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MA research report

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I would like to acknowledge and express appreciation of colleagues at Saide. African Storybook is a remarkable initiative, with remarkable people. It has been profoundly rewarding and engaging work. I also acknowledge with much sadness the death of our Ugandan colleague, Juliet Tembe, in December 2016. She will be deeply missed by many.

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Abstract

This study critically analyses a set of folktales from the African Storybook website, which is an open licence digital publishing platform supporting early reading in Africa (www.africanstorybook.org). The selected folktales were mostly written by educators and librarians working in the African Storybook project pilot sites. The folktales were illustrated and published as indigenous African language and English storybooks during 2014 to 2015.

The analysis is centrally concerned with the settings in which the folktales take place (with a distinction made between space, place and time), and the age and gender associated with central characters. The analytical tools used and the perspectives applied are drawn predominantly from post-colonial studies, African feminism, critical literacy, broad folktale scholarship, and theory from local – as opposed to global – childhoods. The analysis is interested in the conventions of the folktale genre, as it is constructed in the narratives by the writers.

The three central findings with regards to the settings of folktales are as follows: (i) 90% of the folktales are set in rural environments in or near villages or small settlements. The somewhat idealised villages and settlements appear to have been relatively untouched by modern communications and infrastructure, and represent a "nostalgic, imagined past". (ii) The study found that 75% of the folktales are set in the remote past, indexical of the folktale genre's oral roots. (iii) Supernatural characters, objects and events occur in nearly 75% of the folktales. This suggests a possible interpretive space of intersecting temporalities and dimensions of existence, as well as possibilities for imaginative problem-solving. In addition, it raises challenging questions about the limits of human agency.

The study also found that the ASb folktales, perhaps somewhat unsurprisingly for a genre that tends to employ archetypes and stereotypes, seemingly offer no characterisation outside of heteronormative family roles. But despite the heteronormativity and narrowly-defined family roles, especially for women characters, the folktales also present other positions for female gendered characters, and by extension for girl child readers – courageous, interesting, clever and unconventional female characters are in no shortage in these narrative populations.

The findings suggest that the ASb folktales provide a range of identity positions for both girls and boys in African contexts, and my study reflects on how educators might navigate this complex territory. In particular, the findings point to how teachers and other adult caregivers might balance the moral and cultural lessons in folktales with the need for children to imagine and construct different worlds and positions for themselves.

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Chapter 1 Introduction and overview

1.1 Introduction

This research report offers a contextualised and critical reading of a selection of written narrative texts that were published as storybooks for children in Africa. The storybooks are available from an open licence website established in 2014 to promote literacy through locally created storybooks in the languages of Africa: www. africanstorybook.org.

My study focuses on one genre of stories from the website – those narratives that were identified by their writers as folktales. I have worked with the broad understanding that folktales are narratives whose motifs, characters and settings – with many contextual variations – are re-imagined and repeated, often carrying traces of their histories and geographies with them. The folktales selected for this research were written predominantly by educators in pilot countries for the African Storybook initiative to support early literacy learning and teaching.[1] The folktales were published on the African Storybook website around 2014 to 2015. [2]

The website offers a varied, expanding, multilingual and locally grounded collection of storybooks from various genres. My study considers a small portion of the collection, and probes the mediated representations of their writers' perspectives on the folktale genre, on the purpose of folktales for children, and on some of the distilled social issues that seem to be suggested in fictionalised form.

1.1.1 Background to African Storybook publishing

The vision of African Storybook (ASb) is: *Open access to picture storybooks in the languages of Africa. For children's literacy, enjoyment and imagination.* Central to the initiative is an open licence website – www. africanstorybook.org – and associated publishing programme. The website is a growing repository of locally written and

[1] African Storybook is an initiative of Saide (South African Institute for Distance Education), a registered Non-Profit Organisation working in open and distance education policy, research and materials, with a focus on open education resources in Africa. The initiative is funded until the end of 2016 by UK based funder, Comic Relief. For more information about the initiative please see: http://www.africanstorybook.org.

[2] The website was launched in 2014, but the ASb initiative began as a project in 2013.

published digital storybooks in fast-approaching a hundred of the languages of Africa, both indigenous languages and a few of the dominant colonially-imposed languages.

In addition to the ASb internal publishing programme producing about 50 storybooks a year, the website enables any registered user to create and publish her or his own storybooks, and also to translate and adapt storybooks published by other users, and by the African Storybook team.

As at June 2016, 2756 digital storybooks had been published on the website, in 75 languages – mostly indigenous African languages, but also English, French and Portuguese. [3] The total number of storybooks available consists of stories which are considered unique (at least in terms of the website's classificatory system), and stories that are translations and adaptions of those unique stories.

There are two categories of storybooks on the ASb website – those that are created and published independently by the website community, and those that are produced and published through the Johannesburg central office. The latter are considered 'ASb approved' because they (and their commissioned translations) have passed through at least a minimum quality assurance process. There were 1615 ASb-approved storybooks available from the website in June 2016. All the storybooks I discuss are ASb approved.

The content of the storybooks includes fiction and non-fiction, and the manuscript writers and/or the ASb country co-ordinators broadly categorise the texts according to the ASb website genres of:

- Story
- Folktale
- Child-created story
- Wordless story
- Poem, rhyme, song or game. [4]

The storybooks for children to read themselves are organised in four levels, beginning with 'First words' (one picture and up to nine words each page), up to 'Longer paragraphs' (may not be a picture on each page, up to 150 words per page). An

[3] Total number and ASb approved number of storybooks, as well as number of languages, as at 18 June 2016.

[4] This selection is given on the metadata template in which the story manuscript is typed. No explanation is given of the categories.

additional level of storybook is 'Read aloud', which is intended to be read to children by caregivers, librarians, teachers and older children.

Except for a handful of donated titles, all of the storybooks have been written in Africa, and reflect familiar African contexts as well as African diversity and difference. The manuscripts have predominantly been developed and written by teachers, librarians, and education students in the ASb pilot countries of Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and Lesotho.[5] In collaboration with the ASb country co-ordinators, the storybooks are prepared for centralised publishing through the ASb main office in Johannesburg – involving editing, illustration commissioning, and online creation.

Writers are asked to write their stories in their preferred language, and to submit two final texts to their ASb country co-ordinator – the story in a local African language and in English (either the writer or someone else from the community translates as necessary). The ASb country co-ordinators might do additional work on the manuscripts before submitting them to the central publisher and English editor to prepare the storybooks for online publishing.

Although it is frequently not possible to know which language an ASb storybook manuscript is first written in (English or an indigenous African language), the majority of the stories submitted by the ASb country co-ordinators are written in an indigenous language and English.[6] ASb Storybooks are almost always published on the website simultaneously in an indigenous African language and English.

The English storybooks are the 'seed texts', which can be accessed by a wide range of translators via (especially) English as a lingua franca, meaning that one illustrated storybook can be used by many different readers because it is possible to replace the written text on the digital book pages and publish new translations and adaptations of any storybook. For example, one of the early storybooks published in Lusoga and English (*Omusaadha omuleeyi einho* and *A very tall man*), has been translated via the English version into a further 22 languages.

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[5] In 2016, 20 Ethiopian folktales were illustrated and published in addition to a combined total of about 30 Ugandan, Kenyan, South African and Lesotho stories. There are also plans to explore partnerships in Ghana, Rwanda and Zambia.

[6] Anecdotally, in a atoryde development workshop in Mbale, Uganda, participants observed to me that: some wrote the story in English – the language they regarded as more challenging – first, to get that labour out the way, after which the more familiar language was easy; others wrote in their mother tongue first because that was the easier labour, and then translated into English (Uganda workshops report, May 2016).

ASb is first and foremost dedicated to promoting reading in indigenous African languages; however, the national languages of colonising countries are still aspirational in many post-independence countries, and associated with access to social and economic power. Therefore, supporting the teaching of the main ex-colonial languages is a part of an overall vision of literacy for access and empowerment. Apart from the value of English texts for seeding widespread translations, there is also a demand for English storybooks on the website for pedagogical reasons – it is widely used in schools, certainly in southern and East Africa, and in parts of West Africa, and it is a useful language of wider communication for social and economic purposes.

Finally, regarding English and access, I am aware that, given my own linguistic limitations, I could not work with the storybooks if they were exclusively in local African languages. Were it not for the hegemonic position of English and the demand for African storybooks in English, I would not be able to access these texts for professional work or research. I am mindful that in order to ensure that my professional work and research contribute to the decolonisation of Africa, a politicised, critical, self-reflective approach is fundamental to resisting the exercise of power and domination, especially as it concerns language.

1.2 Research aim and orientation

The purpose of this research is to critically analyse a small sub-set of storybooks – folktales for children – on the ASb website, particularly those published in the first year of the website (i.e. from its launch in June 2014 until July 2015). I want to use the opportunity of my research report to reflect on patterns and trends around age, gender and power in this focused sub-set of ASb storybooks.

My aim is to probe what the folktales might express about the story producers' conceptions of the genre, especially with regard to child readers; and also to explore the construction of authority and power in the folktales – how adult characters relate to child characters, and in particular the positions and identities available to both folktale characters and child readers. Part of this expressed aim is a strong interest in exploring narrative representations of our continent by African writers for African children.

Representations of Africa that prevail in dominant forms of publishing still tend to be simplistic, negative and stereotypical – certainly those representations that have dominated cultural production and which reflect the perceptions of most non-Africans,

especially from the powerful global North (Adichie, 2009; Wainaina, 2008). By exploring the mediated representations of African childhoods in folktales by African adults, this study seeks to offer representations from the global South of our contexts, peoples, and issues around childhood.

A critical reading involves reading outside of the discursive space of a text and outside of the ideal reader position – it requires reading against the grain of a text. The analytical model of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989, 1992) and a critical literacy approach to texts (Janks, 2010) are especially useful in this regard. Janks argues that "critical literacy requires that we both engage with and distance ourselves from texts" and that both positions are required because "each on its own is a form of entrapment. Engagement without estrangement is a form of submission to the power of the text" (Janks, 2010, p. 96).

I aim to occupy this critical external position while also locating myself within the folktales and their discursive contexts: a position of engaged estrangement that apprehends the narratives on their own terms, from African perspectives. My study is in every sense grounded in Africa: as a continent; as a construct; as experiences, histories, futures; in our oral and written narratives; as imagined and fought for in decolonisation struggles.[7]

1.3 Rationale for research

My personal interest in this research is located in my role as ASb publisher and English story editor, and motivated by my desire to reflect on the storybooks more analytically and critically than the day-to-day work allows. I perform the usual professional duties of a commercial educational publishing manager: I manage the implementation of the publishing plan and publishing strategy, and my work includes editing the English manuscripts; commissioning the illustrations; online publication of all the ASb-approved storybooks; and, planning and providing publishing services required by ASb partners. [8]

[7] Also on this point, my use of the word 'African' is not by definition synonymous with 'black,' but also more generally describes a person who is invested in the present and future of a decolonised and transformed Africa.

[8] A storybook is marked as "ASb approved" because it (and associated *commissioned* translations) have passed through at least a minimum quality assurance process, either through the ASb main office, or by our partners.

I joined the African Storybook initiative in April 2014 – two months before the website formally went live – and quickly became interested in the research potential of the expanding ASb collection of storybooks. While there is considerable research (particularly monitoring and evaluation) associated with the ASb initiative, there has not been any systematic analysis of the storybook collection and its content (or of any parts of the collection, to date). There is quantitative data from the website analytics, but this pertains to website use and users and offers no detail about the narrative content. The analytics tell us how many users are accessing particular stories (and which are the most popular storybooks – as rated, viewed and downloaded by users).[9]

The African-centred orientation of the website means that the storybooks offer interesting perspectives on African stories for children, and specifically on folktales for children: on their sources and writers, and the social-political-aesthetic aspects of their production (Granqvist & Martini, 1997; Muponde & Stein, 2006; Stephens, 1992). As with most narrative texts, the folktales by the ASb writers contain representations of what is important to these writers – in this case, values they want to convey to child readers, and what they want to preserve or promote about the community in which the child lives. The folktale texts offer expressions of what the producers consider appropriate in narratives for children, how they conceptualise folktale content in particular, and how they use the conventions of this traditional genre.

A final note on the rationale for this study is that generally in my literature searches I didn't find much scholarship in English about oral or written African folktales specifically for children; and even less research on publishing storybooks for children in Africa. The reviewer of a special issue of the *Journal of African Children's and Youth Literature* (2004–2006) refers to this when she endorses a position asserted by the journal editors:

> As Muponde and Stein note in their introduction to the special issue, the study of children's literature in Africa has been shown minimal support in major African universities and there is no journal on that continent that specializes in the study of children's literature. We might add that African children's literature is rarely accorded more than a nod in major research organizations on other continents as well... (Mitsch, 2010, p. 155).

[9] The website analytics are generated on a monthly basis and include information about the top 20 storybooks viewed and the top 20 storybooks downloaded.

Some of the available research – for example, hard copy dissertations in English at East African universities – was not easily accessible from South Africa. Generally there seems to be a need for more research on reading, writing and publishing storybooks in Africa, as well as the need to support better dissemination of that research. There are a number of reasons why it is the case that scholarship on children's storybooks in Africa is not as internationally visible as, say studies on storybooks for African American children, but some salient ones include

> Western ignorance of languages in these areas, uneven book distribution, [and] … the fact that non-canonical—especially non-award-winning—children's books go out of print so quickly that their quality and impact are difficult to assess. (Hearne, 2010, p. 214).

Linked to this is the prevailing impression that children's book production in Africa has mostly been characterised by "weak publishing sectors, inadequate distribution mechanisms, and poor purchasing power" (Ambatchew, 2008, p. 431). These factors have all contributed to "a severe shortage of quality indigenous reading materials" (Ambatchew, 2008, p. 431), and are also implicated in the reason why this area of cultural production has not been highly regarded by scholars.

I noted above that, as a predominantly English language user, I could not work with the stories if they were exclusively in indigenous African languages. Because of the abdundance of English translations – and two other European-origin languages of wider communication – the ASb website affords access to narrative content for children to a wide range of researchers who read those languages. Through this study I hope to make a contribution to research in English about writing and publishing storybook folktales for children in Africa.

1.4 Research questions

Working as the ASb publisher and English editor has generated many impressions and questions that I would like to theorise – about the writers and the contexts of production, and about the positions available to children in the narratives (both child characters and by extension child readers). My impressions have been un-analysed and un-theorised, but nevertheless have suggested some questions and issues that might be important to explore further.

Through this study I examine and theorise my intuitions, locating them within and testing them against particular theoretical perspectives, in order to clarify and

substantiate the impressions – or reject them. The following broad questions drive my research:

- How do writers of ASb folktales represent and use the folktale genre in their texts?
- What discourses are represented or constructed in the folktales? [10]
- What are possible implications of these constructions for children in particular?
- What are the possible implications for publishers and writers of storybooks?

These research questions should guide me to a more rigorous understanding of ASb storybook writers (their writing conventions and their socio-cultural contexts), but also a better understanding of what constitutes appropriate storybook content for African children. I discuss the research questions in more detail in Chapter 3 Research design and methodology.

1.5 Overview of research report

This research report is organised into six chapters, a bibliography, and appendices.

Following this introduction is Chapter 2, Literature review, which presents the perspectives and positions that collectively provide a theoretical framework for my research.

Chapter 3, Research design and methodology, offers an overview of the data and its selection, the overall design of the study, and the methods of data analysis.

Chapters 4 and 5 are the data chapters, which present, analyse and discuss data from the folktale texts, specifically pertaining to genre, setting, and characters.

Chapter 6 concludes the study with a summary of findings, arguments, reflections and recommendations.

[10] I am using Gee's concept of discourses, i.e. they are intrinsically ideological and "crucially involve a set of values and viewpoints in terms of which one must speak and act" (Gee, 1998, p. 2).

Chapter 2 Literature review: Theories, perspectives and positions

2.1 Introduction

I have orientated myself in this research project with certain theoretical compasses. These over-arching orientations come mainly from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Achille Mbembe, Obioma Nnaemeka, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; and perspectives from critical language study and critical literacy, particularly as expounded by Norman Fairclough and Hilary Janks respectively.

I am also guided by interdisciplinary theorists who write about language, literacy and narrative – especially those areas of study in relation to children's literacy and education. In conceptualising children and childhood in Africa I am influenced by writers within what I call a local childhoods approach – reflecting the cultural politics of childhood, and resisting the construct of the normative global child as representing all children.

2.2 Over-arching theoretical orientations

2.2.1 Post-colonial African scholarship

My MA studies have been undertaken at a time when South Africa has been strongly reminded that the issue of decolonisation – especially of decolonising South African education – is more urgent than ever.[11] But the student protests are only one end of a continuum of crisis that has deep roots in colonial invasion and oppression, and which is maintained by the ongoing plundering of African resources by multinational international capital.

Decolonising education in Africa critically involves, inter alia, ensuring that our learners have the educational advantages of mother tongue literacy – as many children do in the global North.[12] For a variety of reasons, few African governments have

[11] For a lucid discussion of the issues behind South African higher education protests in September-October 2015, see 'Transformation and decolonising universities' by Pumla Dineo Gqola (Retrieved from http://www.wits.ac.za/alumni/27024/alumni.html). Of course these issues are not exclusive to South Africa; see 'African varsities burn' in *African Independent* (October 23-29, 2015, pp. 4-5).

