refer to *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, or to *The Zulu*

People (1949), or to the 1911-13 articles compiled as *A History of the Zulu* (1964). Those who personally came into contact with Bryant looked up to him as the giant in his field, not without reason. A number of lesser works have been virtual clones of Bryant (for instance, Ridgway 1944); many others are indirectly profoundly indebted, especially through E A Ritter's *Shaka Zulu* (1955) and Peter Becker's popular histories (1962, 1964).

But the reception of Bryant has, like that of other crucial works on Shaka, undergone a sea-change over the last fifty years, from reverence to a sturdier caution. Stray notes of ambivalence crept in in the 1960s: thus Cecil Cowley, referring to his *Kwazulu: Queen Mkabi's Story* (1966): "In several important points I differ from other writers - even from Dr A T Bryant, whom I greatly revere, & whose monumental works I cherish" (Cowley to Musiker, 2 March 1967).¹ Donald Morris summed up many writers' somewhat contradictory attitude: while averring that Bryant's work "will never be exceeded", he called for "modern editing" of its "quaint style and chaotic organization" (1965:618). Shula Marks was still admiring in 1969: "one cannot but be impressed by his scrupulous care[; he] combed the secondary literature on his subject in a manner that can only occasionally be faulted" (1969:128). More recently, however, criticism has toughened. As early as 1968 Jeff Guy correctly noted that Bryant's lack of system, "at best quaintly eccentric" style, and "annoying value judgements" had probably been more hindrance than help in understanding the Zulus (Marks 1969:128). His attitudes have been characterised as at best "insufferably patronising" (Saunders 1988:105), even verging on the downright racist in their crudely evolutionary underpinning (du Buisson 1987:9-10). In a different line, Paul Maylam notes that archaeology fails to support Bryant's conceptions of "Nguni" origins (1986:22-3).

Whatever his faults, Bryant's energy was prodigious and generous; he made himself indispensable to every subsequent scholar. Shula Marks made a start on trying to "make

sense" of the works, "to sort out Bryant's theories from the traditions he records" (1969:129). There is an underlying assumption here which affects even more sceptical commentators: the assumption that behind what Marks called Bryant's "flights of fantasy", a core of truth is somehow isolatable and retrievable. More recent commentators are closer to the mark in still finding Bryant's books "indispensable... but now less as histories than as source-books for the rewriting of history" (Hamilton and Wright 1989:57). John Wright questions the oral-traditional basis of Bryant's source-material (hitherto accepted as the most valuable aspect of Bryant's contribution); he exposes at least some of Bryant's historical chronologies as fundamentally unsound; and he reveals "major misconceptions" in Bryant's notions of "clan", "tribe", and "nation". Wright and Carolyn Hamilton also represent the culmination of a general move, beginning with Omer-Cooper (1966), away from Bryant's "great man" conception of historical forces to more impersonal and broad views of social transformation (Hamilton and Wright 1989:51; Wright 1989a, ch.3; Wright 1991). These same historians nevertheless repeatedly refer to Bryant for confirmation or otherwise of "facts" gleaned from elsewhere, assuming - rather like Bryant himself viewing oral traditions - that there must be an empirically verifiable or falsifiable truth in there somewhere. It is the lingering notion that evidence, attitude, and style are still somehow separable that I wish to question further here.

What is also missing from these empirically-orientated studies is a full analysis of why Bryant wrote the way he did, and with what consequences for white self-conceptions. This dimension is incorporated only in the tangential comment that the notion of discrete social entities called "clans" or "tribes" - far from unique to Bryant - could be used to support the implementation of *apartheid*. E H Carr's long well-known insight that the reading of history cannot be assessed outside the subjectivity of the historian has not yet been adequately applied to A T Bryant.

The Life of Bryant

Bryant's life story is relatively poorly documented (unless in private holdings somewhere). Nevertheless, a brief biographical sketch, and some examination of his earliest work, makes for an illuminating introduction. Born on 26 February 1865, the son of a printer, Bryant had his interest in the Zulus roused by the fashionable mixture of London's public exhibitions, and articles about "ferocious savages, decked out in flowing plumes and leathern girdles, rushing wildly down, with assegais and up-raised shields, upon (apparently) quite fearless British squares" (1947:1). In an unpublished memoir, "Some Sweet Memories",² he described his perception of the Anglo-Zulu War, with a characteristic blend of sarcasm, pathos-laden over-simplification, and wry criticism of his own nation:

Why [did the war occur]? Well, a Zulu woman ran away from her husband, in Zululand, over the border into Natal. The irate husband (rather naturally) ran after her, and carried her back home without asking permission of the (very jealous) British Lion. British Lion demanded return of the goods. Cetshwayo politely refused to comply; the whole action having been in accord with ancient Zulu law throughout the millenniums. British Lion (very conveniently) recognizing no law but its own, in accord with *that* law, crossed the Zulu border (without asking the Zulu's permission), set about destroying the inhabitants and finally gobbled up the whole of their country, and retained it for all time, still in its capacious (and rapacious) paunch. (1947:1-2)

There are several interesting features here. Among them is the attribution to the Zulu of simple fleshly concerns, backed by "millenniums" of custom,³ as opposed to the only metaphorically fleshly, hence impersonal and monolithic, policy of the "British Lion". Despite the criticism of British conduct here, the cultural bias - primitive and instinctual levelled against modern and intellectualised - is typical of all his writings:

The Caucasian is carried through by his keener intellect, the Negro by his deeper intuitions. What primitive man lacks in knowledge, he supplies by his imagination. (1929:266)

Having studied history and languages at Birkbeck College, London, Bryant found work in 1883 at the recently established Trappist mission station at Marianhill, near Durban. Here, if we are to believe Bryant's memoir, he virtually single-handedly established the

school for boys, an ancillary regimen of practical training, and the first two Zulu-language newspapers, neither of which survived long. Of the Marianhill experience Bryant also wrote - in his own later opinion "foolishly" entitled - *Roman Legions on Libyan Fields* (1887). This flamboyant little volume, overburdened with youthful pomposity - its chapter headings progress from the conventional "The Seed is Set" to the floridly scientific "Pistilliferous Flowers" - nevertheless gives some insights into Bryant's frame of mind, aspects of which never changed. In particular, he conformed fervently all his life to his Catholic faith, being, he wrote, "possessed of a God-loving heart and truly 'religious' mind ... which is, I take it, the greatest gift and blessing the Father has so far bestowed" (1947:2). This piety was, commonly enough for the time, imbued with a bookish patriotism, resulting in a curious ambivalence between condemnation of Europeans' ignorance and mistreatment of the Zulus, and condemnation of the Zulus for being unable or unwilling fully to change their Satanic ways. It is unclear in this extract from *Roman Legions*, for instance, whether or not Bryant actually agrees with the opinion of the "natives" being expressed:

The monks were in their midst: the kafirs passed among them at every instant and thought them just as strange a race as the monks did them. Nevertheless the former always considered that they knew the Natives well. They believed they were already experienced masters of their character and ways. They thought them certainly the ugliest cast of the *humana*, escaping from being really *quadrumana* only by a grace of nature. They felt convinced of their being the laziest people on the face of the earth, because they refused to do a day's work in the fields for their new masters in consideration of their having reduced the hut-rent to half ... As for their morality, what with professional poisoners and man-slayers, who traded in medicines made from the fat of human corpses, wizard-doctors and witches ... polygamy and an infinity of other horrible qualities, one can hardly express the constant caution and dread with which the good Religious beheld the simple Natives. (1887:32-3)

Bryant does not develop the critique implied in the ironic note he strikes here, and indeed goes on to relate his own effort to eliminate precisely these "horrible qualities" from African life. Nor does he explore the self-deception implied by the contradiction between the monks' alleged knowledge of the Africans and their "dread" of them. He adds unabashed, doubtless self-reflecting, veneration for the sacrificial spirit of these monks, "mere boys ... for ever separated from all who were dear to them on earth ... pilgrims striving to attain that one

thing for which we all unconsciously live, or rather ought to live" (4).

While a studied effort at cross-cultural understanding is not lacking even at this early stage of Bryant's career, the tone is finally commandingly ethnocentric. The final chapter of *Roman Legions*, "A parting word about the Zulus", is a characteristic blend of detailed, if scattered, ethnographic and linguistic observation, historical account, and pious propaganda. In discussing Zulu origins, Bryant is indebted to a smattering of travellers' accounts and a vaguely diffusionist model, and his notion of their handsomeness openly praises their faces' "more Caucasian form[:] the cheekbones become less high, the mouth less protruding, the lips less thick" (241-2). While he claims to admire their "remarkably acute and logical reasoning powers" (243; but later will call them only "reputedly logical" [1929:305]), Bryant locates the Zulus' primary characteristic in bloodthirsty caprice:

But while in times of peace they live, comparatively speaking, like lambs, on the war track they become demons. The quiet and harmless Zulu dwelling amidst his one or two untidy acres of mealies or amabele, now issues from his kraal tattooed [*sic*] in yellow and red. Brandishing his assegai in his right hand and his war-shield of ox-hide in his left, he leaps madly about, making frantic [*sic*] gestures and uttering the most horrible yells. In that state and in company with an ibuto or regiment of such human devils, nothing is too bad for him. He is treacherous, immoral in the highest degree, eaten up with a voracious desire for rapine and destruction and will drain to the dregs the blood of all against whom his heart inclines him. (244)

This is clearly indebted to literary or common-talk precedent rather than personal experience, and adumbrates the later work in its diction (for instance, the religious derogation in "demons" and "devils"). There is a mention of "astounding bravery", too, of course, but essentially the Zulus had "not entered the lists in the universal run for civilisation" (245). At the same time, Bryant cannot or will not admit to a total failure of his evangelical ideals, controlling in this way the barely confessed apprehensions of resurgent Zulu power one repeatedly notes in the literature:

Although the progress of civilisation among the Zulus within the last forty years has done much towards enlightening their benighted intellects and driving away a little of the dark and dread superstition that has ruled them so long, nevertheless the old stumps still remain deeply inrooted and retain the ancient spirit always alive. Even

at the present day, when the British rule is obtaining a firmer grasp over the wild people, such cases exist; but whereas they were before more public and more easily detected, by very reason of that firmer government, they are now perpetrated on every infernal plan that secrecy and deception can hide. (253-4)

Still, there is something irresistibly attractive in writing about these "wild people", and Bryant adumbrates, in fulsomely romanticised phrases and with unwitting accuracy, his own future project:

Some day will turn out a sensational author who will find among the few threads of Zulu history sufficient stuff wherewith to weave a romance worthy of providing the youthful lovers of fiction with a pabulum which, though somewhat sanguinary and coarse, will nevertheless be stimulating in its way and tasty to those for whom it is prepared. (239)

Rider Haggard, of course, was in the process of beginning just such a sensational series of Zulu fictions for "big and little boys" (the phrase is from the dedication to *King Solomon's Mines*, 1885). Bryant's similar perception of Zulu history as scanty, colourful, and "coarse", his wrenching of that history into the frame of romance, and his awareness of the potential for titillating a targeted audience (the gastronomic metaphors are particularly revealing of the kind of "consumption" envisaged), makes this passage a clear blueprint for his later accounts of the Zulus. He filled this frame out with vast and turgid energy, but scarcely deviated from its essentials.

In this same chapter of *Roman Legions*, he also included a compressed account of Shaka - again, a preconception, certainly derived from current literary sources (largely Isaacs):

But at the same time as Napoleon, after having drenched Europe in the blood of its own children and brought misery and death to every peaceful hearth, was writhing and gasping his last under the terrible grasp of Wellington, young and fierce there issued forth from the kraal of the deceased Usenzangakona among the hills of Zululand, another monster who would carry on his work in another quarter of the globe. This was Chaka the tyrant of South Africa. His rule was more than despotic. Nature had disgraced him with a coldbloodedness and bloodthirstiness rarely excelled on earth. This spirit he instilled or rather forced into each and every one of his people. Every good sentiment, every tender feeling was henceforth regarded as a sign of effeminacy. Military bravery and brutality was the only virtue, and military honour their *summum bonum*. Amid the demoniacal yells and clashing of shields of

such an army eager to destroy and to taste the blood of its enemies, he completed the conquest of all the country from Inhambane on the north to the Umzimoubu [sic] or St John's River on the south and inland across at least half the continent. (260-1)

Bryant would merely flesh this out in the later work, largely with fictionalised speculations, and devoted to the same pious end:

What this race of warriors will finally come to, God only knows. All that we can do is to hope and pray that it may one day find peace and prosperity in embracing Christianity, and that the bloodstains with which the whole land is rank may all be washed away in the waters of Baptism. (264)

Bryant left Marianhill to spend another fourteen years in mission work in Zululand, ten of them virtually alone on the Ngoye ridge: "No wages and never a word of thanks from the authorities", he pencilled in at the bottom of one page of "Some Sweet Memories" (6). The memoir launches into a tumbling summary of brief adventures, all more or less sensational but revelatory of his detailed knowledge of the Zulu language and customs; he makes no further mention of the success or otherwise of his missionary ventures, only momentarily alludes to his writings, particularly his 1905 *Dictionary* but excluding *Olden Times*, and makes no mention at all of his appointment in 1920 as a lecturer in Bantu Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. He eventually sailed home to England, as he came, to lie up alone in "this drab and uninteresting mass of bricks and mortar, devoid of all poetry and romance ... in Surrey, patiently awaiting the coming of the Great Breaker-Up of all Human Ships" (8).⁴ He died six years later, in 1953.

In many ways Bryant presents almost too tempting a target for the self-consciously postcolonial critic; it is easy to slip into complacent derogation. Yet precisely because his attitudes seem so blatant, he makes a particularly vivid case study. The case is complex, however, and there are many aspects which cannot be examined here. His position in the history of anthropological literature, for instance, deserves more study: I can only point out here that his ideas seem almost as archaic as his style, having more in common with the E

B Tylor of the 1860s than with his immediate contemporaries. We also need to ascertain the full extent of his indebtedness to James Stuart's Zulu readers, which remain untranslated and therefore beyond the reach of this writer, except insofar as they are occasionally noted in Bryant's footnotes or can be retraced in *The James Stuart Archive*. This is in any event a huge empirical task beyond the scope of this study. Also of interest would be a full explanation of Bryant's prefatory complaint that much of the original script of *Olden Times* was excised by a government official: the only apparently existing manuscript is very close to the published version, so I have not been able to detail the publication history of this book as I have for Fynn's "diary" and Ritter's *Shaka Zulu*.⁵ The remainder of this chapter, then, pursues a more limited aim: to examine closely the links between attitude, style, and evidence in a few selected passages from *Olden Times*; some further comment on this work and on *A History of the Zulu* is also offered in Chapter Eleven below.

Unusual devices

Bryant was far from oblivious to what he was doing stylistically in *Olden Times*. In the preface, he noted that he found the history he was presenting (oddly, given the prodigious energy he expended on it) "particularly unattractive", and was therefore led to adopt

unusual devices to make our historical reading intelligible and pleasant - by assuming, in general, a light and colloquial style; by creating here and there an appropriate "atmosphere" ... by inducing a proper frame of mind by an appeal to pathos; by clothing the "dry bones" of history in a humorous smile ... our subject must be rendered entertaining and our book be made to sell. (1929:ix)

But what exactly does Bryant mean by "intelligible", by "atmosphere", by "a proper frame of mind"? What does he think his readers will find "entertaining", and what will be deemed "humorous"?

The Preface throws light immediately on "intelligible". As Wright and Hamilton have pointed out (1989:51), Bryant's aim - despite his confession that the traditions he was

working with were "fragmentary and conflicting", and his insistence on permitting himself "to cast no single scrap of traditional lore aside" - was to "put the crooked straight and to fill in the gaps, linking together disconnected facts by probabilities based on other knowledge, moulding discrepant statements so that they harmonize with their surroundings, drawing conclusions following naturally from well-founded premises" (1929:viii). All contradictoriness is to be eliminated, then, and linear causalities established. This of course is (for a Westerner) a common-sense but limited conception of history, and is already motivation for a certain selectiveness of kinds of evidence. Bryant's explanation here also begs the questions of what is meant by "harmonize", and with which "surroundings", and what makes for a "natural" conclusion.

Bryant uses a panoply of rhetorical devices to domesticate his alien material. He frequently uses fragments of English poetry to provide entertaining parallels; these come perilously close at times to substituting for explanation:

... Thereafter, we may suppose, would his bliss find vent in jovial song - something like this:-

I have fought my fight, I have lived my life,
I have drunk my share of wine;
From Trier to Cöln there was never a knight
Led a merrier life than mine.

- Kingsley

With such extraordinary credentials, Shaka could hardly do otherwise than honour him with the appointment of royal cook. (225)

Or Bryant resorts to dramatic schemata, frequently comparing Shaka's story to a Greek or *Faust*-like drama, or couching events in a five-act play format:

Anyhow, the Nibeles proceeded in force to Mangaziland and demanded admittance. Admission proving free, they took their seats without further ado and concentrated their attention on the play. *Act I*.... But the bride had vanished likewise over the horizon. *Curtain*. (283)

But in accomplishing his "glorious" work, he [Shaka] ruined himself - if, indeed, he was not ruined already; in gaining the world, he lost his own soul. (648)

Or, in a manner I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Twelve, he compares Zulus or

Zulu events to their imagined European equivalents, in instances ranging from the trivial - "Not a drop," quoth Murphy - or its paraphrase in Zulu" (249) - to the pervasive, such as equating Shaka to Napoleon, or the notion of Paradise examined in Chapter Eleven. Bryant is not, however, unaware of a certain "sliding of the signifier under the signified" here:

In writing or reading of the rulers of simple, primitive tribes, we are wont to use the grandiloquent terms and to imagine the magnificent state appropriate to our modern European royalties. We assume that our reader possesses the ability to visualize things in their proper perspective and to realise that, though the events herein recorded occurred but one short century back, the conditions under which they occurred were those of many thousands of years ago. Yet it is not easy for everyone to place himself mentally two or three thousand years back in the days when our own "kings" wore raiment and ate food and dwelt in habitations we would now not offer to a beggar, and ruled over "peoples" too few to run a modern factory. We call wretched and unsavoury grass hovels "palaces", and speak of "great battles" and "conquests" fought and won where the combatants were a couple of score a side. Of course, there are, and always were, primitive tribes of really imposing magnitude. Caesar found himself confronted with some such in Gaul, the Helvetii, for instance, numbering 263,000 all told,... Even Shaka, at the zenith of his might, could muster a fighting force quite 15,000 strong, gradually accumulated by a process of subduing and then "eating up" a hundred petty "kings" and their "peoples"... The general idea in presenting history in this fashion, is, of course, to create a proper atmosphere around the reader, to produce in his mind a relatively accurate impression by transporting him into the "other people's" place and so enabling him to regard things as they appeared to, or were felt by them. (319)

(Bryant's estimation of figures, at least, is sober, relative to those of some of his sources.)

Though the empathetic impulse is superficially admirable, the success of Bryant's strategy here is questionable, since what it ultimately does is to create a "proper atmosphere" by appeal to *European* norms, not to those of the Zulu. It is finally the European reader's conception of "king" which prevails, not the Zulu conception of, say, *nKosi*. The (then very common) equation of contemporary "wretched and unsavoury" Zulu conditions with those of "primitive" Europeans three thousand years ago serves less to facilitate the same reader's understanding than to reinforce a sense of being thankfully and satisfactorily more "advanced".

Bryant's conception of *history itself*, and therefore his deployment of the evidence, is predicated on this sense of difference - the opposite of empathy. Bryant's involvement in history is thus avowedly motivated, in the first place, by paternalistic duty:

For us, the more richly endowed Caucasian race, we hold it an altruistic duty to our unlettered Negro brother to rescue him from final oblivion, before too late, such of his simple traditions as are still recoverable, whatever be their worthlessness to us. (ix)

This claim is at least partly fallacious: it is precisely the "worthless" traditions, the stories, with which Bryant is making his dry historical bones "entertaining". On the one hand, the traditions are regarded as "buried treasure" that has been apparently unchangingly "lying, through almost a century, awaiting the advent of some collector and compiler"; on the other hand, their "worthlessness" as history is continuously alluded to, since (this is a fundamental premise) they arise from a mindset "proverbially loose in thought and fanciful in narration" (viii, x). Bryant is thus caught between a desire to be absolutely comprehensive, and an opposing need to make "intelligible" history.⁶ The prejudice and the tensions are evident in numerous passages:

...then, as all anticipated, Nandi went west, killed, they said, by him [Shaka]. At least, such was the deduction of Native logic; which indisputable facts, Fynn being our witness, do happily confute. (608)

More fully:

Out of the gloom of scant and hazy tradition we now pass at last into the clear and certain light of written records. The White-man with paper and pen has at length arrived, and, thanks to his foresight, interest and knowledge, has drawn for us, of the Zulu people, their habits and their king, many a graphic picture that will endure through all the ages.

The popular *History of England* commences, in the orthodox fashion, with the same old formula - "The history of England may be said to begin with the landing in Britain of Julius Caesar in the year 55 B.C." With better fortune, we have been able to open the story of the Nguni-Bantu with full 500 pages of more or less historical matter prior to the arrival in Natal of the 'Julia' sloop, and the landing there of the invading British in the year of grace 1824.

Politically speaking, the Roman and British peoples have much in common - both were endowed by nature with a similar passion for land-grabbing; both made themselves great by marching over the face of the earth, seizing as much of its land and sea surface as they safely could, and then arbitrarily imposing themselves and their institutions on the helpless and unconsulted natives. (562)

One can hardly blame Bryant for his palpable relief in escaping from the uncertainties of traditions to the relative solidity of the written record. Yet his apparent pride in rescuing his 500 pages of pre-literate tradition is to a large degree undermined by his paternalistic disdain

for this kind of record. That this is intrinsically a problematic and ambivalent situation is underscored by the number of times the *Zulus* are compared to the Romans: such comparisons, which I deal with in more detail in Chapter Twelve, thus serve more to obscure the empirical referent than to reveal it. Such quirks are, like other stylistic features, not merely superficial, but intrinsic to the deployment of evidence and to the whole value-laden teleology of Bryant's narrative.

Dreams and realities

Some aspects of the intimate interdependence of Bryant's style, attitudes and treatment of historical evidence may be sharpened by examining one chapter of *Olden Times*, "Shaka's Home-Life at Dukuza: Its Dreams and Realities (1828)", which is presented as a kind of snapshot of Shaka's character where Bryant can conveniently pause for some generalised judgement. The chapter opens with a cosy travelogue's tone, an invitation to spectacle:

In or about August, 1828, from Bulawayo Shaka went south - for him, to the Land of the Setting Sun. His star was already in decline and soon would sink to final extinction below the horizon. To Dukuza, then, we too will wend our way and spend in closer association with him these last few weeks of life, witnessing there some more grim deeds, spectators of some diverting incidents more typical of his usual home-life, the while augmenting our knowledge of his character.(633)

Having established this rather whimsical narrative museum-display, Bryant offers a highly contradictory - and controversial - summary of Shaka's character and position in Zulu society.

Shaka was in no wise a normal Zulu, and the Zulu people are not to be measured by his standard. He was himself the supreme being, and responsible to none. Justice, sexual propriety, mercy and all the rest of the moral code were as he ordained, and apart from him were not. He feared none, obeyed none, considered none, respected none. Yet all the while he continued blissfully unconscious of all wrong-doing and never knew the sense of guilt, because forsooth his will was the one and only law, and he followed that will and kept that law with such Puritanic fervour, that, in his own esteem, he was a paragon of all the virtues and all the beauties, and all other men but vile and verminous sinners. (633)

It is worth noting the heightened rhetoric - "feared none, obeyed none..." - that invariably marks Bryant's more moralistic passages. This instance is an intriguing inversion of the

Christian scheme of things; it is also a dubious excursion into the inner workings of Shaka's mind. Repeatedly Bryant imposes a European frame on his portrayal, despite (or following on) his assertion that "it is always difficult for a European to gauge accurately the workings of the primitive mind; its equipment and plane of action is so different and foreign to our own" (647). This example of divisive reification is incidentally in respect of the bravery or otherwise of the Zulu; after judiciously weighing up the accounts of the white eye-witnesses (and only theirs), Bryant concludes with an undeniably racist, pseudo-scientific generalisation: "The nervous system of the Nguni Bantu ... was notoriously obtuse, and, feeling less pain, they feared death the less" (647). This conforms to an implicit scale of values, redolent of the crudest forms of social Darwinism, in terms of which Shaka also is drawn as a "man reverted, not to the savage, but to the brutish stage, in which all altruistic sentiments are absent, and the animal instincts reign supreme" (648). Bryant is led from this preconception to deliberately suppress contrary evidence. He avers that he is, despite everything, giving "the devil his due", and allows that "it has been more than once recorded that Shaka shed tears"; but he gives these accounts short shrift, and takes refuge in snatches of Shakespeare and Scott, preferring to think "'Then, oh! what omen dark and high/ When Douglas wets his manly eye!'" (650).

Contrary to this "brutish" portrait, which he supports with dramatised anecdotes drawn entirely from Isaacs and Fynn, Bryant also stresses Shaka's intelligence - another factor which distinguishes him from the "common Zulu" - "for his time and surroundings, a distinctly progressive monarch" (651). One sign of this intelligence is military genius and his consolidation of the regimental system in the service of forging the "Zulu nation", though Bryant denies that Shaka actually invented the system single-handed, as other over-romanticised accounts would have it - including sometimes his own (641). A good part of the chapter is devoted to listing the various Zulu regiments, where Bryant appears to be on

more solid historical ground. The shift in register is also very sharp here, abruptly becoming devoid of judgemental or metaphoric flourishes, supported by tables of regiments and dates, marking this section as "serious" rather than entertaining material. Only here, too, is there sign that Bryant might be drawing on oral sources such as James Stuart's Zulu readers. The tension between an ethnographic, scientific urge to comprehensiveness and the romance of story-telling and "Great Man" biography, is nowhere more palpable.

More important in displaying Bryant's attitudes, however, is the intelligence (meaning scepticism) Shaka allegedly displays in relation to "magic and superstition". More than any other, this aspect of African life exercises the European observer's imagination, evoking alike the intensest curiosity, bafflement, and repugnance; so accounts of it often serve as the clearest barometers of cultural bias. Shaka is portrayed by Bryant as being, "like all his race", fearful of the spirits, but, "with keener insight than his people", as highly sceptical of their oracles. Bryant relates the story of Shaka's exposing of the "necromancers" (originally related by Callaway [1870:120]) by secretly sprinkling blood over his hut. Only one of the mediums the following day correctly divines that Shaka himself is responsible; the others who have all singled out innocent people are duly executed. But the delight in the scepticism is really Bryant's own, as better shown in his extended treatment, in the same chapter, of the "Mmbiya" episode. This also reveals some of the ways in which Bryant utilised his sources.

The story of Mmbiya (or Mbiya) is referred to by both Fynn and Isaacs. Their versions are contradictory and confused - paradoxically underlining Bryant's point about the inaccessibility of Zulu mindsets, at least to these eyewitnesses. Mbiya was an Mthethwa minor chief who, according to Fynn, became an intimate of Shaka's while the latter was with Dingiswayo, was subsequently elevated to prominence by Shaka, and died in 1826, or 1827,

depending on which of Fynn's accounts one reads (1950:32,308; cf. Isaacs I 276-80). In Fynn, Mbiya later "appears" at Shaka's kraal in the form of a snake, communicates with mediums on matters "of a political nature", and shortly promises to appear to Shaka himself at an appointed time. The appearance of an old woman is, however, exposed by Shaka as a fraud. Isaacs has a rather different version, in which Shaka himself announces the appearance of "Umbeah", who has pronounced "that the nation was getting too large and required constant employment" (277). Mbiya's descendants are promoted, and the "dream" is a subject of much discussion. Subsequently a man vanishes, apparently taken by a lion; a few months later he reappears, announcing that he has been transported to the land of the spirits, but is denounced by Shaka as a man of "gross nonsense and falsehoods". He is nevertheless elevated to intimacy by Shaka. Without much visible logic, Isaacs interprets this entire episode as "nothing but an imposition to elate the people with a spirit for war ... inspire them with something like awe, and strike terror into them (by his seeming unearthly character and hidden power), that should check any disposition to revolt among them for his inhuman massacres" (280).

There may just be the elements of some actual, but profoundly misunderstood, event behind Fynn and Isaacs' accounts, though there is no discernible "fact", even probability, of value to the historian. Bryant, however, conflates both accounts and spins them into a five-page tissue of dramatised and reinterpreted fluff. His treatment needs to be seen in the context of his general attitude towards oral traditions, already noted, and towards "the native mind", "Imagination being uncommonly effective among primitive folk" (653). This story is clearly part of the "entertainment" quotient of the work, worth inflating to the maximum. Contradictorily, the episode is meant to add to our understanding of Shaka's character, but is at the same time derided.

Firstly, Bryant expands the importance and frequency of Mbiya's appearances, in a manner now familiar in the Shakan literature. He makes Mbiya Shaka's "adopted 'father', who had cared for him, a little exile, during his childhood and youth" (634); in fact, Mbiya's existence is confirmed by oral traditions, but his connection with Shaka is not (*JSA* II 205, IV 279,348,355; Fuze 49). The exceptional incidents in Fynn and Isaacs now become a norm: Mbiya "had constituted himself Shaka's guardian angel, and in that pious capacity had guided his ward into a vast amount of wickedness" (634) - too Mephistophelean by half. After the single dream, embellished from Isaacs, Bryant adds, that "Mmbiya and his revelation now became the talk of the land; his remotest relatives were raised to the pinnacle of honour, and the universal joy found expression in the immolation (and consumption) of countless thank-offerings to the spirits in every royal kraal" (635). This gratuitous nonsense (Bryant cannot resist a dig at Zulu appetites) is followed by a similarly elaborated version of the lion story.

More interesting, however, is how Bryant then meshes the Mbiya story with Shaka's attempts to control the sexual behaviour of his people - a constant focus of part-titillated, part-disgusted European commentators. Indeed, this is a central nexus of the Shaka story: military prowess and sexual control are seen as indivisible.⁷ Here Bryant uses the superstitious, and to him ludicrous, elements of the Mbiya story to stress the horror and futility of Shaka's sexual controls. Mbiya directs Shaka to massacre his own people for their alleged sexual misdemeanours, though "those of shrewder wit will recognize ... a euphemism for Shaka's last-night's tattling paramour" (639). Given the credence which Bryant's account previously gave Mbiya's presence in Shaka's mind, the "euphemism" would certainly not be apparent had Bryant not pointed it out. Having thus disparaged, effectively, the whole notion of direction from the spirit world, Bryant can insinuate that Shaka's acts in massacring the youth for disobeying his strictures is not only useless - "he was waging a losing war against

high nature", which "brooked no frustrations of her eternal plan and proved even than Shaka himself a more inexorable tyrant" (638) - but Satanically "fiendish" (640) and insane. Moreover, it is hypocritical, since Shaka himself entertains "a thousand concubines":

He ... was out to create a race of manly youths, trained to the practice of brutal passion only. No effeminating amours, no love-sick swains could ever be tolerated in his national school of Spartan culture. ... One man alone was fit to love, - himself, whose adamantine heart could love indefinitely, but never soften. (636)

This portrait of diabolical perversion reaches its culmination in two particular anecdotes: one concerning the alleged murder of 170 sexually overcharged youngsters, the other, originating with Isaacs but here quoted in Allen Gardiner's version, of Shaka dashing out the brains of his own new-born son (637). The first story I examine in more detail in Chapter Eleven, but it is worth noting in passing the often ambivalent infusion of the various paradisal elements. To Isaacs' brief and unlikely description of Mbiya enjoying himself in the spirit-world (I find no such "place" otherwise attested to in Zulu tradition), Bryant adds a characteristically "comparative" flourish: "But the girls! oh, such enchanting houris; and they disported themselves Koranically" (635). This flourish of "Orientalism" tells us nothing about Zulu sexual attitudes, but a good deal about Bryant's. The ambivalence is palpable: what is presented cynically, even sarcastically, and in a Christian perspective as being as abhorrent as Islam, is couched in prose dripping with a romantic longing. This same pagan "idyll", however subtly disparaged, is what Shaka is accused of demonically destroying. In short, the ambivalence is all Bryant's, expressed in conflicting paradigms drawn from European mythic and metaphoric schemes entirely remote from the Zulus. The Eurocentrism is etched in every sentence.

Hence, when it comes finally to judging Shaka himself, in the light of this "evidence", a related ambiguity creeps in, past the insistent derogation of the adjectives. Despite everything, according to Bryant (and as usual it is not easy to distinguish the serious from the sarcastic):

Strange but true, Shaka was as sublime a moral teacher as martial genius. Submission to authority, obedience to the law, respect for superiors, order and self-restraint, fearlessness and self-sacrifice, constant work and civic duty, in a word, all the noblest disciplines of life were the very foundation-stones upon which he built his nation. So rigorously enforced was the life-long practice of all these excellencies, that he left them all a spontaneous habit, a second nature, amongst his people. (641)

That this was *not* taken as sarcastic by most of his readers is witnessed by the number of times it has been uncritically quoted in praise of the Zulu nation divested of its monstrous rulers (that is, malleable to firm government of the British variety). For all Bryant's criticisms of that government, this view is very much that of colonial rulers. It scarcely gels with a very definitely sarcastic judgement a few pages earlier; Shaka is said to have the "habit" - Bryant again expanding a single (possible) incident - of cutting open pregnant women:

Shaka's was a distinctly progressive type of mind, favouring every possible means for the acquirement of useful knowledge. As such he was a strong and early advocate of vivisection. (649)

Once again, this ironic derogation is juxtaposed with that grudging praise which was beginning to be seen more often in the literature, but which had hardly more in the way of hard evidence to recommend it than the denigration had:

The *magnum opus* of Shaka's genius was the creation, organization, training and application of an unconquerable army to the purpose of building up a supreme Zulu nation. Step by step, with intuitive wisdom and skill, the plan was conceived and carried out with amazing rapidity. First weaker, then more powerful clans were tackled; obsolete methods were replaced by innovations more effective; while personal inefficients were weeded out or drastically knocked into form. He proved himself on the field a past-master in the art of strategy and the science of tactics, a general who, whether leading an attack or conducting a retreat, invariably emerged triumphant. (648)

As we shall see in more detail later, this picture has also been so modified by more recent research as to become virtually untenable. Given Bryant's consciousness of the power of the story, it might have been expected that he would end on this high heroic note. But it suited Bryant's own social and psychological purposes better, it seems, to end with three pages of discussion of the efficacy of traditional Zulu medicines, mingled with, and undercut by,

anecdotes from Fynn and Isaacs demonstrating the superiority of *European* technology and medicines. Bryant ends the chapter with the unlikely story of Shaka mooning hopelessly after Rowland's Macassar Oil, under the illusion that it is the "elixir of life".

Bryant's social and psychological purposes, then, are highly complex, and far from exhaustively examined here. In summary, the deployment of the particular inherited "voices" and discourses - the romantic, the dramatic, the archaic, the mythic, the scientific, the anthropological - and the personal idiosyncrasies, the comparisons, the judgements, and the overall structure of the work, together offer an intriguing case of unconscious predilection overwhelming proclaimed purpose. To return to the parameters he set up in his preface, he made the Zulus "intelligible" only by ultimately denying them their own voice, quite in opposition to his own stated aims. He "understood" their history only by denigrating their traditional sources, in unison with "entertaining" his readers with a sarcasm that flies in the face of his own pretensions to comprehensive seriousness. In the end, one is left with the impression of a writer irrevocably defensive of his own culture - and his attacks on British misdemeanours intensify rather than disempower that defensiveness - or perhaps of "the idea" with which, like Conrad's Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, he hopes to redeem it. The overwhelming impression is, finally, of the self-proclaimed bastion of a gentlemanly settler culture presenting itself as saving the Zulu nation from historical oblivion, but in fact, in every exaggerated aspect of its over-literate packaging, revealing a need to save the ideals of his own from precisely the same fate.

NOTES

1. This intriguing letter is tucked into the back of a Cory Library, Grahamstown copy of *Queen Mkabi's Story*.
2. Original in possession of Fr. Godfrey Sieber, Empangeni; thanks to Prof. Joy Brain for passing it on to me.

3. Cf. Bryant 1929:189: "But experience through countless ages had proven to Nguni kings that sons, and above all heirs, are apt to turn out Frankensteins". But Bryant's whole argument is that such "Nguni" "kings" had scarcely come into existence, and, moreover, that Shaka was aberrant in killing his children.
4. This is also extraordinarily echoed by Haggard, whose Allan Quatermain chafes at having to "coop himself in this prim English country, with its stiff formal manners, and its well-dressed crowds. He begins to long for the keen breath of the desert air; he dreams of the sight of Zulu impis breaking on their foes like surf upon the rocks" (cited in Katz 31).
5. The script of *Olden Times* is among the Carl Faye papers, NAB A131, boxes 3-6. The date at the end of the preface is 13 May 1926, and the "compositor" located at the Chief Native Commissioner, Natal.
6. Bryant's wishes in both respects appears to have been partly thwarted by government censorship, mentioned at the end of his preface (xii).
7. As they were in legends of the Amazons, for instance. According to Helen Diner, "The Libyan Amazons ... had compulsory military service for a number of years, during which time they had to refrain from marriage..." (Chester 104). Even more interesting to the mythographer: "A temporary Amazon state may once have existed in Africa in the region of the Congo. A priest, one Father Carazzi, told of a period in African Jaga history during which young girls were trained militarily and were prohibited from making permanent marriages, while their queen [like Shaka!] killed each of her lovers after a brief dalliance, eventually ordering the sacrifice of infant males" (111). That sexuality played a major role in colonial views of Africans is increasingly recognised (see Young 1995).

CHAPTER SIX

THE SELVES IN THE OTHER:

The Poems of D J Darlow and F T Prince

Place-names are stamped with the tough
poetry of the land's great myth-maker:
general, tactical genius, wry
slaughterer, blood-bent mother's son.

The spears
may all be washed up now, or lightly stained
by faction fights, but this is Zululand
all right.

(Douglas Livingstone, "August Zulu")

There is, compared to fiction, relatively little white-written poetry about Shaka. However, this extract from Livingstone's 1978 poem demonstrates in its admirable compression many of the cultural assumptions behind the Shakan literature as a whole. Livingstone deftly demonstrates the pervasiveness of the myth: Shaka does not even require to be named. The poet takes it for granted that place-names, too, will spring automatically to the South African mind. The atmosphere is assumed to be instantly recognisable, scarcely needing specifying: indeed, the myth *is* the atmosphere. "[T]his is Zululand all right": the phrase is tight-lipped and ominous, bringing to a present head the ambivalent ills of history. In the poem's very omissions, and in the assumptions made of the reader, a self writing into a discernible speech community is delineated.

Shaka's whole story is captured in Livingstone's terse list, double-edged with admiration and evil: this "tough" and murderous past is nevertheless a kind of "poetry", Shaka's own killing-impulse is "wry", saved by this faintly humorous adjective from simplistic condemnation. Livingstone draws on familiar icons: the archetypal stamping feet

of warriors, the estimable militarism; the madness, the perverse relationship with the mother. Shaka's era of almost glorious slaughter, of course, makes present-day "faction fights" seem feeble by comparison, as if blood itself has thinned.

There is another level here, too. For all its brusque, dramatic grittiness, the poem is consciously literary: "The spears may all be washed up now" is surely an ironic echo of the title of Donald Morris's popular history, *The Washing of the Spears*. At the same time, however, a kind of textual evasion makes Shaka himself the "myth-maker", not the people who have written about him. Shaka is accorded the ultimate initiative and "reality"; the act of imagining him is transferred and obscured. On the one hand, then, Shaka is centralised, is made almost coterminous with the landscape, and the white presence implicitly marginalised, while on the other the masked process of "writing him into the centre" ultimately promotes a mythology which expresses white psychological needs and fears.

Neither the propagation of myth, nor a questioning edge, both present in "August Zulu", are of course confined to poetry. Some poems are as stereotyped and propagandistic as any imperial adventure-novel: D J Darlow's mini-epic "Tshaka" is of this kind. Conversely, prose is not intrinsically an inferior medium for soul-searching, even if this has been, at least since the Romantics, the special preserve of the lyric. It is striking, though, that white fiction on Shaka has been almost exclusively confined to the adventure-romance genre - stereotyped in characterisation and plot, clichéd in language, and distancing in effect - and the *only* instances in which white writers attempt to cross the imaginative divide and centralise Shaka's "own" voice, are in the poetry. F T Prince's "Chaka" is of this introspective, first-person kind. A comparison of these almost exactly contemporary 1930s long poems by Darlow and Prince, then, throws into particularly strong relief some of the conflicting attitudes that have informed the portrayal of Shaka.

A Precursor: W C Scully

Before proceeding to this detailed comparison, it is worth glancing at one or two earlier poems. William Charles Scully (1855-1943) was one of the many "native administrators" who, caught between a patrician sympathy for blacks under colonial rule and a salaried career in transforming black societies to fit colonial moulds, was fascinated by, and wrote about the Zulu. He was schooled in the colonial mode under the amateur settler historian George McCall Theal, prospected for diamonds in 1871, took part in the 1874 campaign against Sekhukuni's Pedi, and worked as a Cape civil servant and magistrate for decades. At the same time, his sympathy for blacks extended to running the Enjanyana leper colony for a time. His novel *The Harrow* fulminated against what he called "the orgy of imported, financial and spurious imperialism" in the Anglo-Boer War, an attack so trenchant as to be withheld from publication for seventeen years, until 1921 (de Kock 704). *Daniel Vananda* similarly criticised white exploitation of the blacks and police brutality (Scully 1923).

Scully's embeddedness in the essentially white-supremacist notions of his time nevertheless inflects his numerous works. As we have seen (Chapter Four), Scully's one short tale about Shaka, "The Quest of the Copper", in *Kafir Stories* (1895), owes much of its rhetoric to the conventions of the popular fiction exemplified by Rider Haggard. The ambivalence of that story is also evident in the first of two poems of Scully's, paired under the title "Zulu Pictures". "'Nkongane" is a once proud, now octogenarian Zulu reduced to drunkenness and "skulk[ing] round the Mission-House, hungry and lone". Scully's implicit critique of the destructive and trivialising nature of colonial authority is coloured by a neoprimitivist, vicarious revelling in the "ardour of blood-stained days/... and the thundering shields", an era that "glow[s]" in contrast to the "past in a moony haze/ That shines for us sons of old Europe". A voyeuristically nostalgic admiration for moribund warriorhood, for this "lonely hawk/ In a leafless forest that falls to the axe", underpins a kind of sympathetic

disdain for this old man "Sly as a badger alert for honey":

Honest, perhaps - but I have my doubts -
 With an eye that snaps at the chink of money;
 Poor old barbarian, your Christian veneer
 Is thin and cracked, and the core inside
 Is heathen and natural. Quaint and queer
 Is your aspect, and yet, withal, dignified.

When it comes to Shaka himself, however - described in "Nkongane" as the "scourge of man" and the "Angel of Death" - even ambivalent admiration disappears, though not the fascination; in this respect Scully's poem is a strong precursor of Darlow's. The second half of "Zulu Pictures" is entitled "Aceldama", the Biblical "Field of Blood" which was bought with Judas' pieces of silver (Acts i.19)¹ - though there is no indication in the poem that Scully had the subtleties of betrayal in mind in his choice of title. "Aceldama" is presented in the voice of Shaka himself, and in this respect foreshadows F T Prince's poem. Two of the poem's eight stanzas will suffice to exemplify the stereotyped and exaggerated imagery, the alignment of Shaka with tempestuous natural forces, the ponderous ballad-like rhythms, and the simplistic portrayal of Shaka's bloodlust which are evident also in Darlow:

A beast with horns that rend and gore,
 My army rushes through the world;
 The white plumes flutter in the fore
 Like mists before a tempest whirled!
 The roaring sea when storms are strong
 Is not so fierce, the lion's wrath
 Is tame when swells the battle-song
 That frights the clouds above my path!

My beaten shields to thunder thrill,
 My spears like lightning flash between,
 Till raining blood their brightness kill,
 Or dim to lurid red their sheen!
 At morn and eve the splendid shine
 Of burning clouds I hail with joy -
 The sky thus gives its son the sign
 To rise up mighty, and destroy!

Still, there are hints of a kind of nationalistic nobility here, as well as a backhanded moral rebuke which ultimately asserts the primacy of the settler, a mix of responses succinctly expressed by R C A Samuelson in 1929:

Where [Faith] is lost it should be created without delay and directed more and more to the highest ideals, that is a lively Faith in God, King and Country. The Zulu was a noble creature before we crushed him and allowed him to drift about without aim or ambition, and without the feeling that he was now the subject of the Sovereign of Great Britain. (Samuelson 387-8)

Although W C Scully was arguably less of a racist than many, even most, white South Africans of his day, the presumptions of his "Aceldama" appear today disturbingly ethnocentric. For Scully, as for most white writers on the Zulu, the figure of Shaka continued to act as - to borrow a term from physics - a kind of "hostility-sink" for expressions of horror, fear, or disgust at whatever was deemed reprehensible in "the African character". On the other hand, the split in attitudes in Scully's writings, re-enacted in some respects by the differences between Darlow and Prince, militates against reading even a poem like "Aceldama" in too simplistically ideological a manner. Once adequately contextualised, it cannot be seen to have a one-dimensional relationship with, or constitutive role in, either a clearly isolatable socio-economic imperial power-structure, or a monolithic "colonial discourse". The schizoid syndrome is certainly widespread: it affects even writers of this period who were, for their day, profoundly knowledgeable about Zulu history and mores (A T Bryant and James Stuart, for instance, both of whom must or should have known better, reverted to a Haggard-like language of stereotyped, vicarious violence whenever expounding on Shaka in public). But it is also evidence of a crucial fragmentation in the notion of "colonial discourse". That F T Prince's poem can, while drawing on the same "historical" material, represent a cul-de-sac in the genealogy of the Shakan literature, also demonstrates an important blurring. In brief, a path needs to be mapped

[b]between the Scylla of mindlessly particular conventional colonial history, which fails to move beyond the perceptions of whichever administrators or missionaries [or writers] are being documented, and the Charybdis of colonial discourse theory, which totalizes a hegemonic global ideology, neither much tainted by its conditions of production nor transformed by the pragmatics of colonial encounters and struggles... (Thomas 60)

The contrasts and similarities between the treatments of Shaka by Darlow and Prince provide a particularly interesting study in what Thomas calls the "ethnography of colonialism" (13).

In particular, the juxtaposition freshly alerts us to the complexities in the symbolic gestures of the colonisers, in the way that recent ethnography has become sensitised to those of the colonised. Together with a Bakhtinian recognition that any construction of a "colonial discourse" is intrinsically and already heteroglossal, and that different, sometimes antithetical "ventriloquisings" may arise from it, this approach takes us beyond such explanations of the split as Edward Said's, that there is an "insuperable contradiction" in a collective European psyche (Said 56), or Abdul JanMohamed's that the antinomy is only apparent and really "a product of deliberate ... imperialist duplicity" (JanMohamed 80) - both of which seem finally to depend on too monolithic an understanding of the "imperial".

"Ambition's voice": D J Darlow

So little is known about D J Darlow's life or the reception of his poems - I have found no critical material at all, and he apparently deserves no mention in Lovedale supremo Robert Shepherd's massive memoir (Shepherd 1941; cf. Oosthuizen 119, 195) - that we are left with internal, and intertextual analyses alone. However, clergyman Darlow was, at the time of writing his four mini-epic poems, *African Heroes*, on the board of the Lovedale mission station at Alice in the Eastern Cape, and was thus one of very few whites to be published by the Lovedale Press, otherwise reserved for African vernacular publications.² Darlow's position within this Christian structure of belief and of textual power is evident throughout his "Tshaka". The poem itself belongs to an essentially outmoded genre of popular epic, written in turgid blank verse, focussed on sensationalist violence, and archaic in diction and reference in a manner typical of conservative demotic literature. In short, discounting perhaps the crude psychology of a central, Faust-sells-his-soul-to-Satan motif, the poem is Nathaniel Isaacs in verse.

In a footnote on the opening page of this 900-line "epic", Darlow acknowledges a debt to Thomas Mofolo's originally seSotho novel *Chaka*, translated into English by F H Dutton in 1931, "for the personification of Tshaka's ambition in Isanusi and his force and guile in Malunga and Ndlebe" (Darlow 25n). Darlow's debt to Mofolo extends beyond the borrowing of these semi-allegorical characters, however, to the whole sequence of the poem and to innumerable items of detail. Indeed, Darlow shows no sign of having directly used any other source at all, though it seems highly unlikely he would not have known of A T Bryant's monumental *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929), particularly as the Lovedale missionary Brownlee J Ross had already published a Xhosa version of the Shaka story explicitly based on Bryant. Only hints of indirect influence may exist in Darlow's second line, comparing Shaka to "Alexander, Tamurlaine, Napoleon", echoing Ross's "ngu-Napoliyon nomzantsi *Africa*" (Ross 41), and in other choices of diction. What becomes of particular interest, then, is the way in which Darlow conforms to or deviates from this source.

Mofolo's version of the Shaka story, quite apart from the highly-coloured allegorical elements and the underpinning of an essentially Christian Faust theme, is an often aberrant one, in the sense that its ostensibly oral-traditional anecdotes frequently diverge from those more generally-circulated testimonies recorded in Bryant and being collected around the same time (but not published until the 1970s³) by Natal administrator James Stuart. Stories such as that Shaka was conceived as the result of a rape (Mofolo 6), that he was visited by a serpent-like "Lord of the Deep Waters" (25), or that he loved but murdered a maiden named Noliwe (143), find no corroboration elsewhere. Nor do Mofolo's details of Shaka's battles. Shaka murdering his own mother is a story recorded elsewhere, but is undoubtedly apocryphal; and the incident of Shaka filling the Tatiyana gorge with Langeni bodies, and then being tormented by dreams, was almost certainly derived from Haggard's *Nada the Lily*

(Mofolo 191; Haggard 159). If nothing else, this shows the near-irrelevance of historical veracity in the Shakan mythography, though the choice of Shaka in the first place attests to the magnitude of his historical stature.

More important is the question of why Darlow would have found Mofolo - rather than, say, the more solidly "historical" Bryant - more personally or culturally congenial or meaningful. Doubtless Mofolo's fictional, rather exotic treatment, combined with the familiar Faustian theme of a man selling his soul for ambition and the Bunyan-like allegorisation common to many such missionary-inspired writings (Lindfors 25), lent itself most immediately to translation into poetry. It would also have offered Darlow the gratification of using an "African" source - though his treatment effectively disempowers that potential for authenticity. The choice of an epic form is part of this disconnection: while the epic seems more suitable to some of the other characters in *African Heroes*, such as Moshoeshoe, it is unconsciously ironic in the case of "Tshaka". Significantly, the only places in which Darlow deviates from studied pentameter is in unmitigated praise: once of Shaka's heroic killing of a leopard (28), and once in incantatory lament at the death of Dingiswayo, who had sought "not slaughter but security" (31):

Dingiswayo the noble chief of men,
 Lover of wisdom,
 Hater of deceit,
 Lover of courage,
 Hater of fear,
Dingiswayo, torn by a jackal...(33)

A fundamental inconsistency, then, between Darlow's choice of the epic form and the values he appears to espouse is further revealed by details of rhetoric and trope. Prominent among these are comparisons of Shaka to European models, and a relocation of him within European mythic frames, both Classical and Christian. Crucial aspects of Mofolo's African cosmology are discarded in favour of a universe, familiar to Europeans, in which individual will struggles with an unspecifiable Fate. So what might have been a fruitful, which is to

say self-questioning tension between other-ness and domestication, trepidation and understanding, is vitiated by a stereotyping of phrasing and metaphor, a basic lack of sympathy with the subject, and an underpinning complacency in the narrative's closure (Shaka's well-deserved assassination).

Several of these features are present in the opening "Proem", which introduces and illustrates the "epic" cast of "Tshaka": the rather unaccomplished pentameters, derived, one imagines, from Shakespeare and Marlow, and perhaps, shorn of couplet rhymes, Pope and Dryden's translations of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*; the studied archaism of language; the undercurrent of a Classical "Nemesis"; the placing of Shaka amongst a pantheon of other military "heroic villains":

Some men have lived whom naught but death can quell, -
 Alexander, Tamurlaine, Napoleon;
 With them is Tshaka, Amazulu's chief.
 He, too, relentless, sought the furthest bound
 That Nemesis might stretch to, tho' the way
 Be strewn with laurel or with carrion.
 There is a force which cannot be restrained,
 A store of manhood held in vast excess
 That thrusts beyond itself and dominates
 Or crushes beneath the iron of its heel.
 The world may shake when such a one is born
 For he will drag to evil or to good
 Ten thousand others with unswerving will
 Ere Death the one last warrior cast him down,
 As 'twere a weakling, on the blood-stained earth.(25)

Everything here pretends to the exhibition of tumultuous force, expressed in vast exaggeration as might suit an ancient Greek or Norse saga, but the thrust is compromised from the opening line with the empty foreknowledge of death. The juxtaposition of laurel and carrion, of potential for good and evil, seems to posit the kind of tension requisite for the narrative suspense of real tragedy, but the rest of the proem adumbrates the one-sidedness of the whole work: the "iron ... heel" and "blood-stained earth" betray the bias towards the

brutal; the "unswerving will" already undermines the ostensible wrestlings of conscience later in the poem.