[12] I aware of the somewhat contentious nature of the term 'mother tongue', and that the nature of multilingual Africa and African people frequently makes it difficult for people to identify a single 'first' or 'main' language or 'mother tongue'. I use the term as a shorthand, but also in recognition that children, certainly in South Africa, are more likely to be raised by their mother or a female relative, than by both parents or by a father alone. (See 'The state of fatherhood is disheartening' by Kopano Ratele, in *The Star*, 20 June 2016, p.13; and *SA Child Gauge*, 2015, retrieved from http://www.ci.org.za/depts/ci/pubs/pdf/general/gauge2015/ChildGauge2015-lowres.pdf.) African

achieved – or even sufficiently pursued – effective literacy provision in mother tongue languages; although in recent years there appears to be more recognition of their value. In South Africa, one significant reason that parents and learners have resisted mother tongue education is because of its association with apartheid Bantu Education.[13] The association of African language literacy with inferior schooling and limited prospects is articulated here in relation to Nigeria.

> Nigerians in many different parts of the country resisted attempts to teach them their mother tongues in the school. It was perceived … as a means of denying them the linguistic capital that was necessary to their accumulation of both economic and political power. (Goke-Pariola, 1993, p. 224).

Despite the body of research that presents cognitive and other advantages in mother tongue literacy and learning (and in bilingualism), the legacy of linguistic colonialism has made this a difficult argument to win with parents and learners, underscoring the fact that language issues are political issues. Thus, Ngũgĩ's *Decolonising the mind* (1986) and its critical political reflections on the effects of the linguistic colonisation of black African people, is still relevant 30 years' after its first publication.

Along with an anti-imperialist approach to literary studies, Ngũgĩ uses a Marxist lens with which to examine the imposition of English on black Africans, and the consequences for African cultural production. He reflects on the historical and social contexts of African cultural expression and asserts the value of writing in indigenous African languages, and their role in both claiming and expressing African identities. Ngũgĩ's moving dedication at the start of *Decolonising the mind* conveys this.

> This book is gratefully dedicated to all those who write in African languages, and to all those who over the years have maintained the dignity of the literature, culture, philosophy, and other treasures carried by African languages. (Ngũgĩ, 1986, p. iv).

At that time, Ngũgĩ's aspiration was that there could be

> restoration of the harmony between all the aspects and divisions of language so as to restore the Kenyan child to his environment … With that harmony between himself, his language and his environment as his starting point, he can learn other languages and … other people's literatures and cultures without any

Storybook discourse has come to use the phrase 'most familiar language' instead of 'mother tongue', acknowledging that children in Africa often have more than one familiar language.

[13] The Bantu Education Act (1953) established racially segregated, centrally controlled education, resulting in inadequately resourced and inferior education for black African children. See http://www.sahistory.org.za.

> complexes about his own language, his own self, his environment. (1986, pp. 28-29).

But a decade later, it seems that not much had changed – at least in relation to books for children. The editors of a 1997 special edition on African children's literature introduce the collection with a sobering assertion: "That the African children's story or book is part of colonial structures which are still in operation or of more recent neo-colonial frames, is of course, no surprise" (Granqvist & Martini, 1997, p. xiv).

Ngũgĩ's own experiences of storybooks demonstrate the constraints of colonial structures:

> In primary school I now read simplified Dickens and Stevenson alongside Rider Haggard. Jim Hawkins, Oliver Twist, Tom Brown - not Hare, Leopard and Lion - were now my daily companions in the world of imagination. … Thus language and literature were taking us further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds. (1986, p. 12).

And Fanon describes the deeply alienating cultural impositions of "white books" and their effect on his identity: "little by little I take into myself the prejudices, the myths, the folklore that have come to me from Europe" (Fanon, 1986, pp. 191-92).

Where books were accessible to children in sub-Saharan colonial Africa, they would in all likelihood have been written, illustrated and published in Europe (or, later, from North America).[14] Such books would have been shaped by European – especially British English – values, aesthetics, and ideologies; not to mention, European people, landscapes, animals, festivals and seasons. And they would have been written by white Europeans in English (or perhaps French, or German, or Portuguese).

Although the impositions might be more subtle and shaped for their own times, to an extent this situation still persists due to the strong position in Africa of multi-national publishing companies whose head offices are in the global North (for example, Pearson, Penguin, MacMillan, Oxford and Cambridge university presses). Even with the gradual growth of more African publishing concerns, some languages are valued and prioritised over others – depending on whether they are official/national languages, and on the socio-political power associated with certain languages.[15] In 2016, many

[14] For a carefully researched discussion of early publishing for children in "the New World" – English American settler children – and the influence of British publishing mores on the American colony, see *Behold the child: American children and their books 1621-1922*, by Gillian Avery, 1994.

[15] The promotion of kiSwahili in Kenya and Uganda – where the language has very few or no mother tongue speakers – is an example of just such linguistic engineering, which often goes hand-in-glove with the marginalisation of historically indigenous languages.

indigenous African languages are still marginalised, under-valued, under-resourced, and under-published – in their countries of origin, and most certainly by international commercial publishers. As a continent we have made poor progress in realising Ngũgĩ's aspiration for restoring harmony in the Kenyan child, let alone for African children more generally.

In conceptualising my research project I also sought theory that reflected recent contributions to post-colonial scholarship, and discussed African identity from the perspective of the second millennium. To this end, generative ways to think about and understand Africa are outlined by Mbembe in *Postcolony*. While "Africa's story cannot be told in an uncritical manner" (Jamal, 2015, p. 32), a criticality is required which takes as axiomatic that "the African subject is like any other human being: he or she engages in *meaningful acts*" (Mbembe, 2015, p. 6). One of the more absurd – but nonetheless dangerous – of the global North's cherished constructs about our continent is that Africa is the heart of darkness, is negative to the West's positive.

> Africa, a headless figure, threatened with madness and quite innocent of any notion of center, hierarchy or stability, is portrayed as a vast dark cave … in short, a bottomless abyss where everything is noise, yawning gap, and primordial chaos. (Mbembe, 2015, p. 3).

In the same vein, Adichie talks about prevailing constructions of Africa in Western books: "A tradition of Sub-Saharan Africa as a place of negatives, of difference, of darkness …", which shows "a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again." She argues that unless we engage with *all* the stories of a place, "[t]he consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult" (Adichie, 2009).

What often seems to be absent from the dominant discourses about Africa and African cultural production, is again that which is self-evident, but ignored: "Most Africans are neither fighting nor starving … and lead ordinary, healthy, peaceful lives" (Dowden, 2014, p. 5). But as this journalist also points out, "the ordinary gets ignored in Africa as it does in Asia or South America. Normality is nice but it does not … sell newspapers" (2014, p. 5). Instead, in media aligned to the global North, Africa regularly emerges as chaotic, extraordinary, and ultimately beyond rational comprehension: "In this extremity of the Earth, reason is supposedly permanently at bay, and the unknown has supposedly attained its highest point" (Mbembe, 2015, p. 3). These are constructions of Africa that I want to reject at the outset.

Furthermore, as Mbembe also points out, what is also usually absent in hegemonic theorisations about Africa is that "all human societies participate in a *complex* order, rich in unexpected turns, meanders, and changes of course, without this implying their necessary abolition in an absence of center" (Author emphasis, 2015, p. 8). Thus an important orientation for my research is one which, simply put, conceptualises Africa as knowable and ordinary (while none-the-less recognising that there are particular extremes and hardships in many African lives).

This continent is "a space of proliferation that … emerges from a sort of violent gust, with its languages, its beauty and ugliness, its ways of summing up the world" (Mbembe, 2015, p. 242). Such an orientation towards Africa reveals "a way of living and existing in uncertainty, chance, irreality, even absurdity" (Mbembe, 2015, p. 242). As Mbembe points out elsewhere, people in Africa have an "extraordinary plasticity – the capacity to embrace what is new, what is novel" and that this "flexibility and this capacity for constant innovation, extension of the possible … is also the spirit of the Internet, it is the spirit of the digital, and it is the same spirit you will find in pre-colonial and contemporary Africa" (2015b, p. 3). He argues that as a result of this plasticity and innovation, digital technologies find fertile ground in Africa

> because the philosophy of those technologies is more or less exactly the same as ancient African philosophies. This archive of permanent transformation, mutation, conversion and circulation is an essential dimension of what we call African culture. (Mbembe, 2015b, p. 2).

Apart from his future-oriented and fundamentally hopeful vision, two ideas in particular that I use from Mbembe are those of the "entanglement" of African and Western/European lives (whose pasts, presents and futures are intertwined in complicated ways); and of African temporalities, where time is neither linear nor "a series but an *interlocking* of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures" (Author emphasis, Mbembe, 2015, p. 16).

Folktales offer rich residues of cultural entanglement – especially those narratives that have continued in various forms over periods of time, and those that migrate across borders and continents. In their form and content folktales contain facets of their pasts in their present versions: temporalities unfold and refold, time in the narrative is imagined, created, re-imagined and re-created by storytellers.

The concept of these temporalities, in relation to the ASb folktales, suggests an explanation of writers' and readers' attachments to reproducing old genres, to

narratives in a remote imagined time, just outside of the real of everyday life, while simultaneously looking ahead to real future considerations. Folktales, almost by definition, retain depths of their pasts, and suggest how their producers might view both the present and the future.

This conception of interlocking temporalities can be further developed with reference to more recent scholarship from Ngũgĩ, where he argues for an intellectual approach that is a combination of "the global and the dialectical" in order to produce "a mutually affecting dialogue, or multi-logue, in the phenomena of nature and nurture in a global space … a way of thinking and relating to the world, particularly in the era of globalism and globalization (2012, p. 8). Ngũgĩ argues that the scholarly – and popular – dichotomy between oral and written forms of language has even less bearing in the age of digital expression, and that the digital offers new platforms for traditionally oral forms:

> [with] texting and emailing and access to everything including pictures and music in real time … a new language is being created in [which] orality is mediated by writing. It is neither one nor the other. It's both. It's cyberorality. (2012, p. 85).

The ideas contained in the term cyberorality are important for thinking about print literacy in relation to multimodal literacy, in contexts with a strong oral tradition in cultural production.

ASb folktales in digital storybook form, also show how temporalities can co-occur via different materialities and modalities: oral cultural expression associated with the past can be rendered in writing and transmitted via digital channels in so-called developing countries; oral traditions can be preserved in digital form; and oral narratives emerge in various written forms, which combine visual and verbal texts and are available in virtual space, becoming material when they are printed.

While I am interested in exploring the intersection and entanglement of past and present in cultural traditions, I am aware of the inadequacy of fixed and essentialist notions of tradition or identity. Although I am strongy influenced by Marxist theory, one limitation of a classical Marxist perspective is that it tends to see the world in terms of some fairly simple binaries, especially 'oppressed' and 'oppressor' or 'worker' and

'boss'.[16] I think that the intellectual work of both Ngũgĩ and Mbembe is informed by a resistance of binaries and I would like to develop this idea further with reference to African feminism and work of Obioma Nnaemeka in particular.

2.2.2 African feminist perspectives

Thinking and theorising in terms of binaries and dichotomies is unlikely to facilitate constructive engagement about how to decolonise and transform Africa. This is articulated in the reductionism of "*oppositional* binaries, such as traditional/modern, male/female, agent/victim". Instead, focusing on the construction of gender, and on the representation of women in particular, Nnaemeka is interested in the possibilities afforded by "border crossings, gray areas and the ambiguous interstices of the binaries where woman is both benevolent *and* malevolent with powers that are healing *and* lethal …, both traditional *and* modern …, both victim *and* agent …" (1997, p. 2).

Articulated this way, it is easy to recognise that each binary actually hides a continuum of human identity and behaviour. I will refer to this later because, in addition to some fairly archetypal binaries, border crossings and the unsettling of binaries are also represented in the ASb folktales. As Chapter 5 will demonstrate, there are tales illustrating that "agency and victimhood are not mutually exclusive, …. victims are also agents who can change their lives and affect other lives in radical ways" (Nnaemeka, 1997, p. 3). If it were not so there could be no liberation, no self-emancipation of oppressed people.

A useful and dynamic theorisation of gender will avoid essentialising or distorting the complex issues that surround the performance of gender, whether in African or other contexts. The following quotation summarises the particular and conflicting demands that are made on African feminists:

> if they accord their traditional culture some modicum of respect, they are dismissed by feminists as apologists for oppressive and outdated customs; if they critique their culture, they are faced with put-downs and ridicule from the members of their own society for having sold out. (Nnaemeka, 1997, p. 166).

This double bind reflects a crude engagement with Africa by gatekeepers of Western feminism, as well as the negative effects of local anti-colonial nationalist agendas where

[16] See Alan Luke's most useful summary of this limitation of the Marxist dialectic, in the context of critical literacy theory – in Pandya and Avila (Eds.), 2014.

issues around women's oppression are considered secondary to the greater imperative of national liberation. In asserting her own position within feminist theory, Nnaemeka argues that "what much of the existing feminist analyses of African literatures designate as irreconcilable, 'unfeminist' contradictions are actually the tensions of mutuality, not antagonism, (*complementary* not *oppositional*) that give life, vibrancy, and meaning" (1997, p. 2).

This perspective is itself a border crossing, and it affords more potential for nuanced insights than an uncritical application of either Western feminism or African nationalism. The nature of such ideological straightjackets is well conveyed in an anecdote about an early experience that Adichie had at the time she was grappling with what it means to be a feminist: "an academic, a Nigerian woman told me that feminism was not our culture and that feminism wasn't African, and that I was calling myself a feminist because I had been corrupted by 'Western books'" (Adichie, 2013).

Nnaemeka provides a counter to these limited and limiting notions of both feminism and culture: "'Feminism' is an English (Western) word but the feminist spirit and ideals are indigenous to the African environment; we do not need to look too far into the annals of African history to see the inscription of feminist engagements". (1997, p. 166). This brings to mind a recent *Mail & Guardian* article, 'Feminism has always been African,' where the writer asserts:

> Our grandmothers and mothers may not have the language and terms that are used by Crenshaw, hooks, Morrison or Gqola, but for years they have been able to personify what woman empowerment looks like.
> … This can be seen through the Fon women of Dahomey or … Makeda of Ethiopia, Nzinga of Angola or Mkabayi of Zululand… (Pilane, 2015, p. 23).

The failure to recognise this has specific consequence in a certain type of feminist argument that is "premised on the assumption that African women are too downtrodden to be capable of making their own choices and decisions" – which is indeed "a stumbling block to genuine engagement" (Nnaemeka, 1997, p. 168). This recalls Adichie's comments about the danger of a single story, which have additional resonance when considering the construction of gender in Africa, and particularly the construction of African girls and women.

I will conclude this discussion of post-colonial African scholarship with a quotation that encapsulates my approach to gender theory.

> The intellectual challenge of identity lies in the exercise of adding gender to the arsenal of analytical tools required to rethink identity, so that we can deepen our understanding of power, and increase our strategic capacity to engage with and challenge its destructive capacity. Being an optimist, I assume that we still have the chance to do so. (Mama, 2001, p. 71).

In establishing my "arsenal of analytical tools" I have taken the inclusion of gender as critical, and been aware of the necessity of critical reflection on my own feminism and its politics. A guiding objective of this study is to understand how the ASb folktales might reconstruct forms of power and limit human subjectivities, as well as how the tales might challenge power and powerful discourses and present postions of agency for children.

2.3 Perspectives on language and texts

Having established my broad theoretical and political framework, I now concentrate on specific approaches to language and written text, and how these texts can be imbued with social and other types of power and authority. Power is a significant variable in language use and enliteration – especially access to social, economic and symbolic power (while acknowledging that access to literacy, or to any particular language, does not necessarily afford one access to power).[17]

2.3.1 Critical literacy

Critical language awareness and discourse study (Fairclough, 1989), and critical literacy (Janks, 2010) are politicised approaches to language that complement other approaches to language and literacy. They also represent a particular orientation to language study: language as social practice (Street, 1995; Baynham, 1995). This is important because:

> in seeing language as discourse and as social practice, one is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to *analysing the relationships between texts, processes, and their social conditions*. (Emphasis added, Fairclough, 1989, p. 26).

Fairclough locates a text within the processes of producing and receiving that text, and then locates both of those elements within their social, historical, cultural contexts. A critical approach requires the reader to attend to "lexico-grammatical structure,

[17] See Bourdieu, 1977; Kerfoot, 1993.

ideological content, and the identifiable conditions of production and use" (Luke, 2000, 2014, p. 26). I don't apply Fairclough's critical discourse analysis methodology to the data, but I have endeavoured to analyse the linguistic "patterns, designs, and complexities" of the folktale narratives, especially in their "naming and renaming of the world" (Luke, 2014, p. 29). My approach to the storybooks in the ASb collection is that each narrative text carries traces of its processes of production and of its producers. Each story represents and constructs "one set of perspectives on the world, a representation of it: language, together with other signs, works to construct reality" (Janks, 2010, p. 61).

By reading the storybooks with a critical literacy lens I can better see what perspectives and positions the ASb folktales seem to depict and offer, and how the tales might position readers (including myself). Critical literacy refers to an approach to reading and writing (amongst other modalities) that identifies and questions the politics, power relations and accepted normativities that seem to be represented in any artefact that can be read (or viewed).

In developing a critical approach to reading storybooks it is necessary to be able to read at a critical distance the socio-cultural values and discourses that seem to be represented in a text. This involves asking basic critical questions about each text – summarised here as "the classical questions of critical literacy. What is "truth"? How is it presented and represented, by whom, and in whose interests. Who should have access to which images and words, texts and discourse? For what purposes?" (Luke, 2014, p. 20).

I understand critical literacy as a teaching methodology, an approach to learning, and a means of being a critical subject in the world and in response to words and other signs. Critical literacy practices can be practically expressed as

> Analytic habits of thinking, reading, writing, speaking or discussing which go beneath surface impressions … understanding the social contexts and consequences of any social matter [and] applying the meaning to your own context. (Shor, 1993, p. 32).

I have applied a critical literacy analysis to the ASb folktales, and tried to understand what the textual content might suggest about the relations of social power within the contexts where the texts were written. With critical literacy practices come increased "consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others, [and] consciousness is the first step towards emancipation" and

changing prevailing capitalist power relations (Fairclough, 1989, 2001, p. 193). This increased awareness, or, politicisation, "enables a critical engagement with the question of how and where texts are used, by whom, and in whose interests" (Luke 2014, p. 26) – it is an approach to reading and analysing texts specifically, and also to using texts in teaching and learning contexts. The critical literacy questions that have particularly guided my analysis of the ASb folktale texts are as follows:[7]

- What values are expressed?
- Whose values are expressed?
- Who is included? Who is excluded?
- What is present and what is absent?
- What is shown as natural and inevitable?
- What is shown as social, as the result of human action? (Janks et al., 2014, p. 27).

There are of limitations to these critical models of analysis, as Janks points out: "Because critical literacy is essentially a rationalist activity it does not sufficiently address the non-rational investments that readers bring with them to texts and tasks. … What is missing from this model [of critical discourse analysis] is a territory beyond reason. The territory of desire and identification, pleasure and play, the taboo and the transgressive" (2010, p. 211-212). In response to this limitation, there has been a substantial move by critical literacy scholars towards engagement with affect, performance and embodiment; and a growing acknowledgement of the limitations of the rationalist underpinnings of critical literacy (as explored in particular in Pandya and Avila, Eds., 2014). The ASb folktales can certainly be located within the "territory of desire and identification, pleasure and play" and so critical literacy can be usefully supplemented with theories about narrative expression.

2.3.2 Narrative texts and narrative theories

Although critical literacy has been applied to literary texts, mainly in secondary school teaching, it has perhaps been used to best advantage with non-fiction (news) and other "everyday texts". For example, those texts "that are spoken or written as part of everyday life. These texts can be so common that we do not carefully take notice of them" (Vasquez, 2007, p. 7). For reading and engaging with folktales, an additional text analysis lens from narrative studies is useful. Contributing to my understanding and theorising of narrative story texts is the work of Richard Kearney (2002) – in *On stories*

he offers a rich contemplation of the sway held by narrative over humans. Kearney presents a strong argument for the centrality of stories to human existence: "Every life is in search of a narrative … narrative provides us with one of our most viable forms of *identity*" (Author emphasis, 2002, p. 4).

Of course narratives are not neutral and stories bear traces of their producers, consumers and contexts: "every narrative bears some evaluative charge regarding the events narrated and the actors featured in the narration" and every "story exists in the interplay" between the author, the reader and its characters (Kearney, 2002, p. 155-156). This awareness becomes even more important if one considers that producers of stories for children often intend their narratives to be morally and ethically instructive and socialising.

I believe it is useful to reflect on the ASb storybooks with the benefit of an understanding of literary studies. But I have also chosen to resist the word "literature" and its associations with canonic literature – that is, particular forms of writing, and a view of texts deemed literary. To the extent that I do draw on literary theory, it is from the cultural materialist perspective of Raymond Williams (1973; 1977).

In terms of linking literary theory to stories for children, and both to pedagogy, Stephens et al. (eds) (2003) have produced a useful teacher resource that accessibly offers a practical approach to some useful "concepts and issues of concern in contemporary theory" (2003, p. 2). The book also provides photocopiable pages for use with secondary school learners, analysing and discussing English, Australian and American picture books. It's a clever approach to using storybooks with post-primary school children, and also to teacher development in the field of narrative studies, addressing the challenge "to reconcile the twin responses of literary engagement and literary detachment" (2003, p. 2). In addition to applying literary theory to storybooks, this teacher resource has instructive implications for how the ASb storybooks could be used in similar ways to those presented by Stephens et al.

With regard to critical literacy teacher resource books, I also take cognisance here, in particular, of the Australian Chalkface Press publications (Mellor, O'Neill & Patterson, 1987; Moon, 1990; Martino & Mellor, 1995; Mellor & Paterson, 1996); and recent discussions of critical literacy applied to fairy tales and other literary genres (see Pandya and Avila, Eds., 2014).

2.4 Perspectives from selected folktale scholarship

Folklore studies and folktale scholarship are new terrain for me, and to an extent my understanding of the genre and its texts is informed more by cultural memory and intuition than it is by complex theory, I think much like many of the ASb writers who identify their texts as folktales. I also note the caution that "one must be continually aware of the problem of considering African genres in European terms" (Peek & Yankah, 2009, p. x). Despite their limitations for working with African folktales, the dominant classificatory systems constructed by 20th century European folklorists Aarne and Thompson and modified in 2004 by Uther (the Aarne Thompson Uther (ATU) index), along with Thompson's motifs index, are a useful starting point for folktale analysis.[18]

The categories, themes and types defined and discussed by European folklorists are particularly informed by a large corpus of mostly northern hemisphere folktales collected predominantly from countries from Ireland to India across European countries. Although referring to the earliest version of the tale type index begun by Aarne in 1910, Thompson's observation remained largely true of the 2004 ATU index:

> Of course in so far as the European and West Asiatic tales are found among distant peoples, the present index is usable and has been successfully employed, for example, for African, Indonesian, and North American Indian tales. But the native cycles of such tales … would probably not easily fit into the Aarne classification. (Thompson, 1977, p. 422).

Thompson correctly identified that there are limits to applying a model developed for one context and data set to another context and data set (ultimately he is more interested in tracking European folktales that have migrated to African countries than he is with African folktales per se).[19]

Taking cognisance of the cautionary from Peek and Yankah at the start of this chapter, working with the ATU tale types and Thompson's motif index nevertheless contributes to a more insightful understanding of the genre of folktales, common

[18] Motifs are recognisable and repeated story elements, pertaining to characters, setting, action or an important object.

[19] As my current research is not concerned with finding cognate tales from Africa or Europe or America for the ASb folktales, this specific gap in the ATU Index actually has little impact on my discussion. A notable European migrant in the ASb collection is *Kalabushe the talkative,* which seems to be a localised version of the Grimm brothers' version of Perault's *Little Red Riding Hood.*

themes, motifs and the types of narratives within the genre, even if from the perspective of structuralist European folklore scholarship.

In addition to using the ATU and Thompson motif indexes as analytical tools, my theoretical understanding of the folktale genre has been informed by mainly folklore scholars, particularly those working in orality and storytelling. I also note here that "definitions are sometimes blurry. Tales slip in and out of genre. Terms are used differently in popular practice than in theory" (Orenstein, 2002, p. 9). This is a useful caution when considering stories that have been categorised by the story writers as folktales, selected from a limited, unexplained set of categories provided by the ASb initiative supporting documentation.

Finnegan's early work on oral cultural production in Africa makes the point that "one of the main characteristics of oral literature is its verbal flexibility. The verbal elaboration, the drama of the performance itself, everything in fact which makes it a truly *aesthetic* product comes from the contemporary teller and his audience" (Author emphasis, 1976, p. 311). And the *African Folklore Encyclopedia* takes it as axiomatic that folktale is synonymous with oral performance:

> The folktale is perhaps the quintessential expression of verbal art in Africa … Although its significance may have decreased with the spread of literacy and urbanization in Africa, the folktale is still vividly narrated in rural domestic settings. (2009, p. 268).

Once key feature of this deep association with oral storytelling and performance, is that the folktale genre – in written form also – has some strongly defined conventions, as suggested here:

> The fact that folktales fall into culturally familiar patterns built on common motifs and tale types makes them easy to remember for both teller and listener, from the simplest cumulative stories to fairy tales, legends, myths, and religious parables (Hearne, 2011, p. 211).

This conventional nature of folktale narratives, especially in terms of setting, story plot and characterisation, becomes salient in the data chapters, where I discuss the genre as it is represented in the ASb folktales. The conventions and features of a genre give its particular appeal to both speakers/writers and readers/listeners, but they can also be constraining.

Related to their conventionality is another common characteristic of folktales, that they usually impart a moral or social lesson – from *Aesop's Fables* to Anansi tales,

there is ample evidence of this: "folktales give people a collection of values, beliefs and attitudes plus certain already set patterns of behavior" (Mphasha, 2015, p. 301). Even when a folktale is performed "largely for artistic reasons, performers and audiences hardly lose sight of its moral or meaning, whether it advocates patience, punishes greed and selfishness or merely explains the source of the crab's fatty shell" (Yankah, 2009, p. 269). Having a morally didactic purpose is seen by some as a defining feature of the genre in the African context, as asserted here:

> The most important function of African folktales is the teaching of moral lessons, since they are directed mostly at young children. (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005, p. 76).

Perhaps not initially associated with moral lessons, but also salient in my study is the recognition that folktales regularly contain supernatural content (as discussed in Chapter 4). This is especially evident in fairy tales – "a subset of the folktale genre", in the ATU tale type index "they are the 'Tales of Magic'" (Orenstein, 2002, p. 9). Definitions can be somewhat slippery, but this sense of fairy tales as a subset of folktales is what informs my approach to the ASb folktales, and those narratives in particular with fairy tale characteristics, for example, a supernatural aspect.

The supernatural is actually linked to a distinctly real-world social purpose of fairy tales, which Orenstein describes as "among our most powerful socializing narratives" – disguised as "make-believe, they prepare us to join the real world and provide us with lessons that last a lifetime" (Orenstein, 2002, p. 10). This points to why folktales – those with and without fairies – might be such a popular choice for adult writers of narratives for children; and also to why it is necessary to have an analytical "conversation about [the perspectives of] adults who create and present these texts to children" (Lester, 2007, p. xvi), about the fictions and truths that adults convey to children around human subjectivities.

2.5 Perspectives on childhood and children

This is not a study of childhood in Africa as neither the scope of this report nor my academic background afford suitably in-depth and complex treatment. But in preparing to analyse the ASb storybooks I sought to understand more about childhood and the experiences of children in the countries from which the ASb folktales were sourced. I don't suggest that the conceptions of childhood or the experiences of children in the

different countries (or even within those countries) are homogenous; but I think there are certain commonalities which may also find resonance in African contexts than in so-called developed, Western contexts.

There can be no denying that the risks and hardships for many children living in Africa "are many and weighty" – the continent lags behind the rest of the globe in "indicators such as accessibility to potable water, life expectancy, nutritional status, literacy and mortality rates and incidence of diseases (Imoh & Ame, 2012, p. 10). However, it also necessary to acknowledge that the familiar grim representations of Africa and childhoods in Africa narrate only a single story about being a child on this continent.

I am interested in how childhood and children seem to be constructed in the ASb folktales, and what those findings might tell us about the writers of the folktales. One of the five key strategies of the ASb initiative is "Story development from and in the contexts of final use" (ASb Report 2016, p. 2) – children should see (and hear) themselves and their communities represented in their storybooks, as well as people and communities in other parts of Africa. Such familiar and affirming representation contributes to a more grounded sense of self; and a harmony of self, language and environment. This representation avoids imposing normative global North notions of childhood, which are "tied to developments that took place in Western Europe from the seventeenth century, on children in different social and cultural contexts" (Imoh & Ame, 2012, p. 5).

I quote at length to convey the social and historical specificity of the construction of childhood by dominant scholarship:

> What is taken as 'scientific evidence' about child development is mostly drawn from the results of observations and experiments with mainly white middle-class children in North America and Europe … Approximately 18 per cent of the world's children live in North America and Europe, and the evidence is mainly drawn from the better off amongst that 18 per cent. Yet this evidence is assumed to be applicable to all children in all circumstances. (Penn, 2005, p. 46).

And

> the way we bring up children is essentially culturally embedded … common practices in the North … may seem neglectful to those not versed in Euro-American ways. (Penn, 2005, pp. 50-51).

These points are relevant because they provide the necessary orientation for a critical and engaged approach to the representations of children and childhood in the ASb

folktales – of the activities of children, and the positions available to children. My reading of a narrative for children will be permeated by my own notions of what constitutes childhood, and what constitutes appropriate storybook content for children. Politicised awareness of this positionality on the part of researchers, writers and publishers is necessary for meaningful and respectful engagement about cultural production for children in African contexts.

2.5.1 Writing and publishing for children

These quotations from Stephens in essence convey my own position in relation to the production and consumption of storybooks for children

> Writing for children is usually purposeful, its intention being to foster in the child reader a positive apperception of some socio-cultural values …. These values include contemporary morality and ethics, a sense of what is valuable in a culture's past, and aspirations about the present and future. (Stephens, 1992, p. 3).

And

> The subject positions available to children as users of books are often restricted and restrictive, and this is nowhere as sharply defined as by the tendency for these positions to express the ideological assumptions of a society's dominant cultural groups. (Stephens, 1992, p. 50).

For Stephens, a "narrative without an ideology is unthinkable" (1992, p. 8), and while narratives can open up interpretive (and real) possibilities for children by offering a range of subject positions, stories can also present constraints by offering limited subject positions and agency. Stephens presents a useful argument for how writing for children positions both characters and readers and contributes towards the adult socialisation of children. The socialising intentions of writers of children's storybooks is evident in this comment by Kenyan children's author, Sam Mbure.

> What I am saying is not very different from what was said about the English books having been written for the English children … Children's literature should basically teach children simple, yet very important things like who they are, about their surroundings etc. These things should be written and taught in the children's own language. (Mbure, 1997, p. 9).

Didactic and ideological content is a significant aspect of the folktale genre and is part of its popularity with writers of stories for children in Africa: "Africans still acknowledge the great importance of folktales in the early stages of children's lives and their significance in the further development of their growing process". (Mphasha, 2015, p.

300). Ogunjimi and Na'Allah list eleven functions of folktales in African society, chiefly with regard to children; the first three are as follows:

1. Folktales introduce children to the cultural practices of their society, including customs, institutions, mores and beliefs of the people.
2. They inculcate society's basic philosophy about life in children.
3. They introduce to them the African view about the universe, especially the African cosmology. (2005, p. 76).

This didactic and ideological nature of folktales for children will be revisited in Chapter 4. It should be self-evident that it is as necessary to critically interrogate texts for children as it is to critique the ideological work done in texts for adults.

As well as imaginary possibilities, storybooks for children are imbued with social and moral agendas, so it is critical to pay attention to the construction of "race, gender, and identity politics in the context of children's literature" (McCurdy, 2007, p. 223). Those of us involved in publishing storybooks for children need to take seriously the possible role of narrative texts in the development of children's identities: "African children's literature and orature" should "reflect and question the realities that the child is confronted with, the kind of (African) identity that he or she is forming and the constantly changing reference points" (Granqvist & Martini, 1997, p. xiii).

2.6 Preliminary conclusions

This concludes my discussion of the theorists and theoretical perspectives that have informed my understanding of the folktales' contexts of production, and shaped my analysis of the folktale narratives. The theory used to frame my study draws on post-colonial studies, African feminism, critical literacy and folktale scholarship; however, I am sensitive to the limits of my analysis, and the need for further insights from African cosmology.

In the processes of grappling with my own positionality and of finding the ideological lenses that seem to be most useful for an African-centric scholarly orientation, the work of post-colonial black African intellectuals is the foundation and scaffolding of my study. I am interested in how African learners and teachers can resist and repel "the prejudices, the myths, the folklore" in books that have come to them from the global North (to paraphrase Fanon, on page 18 of the research report); but also, in how we can create and critically engage with storybooks that represent the folktales of our African contexts.

The analytical tools that I use reflect a forward-looking hopeful vision of our continent, one that is constructively grounded in the present, always aware of complex pasts; which resists binaries and dichotomies and instead is comfortable with "the ambiguous interstices" of binaries and "border crossings" (Nnaemeka, 1997). With regard to texts in particular, my over-arching theoretical paradigm is that of critical literacy and how language works to construct and reinforce dominant discourses and power relations. I have also taken cognisance of some central positions and conceptualisations from folklore – especially folktale – scholarship; particularly the presence of oral performance conventions, and that didactic and ideological content is an important aspect of the folktale genre.

As with most narrative texts, the folktales from the communities of ASb writers contain representations of what is important to these writers – in this case, values they want to convey to child readers, and what they want to preserve or promote about the community in which the child lives. The texts offer expressions of what the producers consider appropriate in narratives for children, how they conceptualise folktale content, and how they use the conventions of this traditional genre.

In the next chapter I present the design and method of my study, and give an overview of how I intend to apply the theoretical perspectives introduced in this chapter, in Chapters 4 and 5 – my data analysis chapters.

Chapter 3 Research design and method

3.1. Data selection

The data is the verbal content of a defined sub-set of ASb storybooks in English: 40 folktales written in pilot countries and published in approximately the first year of the website's existence.[20] That time period, and the genre selected is determined by the need to limit the data for this research report. It was necessary to further narrow the scope by excluding those folktales with exclusively animal characters, which can be considered as a distinct folktale type (Uther, 2004).[21] See Appendix A for the list of 40 folktales.

I focus on folktales with human characters, although I do not altogether exclude animal characters, but rather those anthropomorphic narratives concerning *only* animal characters. The focus on human interaction, including human-animal interaction, seems to offer more direct commentary on the concerns of writers because there is no additional mediation via animal archetypefs and the rather fixed characteristics of those archetypes.[22]

Apart from the need to limit the scope of the study, I have chosen the genre of folktales because it is reflected in all human cultural production (Cotterell (Ed.), 1999), and folktales are a rich a source of motifs and conventions that later emerge in other narrative genres (Thompson, 1977). It is a significant genre in children's literature generally: "Folktales, whether formally published or informally told … have been a staple of children's literature since its beginning (Hearne, 2010, p. 210).

Finally, also part of the motivation to focus on folktales, is that they are a significant form of African cultural production, "perhaps the quintessential expression of verbal art in Africa" (Yankah, 2009, p. 269). Many of the ASb contributors would have grown up with oral storytelling traditions, and would continue to transmit stories orally to their own children (including learners) and grandchildren.

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[20] I joined the ASb two months before the website went live, so most of the storybooks in the set under discussion had already been created online; I edited and published 12 of the titles in the set of 40. I did not select/source any of the manuscripts in my study.