The comparisons with Alexander, Tamurlaine and Napoleon (particularly the last) were already commonplace, indeed so obligatory that I have in Chapter Fourteen offered a term for the gesture: *vindice*, a coinage which attempts to capture both the white writer's vindictiveness (since the comparison is never entirely to Shaka's advantage), and self-vindication. The comparison is a psychological gesture which domesticates by exaggeration, protesting that this is a way of comprehending the man; but the writer protests too much, revealing, in classical psychological terms, "a feeling of uncertainty which in the end [he] tries to keep down by over-decisiveness" (Freud, cited in Bollas 202). In common with much popular literature, this strategy expresses an attempt to defuse an underlying fear of such a personage by making him perfectly incredible - mythic.

The *vindice* gesture is insistent: Shaka is consumed by "a Berserk madness" (30); he "fought rejoicingly / Like Hector" (31); Noliwe sees in him "An African Apollo" (32); he is like that leader "of Rome who cast off his Volscian friends" (38); his "impis marched / Like Roman legions" (34) and "Spartan boys" (44). Through such, invariably ancient, references, the recent Zulu past is given parity with a European past of two thousand years or more ago - a common gesture in imperial writings. The archaic language reinforces this. At the same time, the register is insistently literate, the references belonging to an atavistic attachment to an Enlightenment reading-list.

Alongside this, Biblical imagery inscribes a morality at odds with the admiration implied by the epic form and by the Classicisms. Isanusi, a Bunyan-like allegorisation of Ambition in witchdoctor form, has eyes in which "beamed a wintry light / Like Satan's when

above the burning marl / He raised his head and saw his prostrate hosts"; this is characteristically reinforced with "Gorgon glow of hate" (29). Shaka's love, such as it is, battles "with the storms of Hell" (35); his troops are "Hounds of hell obedient to fiends, / Ranging th'Inferno slavering with joy" (40). In images like the latter, Christian moral repugnance blends with the numerous descriptions of Shaka as animal: he hisses like a "mamba" as he murders Nolizwe (36); "Lion-like, / He stared unblinking, nausea on his lips" (38); he is a "blazing tiger" (43); his minions are "human wolves" (39). In these similes Darlow is particularly close to Bryant. The use of European or familiar Asian predators, even (or especially) amongst writers like Darlow and Haggard who were obviously aware of the inaccuracy, is another indicator of the partly familiarising, partly mythologising dimensions of *vindice*. In the process of derogating Shaka in these ways, the writer depersonalises himself: the poem lacks a clearly individual vision, seems almost pure "ventriloquism", a palimpsest of borrowed voices.

Underpinning, and counterpointing, all these images is the mythic preconception of a primitive Eden disturbed, closely connected with romantic love:

Lovely the smile of twilight upon the mountains,
Wondrous the light of sunset in peaceful waters
Of upland fountains.
Fair the passing of the royal sunset's daughters
As they trail their robes in the path of the hastening night,
That fain would enfold them before the mysterious light
Of the moon is reflected in lakelet and streams. (36-7)

This insipid idyll, devoid of "a realistic sense of the terrain" (Edward Said, cited in Thomas 6), is disrupted by Shaka-as-natural-force, imaged as thunder, thunderbolt, flame, "Winter's frost/That cracks the mountains" (30), or, in this extended simile, river-flood:

...when Taleni sloughs her winter snows,
Great trees down-smitten, flung as 'twere a twig,
Men snatched to death with scarce a lonely cry;
Thus would he be; why should he not be thus? (26).

In this way, Shaka is presented not merely as "inhuman" (33), but as dehumanised, as are

the forces which control him. For Mofolo's strange but fully realised water snake, with its "long ears like those of a hare" and eyes like "great green hammer-stones", the "Lord of the Deep Waters" which licks Shaka and inducts him into a thoroughly African spiritual realm (Mofolo 26), Darlow substitutes the impersonal "chanting of Ambition's voice ... Of import vast and depth unfathomable" (Darlow 27). Within this framework, the individual conscience is emasculated, subjected in the last analysis to "ye Spinners of the fatal woof" (33):

There is a writing cannot be erased;
Time nor eternity may blot it out.
'Tis written in the fabric of the soul
That will outlast the parchment leaves of Heaven.(37)

Behind this muddled cosmology, the projective and justificatory dimensions of this "writing" are difficult to miss: conscience is of less importance than an inevitable outcome which consolidates liberal Christian values. And in another gesture characteristic of many white accounts of Shaka, Shaka's own voice is briefly appropriated, or invented, to support the "destiny" of eventual white domination, in his dying prophecy of the invasion of the "swallows", meaning Europeans (47).

The values implicit in "Tshaka" are so stark as hardly to need reciting: the poem is the most transparent vehicle of colonial mythologies in all the Shakan literature. It appears to promote the modern liberal project of upholding rationality, equality, and tolerance (in its praise of Dingiswayo, for instance) within the manifold of a measured, literate discourse, but consistently undermines itself: its very "prosaicness", in Stephen Watson's words, betrays the deeper "lack of interest" of a "class which has fashioned for itself a position in which it is apparently immune to any calamities" (Watson 24). Only in the very last line does Darlow hint at a feeling which might have promoted a breaking of conventional boundaries; behind the disdain and outright condemnation, the feeling is fear:

Where is the Thing
That shook the hosts of men and made them cringe,
The Thing that hurled them prostrate at his feet

And bent their hearts to fervent loyalty?
 Perchance 'tis fleeing from the Hound of Heaven,
 Or else, maybe, it ever rests and broods
 Undaunted in the Amazulu hearts. (48)⁴

In the fraudulent relativism of its European comparisons, in the bland conservatism, the "linguistic deadness, the entropy" (Watson 26) of its language and metaphors, in the complacent elimination of any gritty sense of otherness, the poem embodies many of the limitations of a colonial version of modern liberalism. It says, in short, nothing at all about Shaka, but a great deal about the processes of inscribing an idealised *settler* identity.

"Rest after conquests": F T Prince

F T Prince's "Chaka" appeared in his *Poems* of 1938, only a year after Darlow's *African Heroes*, but is a profoundly different work. It is written in five short sections, in free verse. Unlike Darlow's, Prince's diction is self-consciously modern even beneath the paraphernalia of Zulu landscapes and artefacts. Most importantly, it is spoken by Shaka himself: a rare literary event indeed. The tone is meditative, quietly and tensely anguished, questioning the very violence in which Darlow's epic almost unproblematically revels.

In one respect, the two poets are mirror-images of one another: Darlow was an English-born settler, writing in South Africa; Prince is a South African, born and educated in Kimberley, who left to settle in England in 1931. While Darlow wrote his poem in order to assert both an interest in Africans and an identifiable distance from them, thereby buttressing his position within South Africa, Prince asserted that it was precisely the distance *from* South Africa that made possible the "courage, or the presumptuousness" to write "Chaka". (This comment appears in "A Note on Chaka", alongside the 1934 version, printed in *New Coin*, [Prince 1976, hereafter NC], 6). Unlike Darlow, then, who is unabashed at (or unconscious of) a patent lack of knowledge of the Zulu, indeed appears to revel in it, Prince is aware that had he stayed he would have been "too conscious of [his] lack of any

real knowledge of Zululand and Zulu people, and of the folly of trying to make a sophisticated poem out of their history" (NC 6). Nevertheless, Prince felt confident enough of the poem's success to include it in his latest *Collected Poems* (1993; hereafter CP).

The success is of a very different order to Darlow's, both in tenor and quality. Prince is regularly cited as unjustly neglected, confined to swift lists of secondary luminaries in the histories of British poetry, the bulk of his work condemned to being overshadowed by the success of a single poem, "Soldiers Bathing". But Prince is a craftsman of undeniable gifts, highly polished and subtle, even in an early work like "Chaka". The progression of versions of this poem, which we are lucky to have, together with his own comments on it, attests to his dedication. Critical material still remains scant (but see Plomer 1954; Hedley 1968; Shepherd 1989), and very scant on the earlier work: for "Chaka" we have only Donald Burness's indifferent, sometimes inaccurate "prac crit" chapter in his *Shaka in African Literature* (1982), and a brief treatment in Mbongeni Malaba's unpublished PhD thesis (1986).

Darlow's and Prince's poems do have some elements in common. Both draw on the same general stock of "historical" stories about Shaka, which were assumed by both to be true: "[Shaka's] victories and atrocities were, of course, abominable; but they *had happened*" (Prince NC 8; emphasis in original). Prince also acknowledges that his poem was "made possible" by Mofolo's novel, particularly in its "psychological" dimension. A central theme of Prince's poem is thus also a *psychomachia*, a mental struggle between good and evil (Burness 44), which, in common with both Mofolo and Darlow, Prince positions in a Christian moral framework. Prince was aware, however, that Mofolo might lack authority, and read what he could in the anthropological literature (though in 1934, when Prince began

the poem, this was scattered, Eileen Krige's major synthesis, *The Social System of the Zulus*, being still two years away)(NC 7).

Neither historical nor anthropological knowledge was really to the point, however, since Prince's purpose was "imaginative, unscientific" (NC 7), and had almost nothing to do with delineating the Zulus or his relationship with them. The somewhat more "authentic" feel of Prince's "Chaka" rests on occasional mentions of specifics of landscape and artefact (dung-fire, porridge-pot, sweet-thorn, leopard-skin), his use of the first person monologue, and his almost complete eschewal of "European" elements (though he was not immune to his own version of the vindice gesture, comparing Shaka's reign to the "terrible beauty" one might find "in the tribal warfare of the Old Testament or in the fanaticism of Cromwell's New Model army in the Civil War period" - this last closer to the English bone than most such comparisons)(NC 8).

But the authenticity is superficial, and to this extent I contest Malaba's judgement that "Chaka" is a "satisfactory synthesis of the dual African and European legacy" (Malaba 332). The diction, while suggestive of "the spaciousness of a bygone age" (Hobsbaum 677), is mostly that blend of the sharp and the generalised characteristic of certain species of allegory: the following passage (closely comparable to the style of J M Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, for instance) could be set anywhere, in almost any period:

But now the old men and the infirm have been well killed;
 Now there are spies who crawl back from the south
 Bearing on cheeks and shanks the sores
 Of a new sickness. They will be burned. And there are captains
 Who have returned from failure, to be hanged.
 And my singing messengers have taxed the coast,
 My soldiers weep with hurry at my commands:
 They go out to slay, they return at night weary of slaughter,
 They advance and attack and outflank and flee, all at once.
 And on the most desirable of my hills,
 In the sweetest of fastnesses, I speak well of them.
 (CP 46-7)

There are "historically" attested events behind these lines, but the un-Zulu "hanged" and the mythic associations of "fastnesses" aid the displacement from the specifically South African. This passage incidentally includes some of the few lines that survived unmodified from the 1934 to the 1938 version. The latter is typically less blunt, more tangential in presentation of feeling, less clotted with metaphor than the original, which is an unsatisfactory marriage of direct statement, and impenetrably compressed transferred epithets:

With a mean wisdom clouds
 Being dyed, my seeping discontent has mottled
 The sapling on the imprisoned slope; that may be ransomed
 By the savour of some root. The nostril joined
 To draughts of vacant wealth has never scrupled
 To mingle the odour of journeys with disdain. (NC 16)

The price Prince pays for simplifying his diction, dropping open avowals ("I have undertaken lust and done/A proxy satisfaction"; "The small blood-beating fragment that I was/Was fattened on diseases, miseries" [NC 22,26]) and allowing his readers more imaginative space, is a kind of evasion of both the public and the private voices. Thus on the one hand the poem is avowedly an investigation of alarming contemporary European events, particularly the 1930s' drive towards "war and conquest and 'nation-building'...[t]he recrudescence of militarism and tyranny in Germany, and the racist genetics of Nazism" (NC 8): as Donald Davie rightly perceives:

[I]t is no good asking where his native South Africa gets into his verse, or objecting that ... "Chaka" converts that Zulu warrior - except for a few adventitious stage properties - into a prince or princeling of the European Renaissance; the answer is too obvious - poetry, as this poet conceives it, has a duty to reach *beyond* all racial and anthropological and geographical accidents. (Davie 339)

But the "reaching beyond" is so embedded in the apparent inwardness of the monologue's "historical" language, that Norman MacCaig can complain that the "paraphernalia of his poetry excludes the contemporary [and] keeps the reader at a distance" (MacCaig 870).

On the other hand, on a private level, Prince asserts that he "also saw in the personal

history of Chaka an emblem of a certain kind of adolescent crisis; the poem was intended to give the pattern of such an emotional and moral crisis and evolution as we find in Rimbaud's *Saison de Enfer* [sic]" (cited in Burness 46). But how far Prince saw this as his *own* crisis remains questionable: MacCaig wonders why Prince "finds it hard to speak straight out as himself", instead shielding himself behind historical personae. Something of this evasiveness, if it is that, is evident in Prince's self-conscious poem "Not a Paris Review Interview". The "questioner" asks: "But could one, not unfairly,/ Argue that you have suppressed your/ Identity, or tried -/ See the persons and occasions/ In long pieces as evasions?" The answer is:

Why set poetry on one side
And apart from other art,
And plays and novels? ...
A dramatist becomes
Himself in every jot
Of plot, murder or love-affair,
And those who act or suffer.
Oneself as an old buffer
Or young fogey, is both there
And not there, in what one makes. (CP 248)

One is tempted to agree, and to agree with Jane Hedley that if Prince is in fact trying "to hide behind 'substitute selves' he does not succeed in concealing from the patiently attentive reader his attitudes to men, to love and beauty, and to art" (Hedley 93). And there are solid indications that Prince intends neither open social comment nor personal confession, but a dialogical illumination each by the other in an essentially moral metaphysic: as his Shaka "turn[s] a question over in [his] hands" - "Which of us can forgive himself?" - two birds seem to answer, "all are ... guilty of all" (CP 50). In short, "Chaka" is one part of an exploration, extending through many of Prince's poems, of the question asked in "Soldiers Bathing": "who nowadays is conscious of our sins?" And the conception of sin is necessarily both individual and social.

This "ventriloquistic" dimension deserves more detailed exploration than is possible here. For the present purpose, the point is that the near-polar opposition of MacCaig's and Davie's judgements shows just how elusive and deeply personal Prince's approach is. Moreover, this inwardness is intrinsically *self-questioning*, as Darlow's approach is not. Furthermore, the high degree of elusiveness in Prince's poetry was a quality towards which he deliberately worked. In contrast to the lurid and archaic directness of Darlow's descriptions, Prince's reveal his alignment with the allusive imaginations of the Symbolists. He drew his inspiration, he notes, from the styles of Baudelaire and Rimbaud, Valéry, St John Perse and Ezra Pound (NC 9). And some lines, like the following from the 1934 version of "Chaka", could not have happened without T S Eliot's "The Hollow Men": "I am standing by the river, the supple mourner,/Face without eyes and sigh without lung,/Speed without limb" (NC 24).

Prince subjected "Chaka" to a perhaps unresolvable tension between the epic impulse, derived from Mofolo and modified by the influence of St-John Perse's *Anabase*, which Prince saw as "both modern and bardic in tone...heroic, but also sensual and ironic" in mood (NC 6), and the Symbolist impulse to produce "a verbal object, a self-contained structure from which the scaffolding had been removed, and in which the poet's motives and intentions had become invisible, having been completely absorbed". In this Eliot-like spirit, the more powerful, not-quite-narrative "forward thrust" of the original version was weakened in favour of something "more floating, more elusive, less fixed in meaning" (NC 9). Thus, while Darlow's poem is written from the outside, almost complacent in its fated dénouement, Prince's, narrated by a younger Shaka, remains, for all the celebratory "Rest after Conquests" in its last section, subtly unresolved; Burness under-rates, I think, the tension between the apparent subject of celebration and the sombreness of the rhythms, between

sharply observed but dreamlike Edenic scenery and hovering awareness of the fragility of this peace-by-slaughter:

We clap our hands together. What do you dance,
 What do you dance? we ask. We clap hands. How
 Is it one sings your king's name? We have dreamed
 Of an adorable authority, and the brooks
 Sobbing absurdly in the bright morning, the brooks
 Glitter. . .

All these are ours,
 And we are the people of Heaven. Tell us no lies
 On our noons made loud by abolished clans. (CP 51)

Questions linger. Shaka's is hardly an "adorable" authority; these beauties are "gifts inflicted upon us"; "Tell us no lies" is a self-deceiving command on which to end; that "loud" is intriguingly, forbiddingly ambiguous. And in a probable allusion to Shaka's legendary dying prophecy, mentioned earlier, the future is also ambivalent: "the conversation of some swallows is both a keen burden/And sweeter than that of the dead" (CP 51). The questions, ultimately, are Prince's own. The ambiguities in Darlow's poem arise from a combination of simply poor writing, an incoherent philosophy, and both deliberate and unconscious masking which despite itself reveals a mentality violently at odds with itself. Prince's poem, by contrast, makes the ambiguities themselves the subject.⁵

Descendants

The most significant difference, then, between Darlow's and Prince's treatments of the same historical figure is the contrasting purposes to which the same unquestioned Christian morality, and an allied concern with the *lacrimae Christi* (the term is from "Soldiers Bathing") in a brutally sinning world. The former is backward-looking, divisive, and defensive, the latter forward-looking and self-implicating. An historical and moral commonality means that the "interpretative repertoires" of the two poets overlap to a limited extent, but the radically divergent voices discernible in the poems enact the difference between propaganda and self-discovery.

It is significant that Darlow's approach, which from a postcolonial perspective is patently the most narrowly exploitative, is the one which prevailed in most subsequent literature on Shaka. This is true even of poetry embodying an ideology diametrically antithetical to Darlow's, such as African National Congress activist Barry Feinberg's chillingly titled "The Beauty of a Zulu Battle Line". (The echo of Prince's reference in "Soldiers Bathing" to "a strange delight that fills me full,/ Strange gratitude, as if evil itself were beautiful" [CP 57], is undoubtedly unconscious, but attests to the pervasiveness of the idea.) Feinberg's 1989 revolutionist poem, celebrating the anniversary of Isandhlwana, commandeers the momentary glories of the Zulu past to the ANC cause:⁶ Shakan motifs such as the "short broad stabbing spear" and "flesh reared on thorns/ flat stamped"⁷ embody the qualities of anti-apartheid resistance by the "new spears of gun drilled Tambo men" (Feinberg 14). And turning the derogation of Darlow's *vindice* gesture around in "We Found Common Song", set in central Asia, Feinberg alludes to Tamurlane and Genghis as denizens of a "brother continent", and appeals to precisely the forces of which Darlow had expressed his fears half a century earlier (as in the epigraph to my Introduction).

The final important point here is, I think, not so much the homiletic one of "to each his own Shaka", or the theoretically fashionable one that there is no such thing as a unified "white" mentality or voice, but that ideologically antithetical writers can use almost identical textual gestures (note, for instance, the staccato run-on lines embodying admirable action in both poems, or the narrowing of diction to the point of cliché). In other words, South Africa's conflicted political landscape has effected interesting similarities in their felt social-psychological identities; the gestures underlying these "social dialects" and voices of group allegiance indicate social-structural continuities where, as Wertsch points out, "linguists have traditionally seen only randomness" (1991:58). To view the poems in this way is in effect to move in the direction of symbolic anthropology, as Thomas and Wertsch in different ways

suggest, and to extend Bakhtin's multifaceted definition of style as

inseparably linked to particular thematic unities and - what is especially important - to particular compositional unities; to particular types of construction of the whole, types of its completion, and types of relations between the speaker and other participants in speech communication. (Bakhtin 64)

The symbolic utilisation of the past, as this chapter has briefly helped to show, is both more and less variable than many analyses would have it. This utilisation is dependent on precisely those mythic, textual restructurings of the "self" and of the group *through* the "other". Through this social-psychological perspective, the processes of the textual fabrication of both the constants and the particularities of South African colonial identities can be better interrogated, understood and reformed.

NOTES

1. Thanks to the Duchess du Bavier for this reference.
2. Peter Midgely, National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, pers.comm.
3. The four volumes of Colin deB Webb and J B Wright's *The James Stuart Archive* still leave a substantial amount of material from Stuart's transcriptions unpublished.
4. The same anxiety underlies the closing lines of Roy Campbell's more famous Zulu poem, "The Zulu Girl": "An old unquenched, unsmotherable heat - / The curbed ferocity of beaten tribes" (Chapman 78).
5. It would be worth pursuing a comparison with two other almost contemporary "African voice" monologues, the anonymous "Amagunyana's Soliloquy" (Chapman 68-70), and Francis Carey Slater's "The Return" (Chapman 73-5), which lie somewhere between the extremes of Darlow and Prince.
6. Feinberg in this way aligns himself with a particular political group, or probably only with a certain segment of it; see e.g. R V Selope Thema, "How Congress Began" (originally *Drum*, July 1953), in Rive and Couzens 1991:85-88, on Shaka as a symbol of national rather than merely Zulu unification.
7. An allusion to the fictional story, originated by E A Ritter (1955), that Shaka toughened his soldiers' feet by having them stamp on devil-thorns.

PART THREE

The Twentieth Century

Although portrayals of Shaka in the early years of the twentieth century continued to be powerfully governed by the "missionary perspective" (a simplification), it was a perspective increasingly overlapping with a professionalisation of anthropological, historical, and literary studies. By the late 1980s, every established idea about Shaka and the origins of the Zulu state was being challenged - at least in academic circles. Paradoxically, the densest, most rigorously empathetic anthropological study of the Zulu would come from a missionary, Axel-Ivar Berglund.

But the juggernaut of popular perceptions rolls on. On the one hand, professional history shades by degrees into "popular" history; one kind of narrative mutates into another in successive accounts. The relationship between history and narrative is a highly contested theoretical area; what is clear here, is that certain kinds of narrative - in particular, the heroic folktale - make themselves felt in even the most empirically-organised "histories", and more so in the "popular" varieties. The work of Donald Morris is examined particularly closely in this respect. In every case, narrative, and its rhetorical surfaces, are utilised for reasons clearly congruent with the identity requirements of the *writer's* self and society, or self-in-society. The discipline of "history" itself, in all its shifting guises, is such a self-identifying tool.

"Narrative" as a rhetorical device makes the cross-over from "history" into "fiction", and vice-versa, especially fluid. Close reading of the textual strategies in the histories reveals ways in which historiography (by its own lights) has been contaminated by invention (the case of E A Ritter, the most popular writer on Shaka in history, and therefore deserving of a separate chapter, is exemplary). On the other hand, the types of narrative chosen for the fictions are equally revealing of social-psychological stances and meanings. Here, Shaka has been almost without exception confined to the genre of the adventure-romance, in most respects a deeply conservative mode, significant precisely because of its popularity. This kind of story continues, in both books and films, while an increasingly acidic, and increasingly separate, academic industry has begun to reopen for questioning the whole basis of the Shaka story.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE LURE OF THE TALE:

History in the twentieth century

[We now recognise] that stories guide action; that people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories; that "experience" is constituted through narratives; that people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives. (Somers and Gibson 38-9)

In the wake of Hayden White, Paul Ricoeur, F R Ankersmit, Michel de Certeau and others, it is increasingly accepted that narrative is an essential, if not the only, constituent in the process of creating both personal and collective identities. *Pace* Braudel and the *Annalistes*, I shall also for now accept that narrativity is a necessary element in the generation of meaning contained in "history" - or perhaps more accurately, *historiography*, the writing of history. But there are different species of narrative, different kinds of story, even within "history". What different kinds of meaning do they generate, with what psychological and cultural import? What sense of identity do they hold for their writers and readers? And more specifically, to which of these historical narratives is Shaka assimilated?

We are, the psychologist R D Laing once said, the story we tell ourselves of who we are. In the cross-cultural context of colonial literature, such self-identification is also particularly strongly manifested in the story "we" tell ourselves about "them", those who provide a yardstick of differentiation (Laing 76). This is perhaps most immediately manifest in fiction, but in its interface with narrativity, the discourses of historiography are far from

immune. It is now almost axiomatic that behind its positivistic mask of verifiable "evidence", historiography too bears, in its very emplotment, the identifying countenance of its writers and their contexts. As de Certeau put it, "intelligibility is established through a relation with the other": the historiographical project paradoxically "aims at 'understanding' and, through 'meaning', at hiding the alterity of this foreigner; or, in what amounts to the same thing, it aims at calming the dead who still haunt the present" (de Certeau 1988:2-3). Something of this process of taming alterity through appealing to conventions of intelligibility has already been demonstrated in the work of A T Bryant.

White writers' accounts of the youth of Shaka provide a particularly sharp case study of the tension between the purported intention to present objective historical "evidence" and the temptation to couch that evidence in an "intelligible" story format. Given that the evidence pertaining to Shaka's early years is particularly slight, this temptation has, I shall argue, been progressively to reconstruct the account to conform to that most essential, persuasive and entertaining of European story-forms, the folktale of the hero. As we have seen, this is far from being the case in the sketchy accounts of eyewitnesses Nathaniel Isaacs and Henry Francis Fynn, even in the latter's more balanced moments, or in Bryant's central works.

The late emergence of a more heroic portrayal of Shaka is not confined to white writers. Even in *Zulu* accounts, the first mention of Shaka as the man who "welded together the Zulu nation" in Zulu praises is found among songs associated with the establishment of the first Inkatha movement in the 1920s (Vail and White 66). If subsequent, more heroic accounts of Shaka by Vilakazi, R R R Dhlomo, and Mazisi Kunene have had an indirect effect on white writing, it is white writers' decision to be so influenced that remains the crucial point here: a number of works make it abundantly clear that such positive influence

was by no means a foregone conclusion. Only with E A Ritter's novel, *Shaka Zulu* (1955), does a more "heroic", albeit still blood-drenched portrayal emerge. Ritter's account, though apparently inflected by Zulu traditions, including R R R Dhlomo's *uShaka* (1937), owes startlingly little to Zulu sources; both Ritter and Dhlomo are fundamentally reliant on Bryant, and much of *Shaka Zulu* is simply invented (see Chapter Nine). Why does the heroic narrative emerge strongly only at this point and why, as indicated by *Shaka Zulu*'s popularity both as reading-in-itself and as source for subsequent histories, is it taken up so fervently? Since the heroic stories clearly have no superior status as empirical evidence over the monstrous ones, what social-psychological import for white writers does this shift have? The question may be examined by focussing on the historical work of Donald Morris, a key figure in this essentially Western-colonial genealogy of Zulu historiography. First, however, a brief survey of that genealogy up to the 1960s.

An overview

It is tempting, though too simplistic, to divide twentieth-century Zulu historiography into "popular" and "academic" forms, the former being easily lured into that story-telling mode into which stereotypes of villainy and heroism naturally creep, the latter more "rigorous", detailed, "critical" and explicitly theorised, but thereby also too abstruse to reach the very readership in which the fondly-entertained popular beliefs primarily reside. The distinction holds true up to a point: John Wright's or Russell Martin's PhD dissertations will never have the popular impact of the highly readable books of Ritter, Peter Becker, or Donald Morris. Such theses either do not achieve publication at all precisely because they do not conform to more popular narrative modes, or, if published, usually piecemeal in the specialist journals, circulate only amongst a few academics.

In Zulu studies, the split widened noticeably around the turn of the century, as history as an academic discipline became increasingly professionalised; even at Oxford, History had become an independent unit only in 1872 (Kenyon 145). As we have seen, the missionaries had incorporated some historical material about the Zulu into their accounts, and in the 1880s John Bird made a start on compiling a documentary "database". On this documentary resource, and on others of their own compilation, the first major settler historians of South Africa, George McCall Theal and George Cory, drew in considerable detail. Their multi-volume efforts resembled in style and bulk the contemporary Cambridge history series. While representing a major advance in terms of *local* historiographical practice, neither of these (significantly, amateur) historians is very far removed from the earlier nineteenth-century practice exemplified by Macaulay, whose use of documentary sources is selective at best, and whose approach is neatly summarised in Macaulay's own comment on Hume:

Without positively asserting more than he can prove, he gives prominence to all the circumstances which support his case; he glides lightly over those which are unfavourable to it; his own witnesses are applauded and encouraged; the statements which seem to throw discredit on them are controverted; the contradictions into which they fall are explained away;... what cannot be denied is extenuated, or passed by without notice; concessions are even sometimes made: but this insidious candour only increases the effect of the vast mass of sophistry. (Kenyon 56)

Such temptations, of course, bedevil all historical scholars (including this one), and we have seen these temptations wreaking havoc with Bryant's credibility. Bryant had not advanced far in this respect beyond the racism of Theal, who "did more than anyone else to establish a tradition of strongly pro-colonist, anti-black historical writing, and to create the racial paradigm which lay at the core of that tradition and which served to justify white rule" (Saunders 1988:29). Theal's bias reveals itself in a number of ways. For all the new documentation, he is as easily seduced as Macaulay and his imperial successors by the exotic and the scandalously sensational. Macaulay had presented Hindu religion as unmitigated cruelty and suspicion; likewise, Theal, while prepared to spend some pages describing pervasive "Bantu superstition", is ultimately using these descriptions to show that Bantu

minds are "like those of little children, who are content to credit marvellous things told to them", entirely lacking in "reasoning powers", and therefore seduced by "wizards" who are either "impostors" or "monomaniacs", if not "deranged" (1902:42,49). Such a definition of "reasoning powers" suggests, by contrastive illustration, the self-image on which Theal's implicit theory of historiography is founded; such historiography *is* the settler identity.

Theal is also heavily influenced by that kind of historicism, based on the figure of the Great Man and the Battle-as-decisive-event, outlined by Hobbes as early as 1629:

for the greatest part, men come to the reading of history with an affection much like that of the people of Rome, who came to the spectacle of the gladiators with more delight to behold their blood, than their skill in fencing. For they be far more in number that love to read of great armies, bloody battles, and many thousand slain at once, than that mind the art by which the affairs both of armies and cities be conducted to their ends. (Kenyon 5)

This particular species of narrative was accentuated when writing about pre-colonial societies (the frequent parallels between Zulu and gladiator are not accidental); the drift of imperial history towards the tenor of the adventure tale is almost inevitable. As Charles Kingsley put it in 1861: "The object of history is therefore to find out what great men did with the various aspects of public life in which they were involved" (Temu 2). Hence, at least in his *Progress of South Africa* (1900:169-179), Theal establishes a trend in which the history of the early Zulu is effectively the biography of Shaka - the trend continues to Ballard (1988) and Taylor (1994) - and Theal's Shaka is conventionally irrational and brutal, clearly based largely on Isaacs: "In all history, ancient or modern, there is no name with which more ruthless bloodshed is associated than with that of Tshaka" (Theal 1900:169). On this is founded Theal's notorious thumb-suck exaggeration of "two millions of lives lost" in Shaka's depredations (169), which was uncritically repeated by Brian Roberts as late as 1974. Shaka's brutality is further confirmation of an irreducible difference between African and European, reflected in a studied textual division between the affairs of blacks and whites; the hysterical autophagia of Shaka's wars provides the context for Theal's personal relief that

"the murderous rule of the Bantu despot has gone forever ... [his] power for evil on an extensive scale has been broken [by white governance]" (506). Moreover, rather as in William Holden's view, the murderousness is a precondition for white rule: like the "destructive epidemic of smallpox" that cleared the Americas of aborigines, "if the terrible exterminator [Shaka] had never existed there would doubtless have been progress in South Africa, but it would not have been the kind of progress that has taken place; there could have been no Orange Free State, or Transvaal republic, or Rhodesia Colony" (169-70). Finally, Theal also contextualises Shaka within the common view that the "condition of the Bantu at the beginning of the sixteenth century ... is the condition of the great majority of them today" (1902:99), a view which persists at least as late as the *Oxford History of South Africa* (1969). In short, this narrative mode colludes intimately with the projection of a narrowly settler identity, an identity to which notions of "progress" are central.

In another of his many works, his *History of South Africa Since 1795* (1902), Theal exemplifies another common manner of treatment of Shaka, in which the Zulu leader is incorporated only as an adjunct to a heavily documented account of the white settlers and of frontier politics. Interestingly, there is little allusion to Shaka's personality here, except to say that "Tshaka delighted in a display of force, Dingan [sic] in gaining his ends by treachery" (1902:304). George Cory, similarly, attributes solely to Shaka the responsibility for setting off the first of the dominoes of scattering marauding tribes:

The Zulu chief Chaka, a few years previously, had raised himself and his army to enormous power, partly by his own personal influence, but perhaps more by his relentless cruelty and his delight in human suffering and bloodshed. Commencing by devastating the country in which he lived ... and either compelling the men to join his disciplined ranks or murdering them, he extended his operations into what is now the country of Natal, at that time inhabited by a fairly dense native population. In some cases whole tribes, men, women, and children, fell before his murderous army, in others the people fled and brought destruction on those in their line of flight. (1913:230)

As the phrase "a few years previously" indicates, Cory is here slotting the history of Shaka into a far more extensive account of events along the frontiers of European incursion; it is the history of the settlement with which he is solely concerned. Thus while Shaka's "irresistible onslaughts" (344) are credited with massive historical significance, they are given very little focussed, critical, or detailed treatment. Only in relation to the 1828 Eastern Cape frontier scare, already alluded to, are the movements of this "bloodthirsty savage" (354) permitted any detail - supported entirely by settler documentation.

This is a pattern that characterises virtually all the broad, synthesising, subcontinental "histories of South(ern) Africa", including Walker (1928), de Kiewiet (1941), Keppel-Jones (1949), Marquard (1955), Davenport (1979/1987), Thompson (1990), and Parsons (1993), as well as innumerable minor versions. Early Zulu history is treated as tangential to that of white settlement; pre-colonial society is seen as essentially static and impressionable; Shaka is the *sui generis* motor of a massive chain of violence but is never examined in detail. Most of these historians are necessarily out of touch with original sources, drawing primarily on their predecessors and adding only their own interpretative glosses. In this situation develops the notion of the "mfecane", a term first aired in this sense by Walker (1928:175),¹ and given its first concentrated treatment by John Omer-Cooper in his famous *The Zulu Aftermath* (1966).

Omer-Cooper's book was only one of a flurry of "Africanist" works, both fictional and historical, academic and popular, which appeared in the 1960s. Many of these were dependent either on their pot-boiling predecessors, or on Ritter's novel, to a deleterious degree. There was relatively little concentrated "academic" work on the Zulu, and little real change in either accepted stories or even surface rhetoric between the 1930s and the 1960s, as the following extracts demonstrate:

[Shaka] exterminated the clan among which he had spent his unhappy youth. Some of its people he burnt to death; others he playfully impaled *per rectum* upon the tall, sharpened stakes around their cattle kraals.... Tshaka forebade his young warriors to marry, lest the softer allurements of marriage should diminish their natural ferocity; but he allowed them the more transient delights of the concubine. He taught them not to throw their spears at the enemy, but to receive the shower hurled at them, and retain their own for stabbing at close quarters. And, by his military genius and lust for blood, he turned over twenty thousand square miles of fertile coast and rolling uplands, in a few years, from a populous pleasant land into a shambles, covered with bloody corpses and smoking ruins. He decimated three hundred tribes.... Some of the dazed and starving survivors of his raids dug for roots in the forests, or raised meagre crops in open glades. Others crawled to the sea-shores by night, furtively to rob the rocks of shell-fish. Many of them were devoured by leopards or starved to death; some committed suicide in despair; others became insane through eating strange vegetables ... [S]ome ... in time commenced the eating of dogs and then of human beings... [Shaka] has been called the "Black Napoleon" but, compared with Tshaka, Bonaparte was an amiable and benevolent country squire. (Mackeurtan 1930:119-122)

It is time that we should consider this great man, for great he was, however cruel or wicked he may have been.... His frequent executions and cruel punishments - e.g. impalement *per rectum* - may perhaps be purely of his place and time, but he seems to have found a sadistic pleasure in some of them... and to acquit him of the crime of loving cruelty is assuredly impossible.... To reconcile these conflicting qualities [of cruelty and generosity] is difficult except by the assumption that Shaka, like Napoleon, considered himself above morality.... By arming his soldiers with the short stabbing spear and by executing those who returned home without it, he made an army of real fighters. By forbidding his young warriors to marry ... he made them solely dependent on their military career and their sovereign's favour for happiness. ... In the two hundred and fifty miles of fertile coastland south of the Tongaat River, [n]either kraals nor cattle remained. During his reign Shaka is said to have destroyed three hundred tribes and [i]t is estimated that he added half a million people to the Zulu nation.... Over a large area ... the miserable inhabitants had been driven to cannibalism. (Brookes and Webb 1969:11-14)

Brookes and Webb's liberal professionalism is evident in their rhetoric of judicious weighing of evidence ("may perhaps", "To acquit him", "it is estimated", and so on) - but their essential thrust and judgement is no different from Mackeurtan's. Such judgements are embedded in closely parallel declarative sentences. Indeed, such minor, additive shifts in surface rhetoric signal less an advance in historiographical method towards some putative perfection (whatever that may be construed to be), than a wrestle between different modes of discourse or "speech genres", between a reasoning empiricism and "the lure of the tale".

A very similar rhetoric is present in John Omer-Cooper's *The Zulu Aftermath* (1966), a work

which demonstrates perhaps more than any other how the "mfecane" is founded on preconceptions of Shaka's character.

Omer-Cooper drew on the same host of dubious anecdotes as his contemporaries, reframing them in a University of Ibadan-based, "Africanist" revaluation of the initiative and capacity of African peoples to build their own "nations" without "borrowing external models or techniques" (1991:12). While this represents a useful corrective to ethnocentric views that Africans could do nothing without European aid (like building Zimbabwe, for instance²), there is a lingering condescension in the preconception that the "nation" is the acme of political development, and a tautology at work in the notion that Shaka was a "military and political genius" (1966:6) and must therefore have created such a "nation". Moreover, Omer-Cooper cannot resist re-telling Theophilus Shepstone's baseless story that Dingiswayo's original regimental system must have been acquired from a stray white man, a mysterious Dr Cowan. Even Bryant did not believe that one - but Ritter liked the story. Nor does Omer-Cooper question any aspect of the accepted, which is to say highly fictionalised, portrayal of Shaka:

In his personality a distinct streak of sadism combined with high intelligence and a ferocious determination to prove himself by dominating over his fellows. He was personally courageous and callous of the sufferings of others. Only for his mother, and to a lesser extent his grandmother, did he show much normal human affection ... [He] was terrified of producing an heir ... beat his mother severely[, and] had large numbers of old and incapable men put to death on the grounds that they were a useless encumbrance... (30-5)

In a manner which remains ill-explained, this personality, combined with increased competition over drought-reduced resources, managed, according to Omer-Cooper, to produce "a positive process of change in the direction of increased state power through improved military organisation and increased centralisation" (1991:12; emphasis added). Ambivalently, alongside this runs a distinct repugnance at the "colossal upheaval ... accompanied by carnage and destruction on an appalling scale" (4), which Shaka is said to

have initiated. This upheaval, including the scattering of tribes as far as Tanzania (though demonstrably very few of these movements finally have much to do with Shaka, taking place as they did over many more years than Shaka reigned), Omer-Cooper continued to term the "mfecane" (see also Omer-Cooper 1988:52-9, 1991).

It was primarily against this conception that Julian Cobbing's (1988) attack was directed. We will return to this debate in the final part of the chapter, but it is worth noting Cobbing's reception by an historian like Leonard Thompson, who, in his *History of South Africa* (1990), dismisses Cobbing's thesis in two brusque sentences. Thompson's unwillingness to entertain Cobbing's ideas is entirely congruent with his rhetoric; his tropes and sentences show little change from the examples from Mackeurtan and Brookes cited above. In Thompson's general history, despite the shortage of space, much is devoted to a litany of cruel effects in an implicitly beneficent landscape:

[I]n the country between the mountain escarpment and the Indian Ocean, the Zulu kingdom had incorporated all the northern Nguni chiefdoms.... It was a militarized state, made and maintained by a conscript army of about forty thousand warriors. ... During their period of service they were denied contact with women and subjected to intense discipline. ... In warfare, their standard tactic was to encircle the enemy and then, in close combat, to cause havoc with short stabbing spears.... Fear, too, was an important nation-building instrument. Executioners were always on hand to kill people suspected of disloyalty or cowardice.... By 1824, when the first white traders visited him, [Shaka] was becoming despotic and capricious. Like revolutionary leaders in other societies (one thinks of Robespierre, Stalin, Mao Zedong), his rule degenerated into a reign of terror.... By the early 1830s, organized community life had virtually ended in some areas ... where the only human beings were small groups of survivors trying to eke out a living on mountaintops or in bush country. Settlements were abandoned, livestock were destroyed, fields ceased to be cultivated, and in several places the landscape was littered with human bones. ... Some even resorted to cannibalism. (Thompson 1990:83-5)

These examples serve not only to demonstrate, over much of the twentieth century, the commonality of theme and judgement beneath changes in surface rhetoric, but also the degree of cross-over between avowedly popular or non-professional histories, like Mackeurtan's, and the products of university-based historians. It is worth reiterating here, in this respect, that an alteration in the rhetorical manifold of a story does not necessarily signal a commensurate

shift towards greater "truth". Sundry invented narrative segments, or *narremes*, from Ritter's novel have been utilised in the most soberly fashionable academic manner. E V Walter (1969) relied on the eyewitnesses to paint a largely erroneous portrait of Zulu society, which in their turn Chalk and Jonassohn (1990:223-9) use extensively to support a grander theory of the "history and sociology of genocide". While warning against uncritical use of sources, Chalk and Jonassohn appropriate unquestioned Walter's assertions that Shaka created "traffic deserts", and thereby "anticipated the Nazis". In this way Shaka is assimilated into a framework as alien as that of the Georgian landscape conventions that coloured the views of the earliest settlers. More directly, Keith F Otterbein (1967) accepts Ritter's casualty figures wholesale and constructs impressive but wholly spurious tables to illustrate the "evolution of Zulu warfare".

To some degree the blurring between "academic" and "popular" was deliberate, of course: Bryant was aware of the problem and tried rather unsuccessfully to bridge the gap by enlivening his language. This is partly what I mean by "the lure of the tale". Peter Becker's works, too, lie on the hazy boundary between the two genres. Some writers, moreover, found themselves straddling the divide in different works. To illustrate this, we turn to one of the best-known historians of the Zulu, the American Donald Morris.

Donald Morris and the structure of folk-tale

An examination, in Morris's work, of some of the ways in which narrative structures bridge the putative divide between popular (even fictional) and professional histories, provides a fruitful avenue for illuminating the social-psychological dimension of these "histories". Psycho-cultural studies of fiction are now legion, and the psychological import of folk- and fairy-tales have been extensively analysed (Zipes 1983; Von Frantz 1980; Bettelheim 1978). Historiographical works, particularly in South Africa, have in contrast escaped similarly-

orientated scrutiny. In the more popular Shakan histories in particular, folk-tale becomes a structural element in the Bakhtinian "heteroglossia" of the texts, a way in which an individual writer can "ventriloquise" a wider social-psychological attitude, since "the speaker's evaluative attitude toward the subject of his speech" determines not only the choice of lexical and grammatical elements, but also the "compositional means of the utterance" (Wertsch 119).

In examining some avowedly historical accounts of the young Shaka, I want to draw an initial brash distinction between "evidence" and "invention". By "evidence" I mean simply an item of information which has clearly been drawn from a discernible historical source, such as an eyewitness account, a document of the time, or a recorded oral tradition. (The actual *veracity* of any such items is not for the moment pertinent.) An "invention", conversely, is any item of information which cannot be shown to have originated in such a source, and so has only imaginative status. We can begin by working backwards from two recent key accounts of Shaka's childhood, both by Donald Morris - one, usefully, avowedly "popular", the second "professional" - distinguishing those units of narrative, or *narremes*, which may be termed "evidence", and those which are inventions. The first example is Morris's "professional" summary entry for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1986):

Shaka was the son of Senzangakhona, chieftain of the Zulu, and Nandi, an orphaned princess of the neighbouring Langeni clan. Because his parents belonged to the same clan, their marriage violated Zulu custom, and the stigma of this extended to the child. The couple separated when Shaka was six, and Nandi took her son back to the Langeni, where he passed a fatherless boyhood among a people who despised his mother. In 1802 the Langeni drove Nandi out, and she finally found shelter with the Dletsheni, a subclan of the powerful Mtetwa. When Shaka was 23, Dingiswayo, the Mtetwa paramount chieftain, called up Shaka's Dletsheni age-group for military service. For the next six years, he served with brilliance as a warrior of the Mtetwa Empire. (1986a:689)

It is worth noting that very little of this version now remains unchallenged. The specificity of the chronology - age of six, 1802, 23, six years - drawn unquestioned from Bryant's *Olden Times* (1929:63-5), is entirely speculative. Several alternative versions have been

ignored or abandoned. Isaacs, for instance, indicates that Shaka was obliged to leave his father only as he was "approaching manhood" (264). This is supported by a number of oral traditions (*JSA* II 206, 246, 251; IV 38, 206, 352). Alternatives exist, too, to the movement from Zulu to Langeni to Dletsheni. Both Isaacs and Fynn indicate that Nandi and Senzangakhona were married *before* Shaka's birth; Bryant first records the notion that they were not; Morris here evades the controversy altogether. The imputation of near-incest, also originating with Bryant, is probably invented: it finds no correlative in Isaacs, Fynn, or surviving Zulu traditions.³ Evidence that neither Shaka nor Nandi endeared themselves to Senzangakhona, and hence were partially responsible for their own fate, is suppressed. That Shaka actually *was* the son of Senzangakhona and Nandi, and that he served in some fashion under Dingiswayo before succeeding to the Zulu paramountcy, are alone relatively undisputed (though somewhat tendentiously challenged by Argyle 1976).

The inroads of invention are even more evident in the version from which Morris essentially draws the *Encyclopaedia* account, his own popular history, *The Washing of the Spears* (1965:44-6). In this second example, given the freedom of more space, Morris includes the (probably apocryphal) story, originating in the 1900s and first written into the literature by Bryant, that Shaka's name means "intestinal beetle". Here he does note that Nandi's "fiery disposition" was partially responsible for the exile, and relates a story of Shaka accidentally losing a goat of Senzangakhona's as being the final straw (this is a gratuitous modification of Bryant's unsourced tale that Shaka's dog killed a "sheep"; by such incremental changes is a new version constructed). This ignores Isaacs' assertion that it was also the young Shaka's "precocity, shrewdness and cunning" which precipitated the breach. Morris summarises Ritter's fictionalised relationship between the parents, their "quarrels and separations and reconciliations" (cf Ritter 13). Likewise, he notes that the young Shaka was "the butt of every cruel and painful joke" his contemporaries could devise, an exaggeration

of one or two - though widely repeated - traditional anecdotes. He repeats Bryant's surely invented tale of Shaka's "stunted penis" (later embellishing this into an untenable theory of latent homosexuality), as well as Ritter's fictional encounters with a mamba and a leopard (but drops Bryant's probably equally apocryphal account of a fight with a madman). This utilisation and manipulation of invented material, interwoven with narremes which are, in my limited definition, acceptable as "evidence", provides clear signals of unspoken motivation. Morris's intentions may be discerned on two levels: that of underlying structure, and that of surface rhetoric.

Although rhetorically Morris's two versions are very different in their psycho-cultural import, their basic structure is remarkably similar. Let us list again the essential narremes of Morris's version. Shaka has an unusual birth; his mother is a princess and his father is also "royal"; he suffers childhood abandonment and stigma; he is raised in virtual fosterhood amongst "inferior" people; he finds a willing protector in Dingiswayo; he excels himself in acts of heroism; he finally revenges himself on his father by acceding to the Zulu throne. As Daphna Golan (1990:95) has pointed out, this pattern of events conforms with extraordinary closeness to patterns compiled from European folktales by several scholars, particularly von Hahn in 1876, and Raglan (1956:174-5; see also Dundes 232-3). This is my own summary of Raglan's folk-hero narremes:

- (1) Mother a princess; (2) father a king and (3) often a close relative of the mother;
- (4) unusual circumstances of conception; (5) reputed to be semi-divine; (6) attempt made early by the father to kill him; (7) reared by foster parents in a foreign land;
- (8) returns at manhood and, (9) after victory over giant or wild beast, (10) becomes king; (11) reigns for a time uneventfully, prescribing laws; (12) loses favour; (13) is driven out or mysteriously killed; (14) his children, if any, do not succeed him; (15) his body is not buried, but (16) nevertheless acquires a holy sepulchre. (See Raglan 1965:145)

While most elements of Shaka's story conform to this picture with extraordinary fidelity, other narremes from von Hahn's earlier schemata also have relevance, particularly that (1) the hero is of illegitimate birth, (2) there are signs warning of his ascendancy, (3) he is a

high-spirited youth, (4) murders his younger brother, and (5) dies at the hands of an insulted servant (Dundes 1965:143).

These are not patterns simplistically derived from any single model, but recombine elements from sundry such tales long embedded in the European cultural consciousness and refracted through a variety of media. Differences in detail between these schemes indicate the extent to which such hero-myths are not rigorously conformist; and such a pattern surely does not exclude Zulu hero-myths which are filtering into the white writing. In general, however, the parallel with Morris's version of the Shaka story is a startlingly close one. Daphna Golan has rightly pointed to the "mythic character" of this hero-narrative, but misses the essential corollary: this structure has *evolved*, has been quite recently arrived at, not in conformity to changes in the availability of evidence, but in defiance of that evidence. Under what pressures of specific cultural context has this come about, and why?

Answering that question, as I have already indicated, is usefully approached through J V Wertsch's social-psychological notion of the text as "an aggregate of contextually situated processes". This points, firstly, to the socio-political contexts of production, to which I can allude only briefly here. In the case of Morris, this includes the enthusiasm of "Africanists" world-wide in the wake of black Africa's struggling through to independence in the early 1960s: *The Washing of the Spears* is only one of a spate of 1960s historical, anthropological, and romantic fictional works on the Zulus. This Western liberal-humanist perspective overlaps in complex ways with those both of burgeoning Zulu nationalism and of part-nostalgic, part-defensive white South African works being produced in the wake of the imposition of full-blooded *apartheid* after 1948. Wertsch's "processes", in the present context, also involve the choice of textual "gestures", including that of the folk-tale structure, these being highly dependent on literary influence. What is striking is how many narremes

Morris *has* transmitted unchanged from a precursor text like Bryant's, but embedded them in quite different rhetorical textures, as well as selecting them to fit the structure of the hero-tale. The catalyst in this transformation is the intervention of the romance fiction.

Romance, as Northrop Frye has argued, is closely aligned with folk-tale; it is, indeed, the vehicle by which many of the psychological efficacies of folk-tale are preserved in the modern adult psyche. Like the folktale, romance conventionally embodies a formulaic quest theme, a stereotypical polarisation into heroes and villains, and a sensational movement "from one discontinuous episode to another, describing things that happen to characters, for the most part, externally" (Frye 1976:47). Despite its anti-representational tenor, however, romance is close to the pulse of the common mentality. Because its "symbolic spread", in Frye's phrase, tends "to go into its literary context, to other romances that are most like it in the conventions adopted" (59), it consistently reinforces popular themes and attitudes, embodying a fundamentally "conservative, mystical strain of social or religious acceptance" (171). This is strikingly similar to the way in which nineteenth-century folk tales were utilised in the bourgeois social induction of children (Zipes 1983). In short, romance is the most powerful tool in the generation of "myth", in the sense of a universally circulated story marked not by its empirical truth, but by a "certain quality of importance or authority for the community": "The anxiety of society, when it urges the authority of a myth and the necessity of believing it, seems to be less to proclaim its truth than to prevent anyone from questioning it" (Frye 1976:16).

This is not an unproblematic process; myths seldom appear unadulterated: even Ritter's *Shaka Zulu*, while making the greatest contribution to the heroic portrayal of Shaka, is still markedly ambivalent. To concentrate on folk-lore's "ageless" structures, while extremely valuable, also tends, in Zipes's words, to "homogenize creative efforts" (Zipes 6).

Like the structuralist perspective of Vladimir Propp and his acolytes, such a focus provides "no overall methodological framework for locating and grasping the ... substance of the symbolic act" of the works themselves (4). These need, in Marie-Louise Tenèze's words, "to be inscribed in the functional totality of the system of expression of the community in question" (quoted in Zipes 6). To this end, we turn to the rhetorical details of our examples for further clues as to their psycho-cultural functions at the time of their writing. If folk-tale structures appeal to an entrenched tradition of white reader-response, and serve to ossify the conservatism of that popular response, the specifics of rhetoric serve to insert that structure into its specific context.