[21] Here I also take note of Peek and Yankah's comment that: "In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the "lore" of folklore generally referred to folktales. What little folklore scholarship there was in Africa was largely limited to ancient myths and animal tales. These genres are significant, but their continued appearance in collections far exceeds their relative importance among all the forms of folklore in African cultures". (2009, p. x)

In my experience of ASb story writing workshops, this genre has a particular socio-cultural and didactic value for writers, as well as being shaped by enduring and specific narrative conventions and nostalgia.[23] Folktales potentially offer storytellers and their recipients collections of "values, beliefs and attitudes, plus certain already set patterns of behaviour" (Mphasha, 2015, p. 301). This is even more strongly asserted here: "Folktales constitute a kind of 'catch-them-young medium' in which certain important qualities of life are inculcated into children" (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005, p. 76). Thus folktales present much opportunity for exploration of how values, beliefs, qualities of life, and behaviours can be mediated and distilled in storybooks for children.

3.2 Research design and data analysis

My main methodology is text analysis: a critical literacy approach to text, which also incorporates methods from narrative studies and literary studies. The research questions, process and components of analysis are outlined below.

3.2.1 Research questions

The research is driven by the following questions:

1. How do writers of ASb folktales represent the folktale genre?

- How do they – as adults writing for children – employ conventions of the genre to create meaning and significance?
- How do they signal authority as storytellers and as adults?

2. What discourses – ideologies, values and viewpoints – are represented or constructed in the folktales? [24]

- What viewpoints and socio-cultural ideas are constructed in these narrative texts?
- How are they constructed?

3. What are possible socio-cultural implications of these constructions for

- Children in particular?
- For publishers of storybooks for children in Africa, including ASb?

3.2.2 Ethical considerations

This study is conducted through the analysis of story texts, and occasionally draws on African Storybook documentation, and quotations from emails from colleagues (used

[23] ASb Country reports, in particular workshop reports. In particular, Uganda, April 2015 and May 2016.
[24] See Chapter 1, page 14 (with reference to Gee, 1998, p. 2).

with permission). No interviews were conducted, and there are no ethical considerations.

3.2.3 Analysis of types of folktales and genre characteristics

As noted elsewhere, I have accepted at face value the manuscript writers' genre categorisations of their texts;[25] I have established and discussed my own emerging understanding of the genre in Chapter 2, especially Section 2.4

I counted and recorded key aspects and features of the folktales and their content, focusing on the three main areas of genre, setting and characterisation. I locate the ASb folktales within the internationally established Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) folktale type index (Uther, 2004); and then identify the main motifs – recurring themes and patterns – according to Thompson's motif index. Although the ATU index and Thompson's taxonomy were compiled prominently from European folktales, they remain a useful and well-established orientation to tale types and the motifs that recur across the documented types. The revision of the index by Uther expanded the corpus with more African and American data, but significant data from those vast places is still lacking.

3.2.4 Analysis of setting in the folktales

I explore the literary setting of the ASb folktales from the perspectives of place, space and time:

- Place in the broadest sense (urban or rural), then in terms of settlement (city, town, village or small settlement), and dwellings (huts, houses and other homes).
- Space in terms of the spaces that characters predominantly inhabited (inside or outside dwellings) and whether the characters act in restricted or expanded space.
- Time in terms of when the story took place – in the present, in the past, or in a remote past possibly outside of real time.

For each folktale I noted the opening words of the narrative – to ascertain where the narrative was located (that is, time and place). I also used InVivo software to search the folktales texts for a variety of words related to time, place and space. The most

[25] When they submit their story manuscripts, writers use a particular template that ensures particular information (metadata) is captured with the manuscript. Writers are required to select one of five categories to classify their texts – these are mentioned on page 3 of the Introduction to this report.

commonly occurring vocabulary related to place, space and time will be considered for the contribution these lexical choices make to the construction of the folktale genre, as well as for the conditions they create for the main character/s in the tales.[26]

3.2.5 Analysis of main characters in the folktales

A character is categorised as main if their role contributes significantly to the process or outcome of a folktale narrative. I coded all the main characters for gender and age, and for other characteristics such as species – animal, human, or supernatural other. I also tried to identify plausible heroes, villains, and victims.

For characters to be identified as male or female, gender must be specified in the written text; for example, through the use of pronouns or gender-specific nouns. The age of characters is not always as clear from the text as their gender is. I recorded characters as adult if they are referred to as "man" or "woman", or by other words for roles generally – ideally – considered adult (for example, mother or father).

I recorded a character as a child if they are referred to as "boy", "girl", "child" and/or "young", and/or where the rest of the narrative supported this interpretation (for example, the child was part of a family with parents, or other adult authority is in evidence).

3.2.6 Discussion of findings

The key features around folktale type, motif, setting and characters were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet (Appendix B), and the findings presented and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Due to the limited extent of a research report, I do not separately address plot and action in the folktales, but only peripherally as it might pertain to characterisation.

I interpret the data findings and patterns from the perspectives of post-colonial and African feminist scholarship, and critical literacy and narrative studies. I consider the borders, crossings and conventions of the folktale genre, as it is represented and exemplified by ASb writers, and focusing on how characters – and child readers – are

[26] In addition to the basic counting method outlined above, I imported all the storybook PDFs into InVivo and conducted word frequency searches for vocabulary related to gender, family relationships, setting, action and affect. InVivo software was useful for measuring the frequency of selected words across the whole corpus of folktales, and also for generating reports on the use of those words in their textual contexts. The constraints of this research report do not allow for much discussion of the InVivo generated findings. For a full vocabulary list used for the word searches, see Appendix C.

positioned in narrative settings. Characterisation is explored mainly as it pertains to childhood, age and gender. In particular I reflect on characters in relation to construction and representation of:

- Gender (roles, characteristics, activities and behaviours of male and female characters).
- Family and inter-generational relationships (affiliation, type, roles, characteristics; immediate, extended; community).
- Adults, children and childhoods.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I offer a summary and some conclusions from the discussion and suggest possibilities for further and expanded research on ASb storybooks.

The following two chapters are concerned with presenting and discussing my data findings.

Chapter 4 Genre and setting: Folktales and their conventions

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the significant findings from categorising the folktales according to the Aarne Thompson Uther (ATU) folktale type index (2004) and Thompson's folktale motif index, and discuss what these findings suggest about the ASb folktales in relation to the genre more broadly. I also present and discuss findings around narrative setting – place and time. The findings, taken together with the theoretical perspectives on folktales that were discussed in the literature section, stake out the conventions and purposes of the genre as it is constructed in the ASb folktales.

The following quotations from three ASb folktales provide useful points of entry to this chapter because they broadly reflect a sense of time and place that is repeated with variations in most of the tales.

> Once upon a time there lived three girls in a desert village in the Kalahari. (*Katitu Momambo, the clever little girl*, p. 1).

> Once upon a time in a mountainous African village there lived a famous blacksmith. (*The blacksmith's dilemma*, p. 1).

> Once upon a time, there lived a man who had plenty of everything – a large fertile farm, with cattle, sheep and goats. (*Tree wife*, p. 1).

> Long time ago, in a Turkana village, people loved to dance. … The whole region came to know of this village and its dancers. (*Namoratunga*, p. 1-2).

> A long time ago, there lived a man called Mulongo and his wife Nambuya. … There was a famine in the land where they lived. All the villagers, including Mulongo and his family, would leave their homes early to look for food in the forest. (*Mulongo and the ogre*, p. 1).

In the main, the ASb narratives are located in a remote and distant time, and with few exceptions are set in rural contexts without much specific detail (although usually there is a clear characterisation). The quotations also repeat an opening stylistic convention of the folktale genre ("Once upon a time"), certainly as it is employed by the ASb writers and associated with fairy tales.

As noted in previous chapters, the texts in the corpus have been categorised by their writers as folktales. I have accepted this and have not explored in any detail whether the ASb folktales match folklore scholarship's criteria for what constitutes a

folktale. I have worked with an understanding that folktales are texts with origins in oral storytelling traditions, with narratives that are re-imagined and repeated in non-linear ways.[27] Most of the ASb folktales can also be classified within the folktale sub-set of fairy tales.

4.2 Indexing folktales

The ASb folktales are modified and written versions for children, and although the ATU system does not make specific provision for these simpler forms of folktales it's still instructive to see where the ASb folktales can be located within these established indexes. It was no difficult to locate the ASb folktales within the ATU categories and sub-categories, and to identify motifs using Thompson's index. This is not doubt due to the tale types being quite broad, and to certain basic narrative elements that are common to the genre, and which are part of their popularity and endurance (for example, the triumph of good over bad, of cleverness over stupidity, of truth over duplicity; as well as some folktales explanatory use for human understanding of natural phenomena and ontological questions).

As a starting point I categorised the ASb folktales according to the seven main tale types from the ATU index. I excluded the Animal tales type to maintain the consistency of my choice to avoid animal fables, and instead recognised this element – animals – in the folktales as a motif. [28] Thus even where animals and human-animal relationship/s feature strongly, I did not categorise the tale as an Animal tale. The other ATU tale type which did not seem to be present in the set of 40 folktales was that of Religious tales.[29] The identified ATU tale types, along with relevant sub-types, are as follows:

1. Tales of magic (*Supern*)[30]

- Supernatural adversaries

[27] Only one folktale among the 40 strongly struck me as incorrectly classified as a folktale: *Jaaka the fisherman*, which seems to be a short *unique* anecdote, but it's entirely possible that this tale or an aspect of it is part of a tradition of transmission and variation. It would be enlightening to follow up with folktale writers to get their input on what qualifies as a folktale, and the types and motifs they might identify.
[28] I could have plausibly categorised a few tales within the ATU type "Animal tales", particularly with reference to "Wild Animals and Humans" (for example, *Lion that wanted friendship, The honeyguide's revenge* and *Baby snatched by cranes*).
[29] ASb officially has a secular orientation and does not publish or approve overtly religious storybooks as part of its internal publishing programme.
[30] The italicised word in brackets next to the main tale type is the code I used in the Excel spreadsheet capturing the data for the 40 folktales – see Appendix B.

- Supernatural or enchanted wife (or husband, or other relative)
- Supernatural tasks
- Supernatural helpers
- Magic objects
- Supernatural power or knowledge
- Other tales of the supernatural

2. Realistic tales (*Realistic*)
- Proofs of fidelity and innocence
- Good precepts
- Clever acts and words
- Tales of fate

3. Tales of the stupid ogre (*Stupid ogre*)
- Man kills (injures) ogre
- Ogre frightened by man

4. Anecdotes and jokes (*Anecdote*)
- Stories about a man
- Anecdotes about other groups of people
- Tall tales

5. Formula tales (*Formula*)
- Cumulative tales
- Chains based on numbers, objects, animals, or names

(Extracted from: ATU system at http://oaks.nvg.org/folktale-types.html)

4.3 Supernatural in folktales

As can be seen from Figure 4.1, "Tales of magic" emerge as the most prominent type – more than half – of the folktales under analysis. One could plausibly add the two "Stupid ogre" tales to that number, for a total of 27 folktales with a "magic" element. The remaining tales were fairly evenly distributed within three main types: "Realistic" (five folktales), "Anecdotes and jokes" (three folktales), "Formula tales" (two folktales).

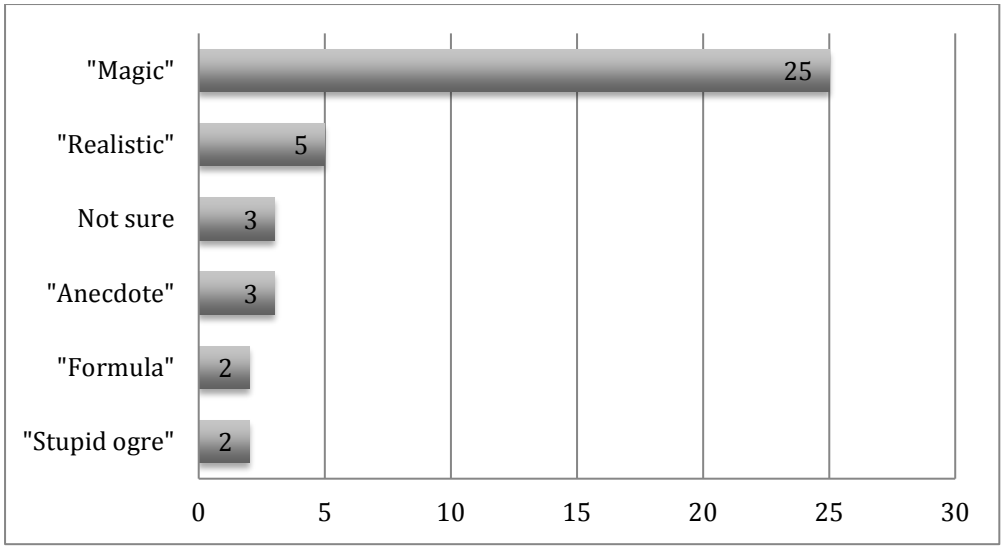

Figure 4.1. Aarne Thompson Uther (ATU) tale types identified across ASb folktales

Acknowledging the role of supernatural suggested from reading the folktales against the ATU index, and moving to Thompson's index of 23 narrative motifs. Understanding motifs as recognisable and repeated features related to characters, setting or events, I identified the following ten predominant motifs in the ASb folktales:

- Mythological
- Animal
- Magic
- Ogres
- Tests
- The wise and the foolish
- Reversals of fortune
- Chance and fate
- Rewards and punishments
- Humour

Because I'm dealing with simple, short texts, I only coded for one motif per tale, although there were a few tales where two strong motifs emerged, almost always "Magic" in combination with another motif, such as "Animal" or "Mythological". I identified "Magic" as the dominant motif in 25 tales. And again, "Ogres and giants" could plausibly be included in supernatural tales. See Figure 4.2 for the findings and frequency of Thompson's motifs in the ASb folktales.

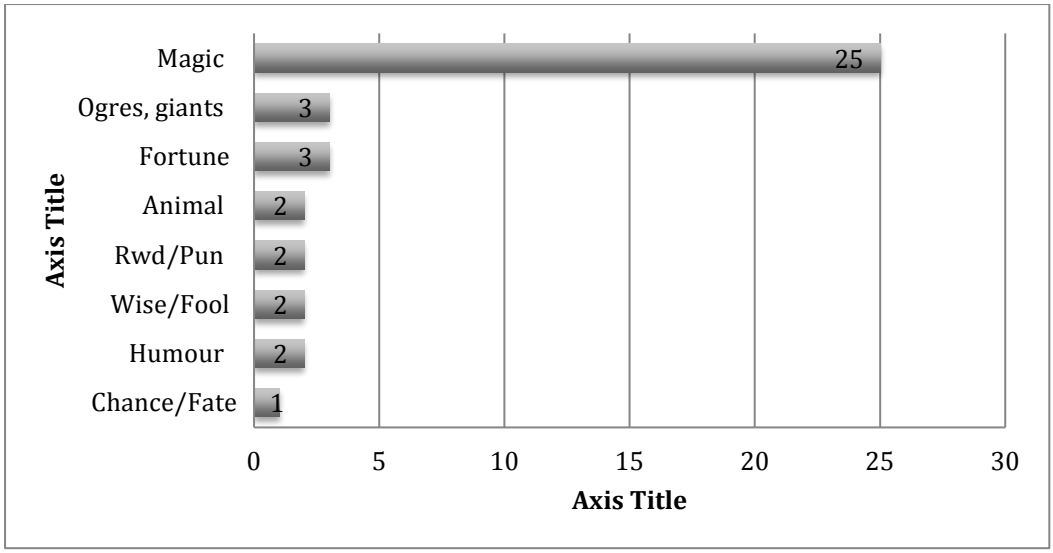

Figure 4.2. Thompson motifs identified across ASb folktales

The prevalence of "Magic" as a motif, taken together with the finding that 25 of the ASb folktales can be categorised within the type "Tales of magic" – 27 narratives in total with a supernatural character, object or event – points to the supernatural as a significant characteristic of the folktale genre, at least for the producers of the ASb folktales.

As can be seen from the categories used in the ATU index, the main term for the classification of this type of tale is "Magic tales", but in the sub-groups of tales within the main type, the authors more often use the term "supernatural" as a broad category (for example, supernatural power and knowledge, supernatural adversaries, tasks, helpers, etc., only "magic objects"). Thompson's index for the motif of "Magic" is sub-categorised according to "Transformation", "Magic objects", and "Magic powers and manifestations" – no use is made of the word supernatural.

Before exploring this finding, I'd like to reflect on the terminology used, taking cognisance of this comment:

> The student of African folklore must be careful when encountering the terms *witchcraft*, *magic* and *sorcery* to ascertain exactly what is meant. They have wide ranges of meaning, and may be used interchangeably and pejoratively. (Author emphasis, Stevens, 2009, p. 506).

I realise my own inexpertise in African folklore scholarship generally, and specifically about "witchcraft, magic and sorcery". I also note that many representations of magic and the supernatural in relation to Africa are constructed within racist and imperialist discourses (*Heart of Darkness* inevitably comes to mind). Within those discourses,

magic's binary is the science of the West – along with other binaries, such as rational or irrational; developed or underdeveloped (or, developing); traditional or modern; cultured or primitive; and literate or oral. Where these binaries are constructed, we can lose sight of human commonality as well as individuality, so that

> instead of the individual, there are entities, captives of magical signs, amid an enchanted and mysterious universe in which the power of invocation and evocation replaces the power of production… (Mbembe, 2012, p. 4).

It's important to be aware of the cul-de-sacs of "oppositional binaries" (Nnaemeka, 1997, p. 2), and how our choice of words/terms can mitigate against those binaries, or reinforce them. The following explanation of supernatural is therefor useful: "all those invisible and unseen forces that influence and affect the existence of the people", and that can be accounted for in a broader cosmology or philosophy of existence (Ogunjimi & Na'Allaah, pp. 9-10).[31]

The supernatural is of course not the preserve of any one continent, time, or storytelling tradition; rather, it is "a universal ingredient of different oral traditions, a central representation of the transformative power which stories and story-telling possess" (Medlicott, 2004, p. 616). In particular, supernatural happenings, things and beings also have a long history in narratives for children; they are usually located in rural settings, and especially employed in fairy tales, as reflected here:

> most verse for the young was set in either a rural landscape or a magic space (such as the land of make-believe) until the … the second half of the twentieth century. (Styles, 2004, page 396).

> [Fairy tales] do not always have fairies, but as a rule there is magic: enchantments, talking animals, impossible beasts. (Orenstein, 2002, p. 9).

> [Fairy tales are] tales in which spirits and ghosts are also characters (Ogunjimi & Na'Allah, 2005, p. 75).

> [In fairy tales] magical creatures regularly assist earthly heroes and heroines achieve happiness (Bottigheimer, 2004, p. 261).

The ASb folktales clearly favour environments, characters and events that are supernatural. This is manifest in a character or object with a rescuing or redemptive role; occurrences that cannot be considered in the realm of normal possibility; or in the

[31] Animism, for example, is just such a cosmology, and the perspectives it affords are persuasively discussed by Garuba (2003). Within this worldview there is no dichotomy between natural and supernatural forces.

form of a supernatural creature. Such supernatural creatures include ogres, giants, hyenas, and an imbulu.[32] In at least half of the ASb folktales, human characters encounter some supernatural intervention, and triumph because of – or in spite of – that intervention.

The supernatural is chiefly constructed by the writers of the ASb folktales in these ways:

- In 11 of the tales, supernatural powers, beings and events benefit (deserving) humans, for example, *Baby snatched by cranes*, *Dima and Owl*, *Khayanga and her gourd*, *Girl who got rich*, *Blacksmith's dilemma*, *Pam Pam bird, Generous fish*, and *Tree wife.*
- In 12 of the tales, supernatural powers, beings and events are threatening to humans but can be overcome/defeated, for example, *Demane and Demazane*, *Kalabushe the talkative*, *Katitu Momambo*, *Mulongo and the hyenas*, *Nonkungu and the imbulu, The talking bag,* and *Tselane and the giant*.
- In four of the tales, the nature of the supernatural is ambiguous – the narrative does not point to a clear conclusion whether it is beneficial or harmful: *Boy nobody loved*, *Crushed louse*, *Tjenga and the eland man,* and *First man and first woman*.
- In two tales a probably malevolent supernatural force overcomes humans: *Ngamorutunga*, and *Girl with one breast.*

The supernatural seems to work slightly more in favour of humans than against; and with only two exceptions, where the supernatural is threatening to humans, it is defeated. The exceptions have surprising, even disturbing, endings in a collection of otherwise safely predicatable outcomes. These ruptures occur on the final pages of the two folktales in question.

> The stranger did not like people laughing at him. He decided to curse them…. everyone became a stone in the position they were in…. Since then, those stones remained there. (*Ngamoratunga*, pp. 11-12).

> [The man] ran how as fast as a bullet. Only to find his wife had just died. He was so grief stricken because of what he had done that he too died. (*Girl with one breast*, p. 4).

[32] With regard to the imbulu, as explained by Credo Mutwa: "Throughout South Africa, among many tribes, you'll find stories about these amazing creatures, who are capable of changing from reptile to human being, and from reptile to any other animal of their choice. And these creatures do really exist". http://www.esotericonline.net/profiles/blogs/the-story-of-the-imbulu-as-told-by-credo-mutwa. Here a key feature of an imbulu is its reptilian nature, which is not visualised in the ASb storybook illustrations.

The appeal of the supernatural in narrative texts is surely chiefly a psychological appeal – it offers the mind an experience of wish fulfillment, of power over nature, of the possibility of appeal to a higher authority than human, and it enables the (safe) imagining of existence outside of known possibilities. This is reflected in the following quotation:

> the key thing about fairy tales [is] the tales' dependence on *magical thought*—a way of thinking which fails to obey the principles of logic or rationality, but which seems compelling and powerful nevertheless. (Author emphasis, Crago, 2014, p. 48).

How the representation of invisible and unseen forces in fairy tales engages children in particular is no doubt the reason for their popularity. The following quotations expand on this and give positive significance to the findings.

> The addition of magic (in its broadest senses) helps both child characters and child readers to a new vantage-point. (Smith, 2004, p. 447).

And

> more can be learned from [fairy tales] about the inner problems of human beings, and of the right solutions to their predicaments in any society, than from any other type of story within a child's comprehension. (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 19).

In addition to an appreciation of supernatural characters, elements and solutions it is also worth remembering this question from critical literacy: "What is shown as natural and inevitable? What is shown as social, as the result of human action?" (Janks et al., 2014, p. 27). Supernatural solutions can also limit our sense of the power of human agency – and this will be considered again in the next chapter

Now I move on in this chapter to discuss setting in relation to genre, and how the supernatural and natural are constructed in place, space and time. In the next chapter I link this discussion to how the folktales construct and position human characters (and readers), and represent actions.

4.4 Setting: Place, space and time in the folktales

I investigate the literary setting of the ASb folktales in terms of the following aspects:

- Place in the broadest sense of urban or rural; then in terms of settlement (city, town, village or small settlement), and dwellings in settlements (huts, houses and other homes).

- Space in terms of the spaces that characters more immediately inhabited (inside or outside dwellings) and moved through; and whether they acted in constrained (closed) or expanded – open – space.
- Time in terms of when the narrative took place – in the present or past, or in a remote past tense reserved for folktales. That is, an almost timeless sense of time that is often used for folktales – fables, fairy tales and myths – and stories for children.

4.4.1 Place and space in the folktales

It is not my intention to conflate "place" and "space", but given the limitations on the extent of this report, I will discuss them together and in relation to each other. My analysis is informed by an awareness that actual places "come with particular meanings and social and cultural associations and specific communication and textual practices" (Comber, 2012, p.27); and that "space, along with discourse, gender, class, and race, is productive of subjectivities, relationships, and practices" (Comber et al., 2006, p. 230). As a working definition, I have used "place" mainly with reference to characters' macro environments and settlement, and "space" to refer to physical and social space in those environments.

As Figure 4.3 shows, there were only four exceptions to a rural setting in the 40 folktales (or at least, it wasn't certain from the text that those four tales were set in a rural context). Figure 4.3 also shows the types of settlement represented in the folktales.

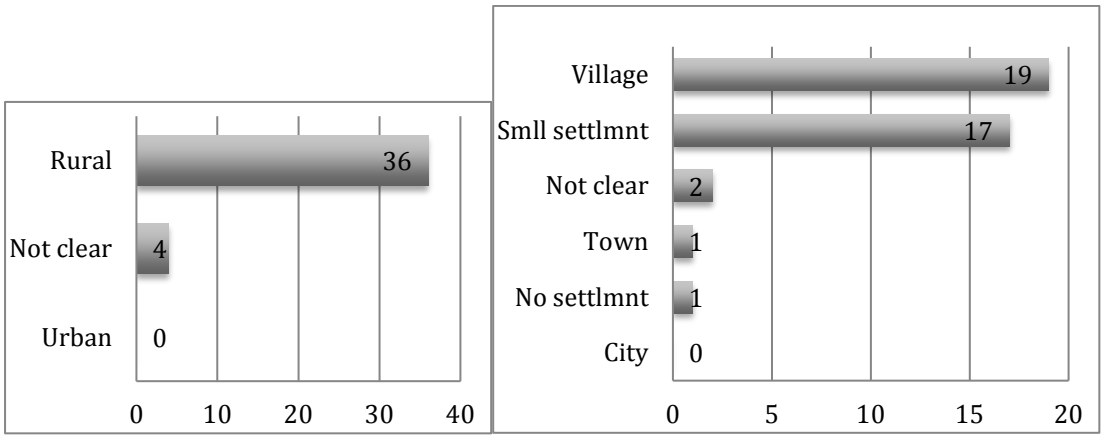

Figure 4.3. Setting and settlement in the folktales

No folktales were set in an urban context or had related vocabulary. The most common types of settlement were small settlements – describing at least one hut or compound, up to a few or clusters of huts/houses together – and villages (i.e. as named in the text). Spatial and geographical distance can significantly contribute to both the responsibilities and the vulnerabilities of those who have to negotiate those distances. We see aspects of these responsibilities and vulnerabilities in some of the ASb folktales – domestic chores and responsibilities often require a character to put herself or himself in a dangerous or vulnerable position (for example, collecting wood or water alone and far away from home).

Although humans are highly urbanised and no longer concentrated in rural areas, those areas still occupy much of our consciousness as our places of origin and retreat, of nature and naturalness; and in some parts of Africa, rural places are also living places for economically vulnerable people who rely on urban relatives for support. In his discussion of English literature's constructions of rural and urban centres related to the transition in that country from pastoralist life, Williams (1973) documents the complex and contradictory feelings clustered around the notions of rural (country) and urban (city); the push and pull between the two. Rural life is widely seen as both offering "a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue" *and* "a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation". The city is widely seen as "an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light" *and* "as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition" (Williams, 1973, p. 1), not to mention a place of commerce, advancement and earning.

Almost without exception, the writers of the ASb tales mainly locate their characters in simplified and simplistic pastoral environments, within small stable groups of humans (sometimes no larger than a family group). Thus the predominant setting of the ASb folktales is an idealised and essentialised past in an imagined rural place. This is perhaps an unsurprising characteristic of a narrative genre with deep roots in oral story-telling traditions, early in human cultural production, when rural existence prevailed. The ASb folktales offer, in Williams' terms, a more natural way of life: an imagined past of innocence and simple virtue.

The contrasting perspectives on urban and rural existence respectively are expressed by Williams as equal pairs, which is a useful way of summarising a continuum of ideas about life in each place. However, there is also a dichotomous sense of urban

and rural: learning and light versus backwardness and ignorance. This can be linked to a rather strident but not unfamiliar perspective on fairy tales that they "belong to the past; [and are] irrational, unproductive and irrelevant to modern needs" (Avery, 1994, p. 65). This quotations reflects some of the dominant opinions about children's books in 1820s America; but the essence of the position could plausibly be found in a 21st century critique of the folktale genre and its nostalgic privileging of a fictitious rural past. While I reject the binary of urban (present, progress) versus rural (past, backwardness), it important to be aware of the different positions afforded to child subjects in these two constructs, and in narratives that employ these constructs.

Moving on to setting in terms of expanded and restricted space, I categorised the space in which the narrative is enacted as "expanded" if characters seemed generally to have little or no constraints or hindrances when moving through their environments and where the environment could be perceived as spacious and open (and with little settlement). Figure 4.4 in Appendix D shows the results of this classification, which was that spaciousness was a feature of 31 of the ASb folktales.

I also differentiated between narratives that took place predominantly outside of a dwelling or shelter, and those that took place predominantly inside. Nearly three-quarters of the ASb folktales had settings mainly outsides of huts, houses and homes. Just over a quarter were set in a combination of outside and inside. This is presented in Figure 4.5 in Appendix D.

I initially attached a positive value to the notion of expanded space, and equated it with freedom of movement. I equated rural space with empty space, open space, unbounded space – and saw this as appealing (at least to visit). I realised that this revealed my own idealising tendencies when considering rural space and place. What suggests expansiveness to me might be a reason why rural life is ideally lived close to home (close to settlement and shelter) and on a relatively small scale. The positive sense of space and spaciousness frequently associated – at least from an urban perspective – with rural existence could be read as a sense of isolation and vulnerability, of human frailty in the face of unregulated nature.

Life lived outside and outdoors can reflect a choice to embrace an external natural environment over a cultivated environment inside human dwellings; it can articulate one sense of harmony and freedom. But it can also be a consequence of the

tight constraints of indoor space in small rural dwellings. This constrained experience of space would be familiar to people living in poverty in urban places as well.

4.4.2. Time in the folktales

As can be seen from the Excel spreadsheet in Appendix B, almost three-quarters of the folktales (29 in total) begin with a formulaic phrase that signals to the reader/listener that they are entering storytelling time, outside of any real time or place.[33] Sixteen of the folktales begin with "Once upon a time", and nine begin with some variant of "long (time) ago".[34] In the same vein, I also categorised four folktales as having a "Storytelling other" beginning (i.e. some other type of stock phrase that signals the genre and nature of what is said or written, for example, "There was once a girl called…"; "This is the story of…"; "In the old days…").

This stylistic device is also used in other narrative genres, but especially in folktales and fairy tales. Such catch-phrases invite the listener and reader to suspend disbelief and enter into a space fabricated by the tale's teller; and in the tradition of folktales, to enter a narrative with varying traces of other tellers and fabrications. This formulaic beginning to a story positions it as offering a narrative world outside of what the reader may consider to be real.

Supporting this construct of storytelling time, I identified 29 stories as set in an unspecified remote past, which I have taken as signaled by the use of "Once upon a time" or some similar signaling phrase indicating that the reader is encountering a story narrative set in a fictional (past) time, and usually, in a fictional place. Of course past is also denoted by the use of past tense verbs, but a remote or unreal past also seems to involve the possibility of supernatural characters and happenings: "[fairy tales] occur outside of history, in an unquantifiably distant past: 'Once upon a time' " (Orenstein, 2002, p.9). This treatment of time also lends itself to the imaginative possibilities of the supernatural. But that fairy tales occur outside history, doesn't mean that they can't also occur in the present, and in urban spaces; as some counter-conventional reversioned fairytale narratives have demonstrated.

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[33] The remaining eleven stories that don't conform to this pattern include:"Tasneem was a very beautiful girl…"; "This is Jaaka the fisherman from Naminya."; "There was much unhappiness in a village of small huts."

[34] It would instructive to explore whether "Once upon a time" is a borrowing from Western fairy tales, while "Long time ago" is more reflective of African oral traditions.

4.4.3. Lexical choices for constructing place, space and time

I used InVivo software to search the folktale texts for a variety of words related to setting.[35] The most commonly occurring vocabulary related to place, space and time is shown in Figure 4.6 in Appendix D. The highest occurring word was "time"(in 34 folktales), related to its use in phrases such as "Once upon a time" and variations of "long (time) ago", as well as other noun use to refer to the progress of actions and events (for example, "no time to hide", "for a long time after", "every time", "a short time", "this time", "each time", "the same time", "just in time", and "from time to time").

Next most frequent, "day" also occurs in 34 folktales, and similarly it is most commonly used as a narrative device: in 27 folktales it occurs in the phrase "one day", to signal a non-specific past time in the sequence of the narrative when a significant action or event occurred that moved the narrative forward (for example, "One day, Kalabushe's aunt fell sick…"; "One day he decided to leave…"; "…was walking near the lake one day…"; "Then one day, there was a great storm").

After these two high incidences, the next three most frequently occurring words related to space and place had considerably lower counts – "village" (19 folktales), "tree" (18 folktales), and "house" (16 folktales). However, unlike the first two words identified, these have more content, and convey some of the material substance of the folktale narrative environments.

Taken together, this set of ten words related to setting (each one occurring in a quarter or more of the 40 folktales) points to a strong conventional element in the way that the narrative signals time: in the way it signals time within the folktale, and the way it signals that the reader or listener is entering narrative time via the text. Nearly half of the ten words is can be seen as belonging to a lexical set that clusters around elements of rural life, that is, "village, tree, fire, animal" (I don't include "open" because it was mostly used as a verb). This supports earlier findings in this chapter.

4.5. Preliminary conclusions

A shared familiarity with the conventions, characters and action in folktales can enhance the storytelling experience of both teller and reader or listener. But such

[35] See Appendix C for full list of words selected and processed for this research.

conventions can also limit the imaginary possibilities of the production and reception of folktales. The reader of the ASb folktales is invited into the realm of a narrative form that both invites imaginative engagement with its characters, settings and events; but also restricts creative possibilities and border crossings because of the conventions and purposes of the genre. This conventional nature of folktales, with their familiar motifs and tale types, "makes them easy to remember for both teller and listener" (Hearne, 2010, p. 211). These conventions and patterns are also an aspect of the ideological nature of genres: "Each genre possesses definite principles of selection, definite forms for seeing and conceptualizing reality, and definite scope and depth of penetration" (Morris, 1994, p. 177).

The folktale genre carries with it considerable symbolic capital, as well as an association with moral authority. This association adds its own weight – authority and power – to the morals and values that the ASb writers might want to convey to child readers. The ASb folktales contain a variety of representations of the consequences of disobeying adults, or of disrespecting adults – almost always with negative results for child characters in the narratives. Although in some cases, it is through the very rupture of disobeying or disregarding that a child is then able to assert her or his agency in overcoming the negative consequences of disobedience (by, amongst other feats, running, talking, tricking, singing, or flying away).

On the whole, the ASb folktales are set in better – safer, simpler, easier, more homogenous – versions of real life. The affordances of fiction mean that the adult writers can largely spare their characters and readers extreme hardships, or can at least soften those hardships – surely common adult impulses when it comes to children. The writers of almost all of these folktales avoid representing socio-cultural taboos (the exceptions being adultery in *Girl with one breast* and murdering a human in *Tjenga and the eland man*). But the folktales also don't shy away from representing real life experiences and realities that will be familiar to many children in the countries where the folktales were written; as will be discussed in the next chapter.

It's unsurprising that rural contexts prevail in folktales, for many tales have their origins in rural contexts, and threads from times when more people lived in rural places. However, there seems to be no intrinsic reason why folktales should not be set in contemporary time and in cities. That they are generally not narrated in urban settings speaks of a certain wistful nostalgia for an imagined and frequently romancised

past. It also points to a closely defined sense of genre conventions for both the telling of folktales, and their settings. The next data chapter will present and discuss the characters who inhabit these imagined rural pasts and places.