Two of the narremes in Morris's *Encyclopaedia* account are particularly revealing in this regard. The first states that Nandi was an "orphaned princess". Morris's immediate source for this is his own book *The Washing*, in which he claims the Langeni chieftain had "recently died" - hence "orphaned" (1965:44). Bryant, Morris's apparent authority for this, writes only that Nandi's father was "long dead", and makes no mention of orphanage (1929:48). But the notion is of particular emotive force when juxtaposed with "princess": it carries a tension of thwarted superiority, and of that Cinderella-like potential for a reassertive resolution, common to most fairy-tales and hero-myths. Furthermore, why should Nandi, coming from a minor "clan", be a "princess", when Dingiswayo, leader of the "Mtetwa Empire", is a mere "paramount chieftain"? The obvious answer is that Morris wishes this aura of royalty to rub off on the misbegotten Shaka; the story is of him, after all, not Nandi. Notice, too, how the term "Empire" emerges only in conjunction with Shaka's "brilliance", the Mtetwa being initially merely "powerful".

The second notion is that of Shaka's protracted and difficult exile, involving the nuances of incest, of being fatherless, of being despised. In Bryant's version the incest

problem is not that Senzangakhona's mother is Langeni (which she probably wasn't), but that Nandi's mother is a daughter of the chief of the Qwabe, "with whose clan intermarriage to the Zulus was tabu" (Bryant 1929:48). This itself is certainly nonsense; there is evidence that Senzangakhona himself married into the Qwabe (*JSA* I 23). Once again, Morris's version carries imputations of "royal" ancestry which Bryant's lacks. The point here is, Morris's shift in emphasis is apparently gratuitous, unless the kind of story he is telling is accounted for.

As for the traumatic, extended exile, a plethora of anecdotes is in the *Encyclopaedia* account necessarily compressed into the words "despised" and "finally". In *The Washing*, Morris has the space to relate tales of bullying and the "stunted penis". This compression has the effect of creating a different species of story. What serves for explanation in the *Encyclopaedia* account is largely the progression of one narreme following another. The narrative thrust relies on an unproblematised assertion of dates and slabs of undifferentiated time. Thus we are led to read the fact that the Langeni "despised" Nandi as explanation for driving her out in 1802. We may well ask, why 1802? In *The Washing*, Morris provides an explanation of a different order: drought. The "despised" could not, or would not, be fed. So the question is: why, in the truncated *Encyclopaedia* account, is the lesser detail - the despising - given precedence over what is arguably the larger - the drought? Again, the answer lies in the kind of folkloric narrative Morris is choosing to tell.

Let me press this further by noting another form of explanation present in *The Washing* but absent in the *Encyclopaedia*: force of individual character. Nandi, in *The Washing*, is described as a "wild, strong-willed maiden" of a "strident" and "fiery disposition" (44-5). This doubtless derives ultimately from Isaacs' account, which avers that Nandi "was said to have been a masculine and savage woman, ever quarrelling with, and so

enraging her husband that he was compelled to exercise some salutary authority", and eventually to drive her away (I 288-9, emphasis added). What in Isaacs is hearsay, becomes a central explanatory factor for Morris.

Similarly, *The Washing* characterises Senzangakhona as "easygoing"; this has no apparent source. Events here are motivated by personal predilection: Senzangakhona "knew perfectly well", "felt no qualms", "saw no objection", "could face down the fact", and so on. The explanatory force of such personalisation is weak: to assert that Senzangakhona "saw no objection" to making love to Nandi is to assert nothing more than that he did. But it says a great deal about the kind of story that Morris is telling, and of the kind of meaning he wishes his readers to derive from it. Morris is here clearly mimicking the conventions of the "realist" novel, and reinforcing the effect with a register, very different from that of the *Encyclopaedia*, distinctly 1960s in tone: "the royal couple tried to make a go of their marriage"; in the "resulting spat", Nandi is "sent packing". In effect, this tells us more about Morris's views of the world than about the Zulus', to whom the mores underpinning such phrases seem entirely inappropriate. By contrast, the simple excision of these personalising "motivations" makes his *Encyclopaedia* account appear more solid, more authoritative, more "historical". It appeals to a different audience, utilising a rhetorical effect designed to entrench a reputable factuality, rather than *The Washing*'s quasi-imaginative appeal to individuated, inward feeling.

The point may be reinforced by a comparison with Bryant, whose archaisms of style are intended to convey the effect of "primitive" speech and to portray a society Bryant implicitly and explicitly equates with a bygone era in European history. Morris wishes rather to wrench the Zulus into a modern frame. The ideological and psychological import of these

two strategies is quite different: the former distances and disdains, the latter desires to embrace and assimilate.

Here, then, lies a powerful discrepancy: an essentially conservative structure is overlaid by varying species of modernising rhetoric. What does this mean? There are two possible aspects to this question. The first invokes variants on some "fundamental inner split" in the European psyche, which, as Henri Baudet suggested, involves a "psychological disposition out of touch with all political reality" (Baudet 8-9). This is to take the opposite tack to Abdul JanMohamed, for instance, who regards such antinomies in colonial discourse as only apparent, really "a product of deliberate ... imperialist duplicity" (JanMohamed 80), and therefore ideologically very much in touch with political reality. Baudet's assumption of an invariant communal psyche is problematic, as is his idea of a recognisable political "reality": both are dependent on a more or less selective accrual of textual evidence, and are difficult to maintain over any long stretch of time. The texts both create and constitute a shifting reality, and at times, it seems, being "out of touch" *is* the political reality. Hence, in his "own" but heteroglossal accounts of Shaka, Donald Morris utilises narremes chosen as "evidence", or invented, in earlier times for partly different social-psychological purposes, refurbishing them as an actual American commentator addressing himself to an imagined (American?) audience in some ways similar to, but in others different from, the readership of his source texts. Conversely, while Morris is drawing on literary conventions deeply embedded in Western traditions, such as the folk-tale, and perhaps inadvertently reiterating Shakan myths originally propagated for narrowly colonial reasons, he cannot be simplistically subsumed in an overarching condemnation of "imperialist duplicity". Nevertheless, Shaka's story is made intelligible by means of structures and rhetorics which have not only to do with the transmission of "evidence" - what Bakhtin calls the "referential" aspect of language - but

also with an "expressive" function: the projection of the writer's notion of his own social identity.

The second aspect lies in the conception of the historiographical practice with which we began and which, as de Certeau has pictured it, is also distinctively "Western" in being a "discourse of separation" (de Certeau 1988:2). This separation is manifest particularly in the discipline's continual struggle between "science" and "fiction", a struggle mildly enacted in the rhetorical shifts between Morris's two accounts. As we have seen, the ostensible "univocity" (de Certeau 1986:202) of a more "scientific" rhetoric (the *Encyclopaedia*) is effectively "a new species of fiction" (201-2), no less underpinned by culture-specific narrative assumptions than its more clearly "fictional" counterpart in the popularised *The Washing of the Spears*. Each style "ventriloquises" the rhetoric both familiar to, and attentive to the interests and preconceptions of, overlapping segments of an ideal European audience. They inscribe, in short, central elements of an *ideal* (the distinction from a "real" one is crucial) Western, middle-class identity.

In a broader social-psychological perspective these two aspects overlap; and the specifics of analysis reveal the extent to which these particular cross-cultural accounts (I would not be so bold as to generalise) tell us less about the Zulus than about the idealised identity of their writer's community. They are part of that impulse to ambivalent historicity which, as Roland Barthes trenchantly put it, is "part of a security system ... one of those numerous formal pacts made between the writer and society for the justification of the former and the serenity of the latter" (Barthes 1987:32).

Revisionism and the "Mfecane"

In recent years, the "mfecane" conceptualisation of Shaka's rule (which really only gave a name to the established story), has been the focus of an intense debate sparked by Julian Cobbing's 1988 article "Mfecane as Alibi" in the *Journal of African History*. This is easily the most exciting development in recent South African historiography and has provided much of the energy for this study. (As an alarmed Donald Morris himself wrote, -with inadvertent prescience, the defenestration, so to speak, of the settler sources of Shaka's reign would necessitate "rewrit[ing] the entire corpus of the history of Southern Africa in the 19th century" [1986b:92].)

The "mfecane" debate has highlighted a widening gap between "academic" and "popular" treatments of the Zulu. While Cobbing's interventions have found their way into the newspapers and subsequent histories (e.g. Thompson 1990, Taylor 1994) in a manner unprecedented for an enterprise originating in the academic journals, those same histories have shied away from the radical implications of Cobbing's argument, and have retained elements of the "popular", Great Man-based narratives. They have continued the approach of the previous generation of historians who, as William Wörger noted, "in their concentration on Shaka's character, reflect the nineteenth-century view that the dynamics of Zulu society could be studied, and explained, only through study of its most prominent member" (155). Even those histories, such as the *Oxford History* (1969) and Leonard Thompson's later work, which endeavoured to incorporate other kinds of historical causation, from ecological to economic, found themselves only adding a context to the accepted Shakan story, not reinterpreting or radically questioning its basic narremes.

Marianne Cornevin's (1980) project is of this kind: apparently revisionist, but more accurately an extension of Omer-Cooper's. Cornevin wants to point out that "the official

version [of Shaka's story - whatever that is] completely prevents the reader from appreciating the historical importance of this exceptional African for not only south-east Africa but for the whole of the black continent" (96). The formation of the unified nation is the cynosure of Shaka's hitherto unappreciated ability, according to Cornevin: "There are few comparable examples of integration in world history" (96). Having set this exaggeration against the conventional reverse one of incomparable despotism, Cornevin continues to cite Isaacs uncritically, adding with by now familiar ambivalence: "Without wishing to exonerate Chaka, Dingaan and Mzilikazi completely of the charges of cruelty made against them, we can conclude that their characters need to be seen in a broader perspective so as to reveal their stature as statesmen" (100). Once again, it is not the evidence which is being reopened to query here so much as the ideological teleology of the perspective from which they "ought" to be viewed. That implicit "ought" is the signal of a *self*-identificatory use of the discourse.

"Revisionist" or "radical" is a term that has come to be attached to certain species of (mostly left-wing) historiography that began making an impact in the 1970s, particularly those schools influenced by Marxist or Althusserian theory (Grundlingh 1984; Saunders 1992). The texts reviewed so far, while often mildly "revisionist" in their own light, tended to adhere compulsively to narrative modes which support a particular kind of Western/settler self-identification that was forged in the mid-nineteenth century. Newer revisionist, even "postmodernist" histories have only recently begun the process of implicitly questioning precisely that identity and its relationship with white supremacist power-structures, effectively taking a powerful liberatory, even moral stance which sometimes obscures the new "situatedness" of the historical forces being proposed (e.g. Crais). These forces are conceptualised in ways deliberately alien to the historiography examined so far, almost totally abstracted into the materialist terminologies of trade or ecological crisis (e.g. Guy 1979), thus usefully undermining the Great Man/Great Battle paradigms. These approaches, variously affecting

Omer-Cooper and the *Oxford History* and their successors, offer an "Afrocentric, socio-economic, history-from-below perspective" which Peires (1993:296) has approvingly termed the "materialist paradigm" as a foil to Cobbing's ideas.

However - and this is my central point here - these "revisionist"/ "radical"/ "materialist" thrusts are also, no less than their apparently more critically vulnerable antecedents, tokens of identity-creation; they identify a different breed of professional historian fundamentally at odds with "mainstream" white opinion and aligned with highly politicised, black and white activists in other fields. Indeed, it is the very combativeness of this historiography, culminating in Julian Cobbing's corrosive cynicism towards previous white historians, which marks this new identity. The intensive debate over the "mfecane" sparked by Cobbing has been characterised largely by "professional" disputes over the significance and veridical status of certain bits of evidence - particularly over whether sufficient empirical data exists to support Cobbing's attempted demolition of a Zulu-centred "mfecane" in favour of a (partially) slave-trade-driven spread of violence. Some commentators would prefer to eschew Cobbing's accurate but narrow definition of "mfecane" as specifically Shaka-centred, and retain the term to describe the nexus of early nineteenth-century violence, whatever its origins. This level of dispute is certainly symptomatic of a new, very un-Macaulay-like sharpness in "scrupulous methodologies" (Saunders 1992:83) - even if one does not necessarily agree with Peires' remark that the differences are amongst different shades of radical (Peires 1994).

The empirical spat has however obscured to some degree the distinction growing between this most exciting historiographical trend and the "popular" juggernaut: while the Cobbing debate raged, the TV series *Shaka Zulu*, incorporating all the hoary myths, plus some, was taking America by storm. It has also obscured another broader perspective, of

a kind different from that envisaged by Cornevin, and perhaps more important: Cobbing has demolished the untenable divisions between "black" and "white" history. "Zululand" was, for a start, integral to a global economy long before the arrival of Isaacs and Fynn.

Implicit in this wider perspective is the reassessment of the sources with which this study is concerned, and of the very methodologies by which they continue to be assessed, and by which "evidence" is made "intelligible". Such intelligibility is necessarily brought about by an implicit closure of disagreement between writer and addressee, and a belief in the commonality or universality of certain facets of culture - a belief, as Sande Cohen argues, which can "neither be validated nor abandoned by historians" (1988:14). The historiographical project remains trapped in a narratological frame which "*simulates* the objectification of cultural contents and activities by wrapping them in 'can' and 'must', truth and belief (modals and their combinations)" (6; emphasis added). "Understanding", then, is limited to the extent to which the *writer's* myth of self-identification, or what Cohen calls the "will to culture" (8) needs to be protected from dissolution. The kinds of narrative examined in this chapter are an index of those needs: their correlation to the prickly defensiveness in the face of Cobbing's project is an index of their sacredness.

NOTES

1. It *looks* like it was used earlier by Fynn, if one can believe the typescript rendition of the "diary" in the Killie Campbell Library, D2 in my annotation in Chapter Three above. It does *not* appear at D2:40; only in a parallel version (284), possibly interpolated by James Stuart, and then as "Umfetcarnie", not the "*uMfecani*" of the published *Diary* (Fynn 1950:148). Here it is translated as "maraudei", one of the meanings (alongside "refugee" or "incomer") given to variations on the word in the late 1820s and 1830s in the Eastern Cape (Cobbing 1988a:500).
2. By no means a far-fetched analogy: in H M Walmsley's *The Ruined Cities of Zulu Land* (1869), the character Wyzinski asserts, "It is believed by many, by none more firmly than myself, that the present race of Zulus, incontestably the finest in Southern Africa, sprang from the fusion of Pharaoh's seamen with the then cultivators of the soil" (48).
3. This is despite Morris's simultaneous (1986) assertions, in a response to an article by Louis du Buisson (1985), that there is "no evidence that [Isaacs] fabricated events", that Fynn was in no way producing a "hatchet job", and that this settler evidence is "incontrovertible" (Morris 1986b:91).

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE LIGHT OF DARKNESS:

Twentieth-century fiction

Whatever the truth, no-one could seriously imagine that, more than two centuries after his death, the legend of the great Zulu tyrant would cast its shadow across worlds he never knew. (Clarke 1988:113)

Apparently Arthur C Clarke, one of the world's most prolific and respected science-fiction writers, had a minor fetish concerning Shaka. In at least two stories, he enacts exactly what the epigraph above denies, attesting to the extraordinary imaginative appeal of Shaka in "worlds he never knew".

The title of Clarke's short story "The Light of Darkness" (1972) implies the inversion of "normal" values which is a primary element in the fictional portrayals of Shaka. In this story, "Chaka" is a twentieth-century central African leader who has "assumed the name of the nineteenth-century Zulu emperor of whom he genuinely believed himself the reincarnation" (88). The modern Chaka reproduces many of what Clarke assumes to have been the traits of the original: murderous tyranny, megalomania, a "superstitious respect for science" (89). This stereotype is set against another, that of "the eversleeping jungle", which induces in the story's narrator "that overwhelming feeling of helplessness" that assails him when he looks over his country from the air and realises "the insignificance of man" (90).

The defence against both tyranny and insignificance is science, technology. The narrator has lost several family members to Chaka's gratuitous paranoia; his own life has only been spared because of his scientific prowess. He has been involved in the building of a massive, static telescope dish laid out in the crater of an extinct volcano; in the middle of the dish a fifteen-hundred-foot tower rises, from the top of which the megalomaniac Chaka can view his entire domain, which he does on the Big Dish's grand opening. By reflecting a laser beam off an intensifying mirror secretly set up on the crater rim, the narrator, safely sitting in a distant observatory, can exact his revenge and save his country. He contemplates cutting the tower's supporting cables with the laser, so bringing Chaka down with it, but (aside from technical impracticality) his loyalty to science is such that he considers this option a sacrilege. He settles, less murderously, for merely permanently blinding the tyrant.

The antithesis of technological civilisation with superstitious barbarism is no less crudely drawn here than it is in Charles Eden's *An Inherited Task*, written exactly a century before; the two plots are strikingly similar in structure. Echoes of the same ethnocentrism can be found even in the deliberately multicultural ethos of Clarke's more recent novel *2061: Odyssey Three* (1988). A vague sense of African threat lurks rather inexplicably behind this helter-skelter tale of interplanetary hijacking, landings on Halley's Comet, the implosion of Jupiter, a diamond the size of Everest, alien forms of amphibian in sulphurous moon-seas, and so on. In some way never actually explained, a secret African organisation code-named SHAKA (there is a theory that it does not exist at all) is pitted against "Der Bund", an enormously rich and powerful lobby comprised largely of refugee Afrikaners who have fled South Africa after a bloodless revolution, stripping the country to the bone as they left, but opening up the way to a "United States of Southern Africa". The woman who hijacks a spacecraft is black (with a Scots name), and may or may not be connected with SHAKA (we never find out); another character, Maggie M'bai (another African?) confesses to having

begun "planning a novel about Shaka, from the viewpoint of one of his thousand unfortunate wives", but gave it up because it became too "repellent": "'By the time I abandoned Shaka,' she wryly admitted, 'I knew exactly what a modern German feels about Hitler'" (175). Clarke's image of Shaka is encapsulated in one other diversionary, and as far as I can see wholly gratuitous reference:

What a monster - I can understand why they've called a gang of African terrorists after him. Fancy executing his warriors if they got married! And killing all the poor cows in his wretched empire, just because they were female! Worst of all - those horrid spears he invented; shocking manners, jabbing them into people you've not been properly introduced to... (178)

Here again Shaka is presented as the antithesis of acceptable values; Clarke follows the stereotyped comparisons with Hitler and Napoleon (179), altering the mythologised stories of insane executions to intensify Shaka's misogyny. As in "The Light of Darkness", he commandeers an African voice to enlightened science, re-establishing the technological and the successfully colonised as the moral norm. Finally, he defuses the implications of Shaka's violence, and distances himself from them, with the artifice of a euphemistic humour reminiscent of Allan Quatermain.

These are lightweight but instructive examples of Shaka's literary reach. Clarke's novel is an updated version of the romantic adventure tale, the genre which governs all fictional portrayals of Shaka, without exception. The main purpose of this chapter is to examine the lineaments and implications of this apparently timeless generic cohesion. Though such lineaments blur in many ways, it is true enough to say that all the Shakan novels are "popular" in intent, are on the fringes of "proper literature", but are for that very reason close to "something like the centre of culture" (Green 110). Popular novels display the polarisations of popularly unquestioned stereotypes perhaps more clearly than any other forms of discourse - though as Sander Gilman has warned (26), and as we shall see, stereotyping is far from absent from more "sophisticated" texts. Popular fiction became the

main vehicle of what John Mackenzie has termed the "centripetal" tendencies of imperial discourse, particularly of the stereotyped "Other" (2). Some romances - and even some aspects of the Shakan romances reviewed here - certainly contain implicit criticisms of European society. But fundamentally, I suggest, the Shakan fictions, "when stripped of the invitations to escape and live out fantasies", have functioned to "reinforce culturally the normality of the status quo" (Fowler 1984:105). The social-psychological role of the Shakan fiction (particularly since, as the Shakan literature demonstrates, fictions do not confine themselves to "fiction") is perhaps the most important of all genres to understand.

It would be tedious to provide detailed plot summaries of all the fictions on Shaka here, and I will pursue a more thematic approach, but a brief overview of the main fictional works will help orientate us. Shaka occurs as a marginal figure in a large number of works which need not detain us, and most, like Bertram Mitford's *The King's Assegai* (1897) and John Buchan's *Prester John* (1910), followed closely on the stylistic and structural heels of Haggard's *Nada the Lily*, examined earlier. P A Stuart, brother to the Natal administrator James, produced the first twentieth-century fiction to incorporate Shaka more centrally. In this highly episodic work - almost a collection of interlinked short stories - significantly titled *An African Attila: Tales of the Zulu Reign of Terror* (1927), the hero Watala relates his career under Shaka, rising to be his Chief Counsellor. Watala displays considerable naiveté in loyally supporting a king of such fickle and murderous character: "Tshaka was never known to smile without someone's death paying for this mark of royal favour" (31). Despite Shaka's position "on the very pinnacle of infamy", as Stuart puts it in a prefatory note (xiv), he is to be praised for instilling a "loyalty unparalleled in the annals of time itself" (xv). The wish-fulfillment aspect of this is clear when Watala credits Shaka's savagery with producing "truth, straight-forwardness and honesty [as] the chief characteristics of our race" (2), the antithesis of so many colonial depictions of unpredictable Africans. While Watala's

ambivalent position is important to sustaining tension, more important to Stuart's juvenile readers is probably the romantic haze of difficult love and nostalgia for a more "manly" violence: "although the lives of men were held as naught, and blood flowed freely as a flooded river in those days,... we were a more contented people than we are today" (42).

The derogation of Shaka captured in Stuart's title was continued into the 1940s with Viola Ridgway's *Stories from Zulu History* (1946), a clone of A T Bryant's *Olden Times*. Sarah Gertrude Millin's *King of the Bastards* (1950) gives Shaka a very minor personal role, but a rather greater impersonal one as the "Hitler (though better-born) of South African natives" (Millin, x); he is the "great general" and principal architect of the "red whirlwind" (242) devastating southern Africa, the field upon which her protagonist, Coenraad de Buys, can play his ironically tragic role. As Michael Green (1991:11) has noted, Millin "remains solidly grounded in the 'settler school' of South African historical writing ... but she uses the gaps in the records to drive home this interpretation with a vengeance". De Buys teaches Dingiswayo his military tactics; Dingiswayo teaches Shaka; Shaka precipitates the very holocaust in the interior of which de Buys himself later falls foul. The point, for Millin, is to concretise "the black man's total decline in South Africa" (Millin 1950:x); the real tragedy for her is "the failure to recognize and maintain racial boundaries" (Green 1991:13; cf. Coetzee 1988:150-2).

The portrayal of Shaka in Esther Roberts' *The Black Spear* (1950) is adequately summed up by the blood-dripping dust-jacket design. This romance is heavily influenced by Haggard, from the quest-plot down to the fair-skinned heroine, Sewele the Rain Goddess, being termed "She-who-must-be-obeyed".¹ There is a new quasi-feminist element too, however, in which, alongside the quest-protagonist Dumisa, Sewele is positioned as an antithesis to Shaka: Sewele "never killed to gratify her savage instincts.... She had heard of

the savagery of Chaka and what she had heard had sickened her... [S]he scorned this upstart who did not know how to wield the power which he had gained" (53). The novel also contains two, albeit almost accidental, "interior monologues" of Shaka's: the only time this happens in all the fiction. Though almost as episodic as *An African Attila*, *The Black Spear* works more closely with historical events, drawn from Bryant, Isaacs and Fynn, so much so that Dumisa's story is in the second half of the book all but overwhelmed.

E A Ritter's markedly more adulatory *Shaka Zulu* (1955) heralded a significant turning away from the monstrous image established by Isaacs, and effected so substantial a reorientation of subsequent literature that I have treated it separately in the following chapter. Ritter's book inspired, for instance, Geoffrey Bond's *Chaka the Terrible* (1960), which was republished in 1982, lightly edited, under the pseudonym James Langa, and with a more politically correct title, *Shaka*. Peter Becker's two popular histories, *Path of Blood* (1962) and *Rule of Fear* (1964), though centrally about Mzilikazi and Dingane respectively, deliver Shaka in compacted versions of Ritter, hovering even less easily on the borderline between history and fiction. Equally ambivalent in this way is one resurgence of the crudely demonic portrayal, oddly combined with some assiduous archival research, Elizabeth Paris Watt's neo-Gothic historical novel about Francis Farewell, *Febana* (1962). A later historical novel, James Michener's epic *The Covenant* (1980), devotes a substantial number of pages to propagating the established legends to a wider overseas audience than even Ritter's novel enjoyed. The interface between history and fiction is a hotly debated area, with a huge and growing critical literature, so it is worth devoting some space to the problem later in this chapter.

More recently, a clutch of novels (this term is for the first time more nearly appropriate) of rather better quality has appeared. Alan Scholefield's *Great Elephant* (1967),

rather like Charles Eden's *An Inherited Task* of a century before, implants some non-historical whites into Shaka's ambit: again, Shaka provides the situation in which the white protagonists, hovering on the brink of "going native", work out their own identities. Scholefield abandons the archaisms of his predecessors, even in his African characters' speech; the reminiscing voice of its narrator, Robert Fraser Black, is more considered and charmingly nuanced, even humorous; and the psychology of his adolescence drawn with considerable subtlety. But Shaka himself remains sketchy and stereotyped: Scholefield's view is adequately captured in his chapter epigraphs from Isaacs and Ritter: "... in the dominions of Chaka ... Death reigned without a rival" (1); "The truth is that Shaka was a most unusual product of his race. He was highly emotional and sentimental behind a facade of iron discipline" (139). Precisely this opposition, this ambivalence, is the central, reified icon of so many white depictions of the Zulus: there is something slightly disingenuous in the generalisation in Robert Black's introductory comment here:

...If Zululand was Heaven, God save all sinners.

Yet that is not strictly fair. Like any other place it was part heaven part Hell, and like any other race the Zulus were part man part Beast. I loved them, I hated them. I admired them, I despised them. I feared them and respected them and on occasions I could laugh at or with them. There was only one state of mind that never existed: indifference. (Scholefield 3)

In this way, the essential tension is established for (as the cover blurb of the 1987 Sphere edition correctly puts it) "high excitement in the Buchan-Haggard tradition".

Another woman writer, Nickie McMenemy, offers a somewhat more sympathetic Shakan love-story, *Assegai!* (1973). Shaka's brutality remains, but the hints of tenderness in Fynn are now generalised (McMenemy 93); Shaka lavishes paradoxical care on the heroine Thola, a half-caste female Crusoe, a shipwreck victim who becomes the Zulu chieftain's favourite "sister" (lover). Thola is also made critical of some aspects of European civilisation, its judicial brutality (142), the improbability of its religion (125), and its enslavement to profit: she asks, along with Fynn, whether she is "up against bestial cruelty

or ... an alien culture?" (143). "While attempts are made to explain this alien culture empathetically, white superiority is consistently underlined and Shaka reduced to a kind of calculating child-likeness which is an essential element in (again) an impenetrable mysteriousness:

In comparison to white men, Thola thought, how like a child you are: you are like an immensely clever child; and you are, on occasion, as naive as a child, but your brilliant childishness is merciless; you have the cruelty of a child, you and all your people. When necessary you slaughter with total abandon; at other times you are as tender as a mother with her baby. Yet, in your own self, there is a greatness of adult wisdom too. And genius. You are a complete paradox. (McMenemy 124; cf.97)

As with Ritter's story of Shaka and Pampatha, Shaka's final "madness" and assassination provide the fated, romantically unfulfilled denouement, and Port Natal is the inevitable haven for the fleeing Thola. McMenemy's Shaka is drawn in more detail, in some ways, even than Ritter's - politically acute, lonely, and moody - but ultimately "no man knew his thoughts". The view is still the limited outsider's, the romantic "women's magazine" (Malaba 355) plot and atmosphere still essentially conservative.

The Pampatha love story reappears as an aside in Lynn Bedford Hall's, Ritter-based children's version, *Shaka: Warrior King of the Zulu* (1987),² but as the central interest in P J Schoeman's story for juveniles, *Phampatha: The Beloved of King Shaka* (1983). This romance feels similarly "feminised" in its emphasis on the mythical love-story, related from Phampatha's perspective - but as with all its predecessors, ends with love foiled by Shaka's intrinsic devotion to brutality - though not, for once, by his death, and for once, the book ends before the white men arrive. A good deal of space is devoted to domestic intimacies, and the story does to a degree "lack the cultural chauvinism of Ritter, Bryant and McMenemy" (Malaba 357). The same might be said of another children's version, Jenny Seed's *Voice of the Great Elephant* (1989), in which the reign of a conventionally "leopard"-

like Shaka, incorporating many of the usual stories (but leaving the white settlers out altogether), is seen through the eyes of a young boy.

On the whole, however, there is little substantial movement between the beginning and the end of this genealogy: the series is brought full circle, in fact, by the most recent Shakan fiction, *The Lost "Bone"* (1993), written by none other than Henry Francis Fynn's great-nephew, Robert W Fynn, in which all the time-honoured Fynn myths are recapitulated, unchallenged.³ While Ritter, McMenemy and Schoeman in relatively superficial ways attempt to present new, less condemnable aspects of Shaka, this is done by, as it were, making insertions between the lines of the established "facts". Only one novel tries seriously to "deconstruct" not only the factual content of the Shaka story but its very generic basis, Stephen Gray's *John Ross: The True Story* (1987). This is easily the most vigorous and intelligent of all the Shakan fictions, and the exception against which its predecessors can be measured.

The Crusoe Effect

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is the archetypal imperial travel adventure against which Stephen Gray's *John Ross* is deliberately set, precisely because it lies so strongly behind all the previous novels, and helped breed so many related myths. The first draft of Gray's novel, "White Zulu", makes this more explicit than the published version: "I [Ross] remember Robinson Crusoe and take courage, though surely Mr Defoe himself never went to sea ... The wave that cast Robinson out with a mother's convulsion does a poor job on me".⁴ The earliest writers on the Natal settlers - indeed, as we have already seen with Fynn, the settlers themselves - were quick to invoke parallels with Crusoe. "John Ross" himself (his real name was Charles Rawden Maclean; see below) wrote in 1855 that he "had been greatly interested, as no doubt youths generally are, with the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, but the reality of

my own were about to rival the fictions of Defoe" (Maclean 126). A correspondent to the *South African Commercial Advertiser* on 13 December 1828 called James Saunders King "a second Robinson Crusoe". Stephen Kay in 1833 compared another 1830s traveller into Zululand, Benjamin Green, to Crusoe (Kay 407n). A footnote in Fynn's *Diary* quotes Mendelssohn in the *South African Bibliography*: "What a romance, to be sure, is the first settlement of Natal. To me at least the travels of Nathaniel Isaacs is as fascinating as Robinson Crusoe.... Even Defoe imagined nothing more wholly satisfying to the adventurous mind than Fynn..." (Fynn 1950:117n). Ian D Colvin, in his *Romance of Empire: South Africa* (1909), continues to compare the adventures of the first Natal settlers to "a chapter in *Robinson Crusoe*" (268).

The motifs in *Robinson Crusoe* highlighted by Martin Green (1980:77-80) - the shipwreck, the solitude on inhospitable land, the agricultural taming of that land, the protection/enslaving of the "native", the cannibalism as justification for violence, the exchange of trifles for valuables - made such parallels natural. The persistence of these parallels indicates that underlying attitudes towards the "literary material" of Shaka's reign are themselves in part genre-governed.

But the motifs from *Robinson Crusoe* are selectively invoked: seldom does one see the cynicism or even the rather pre-determined ethical and religious self-questioning of Defoe's original. The use in the above references of "romance" and "adventure" underscores the narrowness in generic types of fiction to which Shaka is "naturally" assigned. Generic norms enact the confinement of the portrayal of Shaka within typical stylistic and attitudinal boundaries. In short, it becomes possible to examine these fictions synchronically in their adherence to generic convention, without abandoning altogether the historical dimension which ensures that a conceptual genre becomes neither reified nor "vacuous" (Fowler

1982:47). The generic approach also helps explain how individual writers discover their meaning within, or in rebellion against, established literary traditions (see also Wylie 1992).

A clear definition of the genre(s) involved is not in itself easy. As Alastair Fowler puts it, a genre "is much less of a pigeon-hole than a pigeon" (37); a genre mutates as works are added to it, and in some cases (as with *John Ross*) the works challenge the preconceptions of the genre itself from within. Still, there are at least "family resemblances"; genres are, Helen Dubrow writes, "strikingly similar to human personalities" or, quoting E D Hirsch, "like a code of behaviour" (Dubrow 7, 31). The psychological tone of these definitions may be balanced against Frederic Jameson's reminder that "Genres are essentially contracts between a writer and his readers; or rather, to use the term which Claudio Guillen has so usefully revived, they are literary *institutions*, which like other institutions of social life are based on tacit agreements or contracts" (quoted in Pawling, 4). Genres are, in other words, part of the defining mechanism of particular "speech communities". They will not correlate in any succinct or mechanical way with "the society" from which they spring, but certainly embody certain agreeable social-psychological meanings. Because, in the case of the Shakan literature, the novels are classifiable as "popular literature" - "read purely for pleasure by people to whom pleasure is incompatible with the expenditure of intellectual or emotional effort" (Dalziel 1) - these meanings are "usually acutely fashionable, cast in the exact mould of an age's sensibility" (Beer 12). The blend of the personal and the conventional prevents any simple characterisation of attitude, however.⁵ These brief caveats made, the ways in which the Shakan fictions do in fact conform to the romance-adventure mode may be reinforced in relation to Alastair Fowler's useful list of criteria (1982:60-73).

First is a feature of "external structure", the episodic nature of most of the Shakan

novels. Eden's *An Inherited Task* loosely interleaves ethnological accounts and hunting stories inessential to the central plot. Haggard's *Nada the Lily*, though tenuously stitched together by the careers of Mopo and Umslopogaas, embraces diversionary episodes such as the interpolation of Galaxi the Wolf's adventures, and links others almost solely by inscrutable providence. An episodic structure is particularly evident in P A Stuart's *An African Attila*, which consists of virtually discrete tales of mayhem and ordeal having in common only their protagonist-narrator Watala, and their source in Shaka's caprice. A similar pattern governs the protagonist's activities in Esther Roberts's *The Black Spear*; the episodes of both these novels echo closely the quest pattern of W C Scully's short story "The Quest for the Copper"; and both are good examples of what Frye calls "and then" narratives (1976:47).

The fact that these episodes are almost invariably sparked by a previously attested "historical" act of Shaka's indicates one reason for this structure: the life of Shaka, so far as it has become accepted, is itself episodic, focussing on insular deeds of lubricious, sanguinary or militaristic interest rather than on intricacies of daily living, the continuity of inner psychology, or historical cause-and-effect. A generic tautology is at work here: Shaka's life has been reported as episodic because it was *in the first place* commandeered by the norms of formulaic fiction rather than intimate knowledge and observation. Subsequent formulaic fiction has served only to fossilise this. Moreover, as in most children's and working-class adventure fiction, from the earliest "chap-books", through the Gothic abridgements of the "blue-books" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to the magazine and "airport" fiction of the twentieth, such popular fictions have taken for granted a short attention-span and an intolerance of psychological depth. An episodic structure coalesces with an approach in which "the process of stereotyping character, as well as incident, is carried as far as possible" (Dalziel 17). As Fowler notes, "'entanglement' or

entrelacement and multiplicity of episodes typifie[s] romance" (69). Episodic adventures also dovetail with the "atomized society" in which these Zulu characters appear to live: as in most formulaic stories "there is only the most shadowy sense of a community, and their kings and princesses are individuals given the maximum of leisure, privacy, and freedom of action" (Frye 1976:172). At least some of these characteristics are transcended in later novels, where a denser use of historical documentation is utilised (as in Watt's *Febana*), or deeper psychological depth is striven for (McMenemy's *Assegai!*), or the textures of daily life are detailed (Schoeman's *Pamphatha*).

A second structural feature is commonly used: the framing narrator, who is sometimes a protagonist in the tale (Mopo in *Nada the Lily*), sometimes not (the old man in Bond's *Chaka the Terrible*). It is also used by Bertram Mitford in *The King's Assegai* and by P A Stuart; it finds a modern ironic development in Gray's *John Ross*. The result is usually that the story is tinged with the nostalgia of what Frye calls the *penserozo* phase of romantic literature: the "tale in quotation marks" has the effect of presenting the story "through a relaxed and contemplative haze that entertains us without, so to speak, confronting us, as direct tragedy confronts us" (Frye 1957:202). Rather as Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is shielded from our sympathies by the intervening narrators, Shaka is never given scope to attain the status of a truly tragic hero in these novels.

This is closely allied with a third feature common to almost every novel in this study: Shaka is never the central character. He is seen through the (judgemental) eyes of others; never is he given his own voice. He is a spur to action, the mysterious designer of ordeals, the focus of unrequitable love, or a mere foil to the values of the protagonist. He affects the action in the manner of an impersonal providential caprice; in short, he is merely allegorical. However, Shaka is always central in his determining, inscrutably controlling presence; it is

because of Shaka's spectacular historical profile that his reign is chosen as a "field" for adventure in the first place. The heroic scale of his villainy, and his "royalty", naturally align him with the aristocratic "social affinities of the romance" (Frye 1957:306). But Shaka himself is not the subject of these novels so much as are the trials of a lesser protagonist within his ambit, the formulaic "tenderfoot hero" established in the third quarter of the nineteenth century by G A Henty and R M Ballantyne "whose manly courage and good moral sense, coupled with much coincidence and occasional authorial interference, took him safely through a series of adventures, usually pitted against overtly characterized enemies" (Hannebuss 55). Even where this hapless hero is black rather than European, as in *An African Attila*, *The Black Spear*, and *Assegai!*, the associated values are still those of imperial fiction generally.

Fourthly, then, there is in these novels a commanding uniformity of implicit values. At least until McMenemy, a simplistic opposition of good and evil - with Shaka inevitably evil - is pervasive. The pitting of a sympathetic hero against what Stuart Hannebuss calls "identikit villains" is central to all these novels, frequently with an improbable infusion of the paranormal. As Frye notes: "The enemy may be an ordinary human being, but the nearer the romance is to myth, the more attributes of divinity will cling to the hero and the more the enemy will take on demonic mythical qualities" (1957:187). Thus even in the "Africanised" romances the white settlement in Natal is seen as a haven from Zulu barbarity. P A Stuart is even more explicit, having the Zulu hero-narrator say to his unnamed white listener:

And wherefore do I call you "my father" seeing that there is no tie of kinship between us?

The reason is not far to seek. It is not alone because of the esteem in which I hold you but because I have ever found in your [European] race those qualities which a son may most expect in a parent - justice, confidence, firmness, an upholding of the weak, and above all, abounding in that true friendship which surely differs little from that of a father for his son. (Stuart 1927:1)

This stereotype hardly requires exegesis, except to say that the action of the romance frequently displays a dislocation from the exercise of these values; thus, while Stuart's hero Watala generally upholds the principles of justice, courage and loyalty, he will also (much like Allan Quatermain) evince only perfunctory pity for his own or other victims of violence. This, too, is a common feature of romance in its "acceptance of pity and fear ... as forms of pleasure. It turns fear, at a distance, or terror, into the adventurous ... It turns pity, at a distance, or concern, into the theme of chivalrous rescue" (Frye 1957:37). The rules of the genre, Heather Dubrow writes, "in many instances preclude the realization of our worst fears even while permitting others to be enacted" (33). The genre permits an indulgent concentration on the brutal and bloody even as - and perhaps because - opposite, conservative values are espoused. Hence, according to Frye, however conservative a romance writer may be, "something nihilistic and untameable is likely to keep breaking out of his pages" (1957:305). Nowhere is this more obvious than in Watt's *Febana*, where a strong adherence to empirical factuality is ruptured by the most stereotypically bloody passages in all the Shakan literature:

"Zhi...zhi...zhi..." Out of the clamourous dark the fiendish chorus swelled louder and ever louder, more merciless and more murderous. It reached Tshaka, where, slightly to the rear, he was directing the battle. Tshaka heard! Frank [Farewell] saw his smile; and it was the smile of Satan himself hearing the hiss of hell's flames and the dying agonies of the damned. To Tshaka it was the very sound of coming victory....

"*Bulala...bulala...bulala!*" they were shouting in ecstasy as they stabbed and stabbed again. "*Bulala...I kill...I kill...*" They hacked the opposition to pieces; they threaded the Ndwandwes through with pathways of ghastly horror.... And Tshaka drank in the news like a black-skinned Dracula, insatiable in his thirst for human blood. (Watt 130)

In the appalling racism of such writing, the chanting rhythms enact the mindless stereotyping of the writer just as much as the mindlessness being attributed to the Zulu.

As already noted, Shaka's reign is seen as a particularly suitable venue for this vicarious revelling in bloodshed. Zululand itself - Fowler's *mise-en-scène*, a fifth factor - treated as no less foreign and exotic by writers working inside South Africa than by those

outside, and not far removed from the forest locale of traditional romance, becomes sometimes synonymous with Shaka: he is often integrated with a mysterious power regarded as inherent in the very nature of Africa: Shaka is "no mere human being, he was a symbol, the personification ... of nature herself" (Roberts 1950:30), or "an impersonal product of nature" (McMenemy 73). Indeed, Shaka may be seen in many instances as a parody or inversion of stock features of arcadian romance, and as the symptom of a deeper wrestle between utopian and racist or pseudo-Darwinian views of "otherness". Clearly, these writers' portrayal of Shaka is dictated not by a desire for historical verisimilitude but by the perception of him as a suitable character on whom to project their own views of "African-ness". In this respect, Shaka is the long-standing heir to a European attitude towards black "princes" fashionable at least since Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*.

A sixth generic criterion listed by Fowler is *mood*. A heavy gravity and absence of self-reflective irony pervades these novels, what Frye calls the "grave idealizing of heroism and purity" (1957:306) - a characteristic also, it may be noted in passing, of the Gothic romance (Birkhead 223). In contradistinction to, even in compensation for, the inherent improbability of the stories, the humourlessness of these fictions seems to demand that their contents be taken seriously, or rather, since improbability is a deliberate keystone, that suspension of disbelief be total for the duration of the reading. This is closely related to the protagonists' "deep certainty": "they may weep and mourn, forsaken by everyone, on a desert island, they may stumble to the very gates of hell in desperate blindness, yet an atmosphere of security always surrounds them; a god always plots the hero's paths and always walks ahead of him" (Lukács 86). An inescapable atmosphere of threat, potential violence and death is shot through with spasms of redeeming love, and with a nostalgia that is alternately for the pre-Shakan Golden Age of pastoral bliss and for the invigorating Iron

Age of spirited militarism and blood-tinged chivalry. In this paradoxical way, fears are at once given expression and defused.

The elements touched on above are by no means exhaustive. But they do serve to show that in a number of crucial ways the fictions on Shaka can be termed "formulaic" or "romantic" fiction. Romance writers, in short, "draw upon archetypal patterns which meet an understanding in the reader without necessarily formalizing into consciousness" (Beer 19). It is "mimetic at a mythic level" and "forms itself about the collective unconscious of an age" (58). Hence, the romance "is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream" (Frye 1957:186):

Its heroes and villains exist primarily to symbolize a contrast between two worlds, one above the level of ordinary experience, the other below it ... It looks, therefore, as though romance were simply replacing the world of ordinary experience by a dream world, in which the narrative movement keeps rising into wish fulfillment or sinking into anxiety and nightmare (Frye 1976:53).

The social-psychological dimensions of romance's particular generic contract may be approached through four interrelated functions of formulaic literature in society suggested by John Cawelti. In the first place, writes Cawelti, "Formula stories affirm existing interests and attitudes by presenting an imaginary world that is aligned with those interests and attitudes" (35). Romance (usually) tends not to challenge the status quo but to accept its values as given and so to entrench it; hence, for whites wishing to justify their place either physically in southern Africa or morally at the head of a ladder of civilization and progress, romance is an appropriate form. It is all the more powerful if an historical tribe, with a documented historical leader, both famed for his savagery and conveniently self-destructive, can be utilised:

Direct contact with Black Africa will not put an end to the play of delight and horror, of black and white, of idolatry and natives "beloved of the gods". These will merely find "real" objects and change names. When Prester John reaches identification with the real Christian kings of the real Ethiopia, the discourse has found its happiest

moment: the object projected into the void returns perceptually as reality itself. (Miller 60-1)

"Reality" is distorted to match the archetype even as it reinforces it. The iconic Shaka would not continue with such stability were the white supremacist society which produces it not so stable; nor would Shaka continue to be iconic of instability were not fear of instability a perennial constituent of that society.

Secondly, Cawelti suggests, "Formulas resolve tensions and ambiguities resulting from the conflicting interests of different groups within the culture or from ambiguous attitudes towards particular values" (35). Romance acts as a kind of psychic exorcism for both writer and reader: subliminal fears and desires are expressed, but they are also resolved, usually with a definitive sense of closure. In almost all the Shakan fictions, Shaka's assassination serves as the closure. His death not only ends the story; it also ends the sublimated absorption in the psychic problems he represents. Invariably, his death is seen as the satisfactory outcome; it not only resolves satisfactorily the struggle between "good" and "evil" in the story; it resolves the deeper tensions and doubts about European culture, expressed precisely in the admixture of the unholy and the noble in Shaka. The violent can be both enjoyed and dismissed as aberrant; the nobility can both assuage the guilt of the oppressor and, in order to fall short of "going native", be frozen in nostalgia. The important point here, of course, is that the resolution is, like van der Post's giant, one-eyed (1956:95); it is resolved, vicariously, in the European mind alone.

Thirdly, argues Cawelti, "Formulas enable the audience to explore in fantasy the boundary between the permitted and the forbidden and to experience in a carefully controlled way the possibility of stepping across this boundary" (35). Shaka lies at the heart of the presentation of a world in which the norms are precisely those expressly forbidden in European society: justice by violence, polygamy, absolute power over life and death,

nakedness, community of property, lawlessness, unorthodox religion (White 1978:187).

Many of these are the object, in European eyes, of both revulsion and temptation; their crystallisation in Shaka is accordingly ambivalent. Cawelti adds, "Formula stories permit the individual to indulge his curiosity about these actions without endangering the cultural patterns that reject them" (36).

Finally, Cawelti suggests, "literary formulas assist in the process of assimilating changes in values to traditional imaginative constructs" (36). This, in essence, is why Stephen Gray has chosen the romance formula as a vehicle for his critique of the myths embodied in previous romances. It also explains why changes, such as that from the outright demon Shaka to the somewhat noble Shaka, can be encompassed by the romance form, indeed must be if they are to carry a similar cultural weight. Hence, while recent histories have advanced considerably in their reconsideration of Shaka, the romantic myth continues almost unaffected. So against Cawelti's suggestion, it needs also to be reiterated that the literary formulas can offer a counterweight to change, a "centripetal" inertia, so long as that formula remains a culturally viable and marketable one.

The Historical Novel: *Febana*

Of course, all the Shakan novels are also inevitably "historical novels", incorporating to a greater or lesser extent accepted "facts" about Shaka as a framework for fictional treatment. It is unnecessary to venture here into an extended discussion of the nature of historical fiction, which is as labyrinthine a field of study as any (see Fleishman 1971). It is sufficient here to reinforce the points raised in the previous chapter about the subjective dimensions of factuality itself with Barbara Foley's observation on historical fiction:

The historical novel's "facts" appear to anchor the text's analogous configuration in historical actuality by proposing that particular corroborative data bear an unmediated reference to the public historical record. Actually, however, these data function to validate *a posteriori* the text's particular ideological construction of its referent.

Documentation in the historical novel is intrinsically tautological, rather than confirming the text's assertions about social reality, it corroborates a reality assumed to be self-evident. (Foley 146)

Such corroboration of the "self-evident" is nowhere stronger than in the romance mode, from which, as we have just seen, critical self-questioning is perforce expunged.

The rise of the "historical novel" as a recognisable genre is rather neatly contemporaneous with that of the Shakan literature; this is perhaps rather more than coincidental if one takes George Lukács' well-known periodisation as a guide. Lukács (1971) eulogises the "classics" of Walter Scott, produced just as Shaka himself was in his final years (*Redgauntlet* was written in the same year as Fynn landed in Natal). Because of the lag between Shaka's assassination and the time when sufficient material - and sufficient mythic momentum - became available for fictional treatment, the Shakan novels missed out on this formative heyday - formative at least in part because of its close connections with the rise of an imperialistic bourgeois society. A second phase in the development of the historical novel, according to Lukács, began after 1848, marked by a crisis of "bourgeois realism" and the beginnings of a rebellion against the inherent ills of capitalism. The nascent, if superficial, romantic primitivism of Haggard's novels, and of some of his successors', embodied strong traces of this rebellion. In the twentieth century, thirdly, Lukács perceives a move towards novels of "democratic humanism", something closer to the "populism" of the earlier classics and often including an anti-fascist strain.

What is striking about the Shakan romances is that almost none of them bear marks of even this third phase. And not even *John Ross* attains the stature which Lukács hoped would characterise a fourth phase, a return to the "epic" proportions of the classics, but with an even sturdier populist foundation - though *John Ross* does perhaps represent something of "a renewal in the form of the negation of a negation" (Lukács 423). Most seem caught,

in short, in Lukács' crisis-mode; and inferior-quality, second phase. One may or may not entirely agree with Lukács' commitment to a Marxist idealism, or his Leninist perceptions of the internal contradictions of "imperialism as the last phase of capitalism", but his characterisation of the qualities of Walter Scott's works serve as a useful benchmark.

Unlike the Hegelian or Romantic narrative heroes, Scott's central figures are "typical characters nationally, but in the sense of the decent and average, rather than the eminent and all-embracing" (Lukács 36). In this, at least, all the Shakan fictions conform: Shaka is not chosen as a central figure partly because he is seen as atypical, an aberration (though in that lies part of his attraction). He becomes the standard against which the Scott-like protagonist's "inner life, morality, heroism, capacity for sacrifice, steadfastness etc" (Lukács 53) can be pitted and measured. Shaka's primary role is precisely to be aberrant, mysterious, his inner life untouchable, his behaviour paradoxical. A nationalistic, propagandistic element necessitates "the separation of history's great men from history's lawful course, its isolation of them and raising them into myth" (Lukács 211). The separation of Shaka from his people in analogous ways in the histories has already been noted. The national representativeness of the protagonists set against Shaka, however, really holds only for the whites; a sense of separation also afflicts the black heroes, who are portrayed as themselves aberrant (within their own society) precisely in their "ordinary" decency. They are effectively displaced carriers of European ideologies. Like the heroes of the early American plantation novels, their "claims to typicality rest on a patently spurious racial stereotypicality" (Foley 163).

The meaning of this tendency can be pursued further. Lukács' outline of the position of Jacob Burkhardt, an historian in the throes of questioning the moral basis of the European society of his time, parallels the Shakan case so closely that it warrants extended quotation;

Burckhardt is an icon of the kind of awareness which the Shakan writers studiously deny themselves:

[Burckhardt] is tormented by the gravest doubts and caught in a ceaseless dilemma ... also the expression of the general tendency of the period. Burckhardt approaches his glorified great men with mingled admiration and dread [and] regards these men, who combine "deep depravity with noblest harmony", with a feeling that "balances between admiration and horror"...

[This] in reality only mirrors the disunity of the observer's standpoint and has nothing to do with history itself. That is, historical figures are separated from the real driving forces of their epoch, and their deeds, thus rendered incomprehensible, acquire a decorative magnificence by virtue of their very incomprehensibility. This decorative portrayal is further intensified by the special emphasis and central place given to the brutal excesses of history. (Lukács 212)

The (far from original) suggestion has already been made that ambivalences in the Shakan literature are produced by a disunity in the mind of the European writers, not in their subject. This split is also reflected, as the following discussion of *Febana* shows, in the manner in which Shaka, indeed all the Zulus, are separated from the "driving forces of their epoch." He is divorced not so much from the "real" forces (who can say for sure what *they* might be?), but from the *perceived* driving forces, in this case the enlightened progressiveness of imperialism. A key word in the above passage, therefore, is "decorative": the brutal Shaka becomes fundamentally of entertainment value, not in fact the key historical player he is glibly proclaimed to be. The studied seriousness of the Shakan novels is the measure of the authors' own lack of awareness of the contradictions, and is a subconscious defence, I would suggest, against the very kind of dilemmas with which Burckhardt is visibly wrestling. Hence (to cite just one aspect) a paradoxical lack of historical specificity in many of the Shakan fictions: they intensify a tendency amongst historical novels in the nineteenth century increasingly to substitute "psychological anachronism or superfluous detail for historically concrete specificity" (Foley 157).

It is easiest to illustrate some of these points by a more detailed consideration of perhaps the most obviously "historical" of the Shakan novels, Elizabeth Paris Watt's *Febana* (1962). For some years a journalist in London and in Durban, Watt proclaims the historical basis of her novel more vigorously than most. Many of the writers include some sort of prefatory "historical note",⁶ but none have done the kind of archival research conducted by Watt: she can thus insist that "All characters in this book are genuine; and all incidents and interpretations can be supported by accurate references" (5). But the extent to which this research will be harnessed to an ethnocentrically motivated plot is clear from the first paragraph of her Foreword:

This is the true story of Francis George Farewell, the founder of permanent European settlement in South Eastern Africa - Farewell of Natal. It is also the saga of the English-speaking pioneers of South Africa, and a great adventure story. Sober historian George McCall Theal, writing eighty years after, marvelled "... a wilder venture can hardly be conceived than that of these few Englishmen". But it was more than that, for Frank Farewell had a secret role. Besides being a native trader and ivory hunter he was minister plenipotentiary to the most savage court in history - that of Tshaka, king of the warrior Zulus. Farewell's role and his true stature emerge now for the first time, as well as the fact that his prior pioneering was both the inspiration and the blueprint for the later Great Trek. (5)

Here is a studied, and not atypical, effort to discover the epic and romantic plot in history itself, a plot so obvious that even a "sober" historian cannot avoid it (and it is important to juxtapose the sobriety of "history" with its savage antithesis in the book). The hagiography is clear from the style here: the intimacy of the appellation "Frank", the positioning of Farewell as the "blueprint" for enterprises far greater than his own, the term "pioneer"; that he is *the* pioneer and "founder of Natal" indicates Watt's challenge to Fynn's well-established reputation. Moreover, the notion that Farewell had a "secret" mission as "minister plenipotentiary" from the Cape Governor to Shaka - an assertion that reappears in the 1986 television series - is absurd on any reading of the evidence, including Watt's own. To maintain this, Watt is obliged to skew the chronology of Shaka's alleged threats to the eastern Cape frontier, to postulate "confidential talks" between Farewell and the Governor for which she admits "no first-hand records have been traced" (38), and to dismiss what

letters do exist as merely "a nice touch for the records" (39) rather than as contradicting her thesis.

A similar contradictoriness lies in Watt's use of her sources. In an interview published (Durban *Daily News*, 26 April 1962) after the book came out, she in many cases rightly questions the veracity of Isaacs and Fynn, whom she claims to have been deliberately maligning Farewell - but in the absence of alternatives these are precisely the sources she uses. When it comes to describing the Zulu, moreover, it is Isaacs' register of Gothic exaggeration to which she resorts. That Watt is succumbing to her own prejudices is evident from the passage containing the last quotation:

His Excellency [Governor Charles Somerset], formally sanctioning Farewell's trading project, stipulated "all intercourse with the natives must be conducted in a conciliatory manner, and upon fair terms of barter". This was a nice touch for the records, as Britain, under the inspiration of Wilberforce, was being carried on a splendid wave of self-glorification in her championship of the noble black brother. But Lord Charles knew that the savages of Tshaka would bear not the slightest resemblance to trusting Uncle Toms. Far from Frank Farewell's exploiting or oppressing them, the dauntless lieutenant, God help him, was going in at Port Natal to try to hold apart two enormous, opposed forces of black savages. (Watt 39-40)

The problems with this passage are numerous. One set of problems is historical. Somerset's letter, quoted here, is more coherently read as expressing suspicion of Farewell's *bona fides* than of window-dressing; if it is window-dressing, what can Somerset be covering up but Farewell's real rapacity? Surely no such window-dressing is necessary to Watt's plot, since the ideals which Farewell is presented throughout the novel as embodying are noble. And how could Somerset possibly *know* how savage the Zulus would be? As Hamilton (1992) has demonstrated, the first negative reports of Shaka would only appear a few years after this. Watt's prejudices register also in the sarcastic characterisation of Wilberforce's "splendid wave of self-glorification". Clearly, Watt regards the black as neither noble nor a brother. Yet this is precisely the philanthropic kind of mission Farewell is said to be embarked upon; that last image of the "dauntless", solitary white hero pitted against hordes

both hostile and countless (but in the end of no account), is the psychologically self-aggrandising epitome of all the Shakan fiction.

The subtler logical problems in this passage are in any case overwhelmed by the weight of the novel's rhetoric; any kind of stylistic finesse or researched detail is negated by the antithesis so starkly drawn between the British Farewell and the Zulu Shaka, and between those who possess history and those who do not. One can extend in this way J M Coetzee's observation that the solution to the ambivalences felt in the settler situation "in colonial [fictional] practice tends to be ... an ethnic typology for those parts of the novel set in the wilderness, and a class typology for those parts set in society" (Coetzee 1988:162). An intellectual typology is also employed to articulate the workings of the white mind. Furthermore, that historical veracity and English courage are parts of a single truth is established in the opening pages of the novel. It begins with a date: "It was May in the year 1822". An historical biography of Farewell, carefully referenced, establishes the heroism of this "tall and good-looking young man" who had "distinguished himself in action after action" under a protégé of Lord Nelson himself (9). He is "a dashing young man with all the right connections and ... personal lustre" (14); it is not in the least unsavoury that he eyes the coast of Zululand with a mercenary gleam - "There was a fortune to be made!" - and "as if [it] were an enemy ship to be boarded, or a fort to be stormed and subdued" (13). Such hints of violence are in any case to be subsumed in the greater good of his mission for the Governor - and for civilisation.

Against this portrayal, Zululand, the Zulu people, and the Zulu potentate, are drawn in overblown clichés, one example of which we have already seen. Two more will suffice here:

This was the Wild Coast, a name of terror in the heart of every seaman who sailed the seven seas. Wrecks had been strewn along every mile of its treacherous length;

it was a notorious graveyard for both ships and mariners. Here the prevailing wild wind and a scouring current drove straight for the ... fiendish rocks. (10)

As the misbegotten survivors of the *Grosvenor* had apparently discovered, this was a "faulty paradise": "The land, so green and enticing from the deck of a ship", in reality offered only "massacre at the hands of the savages; death in the night from the teeth and claws of ravenous wild beasts; of gently-bred white women carried off, screaming with terror, to rape and life-long concubinage among the savages" (11). This is so stark a summary of the ostensibly deeply-buried, Freudian fears of the colonial that it sounds like a parody of itself. Yet passage after passage attests to its seriousness in Watt's vision of Africa. Shaka himself, of course, is irredeemably "diabolical" and "fiendish" (126-7), if appallingly powerful:

As the occasion demanded, Frank greeted the Zulu monarch with his most exalted titles - "Great of the World ... Great King ... Thou that are black!" Nor did he consider these high-flown pretensions unjustified. The despot, in full warrior splendour, was awe-inspiring in this vivid moment when he was about to meet and subdue his last powerful neighbour. Standing face to face with him Frank knew this was no ingenuous black child of nature; here was a magnificent primitive in the full arrogance and confidence of his irresistible power; a black colossus astride uncivilized Southern Africa; a military genius who, having brilliantly stage-managed every determinable factor ... was now ready to hurl forward his perfectly disciplined army like a thunderbolt of certain destruction. (126)

This Shaka is physically magnificent but really a berserker, a genius only of evil militarism. Farewell's praises are notably uninteresting, lacking in cultural specificity, by comparison with the praises of Shaka well-known by Watt's time; this underlines the poverty of insight into Zulu mores enacted by other stylistic features. A telling logical slippage occurs in finding the praises' "pretensions" (the word insinuates lack of justification) not unjustified after all. Watt here also rejects Rousseau-like notions of "child of nature" idylls; she aligns Shaka with natural forces (the thunderbolt), exaggerates his irresistibility, and forgets that this "perfectly disciplined" army is described everywhere in the book as anarchic murderers enslaved to blood. That this ambivalent discipline is more spectacle than reality is indicated by "stage-managed", another sign of the "drama" of Zulu life for the detached European. This passage, like many others in the book, is both romantic and mythic in its

purport, in studied contrast with those historical details gleaned from the documentary sources. Such details are individuated, singular, and concern the whites, while Zulu events are described only in generalities: "Tshaka held his hand up to his mouth in typical native astonishment (67); violent death is the "common fate" at Shaka's kraal (68); the witchdoctors, in their "customary frenzied antics" (84), use their "usual mess of revolting ingredients" (215); Zulu kings "usually" died by the spear (220).

The propensity for, and attachment to, detailed historicity is one of the tools by which the whites transcend even their reduction to a native mode of living: they alone become "noble savages":

As their clothes grew more tattered, they made up for lost European respectability by becoming splendidly picturesque.... [T]hey became to the life the white Zulu chiefs of Port Natal... [John Cane was] the giant white man who held a special magic for these primitives... (106)

They are redeemed, in the end, by their superior sense of themselves, of the harder quality of their knowledge, which is fundamentally historical:

To Frank, after the unearthly stillness of the depopulated regions from which he had just come, the din of the huge concourse, mingled with the bellowing of the cattle, was deafening. Yet single voices lifted on the high note that sent messages across enormous distances; and from miles away came the answering calls, perfectly clear above the general hubbub. It was the mysterious bush-telegraph....

As night closed in, Frank covered the lower slopes towards the great encampment. It was dark as he rode between the leaping fires, through a scene that was frightening in its flaming vehemence, its smells, its sounds, its stridency. He could sense the dark malign eyes that followed every pace of his horse....

Frank knew only that Tshaka's edict, that he would be treated not as an equal but as a king, restrained their superstitious instinct to kill him as a white creature of witchcraft and ill-omen; only their terror of Tshaka allowed him to pass unscathed. (91)

The perfect arrogance of this self-knowledge - the stereotypical quality of which is balanced and indeed defined by the stereotypicality of the description of the malign, superstitious, and instinctual Zulus - by which both mysteriousness and fear are overcome, reaches its apotheosis in the penultimate chapter of *Febana*. Shaka's death provides the usual sense of closure (though so does Farewell's own, in this case), and Watt extends Isaacs' accusation

of Shaka's final, truth-revealing cowardice: "Perhaps in that last desperate moment Tshaka was fleeing to take refuge with the white men on whose friendship he had set such store; trying to reach *Febana ka Mjoji* [Farewell]" (273).

Nowhere is the overweening cynicism of white writing on Shaka more clearly revealed.

The Romance Deconstructed: John Ross

Elizabeth Paris Watt was one of the first to point out that "John Ross" - a spunky ten- or eleven-year-old who landed in Natal alongside Nathaniel Isaacs in 1824, and who spent more time actually with Shaka than the rest of the whites put together - was not John Ross at all, but one Charles Rawden Maclean. "John Ross" became famed for an overland foot-slog from Port Natal to Delagoa Bay, allegedly to procure medicines for his desperate and stranded comrades, and had named after him, amongst other monumental objects, a waterfront building, a highway, and a tugboat. Stephen Gray takes great delight in rediscovering Maclean's own account, published serially in the relatively obscure *Nautical Magazine* in 1853-5, and using it to overturn much more of the accepted versions of the early Natal settlement than just the youngster's name. The two major achievements of Gray's efforts are his vigorous little novel, *John Ross: The True Story* (1987) - a spinoff of a television series of the same name, but very different in its hagiography - and his critically annotated edition of the original accounts, *The Natal Papers of "John Ross"* (1992).

In the John Ross project, Gray extends an earlier, tentative examination of "Shaka as a literary theme" (1975), in which he rightly pointed out that, after Isaacs, Shaka was bound to end up as a marginal "Man Friday" figure in white fictions (1975:67). Maclean's accounts, though sketchy and evidently unfinished, give Gray the opportunity to "alter the

entrenched markers of the past" by "reassigning meaning to familiar landmarks" (1988:17), and by "invert[ing] in a systematic way the traditional values ascribed to the terms 'black' and 'white'" - a "lethal dualism" Gray describes as a "bad dream" (1990:26). The historical romance, a mode he aims particularly at younger readers and which he sees as antecedent to, and therefore less conservative than, social realism, is itself a crucial tool in Gray's subversive project.

Maclean's originals are perhaps less dramatically revisionist than Gray maintains. Though, in vivid opposition to the slaving career of Nathaniel Isaacs, Maclean became an active, even forceful campaigner for civil rights in the Caribbean, it would be surprising if his account of the Zulus entirely escaped contemporary ethnocentric biases. Nowhere does Maclean question the validity of British rule or way of life, nor its idealised Christian foundation (though he does admit to some "pseudo-Christian" activities amongst the early missionaries):

The reflecting and sober Christian does not whine or howl over the darkness by which he sees large portions of the human family surrounded, when he knows that the Great Architect of the stupendous work of creation has not left them to perish from caprice, ignorance or oversight; that their condition is comprehended in the necessary economy and arrangement of His mighty scheme; that their minds are accommodated to the circumstances in which it has pleased Him to place them, and are thereby endowed with instincts and gratifications unknown to us. (Maclean 107-8)

This naive justification within the divine order of caprice and ignorance (not unlike his contemporary William Holden's) is supported by a winsomely hopeful view of British beneficence:

...many of my old native friends will yet recollect the little Mlungu who told them with all the eloquence of their language of the power and greatness of his king, the truth of which they have lived to see wonderfully verified.... They may remember that I told them though our king was great he was also merciful, kind and benevolent... This I trust they have also experienced at the hands of those who have gone amongst them, and that they have been enabled to distinguish the servants of our king from the rude and lawless Boers by whom they have been assailed. (39-40)

Maclean vigorously defends the reputations of the "strictly honourable" (55) James Saunders

Maclean vigorously defends the reputations of the "strictly honourable" (55) James Saunders King, and Francis Farewell, particularly against the attacks of Stephen Kay (64-5, 107). He is as prone to exaggeration as his fellow-adventurers, claiming at one point, absurdly, that Shaka displays "a hundred thousand warriors" (71), and that he is "the terror of that portion of eastern Africa from the frontier of the Cape Colony to the Portuguese settlement of Delagoa Bay" (113).

However, this is modified by a pervasive nostalgia, an Edenic view of the landscape (eg, 63), an unusually non-judgemental view of Zulu customs, and an attitude of wistful gratitude for the Zulus' - and in particular Shaka's - hospitality: "I owe them a debt of gratitude that leads me to wish and to hope my countrymen, whosever they be, will exercise that mercy and kindness towards them which I experienced at their hands in the day of their rule. Those are yet living to whom I am indirectly indebted for my life" (40). Maclean's view of the Zulu character was generous, even when coloured by the preconceptions of his day:

The general appearance of the natives on this part of the coast of Eastern Africa is so favourable, and particularly of the Zulus, who are a well made, robust, muscular and powerful race of men, perfectly devoid of the characteristic features that distinguish the African negro, that really with the exception of the colour of the skin they might justly rank with the most perfect European. Their well proportioned figures and prepossessing features, with the high expansive forehead, denote much physical as well as intellectual capacity.... Bold and manly in their bearing, ... there is also much kindness, affection and generosity in their character ... Faithful and obedient to his superior, the Zulu manifests no cringing servility in his manner... (80)

If we are to take Maclean at face value, he became a kind of pet to Shaka for considerable periods, fulfilling almost a jester role (one perhaps suspiciously similar, in his uniquely privileged, critical influence on the ruler, to a number of other characters in the fiction): "I believe that with the exception of his mother, Nandi, I was the only living soul that dared to breathe a contradiction to his will" - by virtue of which he "stayed the bloody hand of a relentless executioner from destroying many innocent victims" (113).

At least some of this may be attributed to the romanticised memory of a ten- to thirteen-year-old boy. But while some of Maclean's views on Shaka seem stereotypically exaggerated, and by no means complimentary, in other assertions he seems remarkably clear-sighted. He vigorously disputes Stephen Kay's accounts of Shaka's alleged atrocities (the ones which nevertheless found their way into "history"), and offers his own explanations: "The several bloody and exterminating wars of Shaka appear to have had no object in view other than to enrich himself with cattle of the conquered tribes" (86). He refers to stories of Shaka's military exploits, his "superior generalship and intelligence", and to his generous treatment of incorporated tribes (68), and to his principle of justice: "The same measure that he observed others to give, the same was invariably given by him to them"; despite his being "a merciless tyrant, he was not blind to this virtue when exercised by others". Oddly, given that he seems to demand this behaviour from the colonial rulers elsewhere, Maclean regards it as a "mistaken barbarous notion" (72), indicating again that moral ambiguity which accompanies most efforts to graft primitivist notions onto support for colonial domination. This is compounded here by a discontinuity between the memories of the ten-year-old and the maturer, better-informed reading of the man.

In the final analysis, however, Maclean's account ends on a more empathetic note than any of his contemporaries, and many of his literary successors:

Were I called upon to state in which condition the most happiness existed, I should, from the knowledge I have of man in both conditions [of barbarism and civilisation], bear testimony to the Zulus being the most cheerful and happy people of which I have had any experience. (Maclean 130)

He sadly predicted the collapse of the Zulu nation, but insisted

It is worthy the attention, and the strictest surveillance of the British Government, to prevent the same abuse [of colonists' aggressions] from being introduced into Natal, and no aggression or infringement of the native rights and interest in the soil should be tolerated. (75; cf.117)

Maclean's advocacy of Zulu-liberty was not predicated upon a denunciation of Shaka, and the sketchy hints he leaves of the Zulu chieftain himself are sufficient to lead Gray to believe "that the story of Shaka needs to be revindicated from scratch" (Maclean 188). Gray's fictional strategy to secure such a "revindication" is primarily a tartly ironic tone, established by a direct authorial intervention entirely absent from the univocal romances of his precursors: "I shall have to reconstruct from minimal information, imagining what it was like..." (Gray 1987:28); "If you doubt me,... I can only plead..." (110); and many other such direct addresses to the reader. Sometimes Gray puts his own thoughts into the heads of his characters: "Many ideas the party had about Shaka they must now revise" (101). And with involuted humour typical of the work, "John Ross" expresses the techniques of story-telling which Gray is undermining:

"Och, you know - some details you leave out - some you repeat for dramatic effect - and play on the sentimental parts, with some wishful thinking. And you keep them guessing, so they are curious - and you present yourself, well, in an absorbing historical light. But the core of it all is vision - without vision your story fails."

But he knew how fearfully he lied... (Gray 1987:164-5)

Perhaps Gray is sniping slyly at his own project, too. But it is also part of his ironic technique to juxtapose clearly-signposted fictional conversations with quotations from the historical literature and passages of textbook-like historical explanation: to playfully exploit, rather than attempt to conceal, the inevitably polyvocal nature of the historical novel. The following paragraph exemplifies the historical voice, as well as showing how far Gray's revisionism has *not* extended, since the "*mfecane*" paradigm is inserted unquestioned:

The Zulu imperium had reached its bursting point. If Shaka's organisation of the land could not sustain his deracinated and overpopulated regiments, they must explode outwards to prey on other populations elsewhere. These migrations were setting off about the compass, exporting from its heartland the system Shaka had devised, and changing the face of Southern Africa. (123)

Gray cannot resist, it seems, the drama of placing his diminutive hero alongside "the first modern giant to pick up Africa and shake it until it changes its shape" (84). This exaggeration is offset by details at once lively and earthy (Gray's style is also an attack on

as no other writer does. An examination of styles of conversation in these fictions deserves more extensive treatment than is possible here, but a comparison between exchanges from P A Stuart's *An African Attila* and John Ross will serve to make the point:

With ill-concealed astonishment I held out my right hand and the King of Zululand took it - yes, my father, Tshaka himself held this hand in his own - a warm, soft, and clammy grasp - and said:

"This day, Watala, thou hast saved the life of Tshaka, for the very simplicity of the plot would have ensured its success."

"Make no mention of my humble part in this matter, O King, I -"

"Nay, now, I must do so, young man, but interrupt me not." And then, after a slight pause, "Watala" - he was bending over me now, I felt his hot breath against my cheek - "Watala, thou hast indeed saved my life, but it can only be at the cost of thine own." (Stuart 1938:52)

Against this air of deadly serious deference, the stereotyped menace, and the archaisms, Gray presents us with a thoroughly modern humour, humanity, and quirkiness of detail and diction:

John Ross wanted to protest, but the effect of the [anti-worm] potion he had downed was so violent he thought he would spew.

"Hey, hey, hey," King Shaka clapped his hand over the boy's mouth, and bundled him up. "Excuse me," he said, ducking out of the hut, "please carry on."

He hauled John Ross, his hand firmly over his jaw, to the toilet trench, and posed him over the edge. "No, don't talk; it must go down, not up."

"It is blocked," John Ross gasped, holding onto Shaka's forearm.

"Push, push," said Shaka. "Here I am trying to conduct a most important meeting and you cannot even shit properly." (Gray 1987:124)

Gray ends, inevitably, with Shaka's death and Maclean's departure from Natal, leaving only his weightiest revelations for his closing remarks. Gray delightedly notes that "John Ross" is a character "as invented by history as any novelist could invent him" (184); the irony is partly in Gray's own conscious re-fictionalising, and partly in his using his own historical sources to postulate another, countering, evidential base: "Everything I have written is based on what [Maclean] wrote" (185). But this information had been in fact available for some time. As even some of the most recent literature shows, it is not so much that "The mythologies we live by have to be revised slowly" (Gray 1987:186), but that they *do* revise slowly. That is their primary characteristic as mythologies.

The incompleteness of myth

Gray's novel highlights the paradox of romance and thus of the nexus of literary interests in which the figure of Shaka has been created. On the one hand he is the demonic generator and manipulator of a violence which permeates the romancers' Africa; on the other he is the noble, self-made military genius and nation-builder whose violence is pragmatic and in the service of a higher goal. On the one hand he is the epitome of the white fear of black attack; on the other he is the epitome of white desire for absolute power. Baldly stated, both images are sides of the same coin of Europeans' insecurity and guilt over their role in the conquest of Africa. In neither case is the figure of Shaka presented as believable; the fictional armature in which he is presented ensures that he remains an indistinct and unapproachable icon: a myth. He remains, to recall Roland Barthes, incomplete, since "a complete image would exclude myth" (Barthes 113). In some respects, the figure of the "savage" in *Robinson Crusoe* provided the model, out of which some segments of white society never grew:

For more than a century afterwards the European concept of the savage came no nearer reality than Defoe's representation of him, and it was on that figure that the European, if he was more or less infantile or, like Rousseau, unable to adapt himself to reality, projected the inner image of which there was no counterpart in the solid and too familiar world of reality. (Mannoni 103)

This is the vicious circle: the portrayal of Shaka remains incomplete because he has from the beginning been established as an allegorical projection; because the European mind *requires* such a projection, it chooses romance as the appropriate envelope in which to present Shaka; until that requirement ceases to exist, the fictions will tend to accept the iconic portrayal.

NOTES

1. As an intriguing sidelight on the manner in which fictional/historical sources are being used here, Sewele, like Haggard's "She", is based on the allegedly fair-skinned Mujaji or Rain Queen of Swaziland. Esther Roberts claims, in an anachronistic attempt to give her own account greater historical authenticity, that Haggard actually met the Mujaji (Roberts 1950:8). This is almost certainly not the case. Cf. Davey 1977:168; Munnik 1934:141-3. I am grateful to John Senior for these references.

2. The intriguingly high number of women writers producing versions of Shaka in the twentieth century perhaps deserves greater attention than I allow here, though my feeling is that the juggernaut of accepted stories overrides all but the most trivial of differences that might be attributed to gender.

3. It is intriguing, as an aside, how many of these novels revolve around a material "fetish" of some kind: Buchan's stone, Millin's collar, the diviner's "bone" in Robert Fynn, the *inkatha* in Peter Essex's *We, the Enemy* (Fontana, Glasgow, 1986), another adventure-tale set in modern times but throughout which Shaka's presence dangerously looms.

4. The drafts of *John Ross* are held at the National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, file 88.10.1a/1b; the quotation is from p.11; cf. also p.39. Cf. *John Ross: The True Story*: "Our heritage of children's literature tells us that he should be palpitating with the sheer thrill of his present situation.... but he is not" (92).

5. As Umberto Eco, writing of the apparent racism of Ian Fleming's popular "James Bond" stories, points out:

Fleming intends, with the cynicism of the disillusioned, to build an effective narrative apparatus. To do so he decides to rely on the most secure and universal principles, and puts into play archetypal elements which are precisely those that have proved successful in traditional tales ... [Therefore] Fleming is a racialist in the sense that any artist is one, if, to represent the devil, he depicts him with oblique eyes; in the sense that a nurse is one who, wishing to frighten children with the bogey-man, suggests that he is black.... Fleming seeks elementary opposition: to personify primitive and universal forces he has recourse to popular opinion ... A man who chooses to write in this way is neither fascist nor racialist; he is only a cynic, a deviser of tales for general consumption. (quoted in Cawelti 31-2)

6. P A Stuart offers a "rapid survey" of Zulu history and of Shaka's reign, this being largely based on Isaacs, as indicated by the (now familiar) style of exaggeration: "History has handed down to us the names of such monsters as Nero, Attila, and others infamous for their cruelties, but Tshaka eclipsed them all". But Shaka's historicity is hardly more than an excuse; Stuart is interested in the mysteriousness essential to his themes of quest, carnage and courage: "Tragedy and romance? Yes! both in abundant wealth, but which of us with all our imagination can sound the bottomless depths of the one, or do more than touch the fringe of the other - as they really were - in the stirring days of Tshaka?" (xv). Esther Roberts' interest is as much anthropological as historical, but she includes more historically attested events than Stuart, and is clear about how and why she manipulates events to suit her conventionally romantic plot, shifting dates and giving Isaacs' adventures over to Fynn (8-9). Alan Scholefield lists a rather larger number of references than most in his one-page preface to *The Great Elephant*, and his research makes its mark on a greater density of "historical" (meaning culled from Ritter, by and large) characters and events.

CHAPTER NINE

A DANGEROUS ADMIRATION:

E A Ritter's *Shaka Zulu*

Of all the books written on Shaka and the Zulus, E A Ritter's *Shaka Zulu* (1955) is almost certainly the most widely-read.¹ It remains the only substantial so-called "biography" of Shaka, barring a few slight or little-known clones, generally for younger readers (e.g. Woolley 1973, Cohen 1973, Bond/Langa 1961/1981, Hall 1987). As such, the book has had a disproportionate impact on both the popular image and subsequent historiography: it is cited as a central source in numerous mainstream histories, ranging from Donald Morris's popular *The Washing of the Spears* to the seminal *Oxford History of South Africa* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Ted Partridge more recently claims:

I wish I had been able to get my hands on copies of the books written by the great historian and missionary Dr A T Bryant (*Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*) and Henry Francis Fynn (*The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*) but I cannot help thinking that all the necessary references to them were made by Mr Ritter in his [most thorough] work. (Partridge 1990:62)

This is only a particularly complacent example of the acceptance generally accorded Ritter's text. Ritter has been occasionally attacked, most virulently by Louis du Buisson (1987:11), who characterises him as "whimsical, sex-obsessed" and mendacious about his oral sources. But even historians who doubt Ritter's veracity, and quibble about his fictionalising, or who no longer wish to cite him as a source at all, unquestioningly incorporate assertions or episodes found nowhere outside *Shaka Zulu*. Donald Morris contradictorily recognises that *Shaka Zulu* has been widely accepted as an historical biography but is "nothing of the sort", being full of "fabricated figures", but in the next breath seems to accept it as an "oral history" emanating from the Zulus themselves (1986b:92).

Shaka Zulu represents a decisive shift in the development of the white image of Shaka. As we have seen, until the mid-1950s, that image was dominated by the monstrous portrayal in Nathaniel Isaacs' ostensibly eye-witness account, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (1836); Isaacs was closely followed in A T Bryant's monumental *Olden Times* (1929). Although *Shaka Zulu* is based overwhelmingly on *Olden Times*, Ritter displaces Bryant's demonic portrait of Shaka in favour of a man more sinned against than sinning, frequently brutal but essentially heroic, shrewdly just and militarily magnificent. So strong are the ambivalences inherent in this shift that Ritter's account could simultaneously fuel, on the one hand, Omer-Cooper's paean to African state-building in *The Zulu Aftermath* (1966), and, on the other, Walter's study of Zulu "totalitarianism" in *Terror and Resistance* (1969). Both ends of the spectrum are characterised by a failure adequately to reexamine the original sources, and by a synthesising approach which accepts suitable portions of Ritter's account unquestioningly. The various shifts of emphasis, explanations of motive, and modifications of sequence are made, effectively, with little or no recourse to a reconsideration of what might actually have happened on the ground. This is also true of *Shaka Zulu* itself. A close examination of two extant manuscripts of the book, some correspondence, details of Ritter's own life, and alternative historical sources, make possible a freshly intimate reappraisal of *Shaka Zulu*.²

The life of E A Ritter

Ernest Augustus Ritter was born in Dundee in 1890, the son of a German military adventurer who rose to the rank of magistrate in Natal's colonial service.³ Zulu, Ritter claims, was his first language, and from his childhood in the New Hanover and Upper Tugela areas he picked up the traditional stories he later repeated in his book: "By frequent recounts of the same episodes these became as firmly impressed on [Ritter's] young mind as biblical history

is on that of the ordinary Christian-child" (1955:xi). The first crucial issue is the validity of this resource, which I will deal with separately below.

A second issue concerns Ritter's own veracity. Two incidents cast some doubt. Firstly, Ritter claimed that his father had been "commissioned" by Sir Theophilus Shepstone and Sir Garnet Wolseley to form and lead, "as the sole European - a regiment of Swazi warriors in battle against chief Sekukuni's Pedis at the storming of their mountain stronghold in 1879" (1955:ix-x). No such involvement on Ritter senior's part is recorded in available accounts of the battle or archival documents: both the part alleged, and the implication of closeness to Shepstone and Wolseley, must be at best exaggerated, and perhaps entirely spurious: Ritter is not mentioned in Wolseley's journal, for instance, which he surely would have been had he been "the sole European" involved.⁴ Any exaggeration, of course, may not have been the *son's* fault, but a perfectly normal family legend.

The second incident is more disturbing. In the 1906 Zulu rebellion, Ritter claimed, he himself "fought ... as a trumpeter" with the Natal Carbineers, which "enabled him to witness [the Zulus'] bravery in battle". One such alleged battle was an "epic encounter of Capt. Lonsdale's Natal Native Contingent, armed with shield and spear, versus Zulus armed likewise", in the Mangeni valley (1955:xii). I have found no such encounter described in accounts of the rebellion (Stuart 1913; Marks 1970). Furthermore, Captain Lonsdale's Natal Native Contingent participated not in the 1906 uprising, but in the 1879 Zulu war. The NNC was disbanded immediately after that war, and no Captain Lonsdale is listed in the Natal directories for 1905-6. Either Ritter's memory had failed him, forty-five years later - in which case other details he claims to have remembered from this period must be open to doubt - or he was simply fantasising, granting himself a vicarious authority.

These of course may be no more than minor lapses of memory. But Ritter was ill-equipped to write scholarly history in other ways, too. He was relatively poorly educated, leaving school at Standard Six; though he would demonstrate a prodigious curiosity and self-taught general knowledge, he read little after his twenties, was no writer, and never developed a cursive script.⁵ After a period in the Native Affairs Department in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, he "went exploring" (1955:xii). In 1935, it was a somewhat dissolute Ritter who, at Umhlanga Rocks, north of Durban, applied for lodgings with two sisters, Madeleine Pearce and Frances ("Fanny") Wood. Ritter recalled, "It was solely due to Fanny's heroic efforts that I survived after 1935 when time and again she rescued me from shebeens".⁶ Yet within two years Ritter, who had become an eccentric but ingenious "bush scientist", was being photographed in front of the Reichstag in Berlin, where he was apparently wooing industrialists with "inventions, and hoping he'd therewith help them win the inevitable war".⁷

The inventions were largely unsuccessful; according to Ritter's daughter, *Shaka Zulu* was at least in part an effort to gain respectability, and to relieve a "bitter vein" of family poverty.⁸ In the wake of Germany's defeat in 1945, Ritter was depressed and worried about "general world uncertainty",⁹ and he had fathered a daughter by Fanny Wood. The evident guilt accompanying this ("There is no such thing as an illegitimate child," he wrote, "there are only illegitimate fathers"¹⁰) coalesced with the consuming gratitude he felt towards the simple sisters who had saved him from death by "drink and drugs".¹¹ It is not going too far to see these abiding concerns affecting his approach to *Shaka Zulu*: Shaka, he wrote in a sentence cut from the published version, "was almost pathetically grateful to all those who had in any way been kind to Nandi, his little sister Nomcoba, and himself" (L.35). Here, too, may lie the impulse behind making the love between Shaka and Pampata the real narrative heart of the book, behind the ambivalent sexuality of episodes dwelt on at unusual

length, and behind the militarist, stoic heroism of Shaka himself. On leaving a draft chapter for comment, Ritter instructed William Campbell to "use his Blue Pencil hard in criticism please";¹² writing to his editor he requested "please do not hesitate to use your bluntest terms in dealing with me. I already recognise you as a friend and we only hear the truth from real friends".¹³ This stoicism is of a piece with the lofty courage he claimed to have witnessed and admired in the Zulus who, "collapsing from their wounds, would lie supporting their heads with one hand [and] proudly and grimly ... awaited the customary finishing-off and disembowelling" (1955:xii), or the children who meet death singing the praises of their executioner, or, indeed, the grimly heroic death of Shaka himself.

I do not mean to portray Ritter as a failure; he was clearly a kindly but determined individual, and some of his later inventions were very successful indeed. But it does seem likely that this new, lionised, self-made Shaka (though, as we shall see, somewhat compromised in the original manuscript by clichéd barbarisms) is in large part Ritter's fantasy of or for himself. There is little evidence of documentary or literary pressure on Ritter to produce such a hero-tale, whose folkloristic structure and romance plot powerfully embody wish-fulfilment (see Chapter Eight).¹⁴ Even if there were, it would still be necessary to explain Ritter's elevation of these aspects above the brutal tales long since deeply entrenched and blatantly relished in the very texts he used as sources. It is primarily from the writer's own psychological energies, rather than from new empirical resources, that the inversion of Shaka from monster to hero in *Shaka Zulu* arises. This self-reflexiveness is all but explicit in this passage:

One outstanding fact, however, emerges and stands forth like a shining beacon above the haze of time and controversy, and that is that the White men had some dominant quality even when in rags which compelled the black men to regard them as superior ... It had nothing to do with sky-rockets or horses or firearms ... No! the root of the European's superiority lay in his possession of *ubu-kosi* - the quality and air of chieftainship - for which only the Zulu language has a single word... (1955:268).

Constructing the text of *Shaka Zulu*

Ritter began writing "Shaka - The Zulu Caesar" around November 1949. It proceeded slowly, as the periodically destitute writer worked elsewhere to survive. In March 1950 a "rough and untidy" fragment found its way to William Doerflinger of the publishers E P Dutton & Co.¹⁵ Dutton's tentative option was not pursued. It seems probable that this rough draft is lost, and that the earliest extant version, *K*, is one already revised by John Cuthbertson of the Johannesburg *Star*, as Ritter had apparently intended he should do.¹⁶ Though not stated, such help might explain the gushing praise accorded Cuthbertson ("the quixotic magnet of the oppressed and distressed and the champion of the lowly and the laden") in the ms. introduction (*K*.Intro.5-6; cf. 1955:xiv). Given the appalling quality of some of Ritter's writing, it seems unlikely that the markedly more fluent passages which survived into the published version were achieved unaided.

It is essentially the *K* text which was submitted to Longmans in London. In October 1952 Mark Longman wrote to Ritter of his

intention to produce a comprehensive editorial plan for your consideration. It took a considerable time to make arrangements for this work to be done because we considered it essential to have the services of someone who was not only interested in but knowledgeable about the subject, but who also had literary skill. We were at last successful in finding someone who is, to our mind, exactly the right man...¹⁷

The "right man" was Edward Hyams (1910-75), a rising professional journalist, gardening writer and novelist. Hyams had eight slight but witty satirical novels to his credit by 1952, but no non-fiction; he brought no special knowledge of the Zulus or of Africa to his revisions of Ritter's script.¹⁸ Hyams' essential task was simply to convert Ritter's often turgid original into a much shorter, more smoothly readable account. To this end he suggested a number of revisions, which may be summarised as follows:

1. To remove the foreword (by W A Campbell, father of Killie Campbell);
2. To reduce the Introduction to 3000 words (he surely meant 300, since the original is only 2600 words);
3. To shorten wherever possible;

4. To work Ritter's extensive quotations from Bryant's *Olden Times* into "continuous narrative";
5. To cut all but "the most successful dialogue passages to give the impression of verisimilitude", here and there indicating their oral-traditional nature by inserting "The Zulus say that..."
6. To eliminate appearances of "artificiality" in Ritter's style;
7. To excise most of the "tortures and other horrors";
8. To re-order certain chapters.

Ritter agreed with characteristic humility and gratitude to this intervention of a "master literary mind", and wrote to Hyams: "You therefore have carte blanche to do as you think best."¹⁹ The "Introduction", appendices, and truncated bibliography were retained in the 1955 hardcover edition, and restored by Penguin, but in intermediate editions dropped altogether, depriving many eventual readers of at least some glimpses into Ritter's position. Large portions of dialogue, several lengthy diversions, and numerous shorter redundancies were excised: in all, by my count, 10 325 lines, that is approximately 113 500 words of a total of around 270 000, or nearly 40%. This had three main effects: it obscured the nature of Ritter's use of sources; it strengthened the heroic lineaments of Shaka's portrayal; and it crucially weighted the book's stylistic tenor towards the "historical".

The sources of *Shaka Zulu*

Ritter insisted that all his material was "authentic".²⁰ By this he meant, firstly, that the bulk of his information was derived from the work of A T Bryant, "that genial genius and master of accuracy" (K.Intro.7). With some significant exceptions (see below), Ritter was overawed by Bryant's learning, and eagerly quoted reams of *Olden Times*. Excepting a few passages, these quotations were sedulously acknowledged in *L*. Hyams objected to the extent and "unpleasant" style of the quotations, while claiming to "fully sympathise with [Ritter's] wish to pay honour to Dr Bryant" and promising to continue "to foot-note every single instance of material being drawn from Bryant".²¹

This is not what happened. Hyams fused extensive quotations into Ritter's parts of the account, paraphrased a great deal, and confined acknowledgement to a few inconsistent footnotes (only two with page references). Hence some 9000 words (about 6% of the published book) read effectively as plagiarism, including the first full eight pages. In some fourteen instances Hyams summarised original Bryant quotations and suppressed the source; in six substantial cases, Ritter himself plagiarised or paraphrased Bryant without acknowledgement; and in some nine instances, substantial quotations from Bryant are marked by inverted commas in the published version but no source is given. Hyams excised all Ritter's endnote numbers from the text, including at least 45 which must refer to Bryant. The depth of Ritter's debt to *Olden Times* was thus masked. In fact, his chronology depends entirely on Bryant, as does almost all the "ethnographic" information, with the exception of a few items drawn from Eileen Krige's *The Social System of the Zulus* (1936). In sum, a major portion of any reassessment of Ritter depends fundamentally on a reassessment of Bryant.

Ritter also quotes periodically from the eyewitness accounts of Isaacs and Fynn. He had added by hand to the K script two apparently direct acknowledgements to Isaacs' *Travels*, but these passages also occur in *Olden Times*. In the first Ritter repeats Bryant's misquotes ("In stature somewhat tall" for "Mr Fynn is in stature somewhat tall", "loved" for "beloved"), his interpolation ("1825, one year after arrival"), and his mistaken page reference (39; it actually occurs at page 32).²² A similar correlation of misquotes and ellipses in *all* the other Isaacs quotations proves that Ritter did not have the *Travels* in front of him when writing.

Ritter does appear to have read the accounts of Henry Francis Fynn, both in John Bird's *Annals of Natal* (1888), and in the so-called *Diary*, which appeared while Ritter was

in the process of writing (this may explain why the only quotations from the *Diary* appear at the latter end of the book). A few quotations from the Bird fragments appear early in the book, but the bulk of the Fynn quotes, like those from Isaacs, are also taken from Bryant's work.²³

Some fragments of information were obtained from other published sources which need be mentioned only briefly. With the exception of the few citations of Krige, one of R R R Dhlomo's *uShaka*, and one of Reginald Coupland's *Zulu Battle-Piece*, Ritter's other published references were confined by Hyams to the list of references at the end. However, handwritten footnotes to *K* show with greater precision which items these references support²⁴ - invariably very minor details which scarcely affect the tenor of the work.

Ritter's second, both more problematic and more important, claim to the "authentic" is his invocation of oral traditional sources. These, too, survived the editing process only as a list of names at the back of the first edition, and were thereafter omitted altogether, but Ritter's handwritten entries in *K* permit a greater precision of attribution.²⁵ I tabulate these below for clarity (asterisks denote that the informant *is* named at this point in the published text):

| Episode | Informants | Page refs. |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Dingiswayo vs. Zwide | Njengebantu | <i>K.vi.5/43-51</i> |
| Trainees stamp on devil-thorns | Njengebantu Mzuzeli Qwabe | <i>K.viii.4/67</i> |
| Shaka's revenge on bullies | Njengebantu | <i>K.viii.10/ 69-72</i> |
| Marriage of Mgobozzi/death of Mbiya | Njengebantu Mzuzeli Qwabe MtambogaKwayi Nqakamatshi | <i>K.x.1/ 82-9</i> |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Career of Matiwane | Nyanda | K.xii.11/109 |
| Battle of Qokli Hill | Njengebantu Mzuzeli Qwabe | K.xiv.1/120-49 |
| Mgobozi and Pampata | Nqakamatshi Mlandu Koza | K.xiii.9/123-9 |
| Ndwandwe ' <i>kisi</i> ' skirmish | Sigananda Cube | 170-1* |
| Pampata's allegory | Njengebantu | 157-8* |
| Trial of Ntombazi | Njengebantu Nqakamatshi | K.xvii.1/ 184-94 |
| Shaka grants right to <i>soma</i> | Nqakamatshi | 199-200* |
| Death of Mgobozi | Sigananda Cube Njengebantu | 290-8* |
| Erection-execution | Jabula Ema- Bomvini | 321-3* |

All dialogues between Shaka and Pampata or Mgobozi are attributed to oral sources (K.xv.14), though most were excised by Hyams. Other minor snippets also occur: Shaka's retraction of a death sentence is attributed to Njengebantu (K.vii.15/1955:62), and the images of Shaka's "piercing eyes" (K.vii.10/58), and of the whites' eyes of "fire" (268), to Sigananda. In all, some 78 pages, or 21% of the book, are attributed by *Ritter* to his oral informants. This count is complicated, however, by the fact that in at least 23 places, Hyams inserted "The chroniclers say..." or similar phrase, where there was no such indication in the original; in three of these, Njengebantu is specifically invoked, including Hyams' gratuitous assertion that Njengebantu "was told by his father" (199). Furthermore, there are a number of episodes altogether unsourced, and it seems probable that these are pure inventions.²⁶

Even if genuine, the historical value of this oral-traditional content is minimal. Two episodes, Mgobozi's marriage and the Pampata conversation, Ritter himself labels

"legendary" in *K* (ostensibly private conversations, which comprise at least 10% of these accounts, are by definition imaginary in any case). Neither of these characters features prominently in any other traditions I have found.²⁷ Ritter's versions of the death of Mbiya and of the "*kisi*" fight merely elaborate on Bryant (1929:634-7, 193-5), as does his *soma* episode (641), though Ritter claims the precedence of Nqakamatshi's slightly different version of the latter. Ritter's account of the Zwide-Dingiswayo fight follows the pattern of Qokli Hill (see below): he plagiarises Bryant's account of a *later* confrontation (cf. Bryant 1929:162), inserts a highly technical description of Shaka's tactics in a fight for which there is no independent evidence, and later picks up Bryant where he left off (Ritter 113; Bryant 1929:163). The melodramatic devil-thorns and Ntombazi incidents likewise receive no independent verification; the death of Mgobozi swerves abruptly from total reliance on Bryant (1929:588-91) and is no more than dramatisation. The paragraph on Matiwane's career, finally, Ritter attributed to "Bryant, Nyanda ka Zikali, and Ngwane woman eye-witness" (*K*.xii.11; cf. Ritter 109). This originally prefaced a 12-page account of Ngwane marauding, whose genealogy,²⁸ and the Bryant-based chronology, renders its independent historical value nil.

It remains possible that Ritter renders the outlines of some genuine stories heard nowhere else. However, most are highly dramatised, fictionalised, or anecdotal, hence historically extremely doubtful and of negligible explanatory value. Paradoxically, it was precisely this aspect in which Ritter perceived his "authenticity" to lodge - the Zulus "as they saw themselves" - but Hyams, at bottom disdainful of oral tradition, largely jettisoned it.

There are also deeper objections. When collected between seventy and a hundred years after the event, oral traditions are already highly problematic as historical sources, even under optimal conditions. Such conditions include knowing exactly who the informants were,

their status and affiliations, and the questioning and transcription techniques used. Of all Ritter's supposed informants, we know nothing, with the exception of Sigananda Cube, "the author's one living link with Shaka and his great captains" (Ritter 170n). But little information is attributed directly to Sigananda; Ritter simply says he corroborated Njengebantu, an unhelpful tautology.²⁹ Of Njengebantu, the main informant, we have only Ritter's own statement that he was his father's "head native court-orderly" in Upper Tugela, and was the son of one Mahola, "a co-warrior with Shaka in the Izi-Cwe (The Bushmen) regiment of Dingiswayo". I have found no references to Mahola elsewhere; he was perhaps not of sufficiently prominent status. Ritter claimed that "he was a frequent if not daily listener of Njengebantu's recitals of Shaka's deeds" (xi). Just how young Ritter himself was is indicated by his own note: "Most of the information regarding this campaign was obtained from Njengebantu emaBomvini in 1901-3. He was then approximately 68 years old" (K.vi.6). In 1903, Ritter was 13, and made no written transcriptions; it seems highly improbable that, good as his memory might have been, he could have remembered such details with accuracy *nearly fifty years later*.³⁰

In short, Ritter's use of written sources is clearly extremely limited and selective, even disingenuous, and his evocation of oral traditions so dubious as to be practically useless to the historian, unless corroborated by independent sources.

Reinventing "Shaka"

Biography almost inevitably tends to centre its subject as a prime mover of historical events, and to view events as products of individual, psychological motivation. Ritter, while clearly working within a "great man" paradigm of history, paradoxically attempts to de-centre Shaka as cause of a sub-continental wave of violence (the "mfecane", a term Ritter himself does not use), while lionising his nation-building personality.³¹ The defence is based partly on

chronology, partly on Ritter's overriding concern to present a more sympathetic protagonist: "by no conceivable stretch of the imagination can Shaka be blamed for the devastations" of the early 1800s; these were largely Zwide's and other "desperadoes'" doing, while the "empire-builder" Shaka "destroyed only in order to rebuild" (107-8).³² In this respect, Ritter departs strongly from Bryant (cf. Bryant 1929:94,252). Although, as we have seen, hints of a more heroic figure had appeared in earlier texts, Ritter takes this to new lengths, including the deliberate misquotation of his sources. Where Fynn, describing the first assassination attempt on Shaka, wrote that Shaka "*cried all night*", Ritter substitutes the more muscular "declaimed" (cf. Bird 83; Bryant 1929:579; Ritter 264). To the same end, Ritter adds the italicised phrase to a Bryant quote (Mgobozi speaking): "Thus shall I go, spearing my way through the serried ranks of the foe, until I emerge in their rear *or die - and so must we all do for our Father*" (Ritter 292; Bryant 1929:591). Similarly, while Bryant mimics Isaacs' account of Shaka facing death with pathetic cowardice, Ritter plagiarises Bryant up to the point where Shaka turns to face his assassins, then "swerves" to paint instead a picture of "awful majesty" (cf. Bryant 1929:662; Ritter 349). Ritter's determination to validate Shaka's heroism is further indicated by handwritten notes in *K* (in the event not acted upon): "Add Shaka's personal efforts", "Elaborate Shaka's supervision of the making of the blade" (*K.iii.7, v.6*).

Ritter also stresses aspects hitherto underplayed or non-existent: Shaka as the lover of Pampata, jovial in warrior camaraderie, even-handed, if implacable, in justice. Much of this is certainly imaginary: the scenes of Shaka's "Court at Bulawayo" (237ff), for instance, are unsourced; the demonstration of James King's belittlement by Shaka's shrewdness (340) is a fictional embellishment.

A second major effect of Hyams' revisions was to reinforce this heroic lineament. Ritter had been unable to resist the clichéd rhetoric of popular blood and thunder, often derived from Bryant and running directly counter to the coldly level courage elsewhere presented. Hyams, presumably with an eye on a more liberal, post-war readership, excised dozens of passages and phrases of this kind: "beat them into a bloody heap"; "eyes still blazing with battle lust"; "bounded forward like a pack of wolves"; "an exultant gleam in his eyes as he looks at the dumb victims"; "the figure of death personified"; "frenzy of uncontrolled rage", and so on.³³ Cumulatively, these excisions served substantially to reduce a schizoid quality in Ritter's portrayal which, one senses, arose not merely from an inability to weigh empirical probabilities, but from the radical tension between the nature of his material and his own impulses. Although considerable brutality survives (the execution-for-errections episode [320-3], while claiming oral traditional authentication, is, as far as one can tell, invented), a markedly more self-consistent portrait is finally achieved, not through detailed reassessment of source-statements, but in conformity to an ideal existing largely in Hyams' imagination.

Style and "history"

Apart from the long quotations from Bryant, the bulk of Hyams' excisions from the ms. of *Shaka Zulu* were pages of clumsy dialogue and sundry diversions. One brief quotation will make it abundantly clear why:

And now love's battle is truly joined. Beware! oh gallant maiden, loves [sic] arena has been entered by no ordinary mortal. A Titan's passion has been unleashed, with ruthless, reckless rending action. Pampata gasps and sobs, but clings tighter still in that crushing hot embrace. She fears and yet wishes to be hurt. It thrills her to the core to be so absolutely dominated by this terrific male. A whirlwind of passion sweeps her to the brink of ecstacy [sic] sublime... (L 63)

Frequently, the substance of lengthy conversations is reduced by Hyams to a paragraph; the six pages of dialogue from which the above quotation comes, for instance, translates to the 18-line paragraph "Having killed in battle ... starving vagabonds" (Ritter 23). The overall

effect of innumerable such compressions is to suppress the more obviously fictional stylistic tenets in favour of a more solid, "historical" style of declarative sentences (in this case toughened by Hyams' insertion of the word "certainly"). What Ritter had envisioned as an authentic Zulu tone and style in the stories, Hyams found tedious, and which Ritter admitted, removed from a performative context, "falls flat".³⁴ Ritter included, for example, a blow-by-blow, eight-page account of Shaka's encounter with the "Mad Giant"; an intermediate summary by Hyams reveals his impatience:

The battle between Shaka and the giant is described by "the chronicler" at great length and in much tedious detail. Since the Zulus did not produce a Homer to embellish such heroic episodes with splendid language, the account need not be given here. At one point, when Shaka was in great danger, his friends offered to come to his aid, but he ordered them off. This was his *indaba*. The giant was in poor condition and Shaka's feints and sham retreats wearied him. Both protagonists were wounded, the giant mortally before Shaka was able to deal the death stroke. (L 97)

This action is compressed still further, to the phrase "Shaka met and killed him" (Ritter 36); both Shaka's arrogance and his wounding are suppressed. In numerous other ways, Shaka's portrayal is altered: in Hyams' version, Shaka is less bloodthirsty, less power-hungry (Hyams cuts the sentence: Shaka "dreamed of a time when he would own unlimited herds with which he would acquire all the power he wanted" [L 41]), as well as less fragile (he cuts: "he was almost pathetically grateful to all those who had in any way been kind to Nandi..." [L 35]). In all, Hyams' stylistic smoothening presents a much more measured opinion; an edge of hyperbole is eliminated. The book would never have achieved its historiographical status without this stylistic shift.

At the same time, the fictional element is not eliminated. While "facts" appear to cluster more densely, hence commandingly, the work remains a "good read", leavened with sufficient sex, voyeuristic violence, "native" dialogue, and ethnographic oddities to be grandly entertaining to the European reader. Since the scholarship is palpably shabby, this "entertainment quotient" must be a primary psychological lever in the book's acceptance, not

merely by the popular, but also by its historiographical, readership.

The Zulu-Ndwandwe clash

No single case study will ratify all the points offered above, but one crucial instance may sharpen some of them. The central clashes between the Zulu and Ndwandwe polities, ending with the flight of Zwide and the general disintegration of the Ndwandwe, has become the cynosure of Shakan military courage and tactical genius, and is regarded as a hinge event in the rise of Zulu power. In particular the "battle of Qokli Hill" (variously spelled) has been offered in almost all the mainstream histories of the last thirty years as the crucial confrontation, indeed as the "supreme vindication" (Knight 11-12) of Shaka's new tactics (cf. Morris 1969:61-2; Omer-Cooper 1966:32; Roberts 1974:51-2; Davenport 1987:18; Thompson 1990:83; Laband 1995:19).

Ritter's account of Qokli Hill (chs.12-13) is bracketed by sections (chs.12 and 15) drawn wholly from Bryant. In recounting, in the first half of ch.12, the death of Dingiswayo and the onset of the "first Zulu-Ndwandwe war", Ritter offers no substantive item not to be found in Bryant (1929:163-74). In the two initial scene-setting paragraphs, Hyams inserts only the phrase "disappointed and angry" (Ritter 113). In the following account of Ntombazana's procurement of Dingiswayo's semen and the initial Mthethwa march, Ritter himself is responsible for a page of paraphrase and verbatim plagiarism from Bryant. From "Here they awaited the arrival of Shaka", Ritter departs from Bryant's conspicuous lack of explanation, both imputing outright incompetence to the Mthethwa generals, and inserting an invented tactical scenario involving "exposing their available forces in detail" and a positively misleading comparison with the World War One German general von Moltke. At this point Hyams cuts and summarises a 45-line quotation from Bryant (1929:164-5); the verbal exchange between Zwide and the captured Dingiswayo is plagiarised; Dingiswayo's

dignified death and the melodramatic suicide of his attendants is, in contrast, an embellishment of Bryant. The judgement of Dingiswayo as a "great man" of "reason", is Bryant paraphrased, but the defence of Shaka's brutal vigour as vital in subduing "turbulent" chieftains is Ritter's own. Having just acknowledged a quotation from Bryant (Ritter 116n), Hyams here suppresses several of Ritter's original acknowledgements, so that much of the build-up to Qokli Hill (116-119; cf. Bryant 1929:166-74) reads as plagiarism or close paraphrase of Bryant. (Ritter's Chapter 15 follows similar patterns, and need not be detailed here.)