Chapter 5 Characters and position: Gender, age and childhood in the folktales

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present findings around characters and characterisation, and action as it pertains to the characters. I discuss how these findings can be read within the narrative contexts that emerged from the previous chapter's analysis. The importance of considering characters, and the positions that these characters offer child readers, is conveyed here:

> The concept that a fictive text might offer its readers a variety of possible interpretative subject positions is of inestimable importance for reading fiction, and especially for examining the possibility of ideological impact on readers. (Stephens, 1992, p. 50).

I am interested in exploring the possible positions and roles available to child characters and to child readers in the ASb folktales.

The following quotations from the ASb folktales serve as useful nuggets of some of the key themes suggested by the data, which I will explore in this chapter. These are themes around the family and domestic responsibility, and gender and age roles; around adult power relative to a child's agency, or lack thereof.

> Lokeyokoni had many sons and daughters. The daughters helped their mother with household chores while the sons went out to graze their father's big herd of cattle. (*Young Palinyang*, p. 3).

> The old woman asked if he needed help. He quickly said, "Yes." The old woman replied that before she helped him, he should lick her face until she was clean and beautiful. The boy didn't have any other choice but to lick the old woman's face in order to get the help he needed. (*Boy who nobody loved*, pp. 6-7).

> And that is the tale of Katitu Mamombo. The wise little girl who saved her sisters from the Big Snake, saved them from the snake's children, and (with the help of her brother) saved herself from the belly of the elephant. (*Katitu Mamombo, the clever little girl*, p. 15).

5.2 Classifying and categorising characters in the folktales

I identified characters as main if they played a significant role in the action and outcome of the folktale. I identified 99 main characters in total (predominantly human characters, but also including animals and supernatural others). On average there were two or three main characters per folktale; one folktale with only one character (*Jaaka*

the fisherman), and one which did not have discernable single main characters (*The baboons that went this way and that*, where the main character is the collective of baboons).

I coded all the main characters for gender, age, and other characteristics such as species (animal, human, or supernatural other), and also where plausible, as hero, villain, or victim. For characters to be identified as male or female, gender had to be specified in the written text (for example, through the use of pronouns or gender-specific nouns); see Chapter 3 for more explanation of the criteria for classification.

My discussion now focuses on the findings around family, gender, and childhood and some of the related vocabulary used; the results for heroes, villains and victims have relevance when considering gender and age. I also considered characters' actions by surveying the verbs and particularly noting those words that occurred in ten or more stories. I was also interested in vocabulary related to affect, and the dominant emotions that were ascribed to characters. The full list of verbs and abstract nouns for which I searched, is in Appendix C. Due to the constraints of this research report, apart from presenting the findings I will not discuss this vocabulary other than sometimes in relation to the characters and their activities.

5.3 Representation of families in the folktales

The dominant global model of family structure that is most visible in our media and mainstream literature remains that of the heteronormative family – a heterosexual couple with one or more children. The extent to which this construct is true is questionable for any society, but it is in stark contrast to the reality of Africa's high incidence of single caregivers (usually female), child headed households, and children in extended families.

The idealised model of families is exemplified in the following quotations from ASb folktales.

> Once upon a time, there lived a happy family. They never fought with each other. They helped their parents at home and in the fields. (*Children of wax*, pp. 1-2).

> A long time ago, there lived a man called Mulongo and his wife Nambuya. They had two children … (*Mulongo and the ogre*, p. 1).

> Once upon a time there was a poor man and his wife. They had only one child, a girl. The child's name was Nonkungu. Her parents loved Nonkungu very much. (*Nomkungu and the imbulu*, p. 1).

> Once upon a time there was a family who lived in a village. The parents in this family woke up early every morning to work in the fields. They left the baby with their elder son … and their eldest daughter … (*Baby snatched by cranes*, p. 1).
>
> Tjenga's father said to him, "Now you have learnt a great lesson. You cannot leave your own people and adopt another. When you are in serious trouble, it is your own people who will help you and not your friends." (*Tjenga and the eland man*, p. 9).

The statement by Tjenga's father above reminds the reader of another value placed on family: that blood is thicker than water. The one thing you can rely on in hard times, suggests this folktale, is your biological family unit. In various ways, most of the folktales place kinship through consanguinity and marriage as significant if not central in the lives of the characters. This value would have had a practical reason at the earliest and oral time of folktale development: it would have promoted the survival of human kinship groups and the continuation of genetic material. However, both these moral and biological imperatives it seems less relevant in the global 21st century.

Heteronormative notions of family – and the positions that structure offers – are expanded and unsettled in just over a quarter (12) of the folktales, presenting a variety of family options that more realistically reflect the real world families in which children find themselves. Here are less normative representations of families and family members:

- An orphaned boy is adopted by a respected man, Lokeyokoni (who "had many sons and daughters"). "Palinyang' grew up in this family and was very happy. He was loved and he loved everybody." (*Young Palinyang'*, p. 4).
- Sisters Nelima and Nambuya are orphans: "Their parents were dead. They lived on bare land." (*The girl who got rich*, p. 1).
- Khayanga is an orphan, "taken in by Rose, a distant relative. Rose was kind to Khayanga, but she was old, frail and poor." (*Khayanga and her gourd*, p. 2).
- Twins Demane and Demazane are orphans who go to stay with their uncle. "But they were badly treated. … So they ran away." The children then live in a cave on their own. (*Demane and Demazane*, p. 3).
- Musau lives alone with his father who "stayed out drinking very late every night and Musau hardly ever saw him." (*Musau saves his father,* p. 2).
- The mother of Nosisa runs away from the child's abusive father; and Nosisa then suffers when he marries "another wife" – "Nosisa woke up early every day to make tea for her stepmother. She cleaned her hut and cooked for her…" (*The generous fish*, p. 6).
- After the death of her father, Tselane lives with her mother (who wants to move "to a nearby village to start a new life" (p. 1); and briefly lives alone because she stays behind when her mother moves. (*Tselane and the giant*).

- In *Kalabushe the talkative*, no mention is made of Kalabushe's father or male relatives, only her mother, and an aunt who "lived across the valley" (p. 2).
- In *Greedy Hyena* the mother seems to be the only parent of Atabo and Akiru; she is certainly the one protecting and later avenging her daughter Atabo.
- In *Grandmother and the smelly girl* , Tasneem lives with her grandmother after her parents reject her, and later chooses her grandmother (over her parents) to live with her in the house of the rich chief and his son.
- *Danger of abandoning a mother* presents the reader with a family of a polygamous man "with his two wives, Akai and Akitela", their children, and the man's blind mother.

ASb folktales, despite on the whole being set in an idealised distant past, have elements of the multiple challenges of the present woven into their narratives. Child readers growing up in a varying types of non-normative families are included in the family models of these folktale narratives, and many should be able to position or locate themselves in the narratives. However, notably absent is any representation of homosexual caregivers, family members, or indeed any characters who aren't heterosexual; unfortunately the folktales create no space it seems for girls who don't want to grow up to marry a man, or for boys who do want to grow up to marry a man.

The folktales tend to minimise – or even not represent – real life rural (and urban) hardships around water, sanitation, and access to resources; and, as has been noted in Chapter 4, the narratives generally construct a safer and better version of reality. But there are ruptures when familiar realities of violence and oppression appear in fictionalised form: for example, child abuse in *Demane and Demazane* and *The generous fish*; alcoholism and child abuse in *Musau saves his father*; tribal/ethnic violence in *Danger of abandoning a mother*; horrific gender violence in *Girl with one breast*; and deeply oppressive family relations in *Namukhaywa* (initially at least, until the patriarach reforms). I discuss these last two titles later in this chapter.

Arguably these ruptures – and even the lesser disruptions in some other ASb folktales – might be seen as unusual elements in most Western children's storybooks, especially if childhood is constructed as a stage of innocence, or children are seen as needing constant protection. In contrast, childhood is a time of responsibility in those contexts where children are fully integrated into domestic and social life, as they often are in African contexts.

A consideration here is how life's realities can be presented constructively in narratives for children; and how ruptures might be mediated by adult writers for

children, and by adult educators in classrooms. These types of considerations could usefully be explored by critical literacy – from the perspectives of children, educators and writers.

5.4 Representation of gender in the folktales

In terms of the gender representativeness of the folktales, a straightforward head count of main and central male and female characters shows that from a total of 99 main characters there are ten more male characters than female in the whole set of folktales; admittedly not representative of the ratio of women and men in society, nevertheless I don't think it is a significant finding on its own.

There are a few folktales where the gender of central characters is not specified through pronouns (the cranes in *Baby snatched by cranes*; the louse in *Crushed louse*; and the dancing villagers in *Namoratunga*). See Figure 5.1 for the gender distribution of characters.

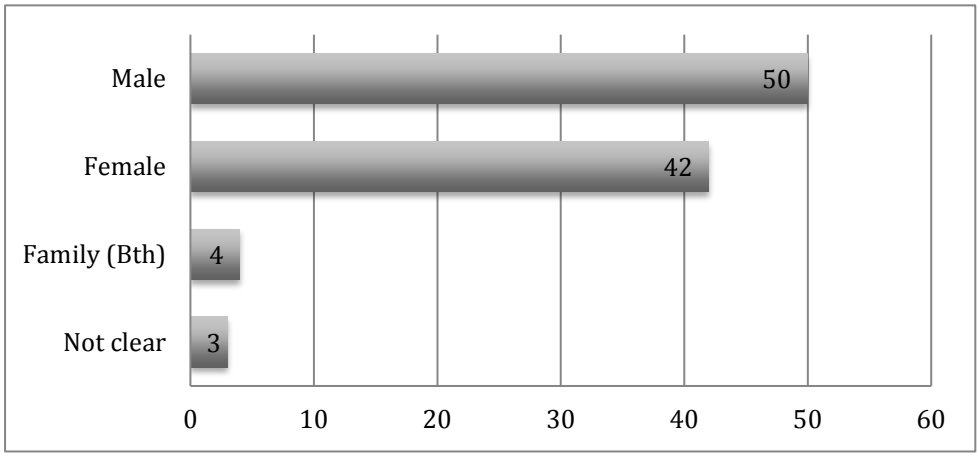

Figure 5.1. Number of female and male characters

We can add texture to this finding – especially around gender roles – if we read it alongside the vocabulary used for gender and family roles: see Figure 5.2.[36] From a set of words for common gender names and roles, "man" emerged most frequently (in 18 folktales), followed by "mother" (17 folktales) and then "father" (15 folktales). An equal number of texts contained the words "boy" and/or "girl" (12 folktales), and "daughter"

[36] Due to the limitations of space I don't discuss the word searches and results, but ideally I would explore the more frequently occurring words in their textual contexts of use, for example, to ascertain which actions and behaviours (see Section 2.3.4) are associated with particular gender roles.

and/or “son” (10 folktales). The only other word related to gender roles that occurred in more than ten folktales was “wife” (11 folktales), contrasting quite noticably with the number of occurrences of “husband” (6 folktales).

When considering the use of genderised words for family roles, man and mother have the highest frequency, followed by father and woman (there are equal numbers of women, girls and boys) – again, slightly more representation of the male gender and agency. Foregrounded in this frequency is that the roles of mother and wife are the dominant roles for adult females. Collectively, the three most frequent words contribute towards an image of heteronormative families in the folktales (and note also the frequency in a quarter of the folktales of “daughter” and “son”).

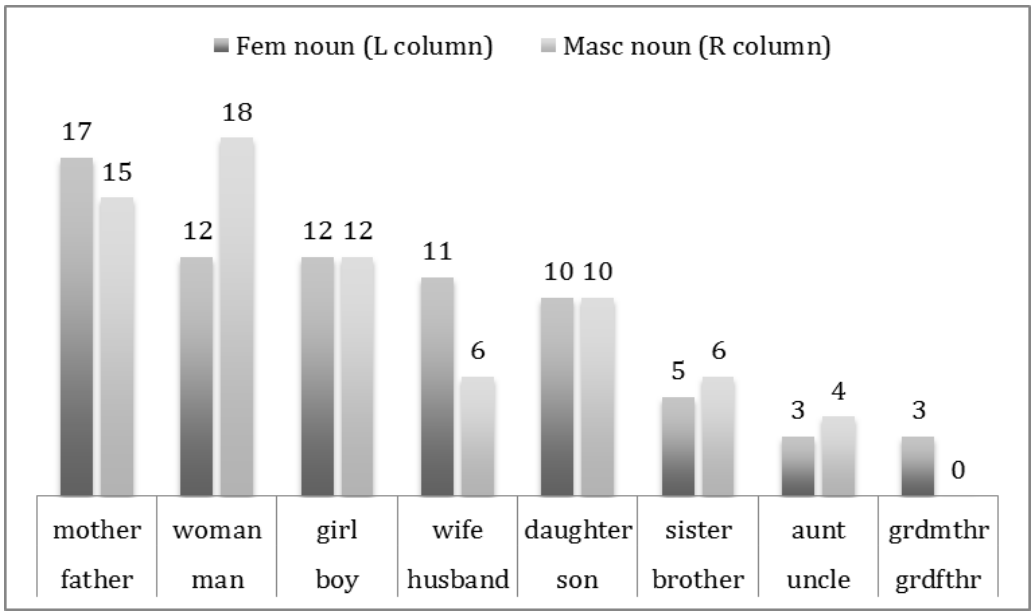

Figure 5.2 Number of folktales with specific nouns related to gender roles

Thus the folktales tend towards a narrative world that is slightly dominated by males, which presents females as predominantly mothers, and adults usually in parent or caregiver roles. Gender is performed and gender roles constructed in the folktales in two main ways: reinforcing traditional and normative gender roles (traditional in African and/or European cultures); and, resisting some or all of available normative gender roles. Worth noting is that there are slightly more female heroes than male heroes (15:13) in the 40 folktales. So although representative of normativity and traditional family roles, the folktales also represent other positions for female gendered characters, and by extension, child readers.

5.4.1 Girls and women characters

There are the powerful girl characters of Katitu Momambo, Kalabushe, Mulongo, Nozibele, and Ketti, represented at the start of this chapter and in the extracts that follow:

> Kalabushe was a very talkative girl. Kalabushe's mother warned her not to talk too much, but Kalabushe did not listen. (*Kalabushe the talkative*, p. 1).

> This was Mulongo's chance! But how was she going to get past the hyena? He was so big he filled the whole doorway. There was only one way. She took a flying leap right over the hyena's back, and ran as fast as her legs could carry her. (*Mulongo and the hyenas*, pp. 11-12).

> As soon as the dog had gone, Nozibele took three hairs from her head. She put one haird under the bed, one behind the door, and one in the kraal. Then she ran home as fast as she could. (*Nozibele and the three hairs*, p. 11).[37]

> Ketti raced out of the forest to a scene of utter devastation … With a pounding heart, she ran all the way back to her home. She quickly found her granny's old thumb piano. "This is my only hope!" she thought. "The rain bird is angry. I have to make her happy again. I have to!" (*The rain bird,* p. 15).

These child female characters are courageous and persistent, rounded personalities, and they manage to get themselves out of some very difficult situations; they are not dependent on male characters, or even on adults. *Kalabushe the talkative* is a wonderful re-working of the core elements of Perault's *Little Red Riding Hood*. A characteristic typically attributed to – and belittled in females – is talkativeness, especially talk without substance. In the Kenyan version of this well-travelled folktale, Kalabushe's loquaciousness is both her weakness and a secret weapon which defeats the predatory male, Sinson. The moral of the folktale is not that quietness or silence is the advocated position for this girl child, but rather that she should not "talk too much to strangers", which is an important distinction.

There are also unconventional older female characters in Nosisa, Tselane's mother, Lopido's old mother, Atabo and Akiru's mother, the giant in *Talking bag,* and the old woman in *Boy who nobody loved* (see quotation at the start of this chapter).

> So, Nosisa took over the homestead and her father's wealth. (*The generous fish*, p. 16).

[37] But also acknowledging here that male power is still the last word in Nozibele's safety: "Then the dog knew that Nozibele had tricked him. So he ran all the way to the village. But Nozibele's brothers were waiting there with big sticks. The dog turned and ran away and has never been seen since" (p.13).

> When Tselane's mother heard the giant's loud snores, she opened the sack and out jumped Tselane. Tselane and her mother ran home as fast as they could. From then on Tselane lived with her mother at the new village – very happily! (*Tselane and the giant*, p. 18).

> The raiders asked the old woman to tell them where her son went. The warriors told her that they would go after her son and kill him. The old woman pleaded with them not to kill the first wife and her children. She also told them to bring back her ram that Lopido took with him. (*Danger of abandoning a mother*, p. 10-11).

> Mother called a meeting of all the animals and lit a very big fire. "The animal that ate Atabo will fall into the fire and burn," she said. (*Greedy Hyena,* p. 16).

> Once upon a time there was a female giant. As she was walking near the lake one day, she found three little girls. She asked them, "Who among you is loved by both parents? *(Talking bag,* p. 1).

Danger of abandoning a mother is especially interesting for its disruption of certain notions of motherhood and unconditionality in mother-child relationships. The blind old woman does not plead for her son; she is no doubt justifiably aggrieved at being abandoned by him, or perhaps she is just pragmatic. Instead she delivers her own justice, she chooses her loyal daughter-in-law and her children and sensibly asks for the return of a ram. This folktale is certainly clear on the obligations of children to parents, and the consequences of choosing a partner over a parent (especially, of choosing a wife over a mother). The moral in this folktale about loyalty in families is stern, but I think ultimately it also asserts matriarchal power and agency.

5.4.2 Gender relationships

There are three folktales that unsettled me because of their representation of gender relationships and especially because of the extremely limited positions available to girls and women – wife, mother daughter, or seductress. The tales are *Namukhaywa*; *The tree wife*; and, *Girl with one breast*.

Namukhaywa is an unsentimental representation of a family, even a community, where female life is not valued as highly as male life. Having borne six girls, Namukhaywa is pregnant with her seventh child and her husband says, "If you give birth to another girl, I will leave you. But if you give me a baby boy, I will hold a party for you!" (*Namukhaywa*, p. 2). Children are possible commodities and women's bodies the

incubators of those commodities.