However, in piling up details of the preparations for and the progress of the battle of Qokli Hill itself, Ritter abruptly swerves. He apparently takes his cue from a brief mention of the hill from Bryant (1929:174), somewhere *near* which, according to Bryant, Shaka "mustered his army in a great circle", before arranging them in a conventional "chest-and-horns" formation for the confrontation. Ritter appears deliberately to misread or refashion this "great circle" into a defensive formation on the hill itself, whereupon a whole strategy is elaborated. The case for a pure fabrication here is overwhelming.

Firstly, Ritter provides no source for this information for several pages, and then only for the "legendary" conversation between Shaka and Pampata (*K* xiv.20; cf. Ritter 124). Indeed, a great deal of Ritter's "authenticity" for the battle itself depends on these supposed conversations, most of which (about 150 lines in ch.12, 210 in ch.13) were excised by Hyams. Secondly, many of the details (and certainly the manner in which they are explained) are not of the kind that would be preserved accurately in oral traditions at all, particularly numbers of participants and casualties; John Laband (1992:90) has noted of the 1879 war, when eyewitness accounts were plentiful, that the Zulus were characteristically extremely vague about their numbers.³⁵ Thirdly, with the exception of the Ndwandwe

Nomahlanjana (and there is no evidence that he *commanded* the Ndwandwe force, as Ritter claims), Ritter writes of a number of Zulu warrior-heroes who do not accord with those in Bryant's account, and occur nowhere else I can find. Fourthly, Ritter appears to import from a subsequent clash the notion of a diversionary tactic (cf. Bryant 1929:206), though he repeats this idea in his embellishment of Bryant's account of that later, final conflict with Zwide (ch.15).³⁶

Finally, and most tellingly, in no other oral tradition does the battle at Qokli hill feature. There are four detailed accounts of the main Zulu-Ndwandwe clash in *The James Stuart Archive*, which agree in essentials.³⁷ All these testimonies relate a decisive battle on the Mhlathuze river after a protracted, feinting retreat by the Zulus: an encounter bearing greater resemblance to the Bryant-Ritter account of the final clash (Bryant 1929:204ff; Ritter 167ff). Unlike Bryant-Ritter, however, none affirms Soshangane as the Ndwandwe commander on this later occasion, and there is no agreement on the meaning or chronology of the "kisi" encounter (cf. Bryant 1929:194; Ritter 171; *JSA* I 183, III 223). Only Mmemi and Mkehlangana mention a "Kwa Gkori hill" on the White Mfolozi as the site of two previous Zulu *defeats* at the hands of the Ndwandwe, which Wright perhaps too directly associates with this particular "battle of Qokli hill" (*JSA* II 211,219,270,282).

While all extant oral traditions remain problematic and need further intensive analysis, and while it remains just possible that Ritter *did* pick up an oral reference to such a battle, it seems clear that his account of Qokli Hill is based on little more than a hint and a name, and that it is essentially a fabrication of his (and possibly his father's) fascination with matters military.³⁸ Importantly, its unacceptability as evidence eliminates one of the primary icons of Shaka's alleged tactical genius. It may not be possible to assert that Shaka was an *unsuccessful* commander, but if the likely self-serving bias of Zulu accounts is also

considered, the manoeuvres of the Zulu-Ndwandwe conflict can cogently be interpreted as evincing considerable Zulu confusion and desperation, and substantive evidence for Shaka's military acumen on the conventional Caesar-like scale all but vanishes.³⁹ A cornerstone of Ritter's magnificent view of Shaka, in short, practically dissolves.

Dangerous admiration

Shaka Zulu is a palimpsest of two men's - Ritter's and Hyams' - shabby scholarship, incomplete reading, personal predilections, conscious fictionalising, and outright deceit. Little blame, it should be stressed, can be attached to Ritter himself, whose lack of scholarly background was not his fault - and after all he saw himself as writing a *novel*. The extraordinary aspect is the credulity with which his script (or Hyams' version of it) was assimilated by subsequent scholars who have no such excuse. While it is arguable that fiction is capable of displaying historical actors' psyches as motive force, in ways that a modern historiography of abstracted social, economic, and political "forces" eschews, Ritter's *Shaka* is clearly a constructed figure largely unsupported by acceptable evidence and entirely decontextualised from the broader southern African scene. Any empirical value *Shaka Zulu* holds will be found to derive from Bryant. However, its influence as an exciting and readable introduction to Shaka and the Zulu, particularly on southern African readers, has been incalculable. While the book has certainly performed the service of displacing the monstrosity of Isaacs' mendacious portrayal, it may have done comparable harm in helping generate a myth of militant nationhood on which present-day violence continues to draw, a dangerous admiration which unquestioning repetition has further solidified.

NOTES

1. Over 50 000 copies printed in Penguin editions alone (Peter Carson, Penguin Group, pers.comm.). I am grateful to two of Ritter's surviving children, Mr Ray Ritter and Mrs Dawn Gerson, for their help and information.

2. The earlier of the two mss. of *Shaka Zulu* is in the Killie Campbell Museum (hereafter referred to as K); the later in the Local History Museum, Durban (hereafter L). The pagination of K is discontinuous, ie. within chapters only, so I refer to chapter and page; the pagination of L is continuous. All references to the published version are to the Longman (1955) first edition.

3. Carsten Ludwig Arnold Ritter, according to Ernest, was born in 1833, served in the Crimea with the King's German Legion, and emigrated to the "turbulent Kaffrarian frontier of the Cape Colony in the combined roll [sic] of settler and border guard" (K.Intro.2). He was awarded a land grant at Braunschweig, between King William's Town and Stutterheim (Schwär and Pape 37). Commissioned in the Transvaal mounted forces in 1878, he was marginally involved in the attack on Sekukhune's Pedi in 1879, and by 1881 was commanding a police post at Fort Albert (Transvaal Archives R983/81). On 1 October 1882 he was appointed Border Agent in Natal's Upper Tugela district, acting magistrate of Lower Tugela and Umsinga between May 1886 and December 1889, as Dundee's first resident magistrate on 5 January 1890, and finally, on 5 November 1894, when Ernst was four, resident magistrate at New Hanover, where he remained until pensioned in February 1904 (Natal Archives A140; *South African Yearbook* 1903-4, 276). He then moved back to Upper Tugela, where he is recorded in 1910 as a JP living at Zunckels, near Winterton (*The Natal Directory* 1910, 45). Ernst wrongly claims he was the first magistrate there to preside over Zikali's Ngwane. In that area, too, C W Posselt, Ernst's maternal grandfather, set up his first Natal mission station; Ritter would credit him with some information included in the original drafts of *Shaka Zulu*, but not in the published version (xi; cf. K.Intro.2).

4. Ritter had certainly offered himself to recruit for the campaign early in 1878 in Pretoria, headed a native contingent (tribe unspecified, but probably not Swazi) under Captain F Carrington in July 1878, and shared the spoils in May 1880 in being appointed "Native Commissioner" at Fort Weeber in the Leolu Mountains. See Transvaal Archives R995/78, R1050/80; Gon 22-30; Smith 1967:24,28,59; Delius 208; Preston 1973. Mphahlele (34) seems to indicate there was wider knowledge of Ritter senior's involvement than these sources show.

5. Mrs Gerson, pers.comm.

6. Ritter to M S Coaker, 31.3.1948 (LHM).

7. Caption to photograph, written by Mrs Gerson, LHM, file 581 R. By 1939 he had developed a gun-cotton substitute derived from wattle bark and banana stems. This anticipated the bucolic tenor of subsequent projects: paper from baobabs and sugar-cane; the patented "Ritter pre-digestion process for the conversion of unpalatable plant matter into palatable stock feed"; a weatherproof chemical compound, derived from antheaps, for building construction and road surfaces. This last, resulting in a company, 'Terrabind', was commercially the most successful; in the years before his death in 1965, Ritter was back in Germany, based in Aschaffenburg, surfacing *autobahnen* by this process.

8. Mrs Gerson, pers.comm. Ritter was clearly hoping for much from his writing. He informed Sir Ernest Guest on 15 November 1950 that the rough draft was nearly complete, and was already looking forward to a second book which would "explode the Afrikaner myth that they cleaned up the country, and that the British did practically nothing", and would enlarge upon the "epic heroism of the British settlers at Port Natal", thus "breaking a lance in the cause of justice" (Ritter to Guest, 15.11.51 [KCM 64426]). This Anglophilic polemic from a man otherwise loudly pro-German seems never to have been produced. As for *Shaka Zulu*, Ritter was, long before its completion, anticipating returns sufficient to cover his debts to Madeleine Pearce and Fanny Wood. These amounted, in his calculation, to £1737.12.10 (Ritter to Pearce, ?2.12.50 [LHM]). He returned compulsively, with almost pathetic gratitude, to this effort to recompense the two sisters for "spen[ding] all [their] substance on the development of [his] various projects" over twenty years (Ritter to Wood and Pearce, 12.11.51 [LHM]), and for "two and one half years free board and lodging and eighteen months free service from [Fanny Wood] in general secretarial work and typing" (Ritter to Wood, 22.12.51 [LHM]). His endeavour to involve the women in sharing the proceeds of the book, of his inventions, and of an attempt to establish a shareholders' "syndicate", went so far as to overcome their excessive humility by threatening to "otherwise go on a binge" (Ritter to ?, ?1952 [LHM]).

9. Ritter to Fanny Wood, 22.12.51. Though he did nothing towards the German war effort in the Second World War, he had apparently smuggled quinine to his hero General von Lettow Vorbeck in east Africa in the First (Mrs Gerson, pers.comm.).

10. Ritter to M S Coaker, 31.3.1948 (LHM). "The thread of concern [with illegitimacy] running through Shaka is, I believe, because of this. Shaka was going to show us all how to triumph over our disabilities/limitations/stigmas" (Mrs Gerson, pers.comm.).

11. Ritter to ?, ?1952 (LHM).

12. Ritter to Campbell, 8.9.1950 (KCM 64426).

13. Ritter to Hyams, 3.11.1952 (KCM 64432). A similar tone is evident in a letter to another rescuer, Horace Coaker, who partially "grubstaked" Ritter in the writing of *Shaka Zulu*, whom Ritter described as "the executive God" who "had of necessity to use the fiery Jovian sparks, and sometimes bolts, to knock some sense into our erring humanity's heads - particularly mine" (quoted in Leach 1991:105).

14. The close conformity of the Shaka story to hero-legend structures has been pointed out by Golan 1990 (and see Chapter Eight above). Though foreshadowed by Thomas Mofolo's ambivalent romance *Chaka* (1931), of which Ritter was apparently unaware, this folk-tale structure only coalesces in white writing with *Shaka Zulu*, and has only tenuous empirical foundations. I am uncertain only about Ritter's debt to R R R Dhlomo's *uShaka* (1937), since neither an English translation of the Zulu account, nor, as far as I know, any comprehensive analysis, have been published. From the very fragmentary and tendentious treatment in Skikna 1984:225ff, it seems Dhlomo himself relied heavily on Bryant and on a Mofolo-like Christian moral schema; and certainly Ritter's account of Shaka's conception, at least, bears no resemblance to Dhlomo's. A good translation of *uShaka* is much needed.

15. E A Ritter, "Memorandum reflecting events up to the present stage of the proposed book 'Shaka - The Zulu Caesar,'" n.d., but presumably written in mid-1951 (KCM 64437).

16. Ritter, "Memorandum", 2. An early script was apparently lent to a Mr Humphries or Humphreys, and subsequently lost (Mrs Gerson, pers.comm.).

17. Longman to Ritter, 1.10.52 (KCM 64428).

18. His own earlier work Hyams described as concerned mainly with "the helplessness of the individual man - usually a young man - up against human institutions", and it is possible that the Shaka project appealed to this predilection. Though Hyams' most successful work was still ahead of him in 1952, the Shaka script must have been light work for a man who would later be described as "the most exasperatingly gifted writer in England", and not one, despite Ritter's insistence to the contrary, for which he cared to take credit (see Wakeman 697-9).

19. Hyams offered to have the revised version retyped and sent to Ritter for his approval. What does appear to have been returned to Ritter, either at this point or later, is a typescript only slightly different from *K*, bearing all Hyams' revisionary marks and interleaved handwritten summaries. This ms., *L*, also appears to have been proof-read by at least one other person before Ritter sent it to Hyams, possibly Cuthbertson, "who advised me while I was writing my manuscript" (Ritter to Hyams, 3.11.52). This reader corrected numerous small errors and made suggestions for revisions, seldom amounting to more than a word or short phrase. To some of these Ritter subsequently objected in his characteristic tiny print, but most of them were incorporated by Hyams into his own revisions. Strangely, both *K* and *L* have the same Introduction, dated "2nd April 1951", though *L* is clearly the later script. The only substantive change between them is the excision of some nine pages on Mzilikazi (*K*.xxi.14-23; cf. compressed accounts at *L*.536, 1955:233). Ritter loyally defended only Campbell's Foreword; Hyams gave in; but it was eventually cut, as was a clumsy summary of "What the Book Portrays" and "A Glimpse of the Man" (Ritter to Hyams, 3.11.52; Ritter to Killie Campbell, 5.11.52; Killie Campbell to Ritter, 7.11.52 [KCM 64431/3]; Hyams to Ritter, n.d. but posted on 10.11.52 [KCM 66434]).

20. Ritter to Hyams, 3.11.52.

21. Hyams to Ritter, 24.10.52.

22. Cf. *K*.xxiii.2 and xxix.10; Bryant 1929:567; Isaacs 32; Ritter 1955:226 and 290. Other quotations from Isaacs via Bryant are at 257-8(*Olden Times* 589), 266(598-9), 289-90(618-20), 301-2(633-4). In one peculiar instance (Ritter 1955:246), Hyams appears to have himself inserted a truncated quotation from the *Travels* (204) - his handwritten insert is labelled "New matter for page 627" - indicating that he may have read Isaacs for himself (*L*.627). However, the quotation also occurs in Bryant (638), so this remains unlikely, if unprovable.

23. Quotations attributed to Fynn in Bird occur at Ritter 49(Bird 67; Ritter carefully omits Fynn's adjective "excessive liberality"), 56(78; considerably modified), 79(not in fact in Bird). Quotations from Bird via Bryant occur at 256-7(*Olden Times* 570-1), 261-5(576-80), 290(588), 291(592), 311-4(608-11). Quotations from the *Diary* occur at 285(*Diary* 121), 318n(300; the detail of Mbuzikazi as mother of Shaka's son is *not* in Fynn), 330-2(143-6), 333-4(151-2), 339(90), 344(138).

24. The first footnote reads "Russell's *Natal History* p.132 and Njengebantu emaBomvini" (K.vi.5), and refers to the campaign against Zwide; Russell in fact provides only the briefest summary of this war, and the reference seems to be intended as a support to the alleged oral-traditional content (cf. Ritter 43). A second reference is to "L H Samuelson" (K.x.6), applying to the phrase "black finch plumes", a translation of "sakabula feathers" in the middle of a (mis)quote from Krige: Ritter presumably pursued this reference from Krige's own footnote, and there is no sign he read any more of Samuelson's work (cf. Samuelson 1899:115; Krige 141; Ritter 85). The third reference is to "Delegorgue, 'Voyage dans l'Afrique Australe', vol.II page 237, and E J Krige, page 260" (K.xv.10): this notes the possibility of safely cross-examining the King at the *umkhosi* festival; only the Krige citation survived Hyams' revisions (cf. Ritter 156). Finally, a fourth footnote cites "[William Cornwallis] Harris" and "[Robert] Moffat", both in evidence of the character of Mzilikazi: no further source details are given, and the passage was in any case excised. The list of sources in the 1955 edition also cited James Stuart's "*U-Hlanga Kula* (London 1924), and Graham Mackeurtan's *The Cradle Days of Natal* (1930), but there is no evidence of specific reference to either.

25. Hyams' list (Ritter 377) reads: "Njengebantu Ema-Bomvini, Chief Sigananda Cube ... Nqakamatshe Ntombela, Msuzeli Qwabe, Mtambokagwayi Gcumisa and Chief Ncwadi Ngwane". Ncwadi's contribution is nowhere specified by Ritter. Mlandu Koza is missing from the list, as is Jabula Ema-Bomvini; the latter is cited as "one of [Shaka's] senior Fasimba guards" (321), and there is no possibility Ritter could have heard the long account attributed to him. No alternative explanation is supplied.

26. Among these are the mystical-bestial forging of the assegai-blade (Ritter 25-31); Shaka the great lover (201-4); the 'Royal hunt' (205-15); and the eclipse (270-5; almost certainly picked up from a passing reference in *Olden Times*, 384-5). In this last case, the sentence, "There now occurred an event subsequently much used by writers of fiction" (271), implying that others had found the story before Ritter, is Hyams' arbitrary insertion; I have found it in no previous Zulu-related text, and it is one of those apocryphal tales found in many "colonial" narratives.

27. Pampata occurs only as a passing reference in Bryant, 1929:637; she occurs not at all in the extensive traditions of *The James Stuart Archive*, and plays almost no part in other Zulu views of Shaka: she is mentioned once only, for instance, in Mazisi Kunene's *Emperor Shaka the Great* (1979:62). Mgobozi, similarly, is mentioned a number of times in Bryant, but occurs nowhere in the sources he cites (eg. at Bryant 1929:594), nor in *JSA*.

28. Ritter footnoted in L: "Related in 1848 to the Rev C W Posselt [Ritter's maternal grandfather] the first missionary of the Ngwanes at Emmaus in the Bergville district, where Zikali, the son of Matiwane settled after the overthrow of Dingane and collected the scattered remnants of the tribe in a reservation allotted to him by the Natal Colonial Government. The account was transmitted by the Rev C W Posselt to his son Nathaniel who related it to the [author]. Although written in the first person it does not purport to be a verbatim account. Unfortunately the woman's name has not been preserved" (L.260n). The passage is a litany of appallingly relished details of rape, impalement, and murder; Hyams scribbled on the ms., "Much of this revolting story has been cut", and eventually dropped it entirely. However, it is worth noting both Ritter's view that this violence was "typical of the happenings to the innumerable other tribal hordes, and must not be regarded as in any way denoting the peculiar ferocity of the Ngwanes" (L 260), and Hyams' that at least some "tortures and horrors ... are essential in expressing both [sic] the character of the hero, of the Nguni, and of their culture" (Hyams to Ritter, 24.10.52).

29. Sigananda had been an *udibi*, a mat-carrier, under Shaka. After an enormously long career in his tribal lands between Nkandla and the Tugela, which included granting Cetshwayo refuge in 1883, arrest after the disturbances of 1888, and participation in Bambatha's rebellion, he died in 1906 aged about 96. It may be, as Shula Marks avers, that Sigananda was "among the oldest living representatives of ancient military pride and tradition" - but her evidence is Ritter's citation of him as oral source (Marks 1970:212). It is far from clear how (though not impossible that) the young Ritter achieved the intimacy he claims with Sigananda at all (Ritter xii), since his father, at New Hanover, lived some forty miles south of Cube territory in a different magisterial district; he may have had some contact immediately following Sigananda's arrest in 1906 (Mrs Gerson, pers.comm.).

30. To be fair, Ritter's daughter remembers him repeating "with rich, unvarying detail" accounts of battles like Waterloo and of the Zulus, and believes it quite possible that he preserved the stories in this way from his youth; she too, however, has no independent station from which to judge their fidelity to an original (Mrs Gerson, pers.comm.).

31. Ritter had no sense whatever of deeper historical forces. One footnote reads: "There must have been some basic cause of these movements. Peoples practicing agriculture by essartage and stock-raising are often driven into movement by temporary soil exhaustion. This is a possible cause" (Ritter 110). However, this is *Hyams'* insertion, and is no more than a spasm of shrewd speculation.

32. Several other defensive passages, tinged with a note of desperation, were excised by Hyams: a discussion of Shaka's "inferiority complex" [L 189]; a paragraph in which Shaka is defended against the charge that he killed his mother (L 141); another in which he is "exonerated of devastation" (L 513); and so on. But Hyams also cut this contradictory passage: "Finally this blissfully growing embryo [Shaka], if not the primary cause, was at least the single most potent force which made it possible for white civilisation in South Africa to extend beyond the Great Kei River. Without this child of destiny ... there would have been no Natal, no Orange Free State, or Transvaal...", and "Inscrutable Providence" could not have decreed "a chain effect of super-atomic violence whose cataclysmic radiations [would] destroy or re-shape the lives of millions of human beings" (L 9). The justificatory undertone of this hysterical exaggeration is unmistakeable.

33. This dimension of the ms. makes Ritter's attack on the "cheap sensationalism" of previous "popular-fiction writers" (72) doubly inappropriate - even disingenuously defensive, given the wilful misreading of Bryant involved.

34. Ritter to Hyams, 3.11.52 (KCM).

35. An unimportant, but illuminating example of the way in which Ritter and Hyams between them toyed with figures is indicated at L.87, where 30, 50 and 60 yards are entertained as possibilities (cf. Ritter 33).

36. The accounts of these two separate clashes are frequently conflated in subsequent literature, eg. Omer-Cooper 1988:56. But cf. Webb and Wright 1987:5-6, where Cetshwayo speaks of two major clashes; Laband (1995:19) uses this source to continue to insist, wrongly I think, on the Gqokli Hill location.

37. The four accounts are those of Baleni ka Silwana (JSA I 17); Mandhlakazi (II 180); Mangati (II 208); and Mmemi ka Nguluzane (III 271). Some details are added by Dinya (I 101). An aberrant account is given by Jantshi ka Nongila (I 184), recounting a defence of Shaka's Bulawayo kraal; Ritter includes a similar account which is *not* derived from Bryant, possibly a solitary indicator that Ritter had remembered a genuine, albeit tenuous, oral tradition (Ritter 144). Cf. also the brief accounts in Fuze 1979:47-9; Webb and Wright 1987:4-6.

38. Ritter's 'true passion', according to his daughter, 'was to have been a military strategist', and he 'worshipped the old Vikings [who were] an obvious source of his interest in and admiration of the Zulus' (Mrs Gerson, pers.comm.).

39. The only major Shakan clash witnessed by Fynn, moreover, appears an unenterprising stabbing-match (Bird I 88); but cf. John Laband's discussion (1995:34-42).

PART FOUR

Mythologies

Whilst case studies such as those of Isaacs, Fynn, Bryant and Ritter provide insights into the ways in which received perceptions of Shaka were modified by these individual writers, deep continuities also run through the Shakan literature. On these continuities, notions of social identity are founded.

Some of these continuities are dependent on the stability of white supremacist rule: some stylistic aspects of the Shakan literature are held to as tenaciously as other more pragmatic tenets of colonial rule. Clearly, however, some of these aspects are carried, by a kind of linguistic inertia (J V Wertsch calls it "the principle of decontextualisation of mediational means" [1985:32]), beyond the immediate social or political context of the individual writer, and also, often, beyond the immediate colonial context into works by overseas writers. In these cases, receptiveness of received "facts" is predicated not so much on the immediacies of power - indeed, they may be explicitly anti-imperialist - as on deeper preconceptions and metaphors so old that they have attained "mythical" status.

Amongst such inherited pressures and constraints are the various conventions surrounding representations of the "primitive". In Chapter Ten I examine the (at least) two thousand year-old tropes of monstrosity and of heroism to which Shaka has been obliged to conform in varying combinations, arguing that either pole is equally indicative of the same mythologising, self-identifying propensity. Chapter Eleven shows that a pervasive "primitivist" mytheme in the literature is that of versions of Paradise, within which even ostensibly rationalistic or historicist paradigms are organised.

CHAPTER TEN

MONSTROUS HERO

He commands like a Pharaoh, he swings like the tide. He is worshipped and he is despised. He has all the symptoms of a genius, and is entirely self-made. (Gray 1987:57)

Putting these words into the mouth of his character Francis Farwell [sic], Stephen Gray compactly summarises white writers' ambivalence towards Shaka's insistently heroic stature. He is both magnificent and capricious, admirable and satanic, a tainted genius - the word "symptoms" is Gray's recognition that Shaka's heroism has always been portrayed as somehow diseased (Isaacs had used the same word). White writers' vacillation between horror and awe is a synecdoche of a common attitude towards all of Africa:

Throughout the history of Africanist writing there is a striking tendency towards dual, polarised evaluations, which are often too hastily ascribed to this or that historical trend. Africa has been made to bear a double burden, of monstrousness *and* nobility, all imposed by a deeper condition of difference and instability (Pliny's "newness").

The result is a European discourse at odds with itself.... The gesture of reaching out to the most unknown part of the world and bringing it back as language ... ultimately brings Europe face to face with nothing but itself, with the problems its own discourse imposes. (Miller 1985:5)

This is the self-serving (*self-saving*) propensity to mythologise as an aid to preserving a certain coherence of identity: the stability in the portrayal of Shaka over a century and a half is in large part a result of, and is expressed by, this recourse to mythic icons, stories, and stereotypical symbolic clusters (mythemes).

As Miller hints, the iconography of both monsters and heroes in the European consciousness goes back to Classical times, if not before; Malvern van Wyk Smith (1979, 1988), for instance, has demonstrated the evolution of the "two Ethiopias" - one savage, one

beneficent - from Herodotus onwards. The images of both monster and hero, a varying admixture of which characterises virtually every account of Shaka, are thus predicated less on historical evidence than on idealised fictional - which is to say mythemic - models. Like the other choices of diction, comparison, and genre already examined, this iconography carries powerful social-psychological meaning. Most interesting, indeed, is the readiness with which the negative image mutates into its antithesis; both, I suggest, are functions of the same syndrome of psychological projection.

As in the epigraph from John Ross, it is almost invariably the very inexplicability of the antithesis of the monstrous and the admirable which is foregrounded. A first hint of this is evident in Nathaniel Isaacs' hysterical invective, quoted before but worth another inspection:

Thus the eve of going to war was always the period of brutal and inhuman murders, in which [Shaka] seemed to indulge with as much savage delight as the tiger with his prey. When he had once determined on a sanguinary display of his power, nothing could restrain his ferocity; his eyes evinced his pleasure, his iron heart exulted, his whole frame seemed as if it felt a joyous impulse at seeing the blood of innocent creatures flowing at his feet; his hands grasped, his herculean and muscular limbs exhibiting by their motion a desire to aid in the execution of the victims of the vengeance; in short he seemed a being in human form, with more than the physical capabilities of a man; a giant without reason; a monster created with more than ordinary power and disposition for doing mischief, and from whom we recoil as we would at the serpent's hiss or the lion's growl. (Isaacs I 281)

The main emphasis is obviously on Shaka's animality, which is effectively equated with a species of paranoia: he is fundamentally "inhuman", "without reason". But into this is unwillingly insinuated a hint of the "herculean" classical Greek hero, the "warrior with intimations of immortality" (Folkenflik 11), a "giant" with "more than ordinary power". In this, and in the image of the "iron heart", one is also reminded of the violent side of Thomas Carlyle's putative Hero, formulated not long after Shaka's time, a man who will "sweep away thy constitutional, sentimental and other cobwebberies... a fellow of most flashing discernment, of most strong lion-heart; - in whom, as it were, within a frame of oak and

iron, the gods have planted the soul of a 'man of genius'!" (quoted in Houghton 330). To be sure, Isaacs' Shaka is also consciously the antithesis of, say, Tennyson's Arthur or Ulysses; Shaka's transcendence of the human, according to Isaacs, is wholly anarchic and destructive. Yet he is also a kind of Miltonic heroic devil who commands unwilling awe; the serpent is uneasily shackled with the lion.

The concentration on the ambivalence itself, coupled with the hyperbolic diction, may best be described as Gothic. As discussed earlier, Gothic tales had forebears in centuries of "chap-books" and penny-dreadfuls which often expounded on the deeds of historical worthies. These stereotypical heroes or heroines were "frequently a foundling of unknown birth, the murderous villain, [the] cruel parent" (Dalziel 6). This has obvious parallels in the Shaka story. Further, the Gothic theme of morality sold to the Devil became popular in the first half of the nineteenth century, as in Lewis's *The Monk*, Byron's *The Reformed Transformèd*, and Reynolds' *Faust*; this idea is also common in portrayals of Shaka, and is explicit, for instance, in Bryant (1929:648) - not to mention the influential Thomas Mofolo. No other literary character conforms so closely to the fictional Shaka as the Gothic hero, who was

a hero of immense energy, some evil, a man of action and passion, free as long as he had the power to preserve his freedom, who seemed to bear little relation to the social or intellectual atmosphere of the times. Theoretically a villain, but the inheritor of Milton's Satan in that very often both his power and his rationale are attractive and persuasive, the Gothic hero is generally lustful, ambitious, violent, sometimes also sadistic, bestial, nihilistic. He is a doer... (Calder 2)

This, with little euphemism, could be Shaka throughout: violent, sadistic, capricious, lustful, efficacious, a "dangerous hero" whom, like Manfred in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, "we encounter as mysterious ... erratic, irrational, unexpected" (Folkenflik 207). Jenni Calder, for instance, has unwittingly echoed A T Bryant: "A quick and active doer is so phenomenal among the Zulu Bantu as to be a real 'black swan'; yet there is no atom of doubt that Shaka made things hum and people hustle" (Bryant 1929:123). Bryant adds that Shaka was "an entirely precocious example of his race" (132).

This precocity is evident not only in Shaka's early military exploits, but in the whole manner in which he is said to have transformed the Zulus from an obscure tribal fragment to a full-blooded nation, rewriting the laws as he went. We will return to both the militarism and the intelligence. More importantly, these qualities are allied, as in the Gothic hero, to an unpredictable caprice. One is reminded of Manfred, of Scott's Louis XI, whose word "was forfeited without scruple" (Scott 6), and of Carlyle's "Fanatic-Hypocrite" Napoleon (Carlyle 219). This is a characteristic constant in the portrayal of Shaka, from Isaacs and Fynn onwards:

Chaka to his savage propensities added many extraordinary caprices and singular whims. (Isaacs 285)

Such opposed kinds of conduct in one person appeared to me strange, but I afterwards became convinced that both the contradictory dispositions, delicate feeling and extreme brutality, were intimately blended in him. (Fynn 1950:151-2)

[Shaka was] ever fond of displaying his power, and often asserted it cruelly, wantonly, and when least expected. (Stuart 1927:25)

In the fiction, Shaka frequently displays the mask of a deliberately deceptive smile: "the dissimulation of the despot", Isaacs calls it (I 276). In *An African Attila*, he is "never known to smile without someone's death paying for this mark of royal favour" (Stuart 1927:44). Similarly, in McMenemy's *Assegai!*, Shaka's "wrath was terrible to witness, for he smiled and he spoke with gentleness; when that was the case with Tshaka many deaths could be expected" (162). This is just one manifestation of the process by which Shaka could be seen as an aberration, could be pared away from his people, as by F B Fynney in the 1880s:

Tyaka's character appears to have been one which was an enigma even to the Zulus themselves, for, as one of his old indunas once explained to me, it was impossible even to say with him what the next move would be ... "He was a strange man, nay, a *silwana* (wild animal)". (Fynney 9)

We are back to the animal, this time ostensibly in the Zulu view. Ironically, *silwana* is the very term Zulus are frequently said to have used of the white man. That the duplicitousness is a fictional construct is only highlighted by those occasions in which Shaka is said to have exactly the opposite trait: that he always kept his word (eg. Niven 103).

The irreducibly mysterious Gothic figure is a more recent manifestation, however. Feeding into the Gothic trope, much older iconic monstrous and heroic inheritances inflect the portrait in a wide variety of ways: some of these strands are examined below. The Classical hero, the mediaeval knight, and the Noble Savage were all segments of a general nineteenth-century revival of hero-worship. These figures provided an iconic foundation from which to combat the growing banality of bourgeois industrialism; by stages, "the Middle Ages, a source of thrills for the tale of terror and Coleridge, a pageant for Scott and Keats, became a storehouse of lessons for the reshaping of Victorian economic life". Thus, influences like Carlyle's "fortuitous and ironic" flirtation with the mediaeval tradition, "especially by adapting Scott's praise of chivalry to the contemporary scene in his famous contrast of the ethics of the knight with the buccaneering of the industrialist" (Neff 11), were grafted onto a wider spectrum of hero-worship and didactic reverence for the primitive.

The central manifestation of this reverence, in the imperial context, was the idea of the "Noble Savage". As we have noted, this goes back at least into Classical times. If, as Hoxie Neale Fairchild has argued, the eighteenth-century concept of the Noble Savage was "a dying convention" by the waning of the slave trade in the 1830s (Fairchild 363), it was by no means dead: it easily inserted itself into the more general longing for heroes that accompanied the drudgery of the burgeoning industrial age. In 1844, only eight years after Isaacs published his *Travels*, Thomas Carlyle wrote that hero-worship was "the basis of all possible good, religious or social, for mankind" (123). Three years later, Disraeli has Tancred complain, "Individuality is dead; there is a want of inward and personal energy in man; and that is what people mean and feel when they go about complaining there is no faith" (Houghton 332). Sixty years after that, Rider Haggard is still lamenting, in his essay "About Fiction", that "English life is surrounded by conventionalism and English fiction has come to reflect this conventionalism, not the life, and has in consequence, with some notable

exceptions, got into a very poor way both as regards art and interest" (quoted in Malaba 143).

The solution, for some Englishmen, was physical removal to exotic and challenging locales; for most, a fantasy of adventure borne by an upsurge in popular literature (the romantic novel); and for a few, like Haggard, both. The romantic hero of the Victorians was, in Jenni Calder's phrase, "an effort to outwit [the] fragmentation" of the commercial world, and the historical hero "most often the product of a tendency to look to a time when causes and commitment were less difficult and less threatening to the stability of progress" (Calder ix,48). The tendency was therefore to look among the "primitives" for standards of nobility and simplicity, and to project onto them the standardised Victorian virtues of discipline, physical courage, respect for social hierarchy and the aristocratic class. As Haggard's contemporary Andrew Lang put it, "I think that this [putative] distinguished being, *Ultimus hominem venustiorum*, will find the last remnants of the gentlemanly Party in some Indian tribe, Apache or Sioux" (Rich 123). Hence Charles Barter, for example, in *The Dorp and the Veld*, admires Shaka because he "preserved his nation from the evils of anarchy and confusion, and deserves to be chronicled as a staunch friend to order, discipline and passive obedience" (quoted in Martin 142). There is no escaping the envy and surprise, accompanying virtually every description of Shaka and the Zulus, of the discipline he commanded, the dignity he evinced, the power he wielded with an almost imperceptible nod, a flick of the finger. That all these attitudes continue to be evinced in twentieth-century popular fiction on Shaka is evidence enough of the psychological atavism of those works.

The Wild Man

Perhaps the most influential monstrous mytheme to feed into the "imperial Gothic" Shaka dates back to the Plinian panoply of invented "monstrous races". These often became

progressively reduced in the Middle Ages to the popular image of the hirsute and lawless "Wild Man". In a second stage, as John Block Friedman (1981:197) outlines it, the Wild Man was conflated with the aborigines gradually discovered by the explorers of the Renaissance and after. Most significantly,

the direct personal observation of the East [and other regions] did not result in a corresponding reduction in the legends of the monstrous races said to live there.... [T]here appears to have been a psychological need for the Plinian peoples. Their appeal to mediaeval man was based on such factors as fantasy, escapism, delight in the exercise of the imagination, and - very important - fear of the unknown. (Friedman 1981:24)

Many of the attributes of the entirely mythical Wild Man were thus foisted, contrary to all the evidence, onto real peoples and individuals - particularly in situations in which, as we have seen with Isaacs and Fynn, the earliest settlers subsisted in a state of more or less parlous semi-dependence. Hayden White, in perhaps the most cogent examination of the Wild Man mytheme, concurs that "the dissolution by scientific knowledge of the ignorance which led earlier men to locate their imagined wild man in specific times and places does not necessarily touch the levels of psychic anxiety where such images have their origin" (White 1978:153). Indeed, the "remythification" of the Wild Man in more recent literature, often "assuming a pseudoscientific aspect" (154), transforms the distance of time and space into other kinds of distance, such as the Gothic or "natural-force" inexplicability common in the fiction, and/or the dismissive mystery of "madness".

Shaka's alleged madness is frequently a rather transparent substitute for a largely ignorant derogation of traits which had traditionally been attributed to the "Wild Man". White summarises the characteristics:

Cursedness, or wildness, is identified with the wandering life of the hunter (as against the stable life of the shepherd and farmer), the desert (which is the Wild Man's habitat), linguistic confusion..., sin, and physical aberration in both colour (blackness) and size.... [I]n a morally disordered world, to be wild is to be incoherent or mute; deceptive, oppressive, and destructive; sinful and accursed; and, finally, a monster, one whose physical attributes are in themselves evidence of one's evil nature. (White 1978:162; cf. Weston 169)

Clearly Shaka's attributes, at least apart from Isaacs and Watt, do not conform to this generalisation in every respect. He is never incoherent; and physically is generally classically handsome (see below).¹ The handsomeness is frequently, however, designed only to underline the irony of that other other stereotypical trope, already mentioned, the beautiful veneer to the terrible heart. Shaka is a hunter of men, and the *creator* of deserts. His praise-name, frequently quoted by white writers, "O Black One!" is invested with only half-concealed horror. In his *behaviour*, he is usually the antithesis of all "civilised" values, which White compresses to the three "securities of sex (as organised by the institution of a family), *sustenance* (as provided by the political, social, and economic institutions), and *salvation* (as provided by the Church)" (1978:166). Shaka is almost uniformly depicted as progressively renegeing on these values, particularly as his life nears its end. He more and more arbitrarily prevents sexual outlets for his soldiers, murders his own children ("the Wild Man is incapable of assuming the responsibilities of a father" [White 1978:166]), even in some accounts his own mother. In his insatiable restlessness he increasingly undermines the social and economic stability of his own state, killing his own people ever more indiscriminately, banning harvesting and milking after Nandi's death, and finally sending his armies off on the ill-fated "Balule campaign". In *Assegai!*, Thola flings at Shaka the accusation, "I do not believe any more that you kill for the sake of your people. You kill for your own delight. You are on your way to being a bloodthirsty madman" (McMenemy 171). And he is always entirely devoid of any "idea of a deity" (Isaacs I 285).

All this, in the colonial context, adds up to a definition of madness with which, as Sander Gilman has shown, concepts of race and sexuality are intimately bound. Particularly in situations where an individual is under threat of loss of self-control within his *own* group, a powerful psychological projection onto the outsider is made: "The perception of the Other as a threat to the individual's autonomy is thus a reflection of the loss of autonomy felt

within the group. Group identity thereby serves as a means of defining the 'healthy' ... as well as its antithesis, the ['pathological'] outsider" (Gilman 25). Stephen Clingman has extended this perspective in an examination of the many representations of madness in South African fiction, following Foucault in attributing the obsession to "a search for significant limits" (Clingman 247) - the limits, that is, of an idealised group cohesion.

Even the Wild Man, however, is not necessarily lacking in admirable qualities. As White explains, he is

desire incarnate, possessing the strength, wit, and cunning to give full expression to all his lusts ... And his physical power and agility are conceived to increase in direct ratio to the diminution of his conscience.... [He] is strong as Hercules, fast as the wind, cunning as the wolf, and devious as the fox. In some stories this cunning is transmuted into a kind of natural wisdom which makes him into a magician or at least a master of disguise. (White 1978:166-7)

The accounts of Shaka's physical prowess, his ability to outdance his warriors, his military stratagems, his blood-sprinkling trick on the witchdoctors, his fictional arguments with the whites in which he gains (at least apparently) the upper hand of a "kind of natural wisdom" - all place him solidly in this tradition. This is also the crack through which a less ambivalent, primitivist admiration can infiltrate, and the Wild Man can become an object of open envy rather than loathing, "the essence of a lost humanity" and an "idealised image used as justification for rebellion against civilisation itself" (White 1978:168). What is crucial in this observation is that in the Middle Ages this transformation in the Wild Man image occurs during a period of social disintegration and general cultural revolution; in Shaka's case, as should now be clear, the admiration is generally more muted than the derogation, occurring as whites in South Africa become increasingly self-critical, but remaining subdued precisely to the extent that a worrisome "general cultural revolution" remains a distant prospect (whether in reality or in imagination is almost irrelevant).

Classical models

Perhaps the primary *positive* model which influences the Wild Man and Gothic stereotypes in a more positive direction is that of the Classical Greek warrior hero. This is already implicit in Isaacs' use of "herculean", a word others will continue to use (e.g. Eden 62). Indeed, the classical stature tends to strengthen after the early writers, the diabolical and animal to be suppressed. A generalised appeal to the classical underlay a widespread conception that Africa as a whole was built to a nobler standard than contemporary Europe or Britain, as evident in William Holden's fanciful description of Zululand:

lofty mountains ... are carved into a thousand fantastic shapes. It requires but little imagination to behold the towers and battlements, the domes and spires, of some Titanic empire; all weaker remains of which have long since sunk into the earth, or been washed away by floods. *There* lies prostrate a Cyclopean form, beside his crumbling tower; - *here* is a large sphinx, looking from high battlements; - and *yonder* a gigantic lion crouches, as if about to spring upon his prey. (Holden 1855:22)

Shaka increasingly becomes the human counterpart of this landscape, part mythologised, part domesticated: titanic, magnificent in its decay, predatory, tintured with battle and nostalgia. In particular, the physical descriptions of both him and the Zulu people owe everything to the genealogy of Classical proportions as filtered through the North American "noble savage". The exotic dusky prince had long been assimilated to the vision of neo-Classical art, as in Aphra Behn's 1688 description of Oroonoko, that "standard hero in fancy dress" (Curtin 49):

[T]he most famous statuary could not form the Figure of a Man more admirably turn'd. [His face] was not of that brown rusty Black which most of that Nation are, but a perfect Ebony, a polished Jet. ... His nose was rising and *Roman*, instead of *African* and flat: His Mouth the finest shaped that could be seen; far from those great turn'd lips, which are so natural to the rest of the Negroes ... bating his Colour, there could be nothing in Nature more beautiful, agreeable, and handsome. (Behn 136)

A similar equivocation over colour (it occurs in respect of Shaka, too) would become indicative of the deeper ambivalences of the frontier/colonial situation. In North America, the "Indian" was also seen through Classical lenses: as in Longfellow's "Slave Dream", the "attenuation by way of Greece and exotic simplifications was necessary for the elevation of

[both the Indian and] the Negro to 'Noble Savage" (Johnson 56). Thus the Indian chief in Samuel Woodworth's *The Champions of Freedom* (1816) is "gigantic. More symmetry of form, regularity of features, and dignity of countenance were never united in man. The prowess of Hercules appeared combined with the grace of Adonis" (Barnett 76). The correlation with some Africans was at times explicit: in 1856, Henry Methuen wrote of the Bantu generally that they reminded him "very much of the North American Indians, as described by Cooper; their warriors are, in general, models of symmetry, tall, of graceful carriage, elastic step, and independent air" (quoted in Hammond and Jablow 45). William Barrow in 1822 echoed Behn so closely it is difficult not to cite her as his immediate source:

Though black, or very nearly so, [the Kaffirs] have no one line of the African negro in the shape and turn of their person [having rather] a Roman or a Grecian countenance. In short, had not Nature bestowed upon him the dark-colouring principle ... he might have ranked among the first of Europeans (Hammond and Jablow 40).

Thus it was often possible for whites to elevate certain isolated figures to a kind of nobility, albeit usually in order "to belabour nobility, not to redeem the savage" (White 1978:192). But as Louise Barnett points out, "Because the frontier romance is really about whites, isolation cannot be complete nor can fiction be avoided totally. When the issue is joined, the noble savage is suddenly changed into the enemy" (Barnett 87).

Hence the Classical proportions (along with "symmetry", a key word of vague approval) of Shaka's physique are finally insufficient to redeem him. To George Herbert's humanist Renaissance view of the human as "all symmetrie, Full of proportions, one limb to another, And all to all the world besides" (quoted in Beer 17), a racial twist has been added. Here is Charles Eden's stock description, embellished from James Saunders King's:

[Shaka] stood upwards of six feet in height, with every limb in most perfect proportion. His head was small, and beautifully set on his shoulders, while his features, when undisturbed by passion, were rather winning than repulsive. (Eden 59)

For William Holden, Shaka was "tall and well-proportioned, his appearance commanding and, when excited, terrific" (1855:55). For Donald Morris a century later, with a spurious

accuracy borrowed from Ritter, Shaka "measured six feet three inches, with a heavily muscled build in due proportion" (1965:46). Brian Roberts writes similarly of this "superbly proportioned, gleaming black figure" (1974:51-2), and Brookes and Webb of a man "about six feet tall, well-proportioned, robust" (11).

In the novels, this ideally proportioned figure is only marginally refined (note the parallels with Aphra Behn):

A magnificent creature, towering even above his own tall chiefs, a perfectly proportioned, heroic figure fashioned in ebony ... although black as the blackest of his subjects, Tshaka's features had greater symmetry. (Watt 58)

His face was strong rather than handsome, with full lips and a broad flat nose... He was magnificently proportioned and his body had the symmetry and grace of an athlete... his physical splendour ... was indeed that of one more than human. (Roberts 1950:17)²

Shaka's physical splendour is inextricable from a more general sense of heroic and authoritarian bearing. Donald Morris, for instance, uses his already spurious information on Shaka's precise height to distort Fynn's account of when he first set eyes on the Zulu king. Where Fynn writes merely that he spotted Shaka "in the background" - by what means he does not say (Fynn 1950:72) - Morris writes: "Fynn suddenly spotted Shaka, whose great height and royal bearing stood out even in the midst of his huddled warriors" (1965:77). Even the word "huddled" is calculated to enhance the impression of Shaka's egregious stature. Similarly Brian Roberts, in the absence of anything more concrete, quotes Ritter at his most fanciful: "His regal, dignified bearing, the easy grace of all his movements, his piercing eyes set in a strong face, and the general look of authority, made it plain that here was a warrior-king indeed" (1974:51-2). A grandiose but unindividuated description which tells us remarkably little, Ritter's account here is typical of the imaginative poverty of all such depictions.

The reference to the "piercing eyes" is of passing interest as almost the only feature

ever dwelt on in any detail. It begins with the Isaacs passage quoted earlier; even if this may be counted as evidential, however, its repeated invocation makes it - much like Shaka's ability to command death with "a flick of the finger" - merely another stereotyped icon. Importantly, the quality of the eyes is most often antithetical to the beautiful body, being derived from a more Gothic tradition of the "piercing eyes", of demonisation, or of the berserker.³ So, for example, in Rider Haggard's *Nada the Lily*, Shaka's face is "fierce and beautiful, and when he grew angry his eye flashed like a smitten brand" (53). Esther Roberts elaborates:

it was [Shaka's] eyes which immediately impressed and terrified those who approached him. They were black and piercing with pupils that seemed to expand and contract while one looked at them. It was said of him that, like the eagle, he dared to look straight into the eye of the noonday sun. (Roberts 1950:17).

P A Stuart's version is inserted after an equally banal description of the "well-built" and "muscular" king:

But his eyes, my father, ah, yes, his eyes! They were small and deep-set, and held a world of cunning in them not to be likened to anything I have ever seen to this day. They flashed with an uncanny brightness as he spoke ... they held me spell-bound. In the darkness of the hut they seemed to change their colour, now green like those of a wild cat at night, now flaming coals of fire, now a terrifying blood-red - the red of the setting winter sun. (Stuart 1927:20)

It is surely the whites themselves who are overly uncomfortable about being scrutinised by these threatening eyes, the only isolatable feature of an otherwise unapproachable and ill-defined figure.

One other minor characteristic of the classical and Homeric hero deserves mention: as Athene put it, "Cunning must he be and knavish ... Bold man, crafty in counsel, insatiate in deceit..." (Frye 1976:69). Shaka is incorrigibly cunning, but not always in an overtly negative way. Many of the white writers appear to take a perverse delight in displaying their arguments thwarted by Shaka's natural wisdom. Some of the conversations written up by Fynn become virtually *de rigueur*: Shaka getting the Dutchman Peterson to test his own

purgatives, his arguments against the efficacy of firearms, against imprisonment, or in favour of celibacy. Ritter, pursuing his general hortatory project, invents a number of further incidents to display Shaka's cunning intelligence: he baffles James Saunders King's carpenter's nails with ironwood, wields effective stratagems in the battle of Qokli Hill, dispenses justice with startling (and non-violent) wile. Many of these incidents are only superficially admirable, however. I deal with this quirk again in Chapter Twelve, but one example from Ritter is apposite here:

On another occasion, Lieutenant King tried to explain that the earth was a sphere. Shaka was prepared to accept that it was half a sphere, or a dish, for how, otherwise, would the waters of the ocean remain on it.

When Lieutenant King tried to tell him that the earth revolved from west to east, Shaka immediately asked him to demonstrate it with a pumpkin on which he placed some grains of corn to represent people.

"Now turn it and see what will happen," and the upshot was that the lieutenant looked rather foolish and Shaka laughed heartily. (Ritter 340)

One strain here may well be of genuine admiration for the homely and direct logic of man operating purely out of his times and from his own direct observations, a logic which is irrefutable on its own terms. Shaka is wise, by his own lights. There is also doubtless a genuine irony being laughingly directed by one white man (Ritter) at another of his own kind. But beneath this moves another, more cynical kind of laughter. For the writer writes from an altogether superior level, with the assumption implicit that the reader is also reading from that level, one from which both can be certain that Shaka was all along quite wrong.

The last laugh is on the king, not King.⁴

A similar undertone of irony accompanies most accounts of Shaka's intelligence, though in nineteenth-century British culture at least, intelligence came to be seen increasingly as a prerequisite for the well-rounded hero. For Carlyle, the Hero was also the "politician, the thinker, legislator, philosopher" (Carlyle 74). Or, in the words of Disraeli's Coningsby:

Brains every day become more precious than blood. You must give men new ideas, you must teach them new words, you must modify their manners, you must change

their laws, you must rout out prejudices, subvert convictions, if you wish to be great. (Houghton 312-3)

Shaka has certainly, at times, been credited with all this. He is seen as the greatest of African innovators, the self-made man who invents new military strategies and renovates the entire social structure of the Zulu, from population dispersal to marriage behaviour. Even the most racist writers, like Isaacs and Elizabeth Watt, admit, if only momentarily, that Shaka "manifested a shrewdness which we little expected to find in an unlettered savage" (Isaacs 93). This oft-repeated note of surprise, on the other hand, is the writer's signal to his reader to collude with a particular derogatory prejudice which, as we have seen, was only one of several in circulation. It is the choice of the prejudice which underwrites the desire to cast doubt on the praise. Fynn, in an account not included in the *Diary*, is equally ethnocentric, demanding of his reader collaboration in a view of the Zulu deliberately in opposition to that which informed the Noble Savage tradition:

It is to be sincerely deplored that such an energetic and inquiring mind as he possessed should have been denied the culture of Civilisation. [H]is too active mind for the sphere in which he moved might then have been diverted from his numberless atrocities and applied to the introduction of Arts and Letters among his subjects [.F]rom the ascendancy he had gained over their minds it wanted but an education to perhaps have placed him among the Benefactors of the Human Race. (Martin 62)

This condescending superiority is paradoxically both the seed out of which later efforts to "rehabilitate" Shaka will grow, as well as providing the material for equally biased assessments, such as that of Bryant, who, as we have seen, sometimes appears to display a sneaking admiration of Shaka, but periodically feels the need to bring him down to earth with a shot of vicious sarcasm. Subsequent, twentieth-century lionisation of Shaka seeks mainly to account for his actions, including the brutal ones, as necessities born of pragmatic politics instead of bloodlust. R C A Samuelson described Shaka as "a far-seeing sovereign" (1913:396); as does Geoffrey Bond/James Langa: "Had he [the old Zulu protagonist] lived to be a hundred he and his kind would never have understood Shaka's far-seeing methods" (Langa 70). But the factuality of the bloodshed is never questioned: this marks the applicable

limit of Classical and other forms of the heroic to the Zulu.

Finally, Classical idealism is occasionally manifested in a more structural way. The epic-poetical and dramatic modes of the *Odyssey* and the Greek tragedies underlie the epic-treatment attempts of D J Darlow and Geoffrey Bond in particular, and in the less well-integrated asides of many of the writers, most of whom see the history of the Zulus as "epic" in some way. The same model provokes A T Bryant's comparison of Shaka to Julius Caesar - the classical hero-statesman refracted through Shakespearean tragic drama. The most thorough-going example of this is the consciously classical structure of Pieter Fourie's play *Shaka* (1976). Fourie's vision of Shaka is the furthest imaginable departure from Isaacs' vituperation; the story has become such that it is possible to identify with Shaka, for all his faults - even because of his faults - as a tragic figure. Shaka is, Fourie writes, "the personification of the Tragic Hero" of classical Greek theatre:

Not only Shaka himself, but the whole milieu and its tribal traditions, are synonymous with Greek tragedy; in Shaka himself the hubris and eventual catharsis are clearly spelt out; the Head-Rings have an unmistakable identity with the Chorus and its functions; the seer, as in *Oedipus Rex*, is concealed in the Inyanga. Then there is the fatal confrontation with the gods, the function of the messenger, and the atrocities that happen offstage. (Fourie 1976:preface)

The important point is that Fourie's restructuring of the story in this way is no less fictional, and no less "European", than anything Isaacs or Watt wrote. Still, the play (perhaps the more remarkably for having been originally written in Afrikaans and entitled, with the familiar antinomy, *Die Swart Attila*) is a mark of how far visions of Shaka have at times travelled.

Chivalry and the Noble Savage

Characteristics of the classical hero shade indiscernibly into those of two other, almost equally influential idealistic mythemes - the chivalrous mediaeval knight, and the Noble Savage. Both flourished in the Victorian revival of both neo-Classical and mediaeval heroic

ideals which gained particular currency at much the time the Shakan literature was being formed. Walter Scott, the writer most likely, first- or second-hand, to have affected the world-view of the likes of Isaacs and Fynn, had set the fashion for romanticised knights of heroically chivalrous proportions. Tennyson aided the process later with *Idylls of the King*, writing, "It seems to me as if there were much less of the old reverence and chivalrous feeling in the world than there used to be ... I tried in my 'Idylls' to teach men these things, and the need of the Ideal" (quoted in Houghton 317).

In its intersections with the imperial process, the concept was expressed in different and sometimes contradictory ways. Most often, it was the flag-bearing, frequently eccentric but morally superior and plucky English adventurers who were the knights bearing Christian light into the Dark Continent. As Joseph Thomson put it in 1896, "we may be a nation of shopkeepers but we have a warm heart to everything which keeps burning brightly the sacred lamp of the chivalry, in which there is as much daring, more self-denial, and a more tender regard for the weak and the oppressed than was ever practised by the flower of ancient knighthood" (quoted in Hammond and Jablow 53). The adventures of Fynn and Isaacs were described by William Holden as "'the Knight-Errantry of Natal', the chivalrous and romantic having a large place in this period of history, which bears some resemblance to Scott's 'Tales of a Grandfather'" - and in almost the same breath he describes African chiefs as "knights and squires" (1855:41).

In this context, like that of the original feudal milieu a highly militarised one, a leader like Shaka is also occasionally given a chivalrous air. Between his fits of demonic destructiveness, he demonstrates the sternly moral behaviour of the knight, who does not lie ("Chaka has not two tongues", as Eden puts it [61]), who rewards his soldiers for brave

conduct, who never goes back on his word, and who has the knight's general demeanour of dignified courage.

However, the efforts of the Victorians' "agricultural mentality" (Neff 13) to create a natural chivalric hero whose primary function was to criticise "civilisation" were accompanied by inner contradiction from the start, clearly discernible in the Shakan literature. By Shaka's day, there were already two versions of the African "reality" extant, neither more real than the other, both adjuncts of Matthew Arnold's "two worlds", involving "the struggle for supremacy between the tradition of insularity and the tradition of cosmopolitanism" (Baker 169). Charles Dickens exemplifies the opposing impulse, using the Noble Savage motif *against* the black people *he* encountered at A T and C H Caldecott's 1853 Zulu "exhibition" in London:

All the noble savage's wars with his fellow savages (and he takes no pleasure in anything else) are wars of extermination - which is the best thing I know of him, and the most comfortable to my mind when I look at him. He has no moral feelings of any kind, sort, or description; and his "mission" may be summed up as simply diabolical. (quoted in Lindfors 1984:133)⁵

We have already seen similar reactions in the earliest Shakan literature: it is in general much closer to the usual portrayal of Shaka than its opposite. As Lemuel Johnson has put it, "The imagination that created the dark continent was incompatible with the placing of a Noble Savage in that darkness" (Johnson 56). It was incompatible, too, with the actual ethic of tough mercantilism allied with armed confrontation which powered the colonial enterprise: in the words of Haggard's Umslopogaas, "It is better to slay a man in a fair fight than to suck out his life's blood in buying, selling and usury" (Street 57). This romantic vision could only be entrenched in fiction once the era of overt confrontation had passed: the Zulu Noble Savage returns, as in the case of the Masai and San in twentieth-century popular fiction (Brown 1983), atavistically, as ideological justification for the mercantilist victory, and to defuse the lingering concern that the victory is not in fact complete. The ambivalence

towards Shaka's heroism reflects the deeper moral disjunction between England's facade of moral rectitude and the real exercise of imperial machinery. As Winston Churchill said:

What enterprise that an enlightened community may attempt is more noble and more profitable than the reclamation from barbarism of fertile regions and large populations?... The act is virtuous, the exercise invigorating, and the result often extremely profitable. Yet as the mind turns from the wonderful cloud land of aspiration to the ugly scaffolding of attempt and achievement, a succession of opposite ideas arise... And as the eye of thought rests on these sinister features, it hardly seems possible for us to believe that any fair prospect is approached by so foul a path. (Sandison 13)

Finally, among the most recent manifestations of these varieties of the heroic, is one which breaks the bounds of all the mythemes discussed so far, and in a strange way reverts almost to an animistic view of Africa. This is the depiction of Shaka as an emanation of the very forces of nature symbolised by Africa. Clearly there is a primitivist strain to this, but also a touch of the alarming monstrosity that characterised the titanic "Adamastor" figure poetically embedded in Table Mountain. In some ways this image grows out of the view that - as Somerset Maugham put it - in England "one grows so small and mean, but in Africa everything is built to a nobler standard. There the man is really a man" (Hammond and Jablow 108). The Zulus as a warrior tribe are frequently depicted as the acme of this manliness: they are "the French of Southeast Africa", as Adulphe Delegorgue patriotically enthused (quoted in Malaba 123); Eduard Mohr, passing through Natal on his way to Zambezia in the 1870s, wrote that the Zulu were "the most important, warlike and intelligent race of South Africa" (though he added the grim rider that they, "but for the arrival of Europeans, would probably have reduced the whole of South Africa, from the Cape to the Zambezi" (Mohr 37); or they are "the purest Nguni, as the Scandinavians are the purest 'Teutonic' race today", as Ritter fantasised (1; also Niven 79). Shaka is, sometimes and in some respects, viewed as the acme of the Zulu spirit. In this kind of portrayal, then, not only is he mysterious and almost supernaturally powerful, he comes to be regarded as an emanation of Africa, or Nature, itself. Esther Roberts describes him as

no mere human being, he was a symbol, the personification of the might of the tribe, of the nation, indeed of Nature herself (Roberts 1950:30).

Whereas "Among the tribes each man thought of himself not as an individual but as a member of a group", Shaka was "an individual", though paradoxically it is this which gives him the "immense power" which had "something impersonal and elemental about it like a natural force" (18). The conflicting tendencies are again evident here: Shaka is at once symbolic of forces latent in Africa and Nature, alien and frighteningly impersonal to the white writer; and is an independent being, more amenable to white comprehension by virtue of that individuality.

The struggle to reconcile the same conflicting impulses is at the heart of Nicki McMenemy's *Assegai!*, which is essentially the story of the foreign girl Thola's attempts to understand the nature of Zulu thought-patterns and thereby even justify them. McMenemy's Shaka is

a magnificent product of nature, a ruler by virtue of innate power, a living proof that he who is closest to nature in that innate power is the survivor. (McMenemy 1973:62)

Since Nature itself, in Africa anyway, is usually seen as cruel, vindictive, antagonistic, undiscriminating, so too, naturally, are the people who live so close to her laws and rhythms.

So Thola reflects on Shaka's brutality:

he was neither good nor evil; more, he was a personification of that affliction which life produces now and again, an impersonal product of nature which, by its mode of life, brings out greatness in those who suffer under such a scourge. (73)

Once again, this runs counter to the vision of the individuated Shaka, in his individuated love for Thola, which is the necessary underpinning of the novel's central romance. Notice again the invocation of a figure of disease ("affliction") by which the attractive heroism is mitigated; real greatness is brought out in the sufferers, the bearers of values antipathetic to Shaka's. Hence the stylistic equivocation of McMenemy's description of Shaka taking his legendary public bath:

Lithely and swiftly Tshaka passed his hands over his body and he was awful in the sight of the gathering: a magnificent ruler, a personification of the darkness of earth, of the imperturbability of air in which silver lightning sets the sky ablaze, of the revivifying, malleable, fertile-making power of water, and the triumphant, unsubduable, all-changing potency of fire. (65-6)

In this welter of adjectives, lyricism vies with dread, attraction with fear, fecundity with destruction. Instead of being the product of the gods, as Isaacs and Bryant, however sneeringly, were prepared to write, Shaka has become the impersonal child of more vaguely materialistic forces, at once both more and less than human - and at once both more and less responsible for his misdeeds. We are returned again and again to that essential contradiction, explained away in this romantic manner, or, as in Rex Niven's ostensibly non-fictional account, left unexplained altogether: Niven finds a "grim fascination" in Shaka's story of "iron resolve and inflexible determination, but in fact it was a life which brought untold suffering to tens of thousands of ordinary people. Though there is a grandeur and a dignity, there can only be shocked revulsion to his whole story". Nevertheless, Niven confusingly adds, Shaka "was a popular and respected king" (78-9).

The Black Napoleon

Say a warrior takes on any kind of battle because war is his business. It is an ugly business but, like all activities, it forms its own moral codes so that the business may be conducted as nobly as possible. In some depth of his soul the warrior is defending social values that he assumes his enemy lacks. All the same, the character and quality of his enemy is exposed during battle. They both present the other with death, but should the enemy turn out eventually to be a noble man in himself, he loves him. (Head 103)

If there is any real admiration extended towards Shaka, it is that of one highly militarised people for the leader of another. Once the Zulu had demonstrated their bravery in 1879, but nevertheless been satisfactorily crushed, the psychological way was clear for a retrospective valorisation of the earlier ruler. In tandem with derogation (the "Attila" comparison), the comparison with Napoleon takes increasingly tenacious hold: it is virtually too frequent to bear listing.⁶

Comparing foreign military leaders to Napoleon was not uncommon in the nineteenth century, when memories of the French general were still fresh (Nathaniel Isaacs landed at St Helena only a couple of years after Napoleon had died there). Toussaint l'Ouverture was a Caribbean-black parallel case to Shaka; so was Mzilikazi of the Ndebele. Of interest, too, is Arthur Southon's fictional "Yellow Napoleon", a West African half-caste "with the brain and the overweening egoism of a Napoleon and the hatred of a devil" (Southon 261). Like Shaka, this outcast Tulani finds "the scum of twenty tribes, a cosmopolitan collection of criminals without a leader. Four years later he was the chief of a new tribe, a tribe whose units came from all over West Africa, but which had been welded into a corporate whole by the half-caste's genius" (12). As the first of these quotations indicates, however, even the Napoleon parallel is not unreservedly approving (see below). The second quotation indicates the prevalence, too, of a particular notion of nationhood which gains increasing currency as the disparate peoples comprising the "Zulus" are boxed in by the common enemy of white settlement, and thus acquire both a practical and a textual identity overrunning fissiparous tendencies.

Shaka's reputation rests fundamentally on his alleged ability to weld together within a decade, not twenty, but "a hundred" disparate "tribes" into a homogeneous "nation". (This is even more the case, for obvious reasons, for black than for white writers). As John Wright (1989) in particular has shown, this "national" homogeneity is in the first place highly questionable. Not only is there increasing evidence of divisions within the polity; it is clear that words like "nation" (and like "race") were widely used in the early imperial period to describe aboriginal groups that bore little or no resemblance to "nations" or "races" in the European context: but the linguistic matching tempted matching interpretations. Partly in this way, the Zulu nation was (in Hobsbawm and Ranger's coinage) "invented". A similar circularity characterises the matching of Shaka with Napoleon. As noted in Chapter Three,

Fynn himself was apparently reading about Napoleon while he wrote about Shaka; while impossible to prove, it seems highly likely that the Napoleon parallel both was provoked by, and helped to entrench, exaggerations of military efficacy and extent of conquest.

Secondly, then, Shaka's reputation as both nation-builder and conquistador - the main component of the Napoleon comparison - rests on the notion of his strategic and tactical military genius; *and/or on the imputation* of more or less insane megalomania. As we have seen, both of these assertions are likewise highly questionable (though they will continue to hold credence as long as they appear in the school textbooks).⁷

In almost all accounts Shaka is credited with entirely dispensing with established, more chivalrous forms of warfare, and instituting some form of "total war" (the phrase is a Second World War one, introduced by E V Walter). Apart from the contemptible strategy of obliterating entire tribes, Shaka is credited with a number of revolutionary innovations of a more disciplined nature, neatly summarised by Charles Ballard:

He invented a short stabbing spear, the assegai - a deadly weapon at close range and superior to the light throwing spear then in common use. He evolved more sophisticated battlefield strategies than his counterparts - notably the "chest and horns" tactic of encirclement, or the military textbook's classic manoeuvre of the double envelopment. Shaka imposed a ramrod discipline over his Zulu troops. To flinch was weakness, to retreat was cowardice - both were punishable by death. Shaka put his men through a gruelling programme of methodical drills and hard physical training that would have been the envy of the sternest Prussian drillmaster. The superb fitness of the Zulu army gave Shaka a force that had few equals in mobility - his men could march over eighty kilometres in under twenty-four hours, with no food and little water, and then still fight a full scale battle. (Ballard 1988:16)⁸

One might add the story that Shaka made his troops dispense with clumsy sandals. More crucially, he organised them into rigidly controlled *amabutho* or regiments, which, since he compelled later marriages, was also a means of channelling sexual energies into warfare, a system which was exported by his former acolytes or opponents (Mzilikazi, Shoshangane and

others) all over southern Africa. On these innovations the Napoleonic parallel depends. But every one of these is open to empirical question.

Firstly, not all accounts agree on just what kind of warfare pertained before Shaka's accession to local power - or, indeed, after it. There is strengthening evidence that violence had been on the increase for up to fifty years before Shaka's time, and that it was no gentlemanly Elysium which Shaka suddenly disrupted. (As I argue in detail in Chapter Eleven, it was more likely a preconception of just such an Elysium which prompted the idea in the first place.) In any event, a number of accounts actually credit Shaka with bringing *greater* stability to a period of endemic warfare. These accounts are themselves based on next to no evidence, however.

It is highly unlikely, then, that Shaka single-handedly "invented" the stabbing-spear, though he may have brought its use into greater prominence (see Laband 1995:37). Certainly it had been in use for some time amongst neighbouring tribes like the Xhosa. This unlikely innovation - touted by Bryant, for example, as having had as dramatic an impact on Zulu as the rifle had had on European warfare - is increasingly centralised, to the point of having even supernatural significance. In earlier accounts, the spears are forged by a particular group of non-Zulu ironsmiths; later, these ironsmiths become an outcast tribelet characterised by strange, sometimes cannibalistic rituals; by Ritter's version, Shaka has to make a courageous and dangerous journey to meet a powerful wizard, "The Nameless One" who appears on the back of a hyena, and will forge the first spear and bless it with unspeakable medicines (Ritter 24-31). This finds its way into Gray and Skotnes' *The Assassination of Shaka*; and in Bond/Langa the "Nameless One" becomes a weird hybrid of beast and man: "He saw the changing shape of the silhouette as it turned, seeming at first to walk on two feet. Then it began to lop away, and four distinct footfalls imprinted themselves on the

"barren ground" (Langa 11). In the television series, the forging becomes a crucial visual experience strongly reminiscent of the blade-forging opening sequence of *Conan the Barbarian*. Of almost equal fascination seems to be the actual motion of stabbing with this new weapon: "Closing with the enemy instead of standing off from him, he would hook the enemy's shield to expose his chest and then stab him through the heart" (Selby 41). No other tactical detail is ever given; though it may just have some truth behind it, despite its oversimplification, it becomes as automatic an insertion as any of the more obviously fictional ones we have seen.

The stabbing-spear is supported in all accounts by the famous "chest and horns" formation. There is not a single shred of evidence anywhere that Shaka actually used this tactic. As shown in Chapter Nine, the primary example of the tactic at work, "Qokli Hill", is unquestionably a fiction. There is equally no substantial evidence that Shaka ever personally led his army into battle. And there is a good deal of evidence that the Zulus were frequently beaten in their confrontations, and were far from the invincible military machine they are so often said to be.

All this is a matter of empirical evidence. More pertinent to this study is the social-psychological *meaning* of the Napoleonic parallel. Malaba (1981:129) has drawn up a detailed account of the similarities in the two men's reputations, but does not extend his analysis to investigating *why* the parallel is so regularly invoked, especially since it is so easily refuted. The meanings of the parallel for European readers, I suggest, closely recapitulate those behind other varieties of monster and hero, reenacting the antinomies of Walter Scott's and James Hazlitt's views of Napoleon as Satanic and heroic respectively. It has also been overlooked that the Napoleon image was by no means always adulatory: for a long time it was imbued with an intense if often ambivalent xenophobia: he was Carlyle's

"Fanatic-Hypocrite". Napoleon was also frequently not clearly distinguished from the Revolution out of which he emerged: growing out of Walter Scott's notion of the French Revolution as analogous to the Fall and Napoleon as its Satanic progeny, "like a huge Anaconda [which enveloped] in its coils, and then [crushed] and [swallowed] whatever came into contact with it" (Friedman 1988:102), Shaka is often said to be executing a "Reign of Terror" (eg. Stuart 1927), or is compared to Robespierre. In Shaka's reducing people to cannibalism (in Isaacs' description and D C F Moodie's illustration, all but indulging in it himself), one is reminded of Gillray's famous cartoon of the *sans-culottes* behaving like cannibals in the 1790s.⁹ This is, in effect, to treat Zulus, like the "swinish multitude" of the Parisian mob, as "exhibit[ing] the consequences without the cause", as Paine wrote of Burke's views (Friedman 1988:21). Vast consequences, and spurious supporting detail, are predicated on the construction of one man's character. The Napoleon image is thus in many ways an historicising extension of the Gothic "monstrous hero", both images shifting in their import over time according to the agendas of the writers.

Who is vindicated?

Throughout this chapter, two fundamental textual "gestures" are prominent. The first is the ambivalence which is at once a literary inheritance, a mask for incomprehension, and a back-handed way of projecting the writer's cultural identity. The second gesture is that of comparison against, and judgement in terms of, the familiar exemplar or model - Attila and Napoleon are only the most prominent instances of a gesture so compulsive that I have ventured to coin a term for it - *vindice* - the implications of which I examine more fully in Chapter Twelve. Here I want only to note that even where such comparisons are apparently admiring, they inevitably carry such a burden of preconception that they serve to conceal more than reveal; or rather, they reveal more of the projective characteristics of the writers than empirical characteristics of the ostensible subject, Shaka. Such gestures are at once

vindictive, implicitly judgemental, and vindicating of the situation of the authors' collective identity. Equally importantly, both derogatory and admiring portrayals of Shaka draw on archetypes from the same mythemic resource-base or level: they are gestures equally Eurocentric, equally overdetermining, and equally revealing of the identity-forming strategies of the writers.

NOTES

1. Except, ironically, in *Zulu* oral traditions, in which he is variously described as suffering from a speech defect, an ugly sloping forehead, or an oversized and perpetually sweating nose (*JSA* I 11,57,195; II 60,92,232; III 72; IV 158).
2. The concept would become applied preeminently to the Zulus, widely regarded as the "finest" of the Bantu, as in Uys Krige's *Zulu*, with his "magnificent body" (that word again) and thighs "of a classic symmetry, the calves and legs as harmoniously proportionate" (Uys, in Wright 145). Much of this rhetoric of beauty may be indirectly attributed to the Classical standards propounded by Winckelmann in 1764; in 1810 the English artist Thomas Lawrence recorded that his black model Wilson had "the finest figure ... combining the character and perfection of many of the Antique Statues" (see Wylie 1994).
3. This can also be seen in a number of illustrations of Shaka, for instance that included in the Appendix, from Ian Knight's *The Zulus* (1989). The illustrations from Ritter's novel (the compilation of which is an interesting synecdoche of the process of the mythologising of Shaka generally; see Ritter xv), Knight, and the SATV series also incidentally highlight the concentration on the heroic physique.
4. Besides, the same alleged incident is attested elsewhere, in both - if memory serves me right - James Fenimore Cooper and the life of Paul Kruger.
5. The original is in Dickens' *Household Words*; also quoted by David Maughan Brown (1983:59), who incorrectly implies that Dickens was speaking of "Bushmen".
6. Still, here are the main ones: Delegorgue 1847:233; Colenso 1855:224; Grout 1862:78; Holden 1866:10,14,21; Tyler 1891:212; Haggard 1892:22; Buchan 1910:105; Stuart 1924:98; Samuelson 1929:396; Brett 1944:20; Fitzpatrick 1932/1959:157; Tracey 1948:21; Millin 1950:297; Gluckman 1960:158. One recent, though tangential query is Marq de Villiers' scoffing at the "popular perceptions of Shaka [which] now make him a weird combination of Gengis Khan and Napoleon as written by Edgar Rice Burroughs" (de Villiers 1987:107).
7. To take just one of dozens of possible examples over the years, A R B Etherton's *A New Certificate Comprehension Course* (1966) includes the passage: "[Shaka] built up an immense army of skilled and highly disciplined warriors, conquering and pacifying a territory larger than Europe" (20; emphasis added). This is the Napoleonic parallel subliminally at work. Just to rub the point in: Europe covers some 3.75 million square miles; the *whole* of Southern Africa south of the Zambezi, some 1.3 million square miles.
8. Ballard's source for this is Morris (1965:51), whose source in turn is Ritter - whom Ballard himself lists under works "derogatory" of Shaka (Ballard 1988:138). He appears to have had little recourse to Zulu sources in this regard.
9. See Duffy (1982). The stories of cannibalism in southern Africa are as legion as anywhere else in the imperial domain, but so far as I know have never been studied.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SHAKA AND MYTHS OF PARADISE

Before the feet of Chaka's impis the land was like the garden of Eden, and behind them a desolate wilderness. (Robert Russell, *Natal*, 1903)

These extensive groves were once inhabited by fauns and nymphs, and a rude race of men who sprang from the trees themselves, and had neither laws nor social culture. They knew not how to yoke the cattle nor raise a harvest, nor provide from present abundance for future want; but browsed like beasts upon the leafy boughs, or fed voraciously on their hunted prey. Such were they when Saturn, expelled from Olympus by his sons, came among them and drew together the fierce savages, formed them into society, and gave them laws. Such peace and plenty ensued that men ever since have called his reign the golden age; but by degrees far other times succeeded, and the thirst of gold and the thirst of blood prevailed. The land was a prey to successive tyrants, till fortune and resistless destiny brought me hither, an exile from my native land, Arcadia. (Virgil, *Aeneid*, VIII)

Evander's nostalgic description of the Arcadian idyll and its double demise prefigures so many elements of the various reconstructions of Shaka's reign that the application of a mythographer's lens to a reassessment of white Shakan literature becomes unavoidable. Despite Shaka's status as a key figure in nineteenth-century southern African history, and as an ideologically potent, even dangerous "national" icon, mythic elements in his portrayal by European writers have received little attention.¹ The recurrence, in that portrayal, of the motifs of Europe's sundry paradisal legends is one sign of the persistent influence of Eurocentric myth on an ostensibly representational "history". As already hinted, this particular mytheme is closely allied to those of heroes and monsters examined in the previous chapter.

It is now widely documented how immigrant Europeans' habitual modes of thought and conventions of discourse affected every aspect of their observation and portrayal of alien peoples. However, I have been arguing, the historiography of the Zulus has remained largely blind to the ways in which style, metaphor, and mythic structures are integral to the very choice and deployment of the evidence of Shaka's reign. This chapter offers a brief examination of some crucial nodes in the genealogy of this mythic dimension. Three main contentions inform it.

The first, relatively uncontroversial one is that style and the presentation of history's "objectivity" are indivisible; the stylistic habits of historians are "signposts to larger, deeper matters", from the historian's personal predilections to the "essential beliefs of his culture" (Gay 7-8). I have already argued that commentators who dismiss the stylistic quirks of the work of A T Bryant, for instance, and accept the residual "evidence" as unproblematically referential, are making a kind of category-error. As critics from Foucault to de Certeau have argued, "history" is itself a stylised form, a nexus of rhetorical conventions, indivisibly enmeshed with narrowly culture-specific modes of cognition and hence (especially in the colonial context) with broader structures of power.

A second, more problematic contention addresses the question of what "style" in any given text might signify. An historical "fact", a bounded and discrete writing "self", and a discernible societal *"mentalité"*, are possible but highly contentious referents: each is a construction subsisting within, rather than outside, the text. Hence style constitutes, or allegorises, all these "entities" simultaneously. The social-psychological perspective on historical styles which I have been using throughout this study illuminates how even the stylistically soberest of texts contributes to the construction of a recognisable cultural identity, and to the way in which evidence itself is deployed to conserve that identity. The

conventionalised rhetorics associated with the paradise mytheme constitute, I suggest, one contextually-inflected "speech genre" - to invoke Bakhtin's term again - which provides useful pointers towards the full meaning of a white settler identity-construct.

The third contention is that "myth" is a vital, psychologically significant ingredient of any such identity. This is not to be "essentialist", but to acknowledge that beneath the fragmenting and contending influences of immediate personal and political situations, continuities also run. The Shakan writers' consistent resort to an ancient paradisal legend, as a means of structuring their view of the Zulu past, is an analogue of surrounding continuities in the balance of political and cognitive power.

In short, I argue that Shakan writers persistently use paradisal motifs as much more than inessential embellishments. Rather, such "core metaphors", as symbolic anthropologist Roy Wagner calls them, "expand the frame of [their] self-referentiality by processual extension into a broader range of cultural relevance" (9). This employment of mythemic structures is profoundly conservative and psychologically defensive - indeed, represents a "psychological disposition out of touch with all political reality", as Henri Baudet wrote of the wider European mindset (8). In creating a new "myth" of Shaka, white writers present a case-study of Roland Barthes' notion of latter-day *myth-making* as a kind of bourgeois defence-mechanism. This type of myth distances and freezes its subject, and denies its historicity, but since it only half-conceals ("its function is to distort, not to make disappear") it can go on ceaselessly "inventing itself" (Barthes 107). The employment of preexistent *mythemes* is vital to this process of created *myth* becoming "so thoroughly internalized ... that its inventiveness is no longer recognized but it is considered as 'the way things are literally'" (Doty 21).² So I hope to demonstrate, through the prism of the paradise mytheme, the extent to which the "Shaka" story, long accepted as an historical reality,

functioned (and in many quarters continues to function) as a popular icon in the continual reinvention of a *European* identity. "The invention of Them creates Us, and We may require to invent Them to reinvent Ourselves" (Laing 76).

Paradise reconstructed: Nathaniel Isaacs and Charles Eden

The search for the paradisal is one of the West's most protean, archetypal "core metaphors", to which the Shakan literature has given a locally virulent twist. The portrayals of Shaka incorporate contradictions strangely reminiscent of Virgil's. It is striking how Shaka is conventionally portrayed, like Cronos,³ as the vengeful exile, the sexual deviant, the fratricide, parricide, infanticide (the Shakan literature repeatedly speculates about a similar solitary survivor). Shaka is portrayed as an "execrable monster" and "inhuman mutilator" (Isaacs I 134, 271) who pulverised much of southern Africa and slaughtered a million innocents: the voracious rapist of a timeless, licentious paradise. On the other hand, Shaka becomes - is sometimes simultaneously - the stern but admirable Saturn-figure who single-handedly imposes the regimens of state security, a muscular idyll of control.

This is only to suggest that legendary structures have played a more dynamic role in the telling of Shaka's story than most have acknowledged. The genealogy of the numerous paradisal legends is long and complex, and has been fully reviewed elsewhere.⁴ As Columbus did, Shakan writers have drawn indiscriminately from the Homeric Elysium, the classical Arcadia, the medieval Land of Cockayne, Enlightenment exoticism, Romantic pastoral. Like the Roman and British imperial civilisations - self-righteous, territorially acquisitive, technologically aggressive, and governed by a linear eschatology - the patriarchal Christian world-view imported into Natal by missionaries preserved incongruent traces of the ancient cyclical, goddess-worshipping, a-historical ontologies it supplanted - the Edenic (and therefore its Satanic counterpart) preeminent among them.

Just as Europe's mediaeval barbarian invaders "were assimilated to the Biblical archetype Gog and Magog and thus received an ontological status and an eschatological function" (Eliade 142), so the missionary William Holden characterizes Shaka's armies, like Attila the Hun's, as a "scourge of God" divinely designated "to desolate nations, and 'pour out the vials of His wrath' upon offending men." Although Shaka's neighbours were Edenically "rich in cattle, and dwelt in security", and his depredations "hideous", he is ordained to "prepare the way" for "the control of the greatest Christian nation in the world", the British (1866:23,25,42). Shaka can only be made sense of in the service of the missionaries' self-identification as God-appointed arbiters.

Although J M Coetzee has argued that South Africa's "alien, impenetrable" character made colonists particularly "apprehensive that Africa might turn out to be not a Garden but an anti-Garden, a garden ruled over by the serpent, where the wilderness takes root once again in men's hearts" (3),⁵ the Shakan texts show that hopeful notions of the paradisal persisted in the face of recalcitrant difficulties. These obstacles were as often human as topographical: South Africa is in some ways unique in its political applications of white perceptions of an anti-Paradisal *people* in a (sometimes tenuously) Paradisal *land*.

The notion of Shaka as disruptor-of-paradise emerged as early as 1823, in the records of Captain W F W Owen's unnamed officer: the "tyrannical monster" Shaka's "bloody proceedings promised soon to leave the whole of this beautiful country ... totally desolate". At the same time, this officer's practical experiences prompted him to scorn the Romantics' vision of beneficent primitivism:

The state of these countries, which have scarcely had any intercourse with civilized nations, is a direct proof in refutation of the theories of poets and philosophers, who represent the ignorance of the savage as virtuous simplicity - his miserable poverty as frugality and temperance - and his stupid indolence as a laudable contempt for wealth. How different are the facts! We ever found uncultivated man a composition of cunning, treachery, drunkenness and gluttony. (Owen 1833:71)

Implicitly, Shaka is seen as an exaggerated crystallisation of traits common to all Africans. The values underpinning Owen's officer's account - an aloof aesthetic of landscape alongside human commerce, honesty, and self-restraint - are those of a different kind of visionary Eden, British-established and -controlled, which frequently opposes the discovered "Eden". This original paradise was no more the one which settlers actually wished to inherit than the "noble savage" was to be emulated: the lesson to be drawn, according to Philip Curtin, "was that *even* a savage could rise to nobility of action because he was close to nature" (50). For the settler in this beautiful but unruly "nature", there was as much threat as pleasure, and the "remedy ... prescribed against Africa's insidious corruptions was cheerful toil" (Coetzee 1988:3).⁶ This work-aesthetic/ethic informs the Hobbesian voice of mercantile pragmatism pervading Nathaniel Isaacs' *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*.

Isaacs' ostensibly eyewitness text shifts from passages of relatively gritty, apparently mimetic details ("my face had been burnt by the heat of the sun, and my feet were in great anguish from thorns"), to others drawn from the literary echelons of Enlightenment aesthetics or of mercantilism and science. The "ventriloquism" of the culture through an individual is particularly strong here. One detailed example will suffice to demonstrate the allegorisation of identity in the deployment of the paradisal mytheme.

In the following extract, details of metaphor collude with the progression of thought to enact a distinctive ideological and self-identificatory stance. It opens with a condemnation of the Zulus: on "one of those brilliant and serene [mornings] so peculiar to the tropics, which encourage and enchant the traveller", the itinerant Isaacs discovers that a certain "vicinity had been a scene of some strife, [judging] from the innumerable fragments of human skulls and bones". A disturbing lack of inhabitants is attributed to Shaka's "depopulation" of the area. This is followed by an equally empty description of the

landscape, in which both indigenous inhabitants and the narrating self vanish behind a screen of imported aesthetics:

Nothing could exceed in grandeur the surrounding herbage, and the rich vegetation which displayed itself on the whole face of the country. A more charming spot cannot well be imagined. Clear and limpid rivulets, green hills, and clusters of trees studding the whole, attracted our attention on the one side; on the other the river Umgani, whose banks exhibited a richness of verdure beyond description beautiful. In the distant ground to which our road led, we could perceive that our course lay over mountains rising gently from the sea, and intersecting our way; and ever and anon, at a distance, the river gliding majestically before us, formed altogether a landscape of no ordinary magnificence. (107-8)

This is not the language of someone who has *seen* the "Umgani". There is nothing in "charming", or "richness of verdure", or the anaemic "no ordinary magnificence", to disconcert the English homebody with alterity. The profession of language's inadequacy - "cannot well be imagined", "beyond description" - is itself conventional, an "inexpressibility *topos*" (Campbell 179) which enacts the romantic's repression of the real in favour of a putative paradise. Even "displays itself" echoes the ancient image of, in Marvell's Ovidian phrase, the paradise which "makes the figs our mouths to meet, And throws the melons at our feet". The symmetry of arrangement is that of the refined Enlightenment cult of the "natural Wilderness" (the phrase is Addison's) of the "English park" to which Isaacs elsewhere compares this country: "pleasantly diversified", with "a happy variety of hill and dale in pleasing undulations", wild but subtly controlled by a Newtonian "design of Omnipotence", with "round and regular clusters of thriving trees" against "grand and imposing" mountains (Isaacs 25, 84; see Thacker 20-35). The rhetoric is drawn from Shaftesbury's and Burke's aesthetics; the structure of the whole passage is imaginative, mimicking the Enlightenment landscape painter's composition of a neatly "intersected" progression from foreground to distance. In fact, Isaacs does defer to "the pencil of the painter and the pen of the poet" (5), unconsciously undermining the very empiricism his work is intended to display: "Whatever poets have in their *fiction* pourtrayed, may be found

realised here; and the painter might enrich his store of objects for the exercise of his pencil..." (187; emphasis added).

Unavoidably, the interloper finds congenial landscapes that echo those of home, and describes them in the congenial conventions. Isaacs' descriptions do bear some resemblance to other contemporary, "helplessly evasive" (Campbell 179) failures of Eurocentric metonymies to accommodate the alien.⁷ However, the "mythic" register of description enacts the desire for an analogous form of European hegemony, the commercial settlement.

The passage continues directly:

The soil appeared to contain properties highly congenial for cultivation, and in many places we discovered the work of the natives who had prepared it for Indian corn ... I was greatly attracted by the surrounding scenery, and was so much engaged in contemplating the advantages of settling on this spot, that trifling obstacles made no impression.

Now, a language of covert desire and domestication becomes overtly appropriative. The imagery of the idealised *discovered* paradise supports and is subsumed in the vision of a *reconstructed* Eden wrested from an intransigent land and a neglectful, therefore "fallen" people. Natal is, the *Travels* compulsively insists, a "very productive" country which "would amply pay the labour of tilling, had the natives the industry and skill of the European husbandman" (149). After the Fall, we must "labour to be beautiful", and, again like Columbus, Isaacs "must spice his paradise with aboriginally fallow land (called 'fallen land' on an early map of the Barbados)" (Campbell 203n). On the banks of the "Umlallas" river, Isaacs notices

a bank about half a league distant from the mouth, over which the sea broke moderately in a gentle breeze. The river inside was broad and deep, affording fine shelter for vessels; and the coast contiguous to the banks of the river being picturesque, presented a most eligible site for a settlement. Nature had been bountiful in supplying this district with innumerable objects of an attractive kind. Splendid scenery and magnificent landscapes, a luxuriant soil, and rich vegetation, animal food in abundance, fish very plentiful, and water from innumerable springs, were to be found through the whole district. (154)

This is precisely where Isaacs plants his Union Jack. Contrary to Rousseau, value in this landscape is less discovered than bestowed by an ideology of unimpeachable progress, by means of whose scientific tools, as Joseph Priestley had put it, "nature, including both its materials, and its laws, will be more at our command," and whose "end will be glorious and paradisiacal" (Kumar 44).

Indeed, this is a "paradise" as readily described in the terminology of science itself: "Its climate is not only congenial but salubrious, as it rarely has the extremes of excessive heat, or intense cold, but a mean temperature between 50 and 80" (Isaacs I 15). This is aligned with Isaacs' up-to-date vision of a previously "trackless" and "inhospitable" Africa now being carefully "delineated" by a "comprehensive," "geographical and statistical" exploration to produce (in a neat collocation of the commercial and cognitive) a "useful ... stock of information" (xxiii-xxiv).

Isaacs' evocation of this "sort of Arcadian country" (153) requires that its antithesis be drawn in explicitly anti-paradisal terms. In practice, European settlement feared, and eventually had to eliminate, a far from trifling "obstacle" - Zulu power. The character-assassination of Shaka is the cynosure of an ethnocentric assault reminiscent of Cotton Mather (Barnett 4-5): Shaka, that "monster created with more than ordinary power for doing mischief" (Isaacs I 281), is repeatedly termed "inhuman," "insatiable," "unrestrained", "unexampled", "unnatural" - a negativity. Isaacs' rhetorical fervour is designed to mask the insubstantiality of evidence for Shaka's "execrable barbarity" which, he claims evasively, is "too harrowing to be narrated", and must be passed over "lest it darken, rather than illumine the inscrutable justice of Providence" (Isaacs I 266). The register was nevertheless well contrived to appeal to the image-stores of early nineteenth-century readers.

The three-fold progression of thought - from an exaggerated condemnation, through a diffusely pastoral, transparently fictional evocation of landscape, to a portentously "scientific" estimation of commercial worth - can be demonstrated elsewhere in Isaacs' book.⁸ That it was not unique to him is indicated by Natal administrator Theophilus Shepstone's 1875 view of Zulu history:

In the first (phase) we have simple, primitive, unalloyed barbarism ... peace, prosperity, and plenty.

In the second we have the same barbarism [but with] a dash of civilisation [Shaka's abilities] which poisoned all enjoyment, cut off all that sustains life, turned thousands of square miles into a literally howling wilderness, shed rivers of blood, annihilated whole communities, turned the members of others into cannibals...

In the third we see civilisation ... in living bodily form protecting and ameliorating the remnants of this wreck. (Sullivan 9-10).

Shepstone's crucial equivocation over "civilization" is blanketed by the clichés which affect almost all subsequent accounts of Shaka. The use of the paradisal mytheme is an equivalent cliché, a psychological defence within which a settler identity is consolidated. It had direct, instrumental effects on the pragmatics of Sir Bartle Frere's policies, for instance. As Natal Governor, and influenced by Shepstone, Frere primed the 1879 British invasion of Zululand by raising the spectre of all the chiefs "join[ing] to resist the flood of new ideas and ways which threatened to sweep away the idle, sensuous Elysium of Kaffirdom, such as Gaika and Chaka and Dingaan fought for and enjoyed" (cited in Martin 256).

Frere's paradoxical condemnation of both sensuality and violence indicates how the rhetorical mask of a simplistic "Manichean" dismissal of the "other" cracks at crucial junctures. Sexuality, another ambivalent staple of the paradisal, is twinned with the military throughout the Shakan literature. Shaka and the Zulus are portrayed simultaneously as militarily regimented *and* uncontrollably bloodthirsty, as sexually constrained *and* enviably liberated. Isaacs' Zulus habitually indulge in an "orgiastic modality of society," in Eliade's phrase (68), a perverse kind of *anti-Saturnalia*:

It has been remarked by an ancient historian, that in peace children bury their parents, and in war parents bury their children; it appeared otherwise in the dominions of Chaka; there, Death reigned without a rival, and without control... (Isaacs I 268)

This inversion of the liberating lawlessness of the pastoral mytheme Isaacs attributes to the "unnatural abstinence" inflicted on the Zulus by Shaka, who (like the Amazons) "forbade all sexual intercourse, under the idea that it deprived man of his physical strength and his relish for war" (267). Sexual deviance becomes a consistent theme of the portrayal of Shaka, from E A Ritter's scenes of mass deflowerings and massacres on the pretext of induced erections to Donald Morris's assertions of Shaka's "impotence" (1966:91), and Gluckman's of his "latent homosexuality" (1972:168); it operates as a parody of the primitivist voyeurism of "delightfully promiscuous" sexual liberties (the phrase is Louis du Buisson's [15]). However, Isaacs has the "base dissembler" Shaka say:

"I see it is the custom of all warriors to abstain from cohabiting with women." This was remarked with a smile, and indicated that he did not accord with the precept, nor profit much by the example, for immediately afterwards about fifty of his girls appeared, saluted him, and went into his palace... (99)

It is surely Isaacs who is the dissembler. He hints at this genuine, gently sensual Saturnalia: "many of the young females were rather handsome, displaying much symmetry of figure and simplicity of feature" (83), "nymphs" who "gambol like ducklings in the water, and exhibit themselves in a variety of characters and attitudes" and "examine [him] with no little scrutiny" (203-4). But Isaacs also professes coyly to be disgusted by such habits, and disdains a people "unrestrained in their sexual intercourse" (151): an assumed Puritanism which flatly contradicts the early settlers' notorious acquisition of Zulu "wives"! There is surely evidence here for Ronald Hyam's assertion that "Sex is at the very heart of racism" (1992:203), and that the overcharged emotional hostility of colonials towards black men - of which Isaacs' hostility towards Shaka is the acme - very likely has a sexual component.

A moral fervour is thus inscribed as alibi: Shaka's allegedly perverted nature is

marked by anti-Edenic epithets of exaggerated savagery. He is the "diabolical" "prince of evil" in the Garden, "from whom we recoil as we would at the serpent's hiss" (281). The "work of extermination" to which he sets his minions is "infernal" (131-2). Shaka has "no idea of a deity" (285); on his "unexampled barbarity", therefore, "ought the vengeance of Heaven to fall" (198). Isaacs sees his own role as leading his readers "to an oasis in this moral wilderness" (272):

- a dissemination of more civilized notions should be attempted ... as may eventually root out these savage and brutal propensities, which deluge the earth with blood, and urge man to prey on man. (90)

The agricultural metaphor "root out" underlines both the force and the putative method of Isaacs' insistence on the white settler's identity *as* the "moral oasis".

For three-quarters of a century, this identity centred on the missionary-commercial thrust of European settlement. In Natal, this was powerfully inflected by the hovering fear of Zulu power to the north-east; hence most portrayals of Shaka moved towards an even stronger simplicity of evangelical stereotyping. Stereotypes function to close the linguistic defences against the alternative or self-reflective view, to banish the incomprehensible, and so to "buffer us against our most urgent fears" (Gilman 16).⁹ The mytheme of the serpent-in-the-Garden is one such stereotype, well illustrated by the first fiction of Shaka - Charles Eden's obscure but instructive evangelical apologia.

As we have seen (Chapter Four), *An Inherited Task* hovers uncertainly between a didactic tract and a popular adventure for juveniles. Here, conventional "wild men" and wilderness are indispensable: Shaka is selected as the prime target for the (un-historical) missionary endeavours of the clean-cut hero Guy Hamilton: "no country presented a better opening for his maiden efforts" (Eden 19). Precisely because Isaacs presents the most vicious portrait of a heathen tyrant available, Eden plagiarises the *Travels'* most lurid

descriptions, and at this fictional "distance", can etch the stereotypical antitheses even more powerfully.

In *An Inherited Task*, as in the *Travels*, only occasional oases are discovered in a country by turns "barren and inhospitable", "uninteresting and very stony", or "grand and imposing". A "howling wilderness" (again) is the obligatory psychological antithesis of the homely English paradise with which the novel opens:

Its villas, surrounded by ample grounds, bordered the margin of the noble river; the smooth greensward, in which the feet sank as into a Turkey carpet, and shaven closely as velvet, sloped gradually down to the edge of the water, which rolled placidly onward to the ocean, scarcely disturbing the graceful weeping willows, that swept the surface with their pliant sprays (7).

Here, "all betokened happiness, industry and content", an atmosphere which the heroes strive to reconstruct at their mission-station, importantly distinguished by its "space for cultivation" (69). In the description of a more natural oasis, the "Nu-Gariep" river appears similarly domesticated by fantasy: its "noble stretch of water, and its verdure-clad banks, seemed like a glimpse of fairy-land"; its "airy acacias and graceful weeping-willows were reflected in unbroken beauty"; flamingoes and ducks echo an earlier description of the Thames's swans, "floating along lazily and securely." But this Edenic spot shortly reveals a sinister counter-current:

The scene was indeed most attractive. The swallows skimmed the surface of the lake; flocks of guinea-fowl ... sought refuge from the heat of the plains...; the ravens croaked from the pliant boughs of the weeping-willows; hawks and vultures poised themselves in mid-air, swooping down with lightning rapidity on the young duckling incautious enough to stray from its mother...; the stealthy fox put forth all his cunning to allure his unsuspecting prey within reach of his hungry jaws; the green serpent ascended the trees to suck the eggs and devour the young, while the parent birds, uttering piercing cries, fluttered round the enemy, and proclaimed aloud his insidious approach. (40)

Curiously, the characters are utterly unaffected by this sense of threat; it is a quiet authorial intrusion, foreshadowing the satanic duplicity of Shaka himself. Like the landscape itself, Shaka has superficially a noble physique (very like Hamilton's), standing

upwards of six feet in height, with every limb in perfect proportion. His head was small, and beautifully set on his shoulders, while his features, when undistorted by passion, were rather winning than repulsive.(59; cf. Isaacs 50)

But Shaka's "exterior gave no indication of the tiger-heart within". The image of bird and young anticipates Shaka's unnatural destruction of familial innocence: "the agonized father was compelled to put to death his unoffending child - brother to execute brother - the husband to impale the wife - and the son to become the murderer of her who gave him life!" (68). Eden goes on to plagiarise Isaacs' characterisation of Shaka as "serpent", and to reinforce the Christian gloss: Shaka is "diabolical", his face "that of a devil", the antithesis of Hamilton's "pleasing smile". Where Hamilton is "ardent [and] chivalrous", of "firm determination" and of absolute calm in the face of impending death, Shaka is "cunning," "insatiable" and, facing assassination, cowardly. Shaka is justifiably assassinated just as he is himself about to impale the missionary's wife, the seizure of whom "filled the cup to overflowing, for the whole [Zulu] nation well knew that it would outrage the British, against whom they could hope for no chance of ultimate success" (120).

This is an idealised identity, reinforced and justified by the manufacture of a moral enemy, in its most jingoistic form. The plot inevitably confirms the characters' comfortable "knowledge that there were at least two Englishmen in the party", and fulfils their hope to "produce a salutary effect on the cruel despot, Chaka." Through Shaka's "providential" assassination, British moral superiority is reasserted; Dingane, Shaka's almost equally repulsive successor, thinks that "on the whole [Christianity] was a good thing, and would make his subjects obedient and brave" (108). These are the very qualities for which the British will come to praise the Zulus, once the paradise of an evangelical peace has been re-established.

The successful destruction of the Zulu kingdom in 1879 merely confirmed this prognosis, written under the impetus of, and in unquestioning support of, the rising wave of imperial exploration and conquest. After the allegedly endemic violence of pre-colonial Zululand, which John Robinson had sarcastically termed "the very paradise of barbarism" (1872:44), Natal under white rule became, as the influential settler historian George McCall Theal unabashedly saw it in 1904, "an earthly paradise" for the blacks themselves (228).

The Voyeur's Idyll: A T Bryant

By the early twentieth century, when priest and anthropologist A T Bryant (see also Chapter Five above) began his massive compilations of Zulu history, language and lore, Zulu power had been decisively crushed. With this threat in recession, the psychological way was partially cleared for more heroic, and, because the opportunity for Zulu heroism itself was in abeyance, voyeuristic portrayals. Rider Haggard's novels of the turn of the century epitomised the resurgence of a neo-mediaeval noble savagery, overflowing with vicarious violence; in *Nada the Lily* (1895) Shaka's solitary son receives a condescending adulation. The further Shaka receded into the past, the stronger became the structuring effect of the older paradisal mytheme.

Much of Bryant's work belongs atavistically to the earlier nineteenth century. For all its freight of linguistic speculation and ethnographic detail, its historiography resembles Macaulay in its cavalier use of evidence, and its anthropology is patterned on that of the 1860s. Despite Bryant's importance to Zulu studies, the implications of this atavism remain virtually unexamined. His ethnocentrism has long been waived as merely unfortunate; his ponderous fictionalising, determined archaism, and sneering humour have been dismissed as a superficial gloss on (in Bryant's own phrase) "the dry bones" of a history otherwise

reliable. In Bryant's stylistic pyrotechnics can be seen analogues of his underlying assumptions, by which a dubious deployment of *evidence* is made.

The following strikingly "paradisal" passage, from *A History of the Zulu and neighbouring tribes* (1964; originally 1911-13), allegorises Bryant's conception of African history:

- Out on the grassy plain, amidst the blue forget-me-nots and the pink gladioli, placidly moved the grazing herds, while groups of merry herdboys, clad only in the sheen of the setting sun, fluted plaintively on their panpipes hard by, as though to say, "Sun! goodbye! goodbye!" Away in the distance, circles of grass brown huts, each with its attendant patch of waving millet, were scattered here and there where, had we approached, we should have found the elder folk peacefully assembled - busy women in their leathern kilts and swarthy damsels in their girdles of fringe, moving artlessly to and fro, while the men squatted leisurely about, plying their simple trades of wood-carving or basket-making, little knowing that the angel of death even then hovered above them.

Such was the pleasing idyll that everywhere rejoiced the traveller's gaze as he passed through the breadth of Lalaland betwixt the Tukela and Mngeni in the year 1810. And with the dawn all this picture of living loveliness was to be blotted out. The reign of Appollyon [Shaka] would enter in the night and this happy spot would become the Armageddon on which the corpses of the wood carvers and basket makers would be strewn o'er the plains. Infants would be pinned to the backs of their slaughtered mothers, tender trembling children would be struck down in their homes, cattle and panpipes would be swept furiously from the hillside - bloody devastation would stalk triumphant through the land and beautiful peace would die a violent death. (74)

This mellifluously-phrased Georgian landscape is strongly reminiscent of Isaacs', with its gaze lifting from foreground to distance, its peaceful herds and its artistically scattered clusters of huts. But it also inscribes a vicarious nostalgia impossible a century before. Isaacs derided African indolence; Bryant's inhabitants stroll through enviable chores. The flowers are domestic; life revels in unthreatened nakedness. The insincerity of this winsome primitivism is palpable: the plain, the panpipes, the happy herdsmen, are the stock figures of the literary paradise. The scene is also deliberately distanced: many details are discernible only "had we approached"; "the traveller" is a hypothetical one; the glance at the "swarthy damsels" is distinctly voyeuristic. The archaisms elide time and space: visual distance is

translated into the evocation of a lost era. It is, after all, an idyll in which the writer cannot, perhaps would not, participate; the taint of melancholy in the "plaintive" pipes and the setting sun is designed to adumbrate and highlight the impending "Armageddon" of Shaka's invasion. In this, too, the resort to stock images - the scattered corpses, the annihilation of "tender trembling children" - underscores remoteness. This is neither a Gibbon-like ironic distance, nor the stylised detachment of a post-Rankean "objectivity", but the stage-managed sentimentality of the voyeur. The horror is as mythical as the paradise, an "empty, parasitical form" in which "history evaporates" (Barthes 1982:103).

This description is not just an aberrant foray into fiction. Numerous similar statements vivify Bryant's essential conception of African historical change as a brash antithesis of idyll and violence:

[The Emazizini clan lived] amidst that panorama of natural grandeur and romance [and] flourished in pastoral opulence and tranquillity ... until the day of universal misery was born with Shaka (29-33).

[The Emaxasibeni clan resolved to] go right away from all this wickedness and bloodshed and would seek peace and plenty in that Utopia whither all others were flying ... To the south in sooth they duly came and found a hell such as they had never known before... (61)

All that was beautiful in life, all its pristine tranquillity and sunshine had suddenly vanished, and the whole pandemonium of evil spirits had been seemingly let loose on each and driven mankind morally mad. (69-70)

It was in the halcyon times, long before Shaka came to disturb the peace... (90)

The serpent-in-paradise mytheme does not operate merely as a structuring principle or as an entertaining embellishment, though it has elements of both: it is alloyed to a fundamentally moralistic deployment of evidence, as a closer look at some of Bryant's actual explanations confirms.

The headings of *A History of the Zulu*'s central four chapters proclaim Shaka's successive "Natal Campaigns" as their subject, but Zulu marauders make only the most

fleeting appearances in the thirty-odd separated clan histories. For instance, in "Shaka's First Natal Campaign", several tribes are arranged according to Bryant's notion of Shaka's order of conquest. The Emacubeni clan, when "the irresistible Zulu army swarmed down", "meekly submitted". What form this submission took, Bryant does not say. Among the emaSomini, Shaka was "working havoc" or "commenced operations"; the implied assumption is that these operations were too crude to require specification. The Ngcolosis, merely mimicking the neighbouring eMbo, felt that "their only course was to submit" to the "presumptuous freebooter" Shaka; this misty transaction contrasts starkly with the detailed account of their conflict with Dingane which immediately follows. Zulu relations with the emaKabeleni consist of a generalised onset of guerrilla warfare; those with the emaPepeteni are reduced to a single, heavily fictionalised battle ("Shaka chuckled with proud delight"). The emaBomyini submission is attributed to a single act of terror, "their chief, Nzombane, having been barbarously plucked of both his eyes while on a friendly visit to Shaka". As for the Zondis, Shaka "simply walked in" and degraded the chiefs "in the twinkling of an eye to a state of abject poverty"; and with similarly magical violence he "drove to the winds Ngongomas and emaXasibeni together" (52-61).