When Namukhaywa apparently unexpectedly she gives birth to twins – a boy (Mukhwana) and a girl (Mulongo) – she feels that she has no choice but to abandon the girl:

> She felt that there was only one thing she could do. Namukhaywa left Mulongo in the care of the midwife and took Mukhwana home to her husband. She proudly showed Ndong'a the baby boy. He was very happy and called all the villagers to celebrate the birth of his son. (*Namukhaywa*, p. 4-6).

Mulongo and Mukhwana grow up (separately) to be "a fine young man" and a "fine young woman" (p.7). The young man comes across his beautiful sister, and is infatuated. He goes to his mother and says, "I have found a beautiful girl … And I want to marry her." But a brother marrying a sister is not acceptable in this moral paradigm, and the truth is necessarily revealed:

> To his surprise, Namukhaywa said, "…That is your sister. You were born twins. Your father wanted a son, not a daughter. So I left your baby sister with the midwife, and brought you home to your father." (p. 11).

But this folktale has a happy ending, of sorts, for the abandoned female child:

> When Mukhwana told his father the story, he saw that he had been wrong. He called Namukhaywa and together they went to the midwife to fetch Mulungo. […] A year later, Mulongo married the son of the rich king of that village. She brought a lot of wealth and happiness to her family. (pp. 12 and 14).

Ndong'a the patriarch admits the error of his ways, and even takes part in a "traditional ceremony for re-uniting Mulongo and her seven siblings" (p. 13). From northern hemisphere liberal feminist perspectives, this may not seem to be much of a happy ending. There's no mention as to what Mulongo felt about marrying the son of the rich king of that village, or indeed how things turned out between the couple (although that is hardly uncommon in fairy tale endings). But in terms of moving from a situation where the patriarchal power disregarded female life to one where he celebrates it, ultimately the resolution of this folktale provides its reader with a positive conclusion about the position of girl children in families.

The tree wife resonates all the way back to Pygmalion sculpting the perfect wife in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, through Shaw's *Pygmalion*, and the films *My fair lady*, *Stepford wives* and *Pretty woman*, and onwards: the male fantasy of being able to construct an attractive compliant wife. The male character has little or no interest in actual women in the society around him, but instead seeks to manufacture one to his preferences and

over which he is unquestioned master. The wife made from a tree branch and brought to life by the "old man", is a bland two-dimensional character, defined by her physical beauty; we learn more about her symbolic clothes and accessories than we do about her personality:

> She was truly the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. He knelt before her, and asked her to be his wife. He gave her a colourful apron, beads and a head ring, the sign of a married woman. (*The tree wife*, p .4-5).

Somewhat curiously, when his beautiful young wife is taken by the covetous "young men from a neighbouring village" who "decided to steal her and take her to their own kraal" (p.6), the old man passively accepts that she is gone, even though he is "heartbroken" and "felt he could not live without her" (p. 7). The folktale continues to unfold in way that is ominous for the tree wife.

Gradually, with the help of doves, the man deconstructs his creation, taking back the symbol of her gender role (the "colourful apron"), of her marital status ("the head ring"), and finally of her life:

> [The doves] perched on her shoulders. As they sang, each bird pecked out an eye. Immediately she turned again into a statue. Her feet and arms fell away. Then her head. And she fell to the ground. (*The tree wife*, p. 12).

However, at this point a complex and ambiguous moment then occurs in the narrative:

> Her husband slowly rolled her wooden trunk to the river. He stood her up with her roots in the water. Nourished by the sun and soil, she grew leaves again. And when the wind blows, the leaves sigh.
> Just as a woman does when she longs for her husband. (*The tree wife*, p. 13-14).

What is interesting about this is that suddenly the tree wife takes on an identity and personality that was previously absent. The old man is described by his relationship relative to her ("Her husband"), and the tree wife becomes a symbol of female desire and longing.

The girl with one breast is the folktale I find the most disturbing and elusive. It is a stern vision of narrative content for children, heavy with two-dimensional stereotypical representations of gender: a victimized good wife, a bad temptress, and a duped (but essentially good) husband. Not only that, the wife's vulnerability and the gender violence against her are extreme: the seductress in the forest tells the man to go home and cut off one of his wife's breasts and bring it back to her:

> Then she would have two breasts, and they could marry. The man ran very fast back home, picked up a knife, pounced on his dear wife, and the breast was off

instantly. (*The girl with one breast*, p. 3).

The seductress is illusory, probably a malevolent spirit, and has disappeared when the man returns from killing his wife. Upon realising the monumental mistake he has made the man "ran home as fast as a bullet … Only to find his wife had just died. He was so grief stricken because of what he had done that he too died" (*The girl with one breast*, p. 4).

The consequences of straying from the bonds of marriage are dire for both the wronged wife and the straying husband. But what really struck me was the ease with which the man cuts off his wife's breast. Like a predator, he "pounced on his dear wife" and "the breast was off instantly" – no resistance, no struggle, no difficulty in preforming the lethal amputation of a profoundly genderised and sexualized body part. This folktale ultimately evades any sense of closure that I attempt to impose upon it: its meaning is not available to me, other than as a grim and violent warning about marital infidelity.

So although the three folktales analysed here foreground oppressive gender politics to various degrees, it's important to remember that "agency and victimhood are not mutually exclusive, […] victims are also agents who can change their lives and affect other lives" (Nnaemeka, 1997, p. 2). This is certainly demonstrated in *Namukhaywa* and in *The tree wife.*

It can't be disputed that this corpus of folktales presents modeling of heteronormative family values, but there are also considerable counter-narratives: single parents (*Kalabushe, the talkative*; *Musau saves his father*; *Tselane and the giant*); significant mothers and other female caregivers (*An egg for bridewealth*; *Grandmother and the smelly girl*; *Khayanga and her Gourd*; *The generous fish; Danger of abandoning a mother*). And on the whole, strong, active roles are available for both male and female readers – with culture-specific complexities that would be enlightening to explore with children (both those familiar with the culture of production, and those living in different contexts).

The ASb folktales may well enact some of the real-life gender politics of their writers and from the social contexts of the producers.[38] As a collection, I think that

[38] At the time of collecting and publishing the storybooks under discussion, the composition of the full-time ASb team was entirely female. In total, 15 folktale texts were written by males, and 13 texts written by females; and eight of the texts were compiled and written by ASb team members (and attributed

ultimately the ASb texts demonstrate the fluidity of culture that Adichie talks about here:

> Some people will say that a woman being subordinate to a man is our culture. But culture is constantly changing […] Culture does not make people, people make culture. So if it's in fact true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we must make it our culture. (Adichie, 2013)

5.4.3 Intersection of age and gender in the folktales

What clearly emerges from the folktale data is that adult characters dominate across the storybooks – of the total number of characters just over two thirds are adult characters. Figure 5.3 shows the numbers of adult and child characters, and how age correlates with gender.

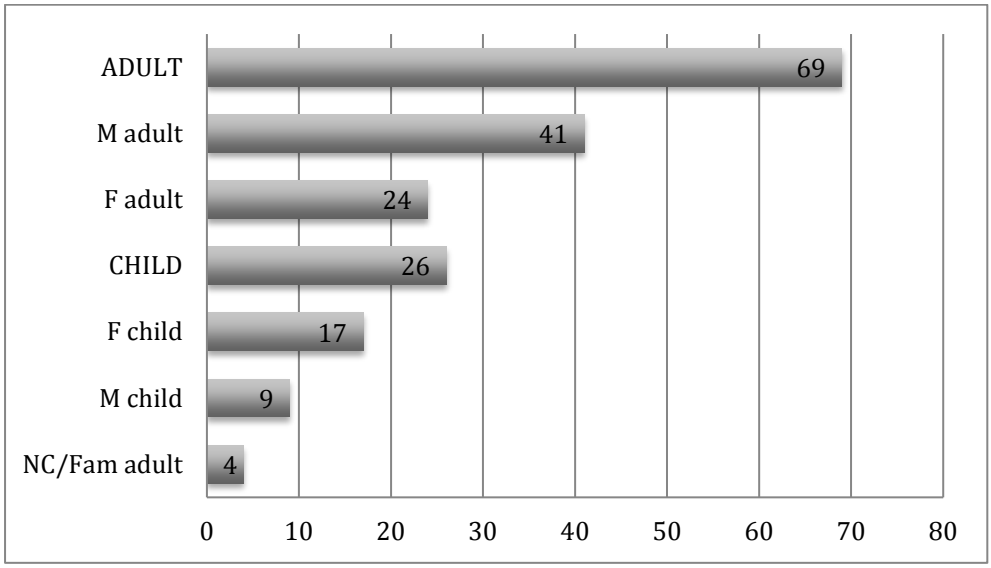

Figure 5.3. Age and gender, number of characters

These figures present narrative worlds where the majority of characters encountered by readers are male adults (nearly half of the total), followed by female adults (nearly a third of the total); this is also supported by the finding that 15 or more folktales contain the words "man", "mother", and "father". These choices suggest that there is scope for males to be men *and* fathers, but females are defined primarily as mothers. The number of child female characters exceeds child males fairly significantly

variously as "Southern African folktale", "South African folktale", and "Ugandan folktale") – effectively meaning that 54% of the folktales were written by females (21 folktales). Two folktales were written by a male and female collectively; and one folkale is an adapation of a Southern African folktake by a male writer.

(represented in 17 and nine folktales respectively) – suggesting that at least in childhood there are more positions available to females in the narratives.

Worth noting from the point of view of both age and gender, four folktales depict especially positive interactions and relationships between a child and an older female adult; as follows:

> Thought Ketti didn't argue with her parents, she felt sure they were wrong. "If only Granny were still alive," she said to herself, "she would have believed me." (*The rain bird*, p. 9).

> Tasneem had only her grandmother's house to go to. Her heart was heavy. She thought nobody wanted to look after a bad smelling girl. But she was wrong. Her grandmother did not send her away. (*Grandmother and the smelly girl,* p. 12-13).

> … there was an old woman who loved her grandson very much. She gave him an egg as a gift. (*An egg for bride wealth*, p. 1).

> Nelima agreed to carry Netasile to her house. "You have done what many have failed to do," said the old woman. She gave Nelima a stick and told her to go back home, where she would find everything she wanted. (*Girl who got rich*, p. 9-10).

There are two female characters described as "old" who are either ambiguous, or harmful, in relation to a child character's interests:

> The old woman said that before she helped him, he should lick her face clean until she was clean and beautiful. (*Boy nobody loved*, p. 6).

> An old woman was sitting next to the hut. Little Katitu went and greeted her. "Oh?" answered the old woman. "This is the village of the Big Snake! … He will go to your hut at night when you sleep and kill you there!"
> Wise little Katitu did not panic. (*Katitu Momambo, the clever little girl*, p. 3-4).

There are no corresponding folktales with a similar "old" male character who either assists a child or hinders her or him; there are no grandfathers or "old men" relating to children in these narrative worlds. Except in the case of Nosisa's step-mother in *The generous fish,*[39] the child characters have neutral or positive relationships with mothers and mother figures (referred to in 13 folktales).

These findings, together with the vocabulary analysis, point to a more sympathetic role for adult female characters, especially in terms of their matriarchal roles. Although there are more male characters overall, the female characters are at

[39] There is also (the adult) Lopido's relationship with his "old mother" as an example of what might be considered "unmotherly" behaviour by some.

least equivalent in presence and substance (both as sympathetic characters and as heroes).

Of course fathers and father figures are characterised, but folktales with adult males individually playing a significant and helpful role are fewer than those with significant adult females. In a handful of folktales, a father figure is harmful or disruptive, but except in the case of Damane and Demazane's abusive uncle and Nosisa's negligent father (*The generous fish*), erring father characters are reformed or redeemed in the narrative's conclusion (they are: Syonzola in *Musau saves his father*, Ketti's father in *The rain bird*; and Ndong'a in *Namukhaywa*). Apart from Nosisa's step-mother, there is apparently only one unloving mother: Tasneem's mother in *Grandmother and the smelly girl* (both her parents fail her, but it is her mother who rejects her).

Returning to advanced age and gender, there are only three "old men" in the corpus, none of whom interact with child characters: the wise old patriarch who outwits his foolish young son-in-law (*The wise man*); the wealthy old man who has everything but a wife – so he makes one from a tree branch, and then marries her (*The tree wife*); and "wise old man Rupule" (*Blacksmiths dilemma*). Grandmothers notwithstanding, these more neutral old men in the folktales contrast with the less appealing or ambivalent characterisation of most of the old women.

> One old woman especially loved the smells that drifted out of the bakery window every morning. This was Ma Shange who slept on a bench in the park every night. (*The smell thief,* p. 6).

> […] there lived an old woman called Netasile. She was believed to be a giver of riches. Netasile had leprosy and her body was full of sores. (*Girl who got rich*, p. 4).

> […] an old, dirty, ugly woman came up to him. (*Boy nobody loved*, p. 5).

> Khayanga was take in by Rosa, a distant relative. Rose was kind to Khayanga, but she was old, frail and poor. (*Khayanga and her gourd*, p. 2).

Children do have adult champions in the folktales, but this role tends to fall more to female characters than males (with the notable exception of the creepy female giant in *The talking bag*). I have already discussed the incidence of the words "man", "mother", and "father" in the context of gender. In old age, there are also more female characters who are noteworthy for their caring behaviours, although the very few

descriptions of old men in the folktales suggest that male elders are more socially esteemed and/or more absent.

With regard to the representation of children across the corpus, 12 stories do not include or mention children at all (for example, *First man first woman, How night came to Opio's village*, *Jaaka the fisherman, Lion that wanted friendship, Ngamoruntunga, The girl with one breast, The blacksmith's dilemma*); and in a few folktales child characters are only implied in the word "family" (for example, *Dima and Owl*, *Pam-Pam bird*). There are two folktales where adults are absent (*Nozibele and the three hairs,* and *Rabbit under the tree*), and a few where adults, usually parents, are mentioned but not characterised (for example, *Boy who nobody loved*, *Children of wax, The talking bag*).

It's not surprising that adult writers, working in education, would create narrative worlds where adults are in abundance, particularly to guide, instruct, and care for children. Thus the folktales seem to embody and enact some of their writers' intentions and values in relation to childhood and children. This foregrounds critical literacy questions around whose values are expressed in a text, and the importance of interrogating the extent to which textual expression of values is supported by real-world power to enforce those values. A critical reading reminds that no matter how well-intentioned and benign adult authority is, it nevertheless remains more powerful than a child's sovereignty.

The number of ASb folktales with *only* adult characters and adult actions seems quite significant, given that one might reasonably expect all stories for children to actually contain children. In part this finding might be understood as an influence of a folktale's oral storytelling origins: most narratives weren't originally created specifically for a child audience and probably would have been narrated for a mixed audience of adults and children. But here too is evidence of adult authority and dominance in a child's world – children's interests wouldn't have been the highest priority for storytellers performing to mixed audiences. Focusing on the ASb folktales, a question for further consideration is, how do child readers respond to narrative worlds – constructed specifically for them – in which child characters are excluded and absent?

5.5 Representation of childhood in the folktales

In the folktales, adult characters outnumber child characters nearly 3:1. Herein lies a significant power differential with its own ambiguities: on the one hand, children need

adults in order to survive and prosper (and so narratives where there is an abundance of adults to meet those needs is a comforting proposition). On the other hand, adult authority can be used to constrain, suppress and hurt children.

The socio-cultural specificity of childhood experience which will be familiar to many children in Africa, especially in rural and peri-urban contexts is articulated in the following quotation.

> Part of the Western notion of childhood is that it is a time of innocence and non-responsibility … This concept of childhood is not only a luxury that few other cultures can afford, but is also something that local tradition implicity rejects … children on commercial farms in Zimbabwe, even from a young age, have responsibilities to collect water, to find fuelwood, to grow vegetables, to look at after the family's animals, etc. (McCartney, 2000, p. xvi).

This experience is borne out in the folktales, with the responsibilities usually gender specific:

> The daughters helped their mother with household chores while the sons went out to graze their father's big herd of cattle. (*Young Palinyang'*, p. 3).
>
> Kalabushe's mother was very busy that day. It was late in the evening by the time she gave Kalabushe food to take to her sick aunt. (*Kalabushe the talkative*, p. 3).
>
> One day Mulongo's mother sent her to fetch water at the well. On the way, she met her friends. They were going to the forest to get firewood. (*Mulongo and the hyenas*, p. 1-2).
>
> Atabo and Akiru went to collect water at the river. (*Greedy hyena*, p. 1).
>
> […] three girls went out to collect wood. (*Nozibele and the three hairs*, p. 1).
>
> When they went to fetch the cattle, you would find him walking behind all the other boys […] (*Boy nobody loved*, p. 3).
>
> One day when the boys were out grazing the animals […] (*Young Palinyang'*, p. 6).
>
> The big girls went into the veld one day to gather food and wood. (*Katitu Momambo*, p. 1).

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child foregrounds such responsibilities, and particularly the obligations of children to their parents and other elders (Cregan & Cuthbert, 2014). Children are not adults in development, but rather contributing members of a community – where the expected contribution is age appropriate and part of learning life skills. As long as these responsibilities do

> not compromise [children's] rights to health, to formal education, to recreation and welfare it is also regarded by traditional culture as a legitimate part of their education and upbringing – a preparation for adult roles. (McCartney, 2000, p. xvi).

Amongst the folktales there is only one example of where responsibilities have become onerous because of a young person's vulnerability and lack of power:

> Nosisa's life became even more difficult when her father married again. Mpunzi scolded her all the time and made her serve the new wife. Nosisa worked like a slave. (*The generous fish*, p. 3).