In the one more detailed case, Shaka's enlistment of Zihlanhlo of the eMbo as a "trusty lieutenant", Bryant still fails to specify the relationship, except to say that Zihlanhlo subjugated smaller clans on Shaka's behalf; some "submitted", some were "destroyed", some fled and "rapidly developed cannibalistic propensities" (53). Bryant's conception of the forces of change in Zulu history rest on variants of these crude reactions. The annihilating power of Zulu terror is taken for granted, and the rest is fiction, marked by Bryant's characteristic sarcasm: "There we *may well imagine* the warrior chief [Zihlanhlo], sturdy, though astute, welcoming the dreaded monster [Shaka] with flattering eloquence - how profoundly moved they all were by this unexpected condescension of a visit; how unutterable

was the respect they cherished for his august person..." (52; emphasis added). The sarcasm, too, distances, transforming historical event into risible theatre.

John Wright (1989b, 1991) has noted the same paucity and splintered distribution of evidence for Zulu predation in Bryant's magnum opus, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929). One further passage - an ironic, almost comic description from this overwrought tome - shows that, despite changes in detail and chronology, the violence-in-Paradise paradigm remains central, and highlights its moralistic import.

The Bantu on the whole are tame and genial savages. But there are fighting-cocks amongst the hens, who now and again, here and there about the continent, grow fitfully gamy and make the feathers fly. Among such game-cocks our Nguni folk were numbered. Those halcyon days of the Golden Age ere Dingiswayo [Shaka's mentor] first disturbed the idyllic peace marked but an interval wherein the aggressive, plundering spirit of the race lay for the moment torpid. Once the ancient fire had been by Dingiswayo re-kindled, then fanned by Shaka to roaring conflagration, there was no longer any power to stay the natural impulse of the race. One after another wild spirits emerged among the clans, and led forth, north and west and south, fierce blood-thirsty hordes, revelling in slaughter and destruction... (446)

The "pre-cataclysmic" (pre-"*mfecane*") "Golden Age" turns out to be merely a temporary repression of innate ferocities capable of exploding unpredictably anywhere on "the continent". The present-tense verbs of the beginning surely embody Bryant's own projected fears of resurgent rebellion (such as that of 1906, which he had experienced), of which Shaka is the personification. Bryant's defence is to reduce the whole people to the rank of the violently animal on a putative hierarchy redolent of both the Great Chain of Being and a bloody Darwinism: Shaka is merely one form of animal life predating another, a "wolf", the "king of beasts", a "wild animal", a "hyena", hounding inferior tribes like "sheep". The derogation of these violent "natural impulses" is delivered with the insulating formality of a ponderously classical rhetoric which invites the elevation of the reader's moral values above those of the subject. It also, in the manner of popular fiction, defuses the fear by exaggerating it into spectacle, while paradoxically reinforcing it in the popular imagination.

In a related paradox, the voyeur's perspective presupposes the actual presence of the voyeur, who can only be the white man: this species of paradise cannot exist without him.¹⁰ Hence, for Bryant, true paradise has no (indigenous) men in it at all: their many alleged battles "pollut[ed] the virgin sward with gore and putrid corpses ... Such was the coming of man into this hallowed paradise where heretofore nature had luxuriated undefiled in unruffled bliss" (380-1; cf. 1964:42-3). Happily, the blacks' inveterate, autophagous violence creates a "No-Man's-Paradise" (1929:237, 390) into which the white man opportunely descends: "anon this most beautiful and fertile garden in all South Africa, this Black Man's arcady smiling, century long, in the joy of peace and plenty and perpetual sunshine, had become transformed into a sullen and desolate waste; and into this wilderness, in the nick of time, two streams of colonizing Whites, from east and from west, had as suddenly walked, and taken possession" (236-7).

Superficially, Bryant seems here to turn his sarcasm against the whites: the "No-Man's-Paradise" is "all a mirage, an illusion", the thousands of inhabitants are "in being all the time, unseen, in hiding or in captivity", and soon making their unwelcome presence felt (237). Bryant is not above pouring vitriol on his own party: "this arrogant, greedy, lawless element struts over the face of the globe, disturbing all ... in its insatiable lust for further lands and further wealth" (235). This precocious "liberalism", however, is framed as a tentative hypothesis ("*something* of the Black man's criticism ... *might* run *somewhat* on these lines"), and slips immediately into a revelation of Bryant's underpinning heirarchy:

To be sure, the Black man is not one whit better; but when the White man descends to do as the Black man does, he thereby lowers himself to the Black man's level and can claim no other justification for his deeds than that conferred by the Black man's sanctions. For, after all, that might is right is a law of nature; but of nature at its lowest, brutish stage, not of that higher and nobler nature which is enlightened by reason, guided by conscience, and ruled by a recognition of altruistic duties and responsibilities. (235)

This anti-primitivist gesture diametrically opposes the "paradisal" impulse, employing the threat of "going native", of becoming, like Shaka, another version of the "arrogant, greedy, lawless" mediaeval "wild man", alternatively Satan: the "fiendish" "arch-demon of iniquity", "his Satanic majesty", "devil", "diabolic" "angel of death". For Bryant, as for Isaacs, mythemic language collaborates with the "scientific" hierarchy on which Shaka *is* the man "reverted not to the savage, but to the brutish stage" (648), the real engineer of imperialistic violence. So Bryant can ingenuously exonerate the Natal whites altogether:

The acquisition of Natal by Briton and Boer was *not*, we are happy to state, accomplished by such methods - in the last instance... the Natives of Natal lost their fatherland largely owing to a misunderstanding and a mischance [!]. (236)

Bryant professes to disparage his own culture's "mere utilitarian morality" and "deplorably brutish and gross" fascination with "bloodshed and devastation [rather than] the arts of culture" (97), but his deployment of both evidence and rhetoric enacts the conviction that violent, unthinking revolution is confined to black history. Morally "correct" values are both the white man's property and his duty to dispense - in short, his identity.

As with Isaacs, Bryant's rhetorical mask repeatedly reveals its artificiality. Voyeurism by definition requires a certain identification with its object, an act of projection. Hence, for instance, Bryant contradictorily elevates both the intellectual benefits of a master civilisation and the victimised clans' "quiet pursuance of their pastoral and industrial occupations", which are unacknowledged but "infinitely more honourable" (98-9). Further, despite the derogations of the Zulus' "marvels of brutality", Bryant, like his missionary predecessors, still needs to find the Zulus both spiritually redeemable and politically docile.

The Satanic "Shaka" is neither. Bryant must therefore, in crucial respects, separate Shaka off from his people: "Shaka was in no wise a normal Zulu, and the Zulu people are not to be measured by his standard" (633). Shaka is the arch-corrupter (cf Isaacs 267), but since he is also to be credited with "forging the Zulu nation", a grudging praise must be given to

those "Shakan" virtues most congenial to the colonial Christian master-myth of the reconstructed Eden:

Strange but true, this Shaka was as sublime a moral teacher as martial genius. Submission to authority, obedience to the law, respect for superiors, order and self-restraint, fearlessness and self-sacrifice, constant work and civic duty, in a word, all the noblest disciplines of life were the very foundation-stones upon which he built his nation.(641)

The stability of this cultural identification - authoritarian, nationalistic, Puritan - shows in this passage's reappearance in many later works (Ridgway 1946:57; Ritter 1955:338; Brookes and Webb 1965:14; du Buisson 1987:26). Bishop A W Lee's 1949 judgement illustrates the projective syndrome succinctly:

Chaka has been branded in history - in European history, that is - as a bloodthirsty monster and a savage despot. This is, however, an unjust estimate of his character. He fought his campaigns for a dimly-perceived ideal, just as did the swashbuckling Britisher of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for his ideal of a great and united empire. When he had attained to his ideal he ruled his subjects with that firm brutality which he knew to be the only method of keeping the *pax Africana*, much as we have ruled Ireland in the past, and India in the less remote past. (6)

What begins as a reassessment and a self-criticism thus modulates immediately into an appropriation and a reinvention of the Zulu past in justification of the British imperial present. The influence of Bryant's work is explicable, not primarily by its daunting density and volume, but by this continual petrification of white supremacist self-definition.

Hence, while some later works echo Bryant very closely, even those which begin to view the Zulus with primitivist favour make little attempt to escape from the mythemic matrix.¹¹ E A Ritter's *Shaka Zulu* (1955) is the crux of this shift. As examined in detail in Chapter Nine, Ritter plagiarises extensive paradisal passages while portraying a Shaka who, quite unlike Bryant's, is physically magnificent, heroic, and politically shrewd, and a Zulu people "noble of heart, dignified of bearing, with refined manner, and learned in natural science - qualities alas! rapidly corrupted or destroyed by the advance of European civilization" (Ritter 8). But this primitivist streak remains subsumed in a countering morality

of racial superiority: "One outstanding fact, however, emerged and stands forth like a shining beacon above the haze of time and controversy, and that is that the White men had some dominant quality even when in rags that compelled the black men to regard them as their superior" (268). Hence the primitivism remains voyeuristic, in that it lacks the sinew of a genuinely radical critique of the settler identity.

Such a critique is attempted by Louis du Buisson's piece of self-styled "investigative journalism", *The White Man Cometh* (1987). But, ironically, du Buisson deploys the same paradisal imagery:

Zululand was a vast natural paradise, one of the most fertile on earth ... a country with a gentle, generous climate devoid of extremes and with all the animals of creation intact, pursuing their own evolution.

Including *homo sapiens*.

... They were settled in thriving, self-sufficient communities who lived such an organic existence on the face of the sun-drenched landscape that they left no trace of their passing ... Unwarlike, fun-loving and hospitable, they lived in harmony with their neighbours and when conflicts arose they were settled in the gentlest possible way.(1987:17)

This idyll is destroyed primarily, in du Buisson's account, not by the Zulus but by "lying, scheming" white invaders. But in the language something of the voyeuristic blandness of the unreachable remains; so do similar ambivalences. A covert religious mythology ("creation") rubs shoulders uncomfortably with the scientific ("evolution", the sanitising, deracialised "*homo sapiens*"). The familiar Eden is tinged with a new ecology, but the epistemology of Eurocentric convention prevails. The target of derogation is shifted, but no alternative voice actually breaks through. The critical lever against "civilisation" which notions of the paradisal and the primitive have often provided, especially perhaps in the eighteenth century (Weston 1984), remains soft.

Edenic Anthropology, Revolutionary History

One further manifestation of the paradisal mytheme may be briefly treated: a marked structural division between the "anthropological" and the "historical" in the Shakan texts. In Isaacs, Charles Eden, Fynn, Bryant and others, "ethnographic" details are confined to distinct chapters or even volumes (Bryant's chapter "Daily Life in Arcady", in *The Zulu People As They Were Before the White Man Came*, is paradigmatic [1949:174ff]). The paradisal motif in Bryant's title reinforces James Clifford's observation that in twentieth-century ethnography generally "the structure of pastoral has been pervasive" (118). The effect of this search for the perfectly primitive "anthropologist's Garden of Eden" (Kuper 121) has been Johannes Fabian's famous "denial of coevalness": like Barthes' myths, a radically a-historical anthropology largely "presupposes the givenness of the object ... as something to be *observed*" (Fabian 86). Pre-colonial society is frozen into timelessness, and this "naturalisation of Time" (16) is readily translated into the mythic spatial imagery of the paradise - and "easily put to work for such ... purposes as national defence, political propaganda, and outright manipulation and control of other societies" (49).

Hence one strand in the anthropology of the Zulu attributes to the pre-Shakan era a paradisal stasis which is more or less abruptly terminated by Shaka's explosive invention of Zulu statehood - the so-called "mfecane". Ritter appropriates lengthy "ethnographic" passages from Bryant's *Olden Times* to set a static stage for the onset of the Shakan "revolution": "The Zulu daily life of a hundred or a thousand years ago was very much what it is today" (Ritter 3). Donald Morris's *The Washing of the Spears* opens similarly with an idyllic description of "an aimless people, happy and careless, with little sense of time and less of purpose" (1966:22-39). In more recent and sophisticated texts, the tendency wanes, but is not eliminated. J D Omer-Cooper's *The Zulu Aftermath*, which legitimised the "mfecane" as a conceptualisation of the Zulucentric "revolution", states explicitly that pre-

Shakan times were "far from idyllic" (1966:21), but continues to attribute to pre-Shakan society a relative stasis: "the southern sub-continent seems usually to have evolved at a slower pace than the rest" (2). Similarly, *The Oxford History of South Africa* comprises opening chapters by an archaeologist and an anthropologist: sections on "Characteristics and Distribution" and "Social Structure" are "handled in wholly static, a-historical terms" (Marks 1981:300), and set the scene for the "historical" chapters on white and black eruptions: "the manners of 1686 are those of the same countryside nearly three centuries later" (Wilson and Thompson 1969:129). The same essentially (though explicitly qualified) static prelude to a history of disruptive warfare structures the opening of even the latest major work on the Zulu, John Laband's *Rope of Sand* (1995).

A second, sometimes confusedly intertwined strand is utopian rather than paradisaical: that is, it concerns the Zulus as they *are*, rather than as they *were*, and their place in a new dispensation of power. The Zulu "character" is objectified, the expression of a particular mode of knowing, a "disembodied narrative" (Thornton 507) illustrated by this "ethnographic" note from Isaacs' *Travels*:

[The Zulu] are, doubtless, the most extraordinary people in existence, if we look into their peculiarities of character, and it is difficult to determine whether we should pity their ignorance or guard against their duplicity; for though they are proverbially in a state of perfect simplicity, yet there is a cunning about them, and an irrevocable desire for indulging in all their savage propensities. (Isaacs, II 243)

Isaacs exaggerates, patronises, condemns, while saying nothing; unintelligibility is reified, so the tone of absolute certainty is palpably hollow. But such certainty is essential to the colonial utopia: it guarantees the equanimity of the observer. Since these "propensities" are "irrevocable", the Zulus are effectively excised from an evolving history, are refused "coeval" dialogue with the observer. The use of the "ethnographic present" tense (Fabian 80) implies that they neither can nor should be changed. The tendency persists into later works. The anthropologist Eileen Krige, for instance, though not unaware of difficulties

presented by "lapses of time", can still, in discussing a single "custom", cite sources ranging from Isaacs to contemporary (1930s) oral informants, conflating them in order to "harmonise conflicting accounts" and to present a "connected", "coherent" whole (v). Even where phrases such as "there might be" and "normally", as in this passage from Omer-Cooper, allow that "exceptions to this might arise", society is frozen:

Administrative authority in the tribe was distributed between the chief and a hierarchy of subordinates. Depending on its size, the tribal territory was divided into a number of sub-divisions, provinces and districts. Each of these was under the authority of a sub-chief and where the tribe was large there might be a two-tier system ... All the important subordinate chieftaincies were normally held by close relatives of the chief.(17)

This remains a language of categorisation, of a normative ethnography which regards deviations from the pattern as aberrant; it is an inheritor of what Adam Kuper has called the "invention of primitive society" (1988), beholden to an essentialist perception of exclusive races, tribes and clans. The utility of such a language for the pragmatic politics of apartheid needs no further comment.

European colonists' mode of *self*-identification is deliberately contrastive. For them, "history" is the appropriate discourse, with its commanding metaphors of progressive change, cause-and-effect, and linear chronology. Equally bound up with the growth of Empire (Wolf 7), "history", no less than "anthropology", is "a product of *allegoresis*" (White 1987:45), is as convention-bound in its rhetorics and choices of material, and is as morally resonant an icon of Western identity in the face of the alien. It, too, is a "labour of separation", Us from Them (de Certeau 2).

In the Shakan context, "history" begins with the white man's arrival. Given its peculiar empirical premises, it must. It demands documentation, great leaders, bounded state systems, dates, events. The pre-textual past of the Zulus offers such a "history" negligible purchase: "The primitive history of the black people of [Zululand] will never be known as

"long as the earth lasts," wrote Viola Ridgway (1946:i). Or as J Y Gibson put it, "Eventful Zulu history ... had its beginning in the last twenty years of the eighteenth century" (1911:11): that is, in Shaka's time. And even earlier, J A Farrer: "Zulu history, as such, does not begin before Chaka's reign, about the year 1820, but it begins fully steeped in atrocities, conquest and devastation" (1879:14). The discourse arrives: instantly, we find a knot of unprecedently great leaders (Dingiswayo, Shaka, Zwide, Mzilikazi), a "nation" being founded in a sudden wave of revolutionary violence, accounts of hitherto unheard-of, full-scale battles. The advent of the discourse does not merely coincide with the Shakan "revolution"; it largely creates it. It cannot help but create it.

Figurative identities

The use of the paradisaical mytheme, for centuries an essential element in European thinking about alien peoples, is a mask, a complex gesture of social-psychological defence. Like most defence mechanisms, it becomes a crucial component of self-identification, difficult to acknowledge and shed. Hence I have argued that the language used to invoke the variants of paradise in the Shakan literature has not been mere elaboration, but the symptom of a network of culture-bound approaches to the alien. I have further suggested that the various levels of this network - whether in the detail of metaphor or in the organisation of discourses - are neither determinants nor consequences of one another; rather, they are mutually reinforcing allegories or analogues, signalling in concert the construction of a textual identity. Finally, this allegorising of identity is a process "best and most succinctly reproduced," as Jung noted, "by figurative language" (quoted in Doty 153).

Also like most defensive masks, this one cracks upon impact with reality: radical ambivalences are manifested throughout the Shakan literature. Thus men like Bryant and James Stuart, who like so many of the writers on Shaka regarded themselves as "honorary

Zulus", spent a lifetime nostalgically gathering data about the very people whose societies they were actively engaged in destroying - and then deriding that same data, on which their accounts ostensibly depended, collapsing back into relieved self-congratulation:

Out of the gloom of scant and hazy tradition we now pass at last into the clear and certain light of written records. The White-man with paper and pen has at length arrived, and, thanks to his foresight, interest and knowledge, has drawn for us, of the Zulu people, their habits and their king, many a graphic picture that will endure through all the ages. (Bryant 1929:652)

The fact that analogous contradictions in the portrayal of Shaka can exist - Cronos against Saturn - is itself the most powerful indicator that we are dealing not with representations of "what-happened", but with the radical other-place of independent textuality. The ambivalence itself - present even in the Biblical accounts of Eden - is the structuring principle of a discernible, but far from cohesive, Euro-colonial *mentalité*, a *mentalité* governed by antinomous cultural arrogance and persistent fears of the consequences of that arrogance.

It may well be (as Jung pointed out of archetypes, to which my mythemes bear some resemblance) that the operations of these "transformations" from psyche to metaphor and discourse - these "floating intangibles" (Wagner x) - are finally unverifiable. However, they do make possible a reading of the Shakan texts which fully recognises them as crystallisations of a process of creating and recreating meaning and identity, as being at once more problematic and much richer than mere attempted mimesis.

NOTES

1. See the tentative commentaries of Fernandez (1967) and Golan (1990). This is in marked contrast to the ongoing debate in historiographical circles (eg. Cobbing 1988, 1990; Wright 1989a, 1989b; Hamilton 1992).

2. I apply the term "myth" more widely than previous commentators on the Zulu such as Carolyn Hamilton (1990a, 1990b), Leonard Thompson (1985), and John Wright (1989b), who have focussed on one meaning of "myth" as a locally generated, by definition historically inaccurate "tale told about the past to legitimize or discredit a regime" (Thompson 1985:1), assessable by its "scientific probability", or on whether its "effects are good or bad" (12-20).

3. Cronos had castrated his father with a flint sickle, married his own sister, banished his brothers and, informed by prophecy that his sons would usurp him, devoured all but Zeus. In later Orphic traditions, Cronos reigns over the heavenly Islands of the Blessed, or is conflated with Saturn.

4. The most useful surveys of the paradisal are Boas 1966; Giamatti 1966; Levin 1969. On some African manifestations, see van Wyk Smith 1979, 1986; and with reference to the Khoi, Dietrich 1993.

5. See also van Wyk Smith's work on the twinned traditions of "the Two Ethiopias", and the city-idyll imaginings of Prester John and Monomatapa (1979, 1986), and Clouts (1971) on the "violent Arcadia" in South African mainstream poetry.

6. In Elizabeth Watt's *Febana*, for instance, Francis Fynn, "looking ashore, saw that everything was as natural and undisturbed as if this was the virgin world at the beginning of time". This Conradian vision will however bear disturbance at the hands of industrious, heroic, appropriative whites - Fynn "knew his Africa well enough to know that the enchanting greenery would defy penetration except with herculean labour and an axe" (1962:31) - but not by "hordes" of blacks. The "enchanting" here, like Charles Eden's, is deceptive; under Shaka, the land reveals itself as a "land of horror": "The blue and beautiful mountains were suddenly menacing barriers cutting off his [Farewell's] last hope of escape" (54).

7. Cf. the description by Isaacs' fellow-eyewitness, Charles Rawden Maclean, similarly idealised but lacking the vituperative frame: "Behind the Fort lay the extensive and gently undulating valley of the Mngeni with here and there scattered clumps of stately trees, giving it a park-like appearance. The dark and well-defined outline of the wooded heights, which bounded this extensive plain as far as the eye could trace, the flocks of roebuck or fallow deer, grazing quietly here and there, or gambolling in the distance, presented a beauty and grandeur of scenery that quieted the gloomy thoughts of our forlorn condition..." (Maclean 63). See also J M Coetzee on the works of Isaacs' contemporary William Burchell (1988:36-9), and Mary Louise Pratt on John Barrow (1986).

8. For instance:

The account I had heard of Chaka, and of his execrable propensities, raised in me apprehensions of no ordinary magnitude, which were greatly increased, when I considered the little chance we had of effecting our escape from so inhuman a monster.... Every thought, every sound, seemed to encourage my forebodings, until

Grey eyed morn began to peep

followed by the glorious sun in all his grandeur, diffusing his influence over the native wilds. I arose and made every effort to shake off the gloom with which I had been overcome, and which the lowing of the cattle, and the apparent joy of the herdsman numbering his flock, contributed in some degree to dissipate. I went forth and looked around, examined the quality of the soil, turned up a little, minutely calculated its capabilities, and concluded that the industry of man might make it fruitful. (Isaacs 38)

9. The persistence of this fear in the Zulu context can hardly be overstressed. Even the Zulu sympathizer Bishop John Colenso wrote: "[I]f the tide of passion [remains] pent up within the bosom of the race, they will either stagnate in sullen hatred, or burst forth again ere long in another terrible outbreak" (1855:xxx). William Holden warned that "among barbarians a single spark has been deposited in the heart, which lies smouldering for years, and then in some unexpected moment, without any apparent cause, has burst forth into a mighty flame, consuming all within its reach" (1866:31). D J Darlow apostrophized "the Thing That shook the hosts of men and made them cringe", which "ever rests and broods Undaunted in the Amazulu hearts" (1937:48). Viola Ridgway speculated, barely masking anxiety, "Perhaps, some day, there will be another leader among the black men, with Shaka's genius for leadership and organization, tempered with the democratic ideas of the white man..." (1946:95). Even in his insistently positive vein, Omer-Cooper sees (as do some Zulus) "the work of Shaka in creating a sense of unity wider than the traditional tribe is still continuing" (1966:48). The 1986 South African Television series *Shaka Zulu* portrayed a monolithic war-machine which "can and will rise again".

10. A more recent manifestation of this is the touristic travelogue (see eg. Bulpin 1966): the landscape itself becomes a museum.

11. One other Bryant clone is worth mentioning: Peter Becker's *Path of Blood*, a Ritter-like popular historical novel about the "tyrant" Mzilikazi, opens with a long description of "a land of plenty ... flow[ing] with the proverbial milk and honey" (1962: 3-5).

PART FIVE

Language and Assassination

Throughout this study I have been arguing that to a great extent the way in which Shaka has been portrayed is a projection of settler or European concerns with their own self-image. This concern is frequently in tension with the implications of the historical evidence, and even with the writers' own proclaimed moralities. Both the continuities and the disjunctions are registered in various ways in the use of particular stylistic techniques, or gestures. Many of these gestures seem to be repeated often enough to warrant some form of classification.

One way is to view sets of gestures which relate to writers' attitudes towards their predecessors. The ways in which, and degree to which, writers mimic, plagiarise, challenge, or depart from their precursor texts offer insight into their personal psychological stances as well as their relationships with the broader "textual society" in which they are working. I have argued in the course of the study that in the Shakan literature conformity to established models and tropes is a great deal stronger than departures, and that the departures themselves are significantly self-orientated.

Chapter Twelve takes a synchronic rather than diachronic view of some slightly different gestures, and isolates a number of textual strategies in which white writers' methods of self-inscription, of the creation of culturally cohesive meanings for themselves, are repeatedly evident. I offer some new neologisms, less to create a new kind of essentialist paradigm, than to direct attention to a particular way of reading textual gestures as illustrative of the writers' social-psychological attitudes towards Shaka, and in some ways more broadly towards the African "Other".

CHAPTER TWELVE

IDENTITY, NEGATION AND STYLISTIC GESTURES

If all white writing on Shaka is inevitably a matter of translation, of choosing intelligible metaphors, of re-situating the strange within familiar frames, even the most sympathetic cross-cultural attempts to convey the Zulu "reality" - and I do not wish to argue that all such attempts have been nugatory or entirely destructive - inscribe the individual and cultural identity of the writer in ways which influence every nuance of the description of the subject. Social identity is founded on continuity, not on disjunctions; hence this chapter focusses on underlying continuities in white *perceptions* of Shaka, or rather the "textual gestures" through which those perceptions are registered. This is not to deny the fissures and absences with which poststructuralist theory is so enamoured, and many of which I have illustrated in the case-studies above, but to suggest that in this literature the continuities are even more important, precisely because they are imaginative constructs. This chapter outlines some of the ways in which the construct is built, not merely in terms of choice of mythemes, images or idioms, but in the dynamic "mannerisms" through which these fragments are deployed and linked. Such mannerisms have been termed "units of semiotic mediation" by J V Wertsch, by which he means mental functions and expressions defined "in terms of their changing interrelationships - their dynamic organisation" (Wertsch 1985:208). Such units of analysis are "microcosms of consciousness", and are neither isolated tesserae abstracted from a purely social matrix, nor idealised essences abstracted from the purely psychological. Each text, in Vygotsky's phrase, is an "aggregate of contextually situated processes" - textual gestures (Wertsch 1990:111).

An example of linguistic translation will provide a point of entry. In almost all works on Shaka, the origin of his name is discussed as a kind of synecdochal lens through which the question of his own origins - his birth, exile and accession to Zulu chieftainship - is refracted. A "folk etymology" is used to support or crystallise the story. In each case the name "Shaka" is translated, and into the "gap" between original word and interpretative translation, the writer's predilections are inserted. This happens with many words, including "Zulu", "Gubulawayo", "Gibixhegu", even "Africa" itself (Miller 1985:10-11). An ambivalence in the translation of Shaka's name is present from the beginning. Nathaniel Isaacs gives two versions, deriving it firstly from "Chekery or dysentery", which Shaka's mother Nandi, the story goes, was said to have contracted in an effort to conceal her pregnancy; and secondly, "in Sichuana at least", from the word for "battle-axe" (Isaacs I 45). The latter translation carries the obvious connotations of insatiable warfare; it also, incidentally, demonstrates the ease with which early travellers transferred information from one tribe to another, tending to see them as at bottom undifferentiated. The former is closely aligned with the notion of Shaka's illegitimacy, which itself, as William Wörger observes, "forms, and becomes an emblem of, the man" (147). The shakiness of the translation becomes evident when Isaacs, jettisoning the name as an etymological source altogether, without explanation, later avers that it was changed from Checker to Chaka (269).

Except for the plagiarism by D C F Moodie (1888:395), Isaacs' interpretations vanish from the literature. So does Henry Fynn's more plausible derivation of "looseness of the bowels" (1950:12), with the exception of J D Omer-Cooper, who adds, again without explaining why, that "This name ... is symbolic of much in his life and character" (1966:29-30). These were overtaken by a more colourful explanation: that of the "intestinal beetle". This only appears in the literature (as does so much else) with A T Bryant's *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929), a century after Shaka's death. In virtually every subsequent

writer,¹ and in conjunction with the "stunted penis" story (also started by Bryant), it is utilised to support new, crudely Freudian explanations for Shaka's violence: a childhood of belittlement, implied in the "beetle" appellation, fuels vengeance and ambition. Thus Huntly Stuart (nephew of James), in his play "Shaka" (1981), has Dingane mock his predecessor with his "royal BEETLE power ... royal beetle authority";² and Lynn Bedford Hall's children's account (prudishly?) suppresses the illegitimacy-connection and has Shaka's young bullies use the term "beetle" merely as insult (1987:2).

The importance, in this context, is not in the truth of the epithet but in how it is used; thus Charles Ballard, in *The House of Shaka* (1988), wishing to lionise the man, evades the connotations of both the ludicrous and the Freudian in the "beetle" story and gives the meaning of the name as "break of day", "fury", or possibly "firebrand", citing no source, but presumably resurrecting the obscurer (because ideologically less amenable) derivation of Rev J L Döhne (1851:xiv) and William Holden (1866:9). Accordingly, Ballard suppresses the illegitimacy issue, asserting that Senzangakhona "officially" received Shaka as his "legitimate son and heir designate by adoption", and has Shaka assume the Zulu chieftainship as "his birthright", rather than by murder (1988:15-16). In effect, given the tenuousness of the evidence, this tells us more about Ballard than about Shaka; it is of a piece with Ballard's overriding concern to place himself on the "correct" side of the modern political fence, to align himself in a kind of "affirmative action" with emerging Zulu power: "I sincerely hope," he writes in his Acknowledgements, "that the interpretation rendered in the following pages lives up to Chief Buthelezi's expectations of a work that embraces a Zulu perspective of the Zulu monarchy" (i).³

This example highlights the manner in which a single lexical choice is both incorporated into, and embodies the writer's ideological stance, personal affiliation, and

awareness of audience: a microcosm of the processes involved in most European inscriptions, whether fictionally empathetic or historiographically explicatory, of "the other culture". It is some broader patterns of these processes, which capture the social-psychological dimension "behind" or "between" lexical and mythemic choices, on which I want to enlarge here.

Tentatively, I isolate three such gestures, which I have termed *enterrrment*, *layback*, and *deadlighting*. Because I am viewing the Shakan texts as *documents of a culture*, these terms may find applicability to colonial literature more generally, but I have not attempted to discover how far this might be so. Nor do I offer my terms as being comprehensive, conceptually omnipotent, or normative; rather, they should be viewed as momentary crystallisations of cultural gestures which by nature are protean, and subject to manifold qualification. Because they are largely gestures used to establish the identity of the writer, the gestures isolated here necessarily have a negating, an "assassinatory" quality. They parallel, indeed enact, the imposition of other forms of colonial power.

Enterrrment

Enterrrment - en-earth-ment - denotes a movement of derogation, an alignment of the Other with the earth, with an inferior position in an implicit or explicit hierarchy. Intellectually, it has been supported by the dissemination of pseudo-scientific paradigms, especially that of the "Great Chain of Being" in the eighteenth century, and, in the nineteenth, bowdlerised forms of Darwinism. Wedded to polygenist anthropology, the concept of literate history and the arrogant numeracy of commerce, expressions of enterrrment tend to relegate Africans to a temporal zone of static timelessness and to a mental zone of numb obedience to unintelligible forces of autocracy, instinct or superstition. Europeans' technological and military superiority, combined with puritanical evangelism, further permitted them at times to take the short step of assimilating Africans to the animal or other natural forces, the

insane, and the Satanic - or to become the devil, the gargoyle, or the buffoon, in Lemuel Johnson's (1969) scheme. In many ways - in opposition to, and often enveloping the heroic aspects outlined earlier - Shaka is portrayed as the cynosure of "entered" qualities seen as generally inherent in Africa and the Africans.

Three broad areas of enterrment can be distinguished. Firstly, enterrment can involve a "burial" of the indigenes in the landscape in ways analogous to the ambivalently forbidding titan-in-the-land poetic figure of Adamastor (Van Wyk Smith 1988). Where a strain of "Edenism" persists in an imagination-crushing landscape, the local paradise is itself fundamentally flawed, and the flaws inscribed through various stylistic qualifications and unconscious contradictions. Often, the indigenous peoples *are* the flaw: so they are entered either by being entirely ignored (this fuelled the depopulation myth), or by their essential qualities becoming targets for elimination: two forms of denial.

Shaka and his "irresistible" armies, as the primary target of such denial, are on one level aligned with dehumanised natural forces: fires, floods, disease and storms are the commonest. This is often implicit in the language of the histories - Shaka is the source, the "storm-centre" (Walker 1928:175) of a violence which is innate in his "tribe" - or in fictional details - "when he scowled his eyes were like the sky before a thunderstorm" (Haggard 1892:33) - and, in its most extreme formulation, explicit in William Holden's epic simile:

As the raging volcano vomits forth from its fiery crater smoke, and ashes, and burning lava... entombing villages and cities at its feet, spreading dismay, destruction and death around; so, from the mouth of this despot a stream of fire was vomited forth ... leaving scarcely a vestige behind in its scorching, desolating course. (1866:25)

This is no different, in essence, from McMenemy's superficially more approbatory characterisation of Shaka as "a most magnificent product of nature". He is, then, really one form of lower life preying on another. D J Darlow, for instance, relates the most dastardly

of Shaka's acts, the murder of the woman who loves him most, in extended metaphors of tender nature savaged by raw forces of nature and darkness:

Fair the passing of the royal sunset's daughters
 As they trail their robes in the path of the hastening night,
 That fain would enfold them before the mysterious light
 Of the moon is reflected in lakelet and streams.
 So was Nolizwe, the maiden of dreams.
 There rises a cloud of thunder
 And beauty is smitten asunder.
 Alas, Nolizwe! like evening she hath passed
 And the dark storm of midnight cometh fast. (1937:37)

More indirectly, a semi-mystical correlation between morality and the earth is drawn by Esther Roberts in *The Black Spear*: she strikes a deliberate contrast between the drought-stricken lands of Shaka's blood-stained kingdom and the awe-inspiring but lush country of Mujaji the rain-goddess, to whom Shaka is obliged to supplicate. Mujaji "never killed to gratify her savage instincts" as did Shaka, who "sickened her" (1950:3). Appropriately to the racial alignment of this enterrment, Mujaji is all but white, as is the novel's central character, Dumisa, through whose anti-Shakan sensibility the story is refracted.

From here, it is a short step to aligning Shaka with Hell, the underworld, the demonic. The logical corollary of incorporating an Eden-myth into visions of Africa is invoking Eden's antithesis, Hell. William Holden regarded Shaka's "savagery" as vital to a salvationist perspective in which the pre-Shakan Eden, whose people were "rich in cattle, and dwelt in security", was doomed "unless in the wonder-working providence of God it should *rise* again in a new and enduring form under the fostering care of Christian Britain" (1866:25; emphasis added). Similarly, Thomas Rose Beattie wrote: "It has ever been a matter of wonder why the Kaffirs should be so devoted to their chiefs - men who domineered over them like princes of darkness", who possessed "a demon nature that burned within them" and "continued to follow in the footsteps of the savage and wicked, until the outside

world came to their rescue" (1891:43-4). We have already seen this idea picked up by Bryant, who called Shaka the "arch-demon of iniquity" (1964:98), his "Satanic majesty" (1905:49), and a "devil" (1929:532) with "fiendish passions" (569). Like Thomas Mofolo, Darlow (1937:35), Viola Ridgway (1946:57) and the television series (1986), Bryant also compares Shaka to Faust selling his soul to the devil: "But in accomplishing his 'glorious' work, he ruined himself - if, indeed, he was not ruined already; in gaining the world, he lost his own soul" (648), and finally this "monster of a myriad crimes rolled over in the dust and gave up his ghost to Satan" (662).

The influence of this gesture can scarcely be over-emphasised. Even in a study like Omer-Cooper's *The Zulu Aftermath*, which argues that Shaka's violent revolution had its positive, because state-building, corollary, a certain repugnance is still perceptible in his dilution of this diction of predation, rape and aberration: "ravenous hordes of pillagers" threw "peaceable tribes" into "turmoil and confusion" (Omer-Cooper 1966:3), "accompanied by carnage and destruction on an appalling scale" in which "whole tribes were massacred" (4); Shaka's armies "ravished" others' territories and inflicted "monstrous sufferings" on his own (41). Traces of this language persist into the most recent histories, such as Leonard Thompson's *A History of South Africa* (1990).

A second type of enterrment involves the attribution of certain immutable or ineradicable qualities to Shaka and the Zulus. The more obvious need only be mentioned in passing: for instance, characterisation as animal - Shaka as "hyena-man" (Moodie 392); the Zulu as "ravelling wolves"⁴ - or otherwise "natural". Even where these are the apparently innocent, even generous transcriptions of events or perceptions into the metaphors deemed closest to the idiom of the Zulus themselves, the translation and linguistic "packaging" by white writers of such terms more often conceals (or reveals) a strategy of deeper enterrment.

For example, a link between animality and insanity is made by Darlow, with characteristic openness:

As when a lion feasts on human flesh
No other satisfies him, Tshaka then
Imbibed a poison only blood could slake,
A Berserk madness hunting through his veins.(30)

More interestingly, we have already noted the persistent attribution of the characteristic of incomprehensibility reified as an irreducible trait. This ultimate reduction of the black man to a blank begins, as Russell Martin has pointed out, with Isaacs, both in and despite his struggle "to devise a suitable language that will convey his apprehension of an historical figure and a society, utterly outside his own and his audience's experience and understanding" (1982:51). Hence, for instance, Isaacs' statement that Shaka "finally succeeded in establishing a sort of *Zoolacratrical* form of government (if I may so term it, for I do not know of anything resembling it in either ancient or modern history), a form that defies description or detail" (I 269). Similarly, according to A T Bryant: "The Bantu character is one to us not easily analyzed. It is largely a study in contrasts; one may say, even in paradoxes" (1929:156). This is directly related to the portrayal of Shaka: Bryant laments Shaka's allegedly irrational treachery: "But who shall fathom the devious ways of Shakan diplomacy?" (219). Shaka's "caprice", "deviousness" and "treachery", a cornerstone of the portrayal throughout the literature, is thus seen as an extension of a more general incomprehensibility which resides in "the Bantu character" (itself a reification which writers "study" while simultaneously inscribing its impenetrability).

This "caprice" becomes a lens through which the entire phenomenon of the Shakan revolution is viewed. So Brookes and Webb describe Shaka's character in terms of repeated qualification juxtaposed with defensive over-emphasis: "great he was, however cruel or wicked he may have been"; of "outstanding, if ruthless, ability"; "his caring for his mother ... seems to have been sincere, however warped"; but "to acquit him of the crime of loving

cruelty is assuredly impossible". Shaka was prone, finally, to "complete unpredictability". Brookes and Webb ultimately circumnavigate the problem of explanation with a neat tautology: "To reconcile these conflicting qualities is difficult except by the assumption that Shaka, like Napoleon, considered himself above morality, responsible to none, and free from ordinary restraints" (1965:11-13). A distortive Eurocentric comparison is wedded to an "assumption" which merely reinscribes the unintelligibility by putting Shaka beyond the pale of any possible judgement. This characterisation survives into the history of Leonard Thompson, who asserts that Shaka became "despotic and capricious", so that on Nandi's death "hundreds of innocent people were killed in a wave of mass hysteria *that he encouraged*" (my emphasis marks an assertion which even Fynn refrained from making). The despotism and caprice are invoked, in effect, to compensate for lack of evidence for other causes of the "revolution", which Thompson skates around, and (by the same comparative device used by Brookes and Webb) are causally linked to the violence which is said to have characterised it (1990:85). Among the fictional portrayals, Nickie McMenemy is representative of the same retraction of insight: her heroine "realised that she would never fully understand the Zulus" (57), nor Shaka himself: "no man knew what was in his head" (88,136). In this novel, as in practically every other, Shaka's gentle smile hides murderousness, a facial correlative to so many white writers' projection of their inability to enter, empathise with, or even imagine the Zulus' thought-patterns.

Thirdly, then, white writers repeatedly assert an inherent inability of the English language to describe the mentality of the man or his people, or the brutality of his irrational reign. Laying bare a gesture more often implicit or fragmented, D J Darlow directly links language failure with the other forms of enterrment, the animal, destructive nature, and the demonic:

What words are there to tell of deeds of blood?
 Like a great torrent after weeks of rain
 The Zulu army swept across the land,
 A ruthless desolation. Those who fled,
 In earnest of the flood worked their revenge
 On who withstood them; ruin everywhere;
 Behind the host the wolves devoured the slain,
 Dogs that trotted at their masters' heels,
 Hounds of hell obedient to fiends,
 Ranging th'Inferno slavering with joy. (1937:40-1)

In the same way, James Saunders King wrote in the 1820s of a Zulu warsong, composed by Shaka, which "cannot be described, but to the ear of their enemy it must strike terror" (Thompson 1827:414). William Holden noted that "those who have written about [Shaka] have laid the English language under contribution in order to find suitable epithets to describe his horrible and revolting conduct" (1866:9). It is generally the violence which attracts this kind of comment, as Holden added: "no language can describe the frantic joy of the conquerors: their hideous yells, their vociferous songs, their savage delight, exceeded all bounds" (23). This is paralleled by Elizabeth Watt: "No words at the command of civilized man could describe the horror of all that followed ... the awful bloodshed, the wild mingling of battle cries, the screams of hate and fury, the groans of anguish, the massacre and revolting mutilation" (1962:128). This is in stark contrast to the scientific language Watt uses to describe the behaviour of her white heroes:

So the small fleet at anchor in Algoa Bay towards the end of June 1823 was going north again, still resolute to carry out orders to survey the unknown coast of eastern Africa despite tragic losses in both officers and crew. In the past six months alone (October 1822 to April 1823) they had lost 36 men from the *Leven*; 27 from the *Barracouta*; and 14 out of the total strength of 20 on the *Cockburn* - all victims to Delagoa fever (20).

The alleged incapacity of the English language to describe Zulu behaviour is the "bounds": there is a symbiosis between expression and judgement. Nevertheless, descriptions *are* being made here, using the phrases of extreme stereotypicality and unfocussed vigour characteristic of romance fiction outlined earlier. It infects historiography, too, as in Brookes and Webb's assertion that the suffering inflicted by Shaka is "almost

indescribable" (1965:8). Negativity opens up space for the imaginative exaggeration, however, so that one or two observed or reported incidents can serve as the basis for massive generalisation. For instance, in view of Shaka's alleged obsession with Rowland's Macassar Oil, according to Isaacs, "[it] will be seen that it is *one of the barbarous customs of the Zoolas* in their choice or election of their kings, that he must neither have wrinkles nor grey hairs ... It is also equally indispensable that their king should never exhibit those proofs of having become unfit and incompetent to reign" (I 242; my emphasis).⁵ Similarly, George Thompson averred: "The steps by which Chaka has attained the uncontrolled authority which he now exercises over his followers, are not as yet very distinctly known; but it may be surmised to be similar to those by which savage heroes usually raise themselves to empire, - namely, cunning and audacity" (1827:356-7). Or Josiah Tyler: "Like most African chiefs, Chaka fell at the hands of assassins" (1891:212). Likewise Elizabeth Watt: "A Zulu king gained no respect from his grey hairs: it was taken as evidence that he was due for speedy retirement, usually from the lethal stab of an assegai" (1962:220).

Tautologically, the only evidence for this was the assassination of Shaka himself, and later of Dingane. A particularly blatant example of this dislocation of logic at the boundary of myth occurs in Hugh Tracey's *Zulu Paradox* (the title itself embodies a mystification): "No one has attempted to explain why this small nation should have consolidated itself into a vicious, bloodthirsty machine in the course of a single decade. We can but assume that the Nguni people as a whole were aggressive by nature" (1948:21). An initial acceptance of the legend is then "explained" in terms of an inherent trait, whose only evidence is the legend itself. Enterrment, then, involves an abrogation of the writer's critical faculties, or at least a displacement of them to areas which will not affect the identity - the social-psychological meaning - of the original tale. The gesture is fundamental to psychological defence; its

characteristic linguistic cramp does not merely point to, but enacts - in a crucial sense is - the deepest level of political conservatism.

Layback

When Nathaniel Isaacs, in a rare moment of self-reflection in his *Travels*, acknowledges his "anomalous description of Zoolas - savage yet hospitable" (II 102), he is not merely balancing two irreconcilable facets and leaving the judgement to his narratee. Embedded in overall derogation and unreflecting Eurocentrism, this momentary "admission" is more likely to be just another reification of the incomprehensible. There is an inner tension here, but the actual manifestation of it, when placed in context, serves rather to reinforce the Eurocentric foundation of the discourse itself.

As we have seen, the Shakan literature is riddled with ambivalences, contradictions, and paradoxes: admiration vies with repulsion, derogation with lionisation, cross-cultural insight with Eurocentric judgement, assiduous fascination with practical oppression. Doubtless a good deal of this is unavoidable in any kind of cross-cultural discourse. Some of it, however, like the example from Isaacs here, is more than simple equivocation; it functions, in a more backhanded way than enterrment, to promote the identifying interests of the writer and his group. For this gesture I offer the term *layback*.

The word is derived from rock-climbing; it describes a technique used to climb a vertical crack in a chimney, in which the feet are placed against the rock and push outwards, while the hands, inserted in the crack, pull inwards; using the friction and tension thus achieved, progress is made upwards. In the textual context to which I now transfer it, it denotes an inner tension or ambivalence, used within a single narrative gesture to achieve the aim of reinscribing an aspect of Eurocentrism.

The layback gesture is frequently made quite plain in the Shaka stories. For instance, when Viola Ridgway characterises Shaka in her novella as "the cruel Brave", this is not merely the inscription of an unresolved paradox. It is already the distillation of numerous illustrative anecdotes; the adjective "cruel" has already been laden with ethnocentric judgement. In its context, the epithet serves as the touchstone for the assertion of the writer's own values, which are kindness, even-handed justice, restraint. Much the same can be said of the antithetical motion of approbation contained by "Brave". Ridgway makes this explicit in her very next lines:

If these stories from the life of Shaka have softened the old ideas of this great leader, and brought the reader a deeper understanding of his faults and his greatness, they will not have been written in vain. Perhaps, some day, there will be another leader among the black men, with Shaka's genius for leadership and organization, tempered with the democratic ideas of the white man for trade, scientific cultivation of the soil and development of the wonderful inventions of the modern world, a leader who will believe in the doctrine of "Live and let live," with mercy and justice for all. (95)

The echoes of Isaacs' agricultural Eden and the missionary stance of the nineteenth century are clear here: "leadership and organization" are primary virtues, structured by science, technology and the tolerance of a democratic judiciary. The "deeper understanding" of Shaka, ostensibly Ridgway's objective, is not in fact to resolve or explain the antinomy of "cruel Brave", but to exploit it in the inscription of a European world-view. Neither the Zulu chieftain nor his people are viewed as whole or are accorded their own voice; instead, approved aspects - "the one who never allowed a worthy man to go unrewarded" (95), the "genius", and so on - are split off, while the condemned aspects are attributed to, say, an unexplained "madness" (87, 89). This schizoid quality, it needs hardly be added, arises from an interpretation founded on a writer-centred adherence to values irrelevant to the Zulus themselves: the split attributed by Isaacs and his numerous clones to the Zulu character and thence epitomised by Shaka is inherent not in the Zulu but in the colonial mind. The tension is less obviously present in, for instance, Brookes and Webb's (unacknowledged) use of Bryant's summary of Zulu "virtues" "so fearfully taught in Shaka's blood-stained school -

submission to authority, obedience to the law, respect for superiors, order and self-restraint, civic duty" (Brookes and Webb 1965:14). Terror and blood as instruments of this education are condemned, but the values attributed to it are precisely those "taught", by precisely this process of fear and bloodshed, to the subject black peoples by white authorities.

A particularly common species of anecdote which embodies my notion of layback involves the meeting of Shaka with items of European technology. There are numerous stories (many common to other colonial texts), involving mirrors, medicines, a music-box, the figurehead of the wrecked vessel *Mary*, firearms, writing, a knowledge of astronomical phenomena, and so on, some of which we have seen. In almost all cases, what is superficially told at the expense of the white man rebounds, on examination, to promote the white over the black. Almost all these gestures of layback are underpinned by the promotion of particular species of logic, of the "scientific" thought-processes and modes of expression which are by definition opposed to irrationality, "superstition", or unintelligibility. The underlying attitude is unconcealed in the earlier texts. Isaacs, for instance, makes no effort to hide his derision even when apparently bettered in argument, as in this exchange between Isaacs, Shaka, and a Portuguese man:

[Shaka] then asked me to fight with the Portuguese, but I told him that, although our nation had conquered the Portuguese, we were now not only at peace with them, but were by treaties their protectors...

"Well," said he, "what need you care? You have once conquered, and may conquer again." My Portuguese new acquaintance sat all this time and heard our conversation with concealed chagrin, and swelling with rage; but when we had left the presence of Chaka, we both laughed at the vanity of the savage. (I 60)

The implicit agreement between writer and narratee in this telling is that open derision is as acceptable to the narratee as it was to the white protagonists, so the story reasserts the superiority of European morality over Shaka's unbridled violence. The same comfortable derision informs Isaacs' other stories of Shaka's encounters with medicines, firearms and mirrors (eg.90,93,236), which became staples of the dramatisation of this culture-contact.

The incident of Shaka's encounters with a meteor or eclipse (another perennial of colonial fictions⁶), is similarly used to assert the expertise of the white man. The meteor incident is presumably derived from a brief note in Fynn's *Diary*: "On Shaka's preparing to attack the Ndwandwes, a meteor appeared which detained him some time from proceeding until perceiving it throwing its meteoric sparks in that direction announced a favourable issue, it being a sign that the enemy would be entirely defeated, which was verified [by the outcome of the battle]" (1950:317). Though Fynn seems largely free of Eurocentric sneering here, there is no doubt that he disbelieves this explanation himself, and regards it as an ethnological curiosity symptomatic of "the uninformed and unenlightened state of [the Zulus'] minds, the result of ages of the grossest ignorance" which make the Zulus, "feeling conscious of existing superior powers[,] endeavour to supply that deficiency by invention from their own limited ideas" (267).

A subtler story of Shaka's reaction to a similar celestial phenomenon, an eclipse, is related by E A Ritter. There are no white characters involved here, and it is Shaka's stature which apparently is elevated, in accordance with Ritter's general lionising project. But there is a layback gesture involved nevertheless. Ritter portrays the Zulus as terrified, Shaka as calm but disturbed, "mutter[ing]"; he is handed some medicine by one Mqalane, to spit at the sun, "commanding it to return". This Shaka does, the sun duly returns; Shaka's "commanding figure seemed to be magnified to majestic proportions in that weird and unreal light"; and "like Joshua of old, Shaka continued to exploit the dramatic possibilities of the situation", until, the eclipse over, "there was one continuous roar of victory, which continued in triumphant waves of adulation for the all-powerful Warrior-King who had saved the nation" (271-4).⁷

This may or may not be tolerably close to how the Zulus might have seen it, but it is certainly not how Ritter sees it, or expects his readership to see it. It is, in Ritter's own, only partially-concealed, view, no more than a "dramatic" situation of which Shaka can shrewdly take advantage; he only "seems" to be magnified; and the medicine is shown to be really beside the point, the "saving of the nation" in any literal sense spurious. In the commandeering of a "superstition" to a political stratagem, Shaka is seen to exploit the Zulu people's "credulity"; but the credulity is also being exploited by Ritter. While there is an apparent admiration for Shaka's self-control and shrewdness, the final flow of sympathy is in fact against him, since Ritter (and, he assumes, his narratee) still knows better; were it not for the implicit gap between species of knowledge, of which the European is clearly seen as the superior, this story would not have been told at all. Hence, Ritter manipulates narrative "suspension of disbelief" up to a point at which, in this and numerous other cases in *Shaka Zulu*, he interrupts with an explicatory comment designed to reassert the primacy of European paradigms of logic or historical perspicacity: "It is appropriate at this point to note that Shaka was far too wary to engage in the very uncertain business of rain-making, which all other chiefs, and kings, dabbled in" (274). Ritter's contempt is evident in the word "dabbled", and here Shaka is commandeered to support him; Shaka's stature in the novel, in the end, depends upon his being crafted to conform with Ritter's own values. Like Viola Ridgway, Ritter cannot resist making these values plain:

One outstanding fact, however, emerges and stands forth like a shining beacon above the haze of time and controversy, and that is that the White men had some dominant quality even when in rage which compelled the black men to regard them as their superior. Shaka not only recognised this but had it proclaimed to all his nation. It had nothing to do with sky-rockets or horses or firearms, for these had been met with in the hands of Portuguese half-castes, and of the White men's Hottentots who were regarded with contempt.

No! the root of the European's superiority lay in his possession of *ubu-kosi* - the quality and air of chieftainship - for which only the Zulu language has a single word which fully defines that otherwise indefinable aristocratic ascendancy which radiates authority without any apparent effort. (268)

Thus at least part of Shaka's stature in Ritter's eyes depends on his "perception" in the whites of precisely the quality which Ritter has projected onto Shaka in the first place; thus, at best, Shaka is admired for his "white" traits, and at worst, positively overshadowed. Moreover, it is a *Zulu* word which is invoked as most adequately descriptive of this quality, a quality "instantly and instinctively recognized by every Zulu"; a Zulu perspective is domesticated in order to justify the white assumption of superiority; the Zulus, in effect, are obliged (textually) to connive at their own subordination. In this textual acquisition of a "Zulu point of view", layback overlaps with what I call *deadlighting*, which I will treat shortly.

A related tack has been to compare Shaka's policies to those pertaining to the England of the time. This has been hinted at in numerous instances since Isaacs and Fynn related how horrified Shaka was at hearing of the practice of imprisonment, in which argument the white men are, again, momentarily bested. But there is no question that Fynn believes, and that the reader is meant to believe, that imprisonment is morally preferable to the atrocities which Fynn and Isaacs repeatedly condemn in Shaka. Louis du Buisson's *The White Man Cometh* provides a more recent, and final example. The opening paragraph of du Buisson's Foreword is:

It was a savage age. In England, the most "civilised" nation in the world, boys were sent to sea at the age of six, children were made to labour for sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, in mines and cotton mills. In London, Mondays were still public hanging days.

Du Buisson then quotes A K Millar on the "heartless" customs of the English, with "no fewer than two hundred offences for which death by hanging was the prescribed punishment", and notes that in North America "Europeans were systematically exterminating the natives and the animals and taking over their land", and doing the same in Africa with the pernicious addition of taking slaves (1). This appears a useful reminder that, after all, Shaka's atrocities were not unusual. But du Buisson fails to press the point, continuing:

1815. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* topped the bestseller list, Beethoven's *Fidelio* was first performed in Vienna, the waltz was all the rage in the ballrooms of Europe, Napoleon Bonaparte faced his Waterloo and President John Madison unveiled America's latest weapon, the *USS Fulton*, the world's first steam-powered warship. And in a grass-hutted village on the south-east coast of Africa a young Zulu invented the stabbing-spear. In the context of time and place he might as well have invented gunpowder. By the end of that year, with the great European star of Napoleon in its final eclipse, a new star was rising in Africa. *Shaka.* (2)

Du Buisson's purpose becomes immediately obscure. Is he merely setting the scene? But the juxtaposition of hanging-days and Austen is disconcertingly abrupt, even irrelevant, inviting awkward comparisons. The "invention" of the stabbing spear is manifestly overstated, the tone of the passage melodramatic. This is a list of items designed for the Eurocentric reader, and whatever du Buisson's stated purpose, "grass-hutted" sounds either condescendingly "natural", or slightly pathetic, against "ballrooms"; "stabbing spear" sounds frail against "warship" and "gunpowder". It seems that something of Europe is meant to rub off on this *Shaka*, particularly something of Napoleon. But it is by no means clear whether we are to read this warship as iconic of laudable industry, or (rather indirectly) of the threat of the white man, or (perhaps unconsciously) of a belittlement of the Zulu. Neither is it clear whether du Buisson intends a defence of Zulu, alongside his condemnation of nineteenth-century English punishments, or to include Shaka in this "savage age" and condemn both. In either case, the lens through which we are initially introduced to Shaka here is undeniably European; so, presumably, is the concept of justice which we are invited to bring to bear. Du Buisson goes on:

Fynn and Isaacs ... professed themselves horrified that condemned criminals were dragged out of the [Zulu] capital and clubbed to death. But then king Shaka was equally horrified that Europeans should deprive people of their freedom for ever, something he considered more inhuman than the death penalty.

... It is ... true that the Zulu monarch's power was absolute and that life was cheap. Yet in the Cape, during king Shaka's lifetime, executions were still public affairs and accompanied by hair-raising brutality....

Isaacs was aware of this.

'In such a rude state of society,' he wrote, 'the death penalty for crimes of a capital nature does not differ from more civilised nations, but the execution is exceedingly revolting and only to be found amongst barbarous hordes.'

Yet, curiously, when 'king' Henry Fynn of Natal and his chief legislator Nathaniel Isaacs set up their own government and began meting out death sentences,

their victims were executed in the traditional Zulu manner - by clubbing!

Isaacs crowned his own duplicity with the following comment: "These executions contributed not a little to enlighten them and prepare them for receiving those more important blessings which civilisation brings." (8-9; cf.121)

Several ambivalences are tangible here. Firstly, du Buisson seems concerned to damage the credibility of Fynn and Isaacs: his insinuation is that they were not actually horrified by Shaka's misdeeds - but Shaka was "equally horrified" by theirs. Shaka is at least honest, it seems - or equally dishonest - even if, for him, "life was cheap". Not only does du Buisson continue to accept the picture of Shaka as violent despot, he also implicitly agrees with Isaacs' judgement of "exceedingly revolting", while simultaneously attacking Isaacs for his "duplicity". The final sentence here seems less an example of duplicity than of defensive arrogance; and one wonders why the contradiction between Isaacs' revulsion at Zulu executions and the meting out of his own should be merely "curious". "Curiously", possibly meant to effect a kind of journalistic wry distance, in fact signals du Buisson's hesitancy, evident throughout his book, adequately to press his conclusions; in this passage he fails to address the question of why, if Fynn and Isaacs really were not horrified, they "professed" to be; or why, if everybody were living in a "savage age", they thought their moral outrage should have had any effect. Behind these inner tensions, the layback gesture is visible: du Buisson contextualises Shaka's world both against and within a European value-system which is equally distant; the nineteenth-century English being as "other" to du Buisson as the Zulu, he effectively inscribes his own, late twentieth-century morality over the heads of both.

Deadlighting

A third narrative gesture, closely related to layback, I term *deadlighting*, which I take from the nautical term for a storm-shutter which is dropped over a cabin window or cannon-port. By it I denote a gesture by which the writer claims to "shed light" on the Other, but inadvertently hides more than he reveals. There is often a palpable defensiveness about this

manoeuvre, a desire to conceal the writer's own predilections, or a lack of real knowledge, or a quiver of "colonial guilt", which the image of the deadlight also catches.

Perhaps the commonest gesture of deadlighting involves the comparison of the Other with something or someone European. This is a natural enough reaction for anyone trying to make sense of the culturally different; the Other is appropriated to, or domesticated by assimilation into a familiar metaphor or figure. Essentially, it is a defence against the threat of the absolutely Other, an attempt to explain (and *explanation* is the psychological cornerstone of a great deal of colonial discourse) what might otherwise be unassimilable, hence uncontrollable. The aim of this assimilation is to create a new, metaphorical "reality" - here, a new, textual "Shaka". The role of metaphor is crucial in the creation of those "truths" on which all notions of identity must rest:

metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another...[They] can ... define reality ... through a coherent network of entailments that highlight some features of reality and hide others ... Such "truths" may be true, of course, only relative to the reality defined by the metaphor. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:117,156-8)

A particular instance will demonstrate how this works. As we have seen, the comparison of Shaka to other "tyrants" - Attila, Napoleon, Alexander and so on - has become almost a reflex, so ingrained a gesture that it earns a term of its own: *vindice*. This I have taken from the character in Cyril Tourneur's play *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Vindice, who induces the Duke to self-destruct by kissing a poisoned skull disguised as his lover. This is, analogously, what happens to Shaka; he is poisoned (or at least violently misrepresented) by being juxtaposed with another autocrat or general with whom he is supposed to have affinities. This is frequently linked to a defensive admission that Europe has also had its tyrants and its injustices (e.g. Bryant 1929:649); the term *vindice* thus appropriately carries the twinned connotations of vindictiveness and of vindication (either of

Shaka, or of the writer's condemnation of him, or of the condemnation of his own society: the ambivalences here are again multiple).

Another example from Bryant will clarify these points. He writes: "One judges the worth of an object by its contrast with the rest of its class. And one can gauge the true worth of Dingiswayo's character only by comparing him with other men of his position whose greatness is universally acknowledged" (1929:168). The first sentence here demands judgement by intra-cultural *contrast*. The second, which Bryant in fact proceeds to follow, (tautologically) proposes assessment by cross-cultural *similarity*. Bryant then gleans examples of "the outstanding political geniuses of the ancient Mediterranean and Oriental world" to demonstrate "how identical were the mental characteristics which drove these men to such glorious deeds". Significantly, Bryant chooses models from "5000 or more years ago", assuming that this is bound to be equivalent to the present African "stage" of development. He also selects foreign (i.e. non-British) examples, even as he argues that these were "the founders of our own civilization": a necessary defence to accommodate his own clear preference for enlightened European advancement. Thus he goes on to argue that Dingiswayo's talents "were buried in a field whereon the light of knowledge had never shone, and whereto the fertilizing waters of foreign intercourse never penetrated", but these abilities were fortuitously liberated by his momentary contact with a white man or men (a legend if ever there was one; cf.93-4). After several pages, in which Bryant provides more information on other leaders than he is able to provide on Dingiswayo himself (one of the impulses behind the vindice gesture is to compensate for the paucity of evidence), he concludes that "If Shaka was the Timur and the Attila of his race, Dingiswayo was its Menes and its Alfred the Great" (171). At least part of this contrast derives from, and is designed to reinforce, the notion of Shaka's revolutionary violence and unnatural cruelty.

Two further points need to be stressed. The first is the non-Britishness of the vindice comparison: in Bryant, it is Attila, Napoleon, Caesar, the Spartans, Timur. While the gesture is occasionally in praise (particularly with Napoleon), the figure is at best ambivalently heroic himself, reflected too in the hesitancy of the shift from Attila to Napoleon (the Attila comparison persists sporadically right up to the 1986 SATV series), from Nero to Alexander the Great.⁸ The contradictoriness of these juxtapositions is evidence enough of their empirical tenuousness - and their frequency, of their psychological importance. The second point is the way in which the vindice gesture is periodically updated. After the Second World War, Hitler and the Nazis are invoked (eg. Tracey 21; Niven 81); after the 1960s, Stalin (de Villiers 109). From this point, generalisation about all tyrants is possible, as by Mary Douglas: "Even a Shaka, a Stalin or Talleyrand, or Genghis Khan or Alexander the Great, however much at the top of the universe they appear, regard themselves as insecurely poised" (1978:17). Leonard Thompson summons "Robespierre, Stalin, Mao Zedong" to illuminate the process whereby the rule of "revolutionary leaders" "degenerated into a reign of terror" (this last phrase, like "cohorts", "legions", "Golden Hordes", even "regiments", is itself a kind of vindice). J M Coetzee, in his novel *Age of Iron*, has his white protagonist say to a black man: "The Germans had comradeship, and the Japanese, and the Spartans. Shaka's impis, too, I am sure. Comradeship is nothing but a mystique of death, of killing and dying..." (1991:150).

The effect of all this is surreptitiously to associate Shaka with better-documented examples of genocide and/or heroism, in order to reproduce or reinforce the prejudice of preceding comparisons (one familiar myth underwriting a new one), to obscure the individuality of Shaka's reign, and merely by proxy and proximity to exaggerate the extent of Shaka's conquests and depredations. After all, Shaka could not possibly have conquered as much as Napoleon did, or murdered as many people as Hitler or Stalin - though one

would hardly believe it to read Percy Fitzpatrick's account of Tshaka, "Lord of the Millions Dead" (1932:194), which is worth quoting in full since it epitomises a whole nexus of popular attitudes within a deadlighting gesture:

This Tshaka, who has been called the Black Napoleon and the Attila of the Nineteenth Century, and the Alexander the Great of Africa - is surely one of the romantic figures of history! Think of it! Here was a naked savage, so brave, so capable, and so masterful, that whilst a mere lad he rose to leadership and was marked by the Chief, his father, as a rival, and would have been murdered, but for his mother's warning to seek refuge with her father, the chief of a neighbouring tribe: who rose to power and favour and, succeeding his grandfather, soon returned to become also chief of his own tribe, - Amazulu. Was it merely an accident, or was there some weird prophetic instinct at work, when these three were named in their insignificant infancy? Tshaka - The Destroyer - but, to be fair, he was more than that; he was the builder of a nation, too! His mother - beloved of her people, so they said - Umnandi, The Sweet One! And Amazulu, the People of the Skies! It is told by one of the old explorers that a shipwrecked sailor, the sole survivor of some unrecorded disaster on that coast, repaid the kindness shown him by telling the lad Tshaka the story of Napoleon. But even if that be true, the story of the Black Napoleon would be not less but more striking still! He invented discipline and the science of war - for they were unknown in his world, and who could have taught him? From the smallest beginning he marched from victory to victory, until within twelve years, and while still in his thirties, his most terrible arm reached from Port St Johns to Lake Nyassa... (1932:281-2)

This is interesting for a number of reasons: the invocation of "romance"; the historical aberrations; the appeal to oral tradition, in this case a white one; the apparent transference of a Dingiswayo story (being taught by a white man) to Shaka; the antinomy between the archaicising "weird prophetic instinct" and the modernising "science of war"; the unusual translation of Shaka as "The Destroyer"; the exaggerations of scale. In this last, particularly, one sees the effects of the vindice gesture.

Writers are sometimes aware of the potential absurdity of such a comparison; and so provide a counter-balancing argument that Shaka had as dramatic effect in his smaller, more primitive, less technological world as these other dictators had in theirs. This is to introduce a slightly different species of cross-cultural comparison, the difficulties of which Bryant lays almost inadvertently bare:

In writing or reading of the rulers of simple, primitive tribes, we are wont to use the grandiloquent terms and to imagine the magnificent state appropriate to our modern European royalties. We assume that our reader possesses the ability to visualize things in their proper perspective and to realize that, though the events herein recorded occurred but one short century back, the conditions under which they occurred were those of many thousands of years ago. Yet it is not easy for everyone to place himself mentally two or three thousand years back in the days when our own 'kings' wore raiment and ate food and dwelt in habitations we would now not offer to a beggar, and ruled over 'peoples' too few to run a modern factory. We call wretched and unsavoury grass hovels 'palaces,' and speak of 'great battles' and 'conquests' fought and won where the combatants were a couple of score a side.... The general idea of presenting history in this fashion, is, of course, to create a proper atmosphere around the reader, to produce in his mind a relatively accurate impression by transporting him into the 'other people's' place and so enabling him to regard things as they appeared to, or were felt by them. (1929:319)

Bryant shows himself keenly aware of the problem of the cross-cultural translation of terms, concepts and categories, and subsequent historians might have done well to take fuller heed of his initial warning. But Bryant himself continues the practice in the service of creating a "proper atmosphere", that is, making the imaginative leap into the mind-space of the Other, producing a "relatively accurate impression". The word "relatively" has an interesting *double entendre*: Bryant surely means it in the sense of "more or less", allowing that the impression is bound to be no more than an approximation; but it also invokes the "relativity" of the writer/reader's culture to that of the subject. Bryant seems to intend that when his narratee reads "king" in *Olden Times* he is to imagine a man who, however "relatively" undistinguished his accoutrements or mean his principality, commands a reverence from his subjects analogous to that accorded a European "king". Consequently, however, instead of gaining insight into the individual particularity of the Zulu experience, the narratee in fact constructs a mental image relative to the *European* experience; instead of difference being inscribed, and the narratee carried over the cultural boundary into that difference, the two cultures are conflated. The use of Eurocentric terminology, in other words, embodies an implicit agreement between writer and narratee that the European concepts will finally dominate. The distortive effects of this are dramatically evident in the SATV series, in which costumes and architecture (not to mention the latex wrinkles of the necromancer's

face) are absurdly exaggerated, precisely to cater, not to the Zulu reality, but for the potential viewers' Eurocentric preconceptions.

Probably the commonest deadlighting gesture of this kind is the ostensible assumption of the "Zulu point of view", an essentially fictional foray of the white writer's imagination into the mindset of the world of the subject, an essay at giving the Other his own voice. I am far from arguing that such imaginative leaps and transcriptions should never be attempted; it is probable (following Schopenhauer) that no communication whatever can take place without some such empathetic effort, a temporary shedding of self-consciousness. However, these leaps - the diametric opposite of the logical imposition of more "scientific" discourses noted earlier - are themselves clearly fraught with the dangers of false transpositions or distortive translations, and in a number of cases they undoubtedly obscure more than they enlighten.

The most immediately accessible example of this is the "quotation", more often invention, of the "voices" of Zulu people themselves. This occurs from the eyewitness accounts onwards. Henry Francis Fynn generally refrains from making direct quotations - with good reason, since he was writing in retrospect. His accounts of discussions with Shaka are almost wholly in reported speech; he simply summarises verbal exchanges, and there is no pretence to be giving the precise words. On three significant occasions he departs from this practice: I will confine myself here to one (but see Fynn 1950:146; Wylie 1995). This particular deviation from the recorded-speech form is presented as the oration of Shaka's induna Ngomane:

"The tribe had now lamented for a year the death of her [Nandi], who had now become a spirit, and who would continue to watch over Shaka's welfare. But there were nations of men, inhabiting distant countries, who, because they had not yet been conquered, supposed that they never should be. ..." (139)

The implication of the textual presentation of this as direct speech is that Fynn is reiterating, presumably as closely as his translation will allow, Ngomane's actual words. But the displacement of the tenses from, for instance, "have" to "had", in fact inscribes Fynn's own distance from the original delivery of the speech; while we have no evidence to maintain it does not capture the gist of the original, it is certainly not the speech itself. That this hybrid of direct and indirect speech was conventional at the time - Isaacs also uses it (eg.I 138) - only reinforces the point: what we are reading is a twice, perhaps three-times veiled shadow of an original, for the veracity, even the occurrence of which we have no independent evidence.

Historiographically, this is no trivial point, for Ngomane's reported speech concerns the 1828 Zulu attack on the Mpondos and its aftermath along the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony - an attack in which, as noted in Chapter Three, Fynn himself was involved, may even have engineered, and which he has in this "diary" therefore every reason to conceal. It is quite possible, if unprovable, that Ngomane's speech is a fictionalised attempt to authenticate with a "genuine Zulu voice" a story which may well be an alibi. The same reservations affect a reading of another "quotation" of Fynn's, a song, said to have been composed by Shaka and sung on the impis' return from the Mpondo raid, and Fynn's exegesis of it (149-151). It is perhaps significant in this context that almost the only further instance in which Fynn "quotes" Shaka's actual words is also during an argument about the Mpondo campaign. Fynn buttresses his personal defence by arguing that he attempted to dissuade Shaka from an attack too close to the Colony; his account slips abruptly from a consideration of practical politics to a display of Shaka's innate violence: according to Shaka, "Black people who had committed an offence should not be talked to but killed":

"How is it," he observed, "they attempt to play on your superiority of force and arms? You know they steal your cattle and kill your countrymen. By destroying a tribe entirely, killing the surviving chiefs, the people would be glad to join you on your own terms..." (146)

Apart from this sounding rather like a justification for what the *whites* did on the eastern frontier - and perhaps for what Fynn was trying to do himself - this bears all the hallmarks of a fictional invention.

The attribution to Shaka of such speeches, of course, tends to be substantial in the novels and to be leached from the histories. A T Bryant hovers over the ill-defined ground between the two; thus, into his chapter "Shaka's Home-life at Dukuza: Its Dreams and Realities", which wavers between the sensationalist and the ethnological, he inserts this anecdote:

On one very rare occasion Shaka became - in a way - suddenly humane: he abrogated the law prohibiting courting - for one night only. Towards evening, being in a playful mood, he popped his head above the *isiGodhlo* fence and bellowed out the general order, "Proclaim to the *izimPohlo* boys that they dress and be off to *soma* (have intercourse with girls)"; then as suddenly vanished. This was indeed an equivocal pronunciamento. But none awaited further explanation; dressed or undressed, they were off in a jiffy. After a while Shaka affected great surprise. "Dear me!" quoth he, "things seem very still in the barracks tonight. Where are they gone?" "Insooth, sire," replied an attendant, "there is not a soul in the kraal." "So, then, they heard that word of mine, and went? I have given them an evening out; but do they really then so like the girls?" - which, indeed, was what he wanted to discover. "Most obviously, *baba*; not one of them not gone." "Well, call out the *emBelebele* brigade, and let them go and confiscate all *izimPohlo* cattle." Thus was it that the *izimPohlo* boys got the girls for once, but lost their cattle for ever. "They can't have their bread jammed on both sides, thought Shaka. (1929:641)

Whether or not this is extrapolated from a genuine tradition, it is very clearly cast as a fiction, is a logographia; the tone of derision dismisses any idea that it might be intended as a genuine attempt to elucidate the Zulu mind or mores. The concentration is on Shaka's caprice; Bryant playfully colludes with his character (and with his narratee) in making the boys the butt of an obliquely lubricious jest: "Of course, it was very wicked of Shaka to encourage vice in this wholesale fashion - if, indeed, vice there be in Nature's dictates" (641). An absurd levity and contrived archaism (*quoth he, insooth*, and so on) serve not to clarify the reality of Shaka, but to distance it. In the sentence in which Bryant pretends to "quote" Shaka's actual thoughts (a technique theoretically possible only in a fictional, not an

historiographical context), the "light" is effectively extinguished by the trivialising anachronism.

Archaisms of language are frequent in the literature, particularly in direct speech. Probably Rider Haggard was the primary exponent of this "imaginative, pregnant, compressedly aphoristic way [of speaking] which later writers have taught us to think typical" of "natives", largely a legacy of Macpherson's *Ossian*, *Hereward the Wake*, and the colonial literature of the Amerindians.⁹ This is combined with the kind of hierarchisation associated with enterrment: the perception of a temporal or evolutionary progression to a European pinnacle is reflected in differentiations in portrayals of immediate contact, and a "speech of temporality" invented to equate "primitive" locutions with the modes of expression thought appropriate to a much earlier stage of *European* development.

The archaic language is, ostensibly, intended to display with greater veracity the "feel" of primitive society; in fact it banishes understanding in favour of logographic sensationalism. Paradoxically, then, even as the Zulu world is being *portrayed* as being as *different* as possible from that of the European writer, that difference is linguistically diminished, domesticated. Georg Lukács writes of the historical novel: "it is a present-day story-teller who speaks to present-day readers of [the past] ... It follows therefore that archaism must be ruled out of the general linguistic tone of the historical novel as a superfluous artificiality. The point is to bring a past period *near* to a present-day reader" (Lukács 232). Lukács is being somewhat prescriptive in terms of his Marxist framework, but his perception is accurate that the true ideological purpose of such popular novels and stories is often *not* to bring this particular past closer, but defensively to defuse it with varying admixtures of derision, improbability and voyeurism, to make it into a harmlessly

bloodthirsty object of entertainment. This pseudo-distancing, this spurious spatialisation, is no different in its roots from that which impelled the pragmatics of apartheid.

An extension of sporadic quotation of the "other voice" is to employ a "native" narrator. *Nada the Lily* was among the earliest of many stories ostensibly delivered by a Zulu narrator, among them W C Scully's poem "Aceldama" (1892), P A Stuart's *An African Attila* (1927), Geoffrey Bond's *Chaka the Terrible* (1960), and Cecil Cowley's *Kwa-Zulu: Queen Mkabi's Story* (1966), which is one of the most thorough-going attempts to relate the story from a Zulu, in this case, Queen Mkabi's first-person point of view. Even third-person narratives like Esther Roberts' claim to give "a picture of Zulu life before the coming of the White man" (8); P J Schoeman considers it "of vital importance that we as whites should have a deeper knowledge of 'the man behind the black skin' and a thorough knowledge of his past, before he was influenced and perhaps contaminated by western civilisation" (preface). This tendency is by no means confined to self-confessed fiction: several "histories" also claim to be offering the Zulu point-of-view, including Bryant, Ritter and Ballard.

Probably the majority of Shakan works, from novels to theses, invoke the "genuine" Zulu voice in another way: the appeal to "oral tradition". Again, it began with Fynn and Isaacs; subsequently William Holden claimed the authority of oral accounts to counter some of their assertions: "I have been brought into contact with some of the oldest and most intelligent natives themselves, enabling me to look at what transpired from *their own stand-point*, and record events in the light in which *they beheld them*" (1866:7). Yet, as we have seen, the appeal to the testimony of Shaka's nephew, "Abantwana", is buried in Eurocentric comparisons and judgement, Shaka appropriated to the Christian mythography, the Zulus said to be of "Ishmaelitish descent" (2), and so on. Nowhere is Abantwana quoted, or even

explicitly paraphrased. The gesture has, instead, the reverse effect of legitimising precisely those stories which Holden has *not* interrogated. Without wishing to denigrate the impulse to understand which also energises appeals to oral traditions, or to assert that the Zulus themselves have had no impact on white perceptions at all (see Hamilton 1993), most such appeals to oral tradition in the Shakan literature demonstrate the same superficiality and justificatory deployment. Indeed, it is precisely the tug of this potentially self-critiquing impulse against the weight of received perceptions of Shaka, that often generates the ambivalences. Even the desire to understand, like the desire to reduce Shaka to entertainment value, is a strategy to defuse. Holden makes the self-defensive import of the stance quite clear:

We know "how great a matter a little fire kindleth" sometimes among civilized nations; but among barbarians a single spark has been deposited in the heart, which lies smouldering for years, and then in some unexpected moment, without any apparent cause, has burst forth into a mighty flame, consuming all within its reach. (33)

This is the Shakan "revolution" generalised; the fear of its resurgence - once again, capricious and mysterious - haunts almost all the white literature, often explicitly. Thus John Colenso wrote, not without reason: "[If the] tide of passion [remains p]ent up within the bosom of the [Zulu] race, they will either stagnate in sullen hatred, or burst forth again ere long in another terrible outbreak" (1855:xxx). The worry persists long after 1879, as the figure of John Laputa in Buchan's *Prester John* (1902) attests, and long after the 1906 "rebellion". D J Darlow ends his epic poem:

Where is the Thing
 That shook the hosts of men and made them cringe,
 The Thing that hurled them prostrate at his feet
 And bent their hearts to fervent loyalty?
 Perchance 'tis fleeing from the Hound of Heaven,
 Or else, maybe, it ever rests and broods
 Undaunted in the Amazulu hearts. (48)

The same formless fear shadows Viola Ridgway's pious hope, offering sentiments little different from those of Isaacs a century before: "Perhaps some day the Zulu nation will rise

again and, with the help of education, that fine spirit that existed under Shaka will find expression in usefulness and so tread the paths of peace and be a blessing on the world!" (1944:90). Sir Rex Niven, drawing closer to the ideological facets of the resurgence-fear, asked: "Is it Chaka and his successors on the Zulu throne who are the real authors of Apartheid? Is it the unspoken fear of the great Chaka's spirit that forces the South African Government to take the line that has made them so unpopular abroad?" (1964:103). More recently still (1986), the narrator of the SATV series asserts that the Zulu "can and will rise again". More than anywhere else - in the ambiguously fearful and deeply guilt-ridden situation out of which colonial writers have attempted to write themselves - lies the root of the ambivalence perceptible in the rhetoric: the fascination and the revulsion, the liberalism and the derogation, the inability to transcend the limitations of their own language.

Hegemonic systems

Two deep, contrary problems run beneath this chapter. One is the possibility that even the logical structures of our historiography (and I am conscious of my own appeal to these structures at various points in this study) are a gesture of implicit enterrment, that they fail to capture the reality of Zulu dynamics (how many modern histories integrate Zulu spiritual beliefs as historical cause?); more, that history itself is a form of oppression, is part of the armature of what Edward Said calls a "saturating hegemonic system" which is "predicated upon exteriority" (1978:14,20). The second is the possibility that the opposite alternative, the "nonethnocentric, nonprojective" imaginative leap into the Other's *weltanschauung*, is itself doomed to failure, an endeavour which "will remain both indisputably desirable and ultimately unattainable" (Miller 1985:282). Both impulses are embedded and at war within our colonial narratives, producing the protean gestures of layback and deadlighting. It is simply a greater awareness of this war I have attempted. Without doubt my tentative terms will bear a great deal of refinement. The essential aim, however, is to direct attention to the

psychologically dynamic way in which linguistic choices are made, even those which propose a strictly "objective" deployment of language. No strategy is without social-psychological resonance in the response it reveals to its "conditions of possibility", conditions which include intertextual resonance as well as (or indeed instead of) sensitivity to contemporary events and attitudes.

NOTES

1. Bryant 1929:48. See also Ridgway 1944:40; Millin 1948:125; Ritter 1955: 16; Michener 1980:539; Schoeman 1983:17; SATV series, 1986; Hall 1987:2. To judge by the testimonies in *The James Stuart Archive*, the "beetle" story did exist before Bryant's popularisation of it, having been given in evidence by Jantshi in 1903 (*JSA* I 179). Most oral accounts refer to "itshaka" or, more commonly, "itshati", a "particular disease" rather than a beetle (as does M M Fuze 1979:45); most accounts say that the attempted cover-up was made, but do not state that this was the origin of Shaka's name (*JSA* I 5, 188; IV 198, 202, 213, 222). One account does make the connection explicit (II 230); one equally emphatically denies it (II 246). Cetshwayo asserted in 1880 that Shaka meant "bastard"; an alternative word was used thereafter, according to his editors Webb and Wright (1987:3 and 3n).
2. Huntly Stuart's unpublished play "Shaka" was first performed at the Foundation Theatre, Durban, on 7 July 1981, with Henry Cele, later to star in the television series, as Shaka. The ms. is in the Killie Campbell Africana Library.
3. An interesting reverse analogy occurs when Buthelezi wrote, in a preface to a reprint of *The Washing of the Spears*: "[Morris] could not entirely escape the clutches of a very biased recording of the past. It is, however, not the extent to which some of his observations could be questioned that is important. The important thing is that Mr Morris was the least biased of all the people who had ever published books about KwaZulu" (Morris 1986b:94).
4. Interestingly, the epithet "hyena-man" was subsequently more often used of Dingane, especially as Shaka waxed into a more heroic stature (as in B L W Brett: "If Chaka was the lion, Dingane was the hyena" [n.d.:26]), but Bryant also used it of Shaka (1929:637), alongside "wild animal" (537), "king of beasts" (477), or "wolf" (128). The association of this last Eurocentric simile with the Zulus' generally unrestrained brutality and its undertone of lycanthropic insanity is also frequent, as in Bryant's narrative of when "the 'poor man's' army [Shaka's], with a blood-curdling howl, charged without warning and like a pack of ravening wolves ... stabbing indiscriminately men, women and children" (133; cf. Ridgway 1946:54). The "wolf" misnomer persists even in the most sympathetic works, such as Schoeman's *Pampathatha* (1983:184). See also Brett 18; Darlow 30,38,43,46; Moodie 393; Eden 60; Holden 1855:45; Stuart 1927:20; Roberts 1950:44.
5. This was the suggestion repeated by Frazer in *The Golden Bough* in support of his survey of ritual assassination. Such "ritual" assassination was a not uncommon theme in fiction; witness R M Ballantyne (see Street 139).
6. See, for example, Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*; Bertram Mitford's *John Ames* (1900); Charles Gilson's *In the Power of the Pygmies* (nd); Mark Twain's *A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur* (1900); even Patrick White's *Voss* (1957).
7. See also Stephen Gray and Cecil Skotnes, *The Assassination of Shaka* (1974:23): "you don't believe that/I am a god/this spurt out of my lungs/had a god's power/I will get it over with/when the royal sun/was eclipsed/I stood before it and/spat the blackness out/and the sun/was reborn".

8. A few further examples. For Néro, see Tyler 212, Stuart 1927:12. For Attila see also Colenso x; Moodie 393; Holden 1955:10; Fitzpatrick 157; Stuart 1927:preface; Watt 114; Gluckman 158. Attila and Napoleon are sometimes coupled, as by James Stuart in a 1904 lecture (Malaba 242). For Alexander see also Fitzpatrick 157; Darlow 25; Niven 81; Ritter 24; McMenemy 97. For Caesar see also Holden 1855:2; Moodie 391; Samuelson 388; Darlow 25; Ritter 191. For Golden Hordes see de Villiers 105; Colvin 266.

9. See Fairchild (1961:92). In Haggard's *Nada the Lily*, the narrator Mopo confronts Shaka:

Only I stood still, covered, as I was with mire and filth, for I did not fear to stand in the presence of the king. Chaka drew near, and looked at the piled-up heaps of the slain and the cloud of dust that yet hung over them.

"There they lie, Mopo," he said. "There lie those who dared to prophesy falsely to the king! That was a good word of thine, Mopo, which taught me to set the snare for them; yet methought I saw thee start when Nobela, queen of the witch-dressers, switched death on thee..." (1892:63)

Haggard weaves an envelope of occult spirituality, heroism, weapons with legendary names, and neolycaanthropy which is more Nordic than Zulu in its mythic atmosphere, with an anti-mercantilism expressed as atavistic mediaeval chivalry. Within this, both direct speech (here laden with thee, thine, methought, and the coinage of "switched death on thee", intended to mimic the closeness of a translation direct from a vernacular) and the narration are delivered in orotund archaisms, a simplified vocabulary and sentence structures which characteristically eschew relatives and subordination in favour of the conjunctives of narrative flow, uncomplicated cause-and-effect, and stark contrast (and, but, then, so, are the commonest). Intellectualism, subtlety, qualification is thereby excised.

CONCLUSION

Shaka continues to be the most powerfully evocative symbolic black personality in South African history - rivalled now perhaps only by Nelson Mandela. While isolated scholars have over the last few years made dramatic strides towards a genuinely revisionist re-examination of the Shaka story, and there are signs that some educational institutions are beginning to take note of the academics' arguments (see Epprecht 1994), the popular image is not easily dislodged. The massive success of the 1986 television series *Shaka Zulu*, which for millions comprises the only exposure to Zulu history and culture, is demonstration enough that conventional iconographies of raw African savagery, crude superstition, and epic storylines are not overturned by new technologies: on the contrary, the controversial film embodies almost all the old myths, and then some (see Hamilton 1990b; Mersharn 1989, 1993; Msimang 1990). Ongoing violence in KwaZulu-Natal and the power-struggles between King Zwelithini and Mangosuthu Buthelezi, while showing that a coherent Zulu polity is by no means an undisputed reality, serve only to entrench those seductive visual images in minds which have no alternative resource. The image of Shaka looms behind any television coverage of latter-day Zulu *impis* armed with fiercely cherished "traditional weapons" - and less tangibly behind, for instance, Zwelithini's call for "a sovereign Zulu state according to the pre-1838 boundaries" which "would encompass all of Natal, including kwaZulu, and would stretch from the Drakensberg mountains to the sea and from Mozambique to the Umzimvubu River in the south" (*Weekly Mail and Guardian*, Feb 11-14 1994, 6). This is altogether too close to Fynn for comfort, a projection of white mythography reabsorbed into the Zulus' own sense of identity - and as fervently defended as any other aspect. Shaka's name, like a talisman, is invoked to head articles which

otherwise make no mention of him: "The Iron Grip of Shaka's House" (*Leadership* 14(2), 1995), for instance. And its reach is global: in 1991, a student at the University of Wisconsin was suspended for abusively calling another "Shaka Zulu" (*Time*, April 1 1991, No.13, 61).

If, as I have argued, this influence has been constructed, if not out of thin air, at least through an accumulation of mythic inventions, masks and distortions made for a variety of political and social-psychological reasons, this is not to say the influence is not "real". Quite the opposite. Beliefs seem frequently to be held with the greater fervour precisely because they are *not* comprised of some verifiable (or at least arguable) empirical "hard nuggets"; but their consequences for concrete behaviour are very real indeed. The Shakan literature is itself, I have been suggesting, a form of behaviour, a complex of meaningful gestures. Those gestures have, on the whole, embodied a discomfiting, even fearful ambivalence on the part of white writers which has tended powerfully to eschew self-questioning, either in the form of a thoroughgoing empiricism or a searching fictional imagining. The more entrenched Shaka became as a meaningful symbol, the less attractive such searching appeared - at least until socio-political circumstances took a different turn. At a deeper level, I have argued that empirical history, observant anthropology, romantic fiction (and perhaps realist fiction, too), are themselves to a greater or lesser extent emanations of the writers' desires to identify, demarcate and project their *own* social and psychological identities.

Let me be clear on a few things here. Firstly, this kind of self-identification is not an unusual situation: it is a locally intensified manifestation (a) of a psychology operative - if we are to follow Vygotsky and Bakhtin - in the very nature of language itself, and (b) of behaviours evident in multiple mild forms in everyday life (see also Goffmann 1959; Laing 1967; Shotter and Gergen 1989). The ambivalence that suffuses this literature may even, as

Zevedei Barbu suggests, be one situated manifestation of a pervasive antinomy between reason and emotionality:

Reason is a balancing structure; its main function is to establish a certain degree of gradualness, continuity and consistency in human behaviour. To achieve this it has to struggle against - to repress, as the psychoanalyst would have it - emotionality which, on the whole, works in an opposite direction[, permitting] no neutral ground between extreme tendencies. Love borders on hatred, courage on fear, arrogance on servility, piety on impulsiveness and violence. (Barbu 57-8)

In its general generic and linguistic rigidity, then, the Shakan literature may be seen as an historical rationalisation of European emotional responses not only to Shaka and the Zulu, but to many broader cross-cultural situations; in these responses the ambivalences remain stylistically discernible.

Secondly, I am not saying that empirical history, or anthropological observation, or even romantic fiction, are in themselves evil and destructive and should not be pursued. It is the ends to which these disciplines can be put - and in the case of Shaka, have been put - which may be destructive. Discourses which fail to engage adequately with their own situatedness, their own heteroglossia and fracturedness, and their own relative-ness, become more than understandable tools of cultural cohesion: they become aggressive in their narrowness. Shaka's unquestioned stature, whether as monster or hero, is in large part the product of just such a narrow mentality of self-deceiving, and at the same time ambivalently self-doubting, beleagueredness.

Zulus will doubtless object at this point. So let me be clear, thirdly, that I am not saying that white people have wilfully constructed a portrayal of Shaka which the Zulu have simply and passively bought (let alone wishing myself to tell the Zulu what to think of themselves). Anyone who takes the trouble to read the oral testimonies in *The James Stuart Archive* will realise that, empirically problematic though those testimonies are, perhaps to the point of making a conventional "history" out of them impossible, they at the very least allow

the construction of a radically different story to the ones that white schoolchildren and Zulu nationalists alike have been taught. This embodies a recognition, though, that what we "know" of Shaka with any kind of certainty is as yet extraordinarily slight: this study has been concerned with clearing some of the brush preparatory to a renewed effort in the direction of, at least, historical probabilities. Reflexive awareness of the ways in which we construct that "knowledge" is crucial.

At the same time, fourthly, settler and Zulu self-conceptions have not grown up in isolation from one another: there have been constant exchanges of information, and even where there have not, group self-consciousness, the legends on which that consciousness is based, and the manners in which the legends are propounded in literature, art, film, or academic discourse, are generated in relation to the real or imagined lineaments of "the other". This seems to me a fundamental dynamic, though much of what I have argued runs counter to a simplistic manichean contrasting or "strong othering": there is frequently more than one "other" contesting for attention - and most frequently one of those "others" is within oneself. Here arise the multiply conflicting ambivalences to which I have repeatedly drawn attention. It also needs to be stressed that the "idealised settler identity" which I have invoked as a fundamental impulse behind this genealogy of white Shakan literature is not entirely isolatable from, indeed is in some ways predicated upon, metropolitan British or American mythemes and thought-patterns. Further, it is not the only such idealisation to have been mooted over this period; the Cape newspapers of the early nineteenth century were already filled with debates over how settlerdom ought to think of itself. But the general cohesion of the Shakan genealogy, in crucial ways overriding changes in settler thinking even as individual writers in other ways adjust themselves to those changes, makes it a peculiarly powerful one in South African history and thought.

APPENDIX:

Shaka Depicted

Pictorial representations of Shaka are numerous, and will reward more extensive treatment than I can give them here. They offer illuminating parallels to the written texts, often revealing cultural idioms even more clearly. The "mini-genealogy" represented by these six illustrations casts further light on the notions of heroism, monstrosity and physical magnificence already noted in the texts, as well as the tendency towards stereotyping and almost ludicrous exaggeration. Albert Boime sums up the psychology which often influences both kinds of representation: "Those in power inevitably exaggerate the threat of those in their thrall and in overreaching betray their tenuous ideological underpinnings. As an agent of ideological practice, visual expression often participates in the overreaction and thus discloses the fragile character of the very system it seeks to reinforce" (Boime 1990:xiv). It is arguable, though, just how fragile the imperial system has been: after all, it triumphed for a considerable period, and in many ways - as these pictures show - the discourses it imposed continue to dominate.

Fig.1. "Chaka, King of the Zoolus", from Nathaniel Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (1836:I opposite p.48). Etching on stone by W Bagg. This is the first purported portrait of Shaka, often claimed to be taken from the life, presumably because Isaacs claimed the "able assistance" of James Saunders King in compiling his drawings. Since King had been dead eight years by the time the book was published, this seems dubious. In any event, the portrait is a pure projection of European art-conventions: the *contrapposto*, the way the hand curls around the spear, the position on the promontory, the

head-to-height ratio, are motifs to be found in European art at least as far back as the Renaissance. As I pointed out, its symbolism is heroic and regal in every respect - the exact opposite of the portrayal in the text. This inauthenticity was not recognised by the designers of the monument to Shaka now standing at Stanger, kwaZulu-Natal (see Wylie 1994).

Fig.2. "Tshaka, Formerly King of the amaZulus", from D C F Moodie, *Battles and Adventures in Southern Africa* (1888:I opposite p.393). This is a portrait at least better correlated to the text, which plagiarises large portions of Isaacs, though it is hardly more credible. Unlike Isaacs' picture of poised aristocratic uprights, this is notable for its vigorous diagonals, characteristic of romantic historic artwork from Delacroix onwards, its heavy hint of cannibalism, and the "berserker" expression.

Fig.3. "Shaka", from E A Ritter, *Shaka Zulu* (1955:frontispiece). Ritter writes:

Special thanks are due to Captain A D Shorey, for his remarkable 'composite' painting of Shaka. It was done by study of a photograph of Chief Mangati, a grandson of Ndelela, pointed out by Sigananda as bearing a remarkable likeness to Shaka; by studying photographs of near kinsfolk of Shaka; and by studying Shaka's character in the MS. of this book. Old and illiterate Zulus, shown the picture, have, without exception, exclaimed 'U-Shaka'. (xv)

I was unable to trace this photograph of Mangati. As far as one knows, there were no "near kinsfolk" of Shaka's who might have borne any kind of genetic resemblance, and the tautology of relying on the text itself does not need to be laboured. The final sentence is another interesting instance of a "deadlighting" gesture, by which Zulu illiteracy becomes a kind of virtue, a token of authenticity. This kind of portrayal became the norm, as in the following figure, on the cover of McMenemy's *Assegai!*, and in the figure of Henry Cele in the title role of the television series (see Fig.6).

Fig.4. Shaka in "The Battle of Gqokli Hill 1818", by Angus McBride, from Ian Knight, *The Zulus* (1989:34). The poster-style painting of McBride's (originally colour)

brushwork indicates the popular audience aimed at, as well as details of dress and weaponry, suitable to Knight's stress on the military aspects of Zulu history and culture. Note the "berserker" expression again, and the conventional blue-crane feather in Shaka's headgear, also derived from Isaacs' and Fynn's descriptions. The painting perpetuates the assumption that Shaka led his forces personally into battle.

Fig.5. "Zwanna, Son of Zulu", from a comic of the same name produced by Dark Zulu Lies Inc., under Nabile Hage of New York (see *Newsweek* 122(7), August 16 1993, 52-3). This extreme formulation of Western enthusiasm for black African authenticity is an African-American answer to (or is it extension of?) white superhero comic characters. I was unable to trace either the whole comic-book or the company; thanks to DC Comics for supplying this photocopy.

Fig.6. The 1987 American edition of the poster for *Shaka Zulu*, the television series (1986). From Mersharn (1993:83).

Fig.7. "Shaka Kills an Heir", by Cecil Skotnes, from Stephen Gray and Cecil Skotnes, *The Assassination of Shaka* (1974:29). Skotnes' vigorous woodcuts are influenced both by German Expressionism and African masks and carvings, and represent an attempt to escape from Eurocentric forms of representation into methods and colours both simpler and more dynamic - qualities in themselves predicated on a certain set of perceptions of the "authentic" Africa. The story presented by Gray and Skotnes is the conventional one, derived largely from Ritter. Gray's poem, accompanying this black-and-white on dark green illustration, runs: "held by laws like gravity/ together to our stretching soil/ why should a hub of the just/ unbalance in front of a son/ I tripped his baby heels and/ swung his brains on rock".



Fig.1



Fig.2

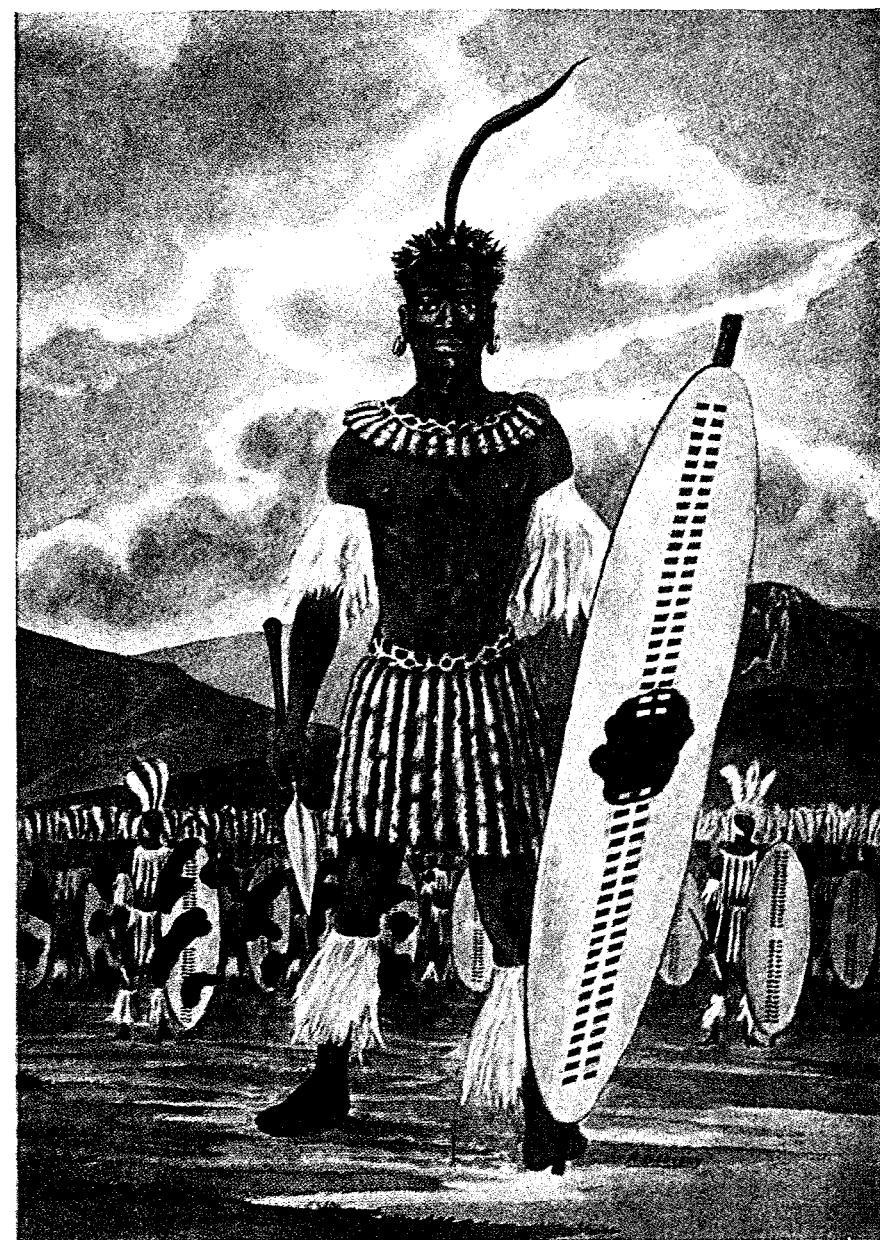


Fig.3



Fig.



Fig.5

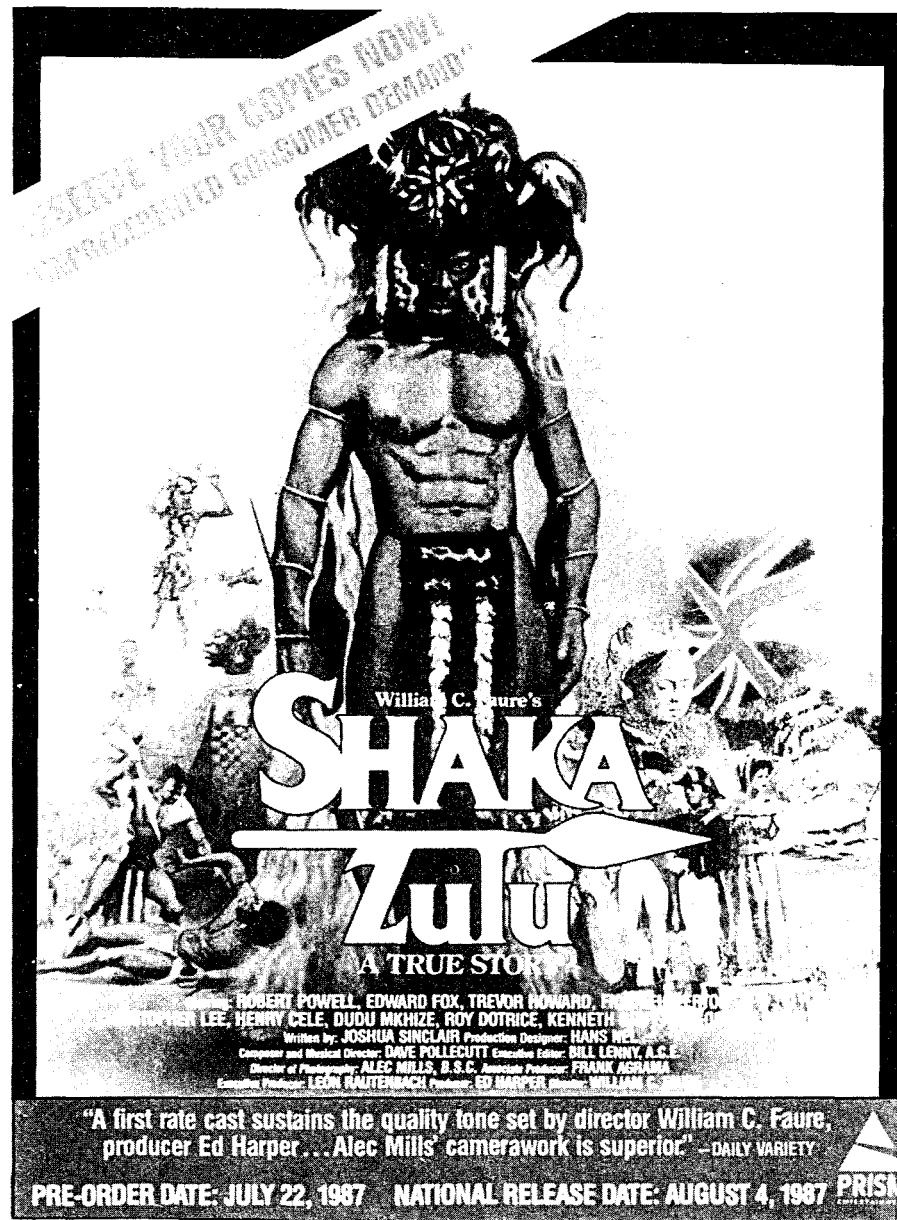


Fig.6



Fig. 7

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A. Abbreviations and archival material

| | |
|-------|--|
| CAMKJ | Cape Archives, M K Jeffries Papers |
| GTJ | <i>Graham's Town Journal</i> |
| JSA | <i>The James Stuart Archive</i> . Eds C de B Webb and J B Wright, 4 vols. University of Natal Press: Pietermaritzburg. 1976-86 |
| KCFP | Killie Campbell, Fynn Papers |
| KCSP | Killie Campbell, Stuart Papers |
| KCM | Killie Campbell Museum Library, Durban |
| LHM | Local History Museum, Durban |
| MM | Macmillan Papers, Rhodes Library, Oxford |
| NAB | Natal Archives, Pietermaritzburg |
| NAFP | Natal Archives, Fynn Papers |
| NEC | <i>Records of the Natal Executive Council</i> . Vols 2-5. South African Archival Records: Cape Town. 1960-64. |
| NELM | National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown |
| RN | <i>Records of Natal</i> . Ed. B J T Leverton. 3 vols. South African Government Printer: Pretoria. 1984-1990 |
| SACA | <i>South African Commercial Advertiser</i> |

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