These folktales are written by adults who generally are from cultural traditions that value and expect childhood responsibilities and contributions; it's a value that many adult writers in these contexts would want to transmit to child readers. Playing and school are not absent from the folktales, but they are scarce:

> At school, you would find him sitting alone while other children were playing. At home, he would sit alone while his family watched television. (*Boy who nobody loved*, p. 2-3).

> The children did not notice anything because they were busy playing. The children's parents were working hard in the hot sun. (*Baby snatched by cranes*, p. 4).

> Lokeyokoni thanked Palinyang' and bought him a red bag for carrying books to school. (*Young Palinyang*, p. 12).

Characters do however have some remarkable adventures in the narratives, often as a result of embarking on domestic chores and going astray. Thus the element of play features more than is explicitly referred to, but in ways naturally enmeshed with the world of responsibilities.

5.6 Heroes, villains, and victims in the folktales

In terms of character attributes, I identified characters who have heroic or villainous qualities, as well as a small number of characters that seem to be in a victim role. Initially, I tried to apply Vladimir Propp's character functions for folktales (of which hero, villain and victim are but three of 31 character functions) (Propp, 1968). I found this illustrated the limitations of applying a model developed for one specific context and collection of folktales (traditional Russian folktales) as the terms of Propp's structural model didn't apply to all the folktales in my corpus. I didn't pursue this type

of analysis any further. Instead I concentrated on identifying only those characters in the folktales who could be seen as heroes and villians.

Establishing which characters might be heroes is not straightforward. I wasn't looking for heroes who were good in a stereotypical or mono-dimensional sense (that is, without flaws), but rather, characters who in some way triumphed or succeeded with a quest, overcame a problem, or rescued other characters. Or even, as in the case of Jaaka the fisherman, an ordinary everyman who meets the vagaries of life with equanimity and hope. Heroes contain within themselves both positive and negative qualities, but ultimately seek to restore a lost harmony and reveal positive humanity (Sheub, 1999, p. 253).

Villains were easy to identify when they were the likes of ogres, hyenas, giants, and bad spirits; but sometimes they were ambiguous, as in the case of the louse who offers hospitality to two herders (*Crushed louse*) or the old woman in *Boy nobody loved*. I also needed to confront my own cultural and political associations with words such as "hero" and "villain", and how those associations influence the sorts of actions and vocabulary I anticipated from those roles in a story. For example, there might well be readers who consider Namukhaywa's husband a fully redeemed hero by the end of that folktale (*Namukhaywa*, see page 61 of this chapter). Similarly there may be readers who don't consider female characters capable of being heroes, associating females more with victim or villain roles. It's important to acknowledge the subjectivity of these interpretations. This is underscored in the following quotation.

> The ambiguity and contradictoriness of the hero's personality make it possible for the hero to be viewed differently by different people, especially since apprehending the hero, like reading a text, is a form of interpretation and appropriation that depends on the viewer's position, perspective, and interests. (Mbele, 2004, p. 335).

There were five characters I identified as victims; and of those characters, three were only temporary victims; they are Demazane, Tselane, and the girl who "is loved by both parents" (*The talking bag*). The villagers who dance edonga (*Ngamoruntunga*) and the man's mutilated wife in *The girl with one breast* are the only permanent victims in the collection of folktales under analysis – with the exception perhaps of the ugly boy in *Boy nobody loved*, but at the end of his story he was at least no worse off than when he started.

See Figure 5.4 in Appendix E for a summary of characters identified as hero, villain or victim, as well as the genders of these characters. I counted heroic characters in 28 folktales, the majority of which are child characters (16 folktales); there were slightly more female heroic characters than male. This accords with previous findings that there are positions of power available to girl readers.

5.7 Preliminary conclusions

These folktales offer constructions of local African childhoods, including adult aspirations for and concerns about those childhoods. Unlike many children in the global North – whose health and nutritional needs are better met, and who are confined to the activities of school, recreation and play (Cregan & Cuthbert, 2014) – more children in the global South tend to live in uncertain environments. Depending on their economic background, they have drastically varying access to nutritional food, healthcare, and education; and they are expected to shoulder responsibilities and contribute domestically.[40]

The ASb folktales represent and refract real childhood experiences to varying degrees, and mostly through socially acceptable conventional topics. A handful of tales represent some truly terrible experiences of childhood and families: prejudice against girl children (*Namukhaywa*); child neglect and adult violence towards children (*Musau saves his father*, *Demane and Demazane,* and *The generous fish*); and extreme domestic violence of a husband against his wife (*The girl with one breast*). But what more strongly emerges from the folktales – and despite the prevalence of the supernatural – is the possible power and agency of human beings, and the autonomy of girl children in particular (albeit somewhat tentatively in the overall picture).

As well as varied child and adult male characters – for example, Demane, Dima, Opio, Jaaka, Mulongo, Musau, Pensa, Ratshipi, and Palinyang' – the ASb folktales present some strong positions for child and adult female characters – for example, Katitu Momambo, Kalabushe, Mulongo, Nozibele, Ketti, Nosisa, Nelima, Tselane, Tselane's mother, Lopido's old mother, and Tasneem's grandmother. But females are also mainly defined by their roles as mothers or wives or daughters. Although mothers in the

[40] A recent edition of *African Independent* presents a grim picture of the worst experiences of childhood in Africa in "Africa's children: 10 facts that will shock the world" (July 1-7, 2016, pp. 13-14). The article reports from Unicef's "State of the world's children", that by 2030 sub-Saharan Africa is "expected to be home to 9 out of 10 of the 167 million children living in extreme poverty".

narratives are also builders, rescuers and avengers, they have fewer additional roles than those available to male characters, which include, hunters, herders, fishers, traders, headmen, and wise men, as well as fathers.

A limited range of roles and expression for women is not peculiar to ASb folktales; on the whole, the genre seems to have limited or restricted characterisation and character subject positions, and these in turn are often connected to normative gender roles. It is after all a genre that draws heavily on archetypes and stereotypes. However, fortunately for the balance of power – and as the remarkable creativity of the variations of *Little Red Riding Hood* have demonstrated over time (Orenstein, 2002) – normativity and hegemonic conventionality in fairy tales seem to inspire challenges, subversions, and re-imaginings – and, crucially, critical re-readings. After all, "inversions are also part of human nature" … "the human sense of identity is full of tricks. Absolute categories are elusive. Ideas about who and what we are shift over time" (Orenstein, 2002, p. 242). This is also compellingly articulated by Adichie in her discussion of culture and feminism: "culture is constantly changing. … Culture does not make people, people make culture (Adichie, 2013).

In addition to the writers' perspectives, the data also reflects the manuscript choices made by African Storybook staff members, who in various ways have also shaped the folktale corpus and the broader ASb-published collection of storybooks. This – along with the potential for culture to be re-made and changed – is powerfully articulated by the Kenyan in-country co-ordinator, Dorcas Wepukhulu:

> You know what I think, the AS[b] offers a wonderful opportunity for communities to break away from negative tradition [and] stereotyping and seize the moment to re-shape values.
> Take the example of Turkana, as a pastoralist community, they are constantly engaged in cross-border raids during which the warriors kill, maim, rape, [and] drive away animals. These are always met with retaliatory attacks from the other. This is reflected in some of the stories they write, where the enemy is either burnt with boiling oil, speared or beheaded, and that's where I encourage the teachers to soften their language so that children can learn something more human rather than the perpetuated cruelty that has been there since time immemorial.
> (Email correspondence, 08 April 2015, with permission).

This concludes my presentation of the data and discussion of findings. The folktales suggest the perspectives and values of the adults writing narratives for the ASb initiative, in the three countries mentioned. The narrative texts are imbued with a

certain authority that is grounded in the tradition of the folktale genre and its didactic function, and further reinforced by the authority of adult storytellers constructing narrative worlds for children.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This research report has brought perspectives from post-colonial studies, African feminism, critical text analysis, and local childhoods to bear on 40 folktales that were published in the first year of the African Storybook website. It has also presented and explored the perspectives and positions that seem to be most strongly represented in these narrative texts – the perspectives of adult writers, and the positions available to child characters and readers.

As noted in Chapter 1, my research responds to the following main questions:

- How do writers of ASb folktales represent the folktale genre?
- What discourses are represented or constructed in the folktales?
- What are the possible socio-cultural implications of these constructions for children?

In addition to summarising the main findings from my data analysis, this Conclusion also presents closing responses to those questions.

The first data analysis chapter was concerned with findings around narrative genre; and setting as it pertained to narrative place, space and time. Ninety percent of the folktales are set in a rural environment (in the remaining ten percent – four tales – the setting isn't clear from the text). Virtually all the narratives are set in or near villages or small settlements that seem to be virtually unaffected by innovations related to infrastructure, communications or transport. With only one exception (a television, in *Boy nobody loved*) there are no references to electronic or digital technologies. Along with almost exclusively rural contexts, another key finding is that nearly 75 percent of the folktales are set in a remote past. This is conveyed in verb tense, but more specifically by stock phrases such as "Once upon a time" and "Long time ago" (and variants), which open the majority of ASb folktales. These stock phrases signal a sense of time that is historical (past), but also time that is not real: it is when narrative time begins, with all its possibilities for entering imaginative positions and places. It is a sense of time that many writers are likely to associate with fiction and storytelling – especially for children – and the stock phrases are also reminiscent of the folktale genre's oral roots. In addition to having positive associations, the rural and imagined past are also contexts where choices and positions – certainly as far as ASb characters

are concerned – seem to be closely defined, notably life choices (as discussed in Chapter 5).

A third major finding from this study is that supernatural characters, objects and events also occur in nearly 75 percent of the ASb folktales. This suggests enormous opportunity for imaginative constructions, but as with the prevailing narrative settings of the tales, it can also be associated with diminished human agency or potency. In at least half of the folktales, human characters encounter some type of supernatural entity or activity – and triumph because of or in spite of the supernatural. This way of conceptualising the world can result in human action seeming less possible or less powerful – both human action and human capacity to fully apprehend the world. The human characters in the ASb folktales are ultimately trying to resolve human predicaments – threats to self, threats to family, and the like – and mostly the characters do manage to triumph by applying their human attributes. Supernatural existence does not alter the facts of human existence, which is subject to familiar mortal trials and tribulations: "Fantasy and supernatural beings work their way through the interstices of human life, mirroring the internal clashes as humans struggle to move to the best part of their nature" (Sheub, 1999, p. 253). It would be relevant to explore this finding in relation to scholarship about African cosmology, and animism in particular. An animist logic undermines the binary of natural/supernatural because it "destabilizes the hierarchy of science over magic and the secularist narrative of modernity by reabsorbing historical time into the matrices of myth and magic" (Garuba, 2003, p. 270). This perspective on the supernatural opens the possibility of seeing "nature and its objects [as] endowed with a spiritual life both simultaneous and coterminous with their natural properties" (Garuba, 2003, p. 267). In Nnaemeka's terms, these are "complementary not oppostional tensions of mutality" (1992, p. 2).

The folktales discussed in this study favour narrative settings in a rural pastoral past – reflecting ASb writers' constructions of a nostalgic imagined past, and most likely also the conventions used in other versions or fragments of a tale as they heard it told. Some child readers will find familiarity in narratives set in rural spaces, and in experiences of collecting wood and fetching water from natural sources, of distances and dangers in rural places. But obviously some child readers will not find their life experiences and circumstances reflected in the folktales, or they may find some aspects but not others. These are questions that should be explored in critical literacy

discussion about children's responses to the narratives, as well as the links probed that children might make between narrative setting and their own lives.

In terms of the ASb website collection of storybooks, the absence of urban and contemporary settings in the analysed storybooks is problematic only if those settings and experiences are also not represented or are under-represented in the rest of the ASb collection of storybooks. The extent to which the texts of other ASb website genres represent urban contemporary experiences is a question for another research project. It should be noted here that, for reasons related to those discussed above, it was always an overt intention of the website curators that stories from the folktale genre should not be in the majority overall.[41] This intention is supported by my findings.

Moving now to the second data analysis chapter, which considers findings around characters and characterisation, and the interpretive subject positions offered to child readers by folktale characters. In broadest terms, the ASb narratives seemingly offer no characterisation outside of heteronormativity – although this is not unique to folktales or to ASb writers of stories for children. [42] In a handful of folktales this is overtly characterised in heterosexual two-parent couples with a child or children; but it is also frequently implicit or implicitly characterised in folktales with single parent and extended family scenarios, including those with non-human families (for example, the hyenas in *Mulongo and the hyenas,* the snakes in *First man, first woman,* and the dog in *Nozibele and the three hairs*).

With regard to gender, the folktale worlds are inhabited by slightly more males than females, and women are first and foremost mothers. Adult characters dominate, usually in parent or caregiver roles; but in a handful of tales, also as ambiguous or threatening characters. The adult characters in their numbers and roles assert that authority and the power to enforce it ultimately reside in adults. Word frequency analysis indicates that motherhood is the most represented identity and source of authority for adult females – more than fatherhood is for males. This again points to the conventional nature of the folktale genre, and the circumscribed roles and character positions its creative traditions tend to offer.

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[41] Email correspondence with ASb project leader, Tessa Welch, April 2016, with permission.
[42] See Lester, 2007, pp. 3-31, for an insightful consideration of "the extent to which children's texts perpetuate a limiting heteronormalcy that negatively impacts identity development for those who do not fit this model of behavior and desire" (p. 5).

Despite the heteronormativity and traditional family roles, the folktales do also represent other positions for female gendered characters, and by extension, for girl child readers – as evidenced in courageous, clever and unconventional female characters. And arguably, the female characters are in the main more interesting and complex than the numerically greater male characters. Thus there are representations of woman as "both benevolent *and* malevolent, with powers that are healing *and* lethal … both victim *and* agent" (Nnaemeka, 1997, p. 2). The folktales present possibilities for classroom conversations about gender and traditional roles; as well as for discussing the representation of childhood and the responsibilities reflected in the narratives.

There is scope for considering the texts and their characters outside of heteronormal expectations – for example, perhaps neither Tselane's nor Kalabushe's mothers are interested in husbands; perhaps Jaaka's partner is another fisherman; perhaps the grandson may want to use his grandmother's egg for bride*groom* wealth; and perhaps Tasneem's fairytale ending is to marry the local chief's daughter. These possibilities are ripe for critical literacy lessons, but hopefully even possible in some mainstream contexts – although the fact that homosexuality is illegal in 35 countries in Africa is a weighty reminder that challenging heteronormacy and hegemony in some classroom contexts requires exceptional courage.[43] Obviously homophobia is not exclusive to the African continent, nor do LGBTI people in Africa enjoy full equality and freedom outside of the legislation of the 35 countries. A fundamental element of social justice work must be to connect efforts from multiple sites of struggle – not only to share efforts and insights, but also to link resistence to one specific injustice to resistance of injustice more broadly.

In the set of storybook texts analysed, the writers have represented the folktale genre as one with well defined stylistic conventions and archetypal characters and happenings. It also emerges as quite a contained and closed genre with regard to narrative innovations that might be seen in other narrative types with creative traditions that are less entrenched. The dominant discourse is one of heteronormativity; and although powerful subject positions are available to both male and female characters – with a slight foregrounding in the corpus of girl child characters – a

[43] Source: https://www.amnesty.org.uk/lgbti-lgbt-gay-human-rights-law-africa-uganda-kenya-nigeria-cameroon.

woman's role as mother is the one that emerges most visibly and consistently for adult females.

Implications and recommendations

One of critical literacy's central concerns is the design and redesign of texts. This takes into account the design and production of new texts, and particularly "the ability to harness the multiplicity of semiotic systems across diverse cultural locations to challenge exisiting discourses" (Janks, 2010, p. 25). It also extends to redesigning existing texts: re-writing, re-illustrating, re-making, or re-mixing texts as a means to challenge dominant social practices and present social alternatives for the listener, reader and viewer to consider (Janks, 2014). Part of imagining futures of well being for children is offering them a wide variety of texts and text experiences with which to associate and explore their different and changing subjectivities. To fully engage with the perspectives and positions presented in texts, both educators and children will benefit from the analytical tools offered by critical literacy. And in particular, a critical literacy that accommodates affect, fantasy, and play.

As established by Makalela in an account of the effectiveness of locally developed stories in promoting HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention, narrative texts can be persuasive, they can even change behaviours (Makalela, 2015). Because stories can have real life consequences, educators and publishers should pay attention to the social effects of texts by considering these sorts of questions when selecting and developing storybooks:

- How do we – as educators and publishers – become aware of and negotiate our own positionalities in relation to narratives?
- Whose values are expressed in the narratives? How do these values relate to human subjectivity and a social justice agenda?
- What are the possible interpretations and uses of the narratives in teaching and learning environments?
- If we – as adults – aim to shape children's behaviour through narratives, what are the implications for our own behaviours and especially how we behave towards children?

- How do we question the taken for granted assumption that narratives for children should teach moral lessons rather than invite them to imagine – to enter a different world, to think, feel, etc.

In terms of manuscript development workshops and narrative designs, a generative challenge would be for writers to set their familiar folktales in familiar city environments. And to create narrative worlds without adult presence (other than as an implied). New directions for folktales lie especially in reimagining the characters and events in contemporary urban settings. New possibilities for children's subjectivities can be explored in folktales where the role of adult characters has been minimised and the emphasis is on the child characters experiencing life, having adventures and solving problems. Further research potential lies in how child readers respond to contrasting narratives where child characters and their actions are central and privileged, or where adult characters and their actions dominate. Of interest also would be children's own versions of folktales; and whether children in rural and urban contexts respond differently to the rural settings of the folktales.

In closing, I recall a challenge posed by a writer considering the prevalence of heteronormativity in children's literature: the challenge to "all adults, educators in particular, to take responsibility in creating for all children the safest, most nurturing, and most open environments both inside and outside the classroom" (Lester, 2007, p. 5). It's easy to agree with this injunction; but therein also is a reminder that all created environments – whether in reality or in folktales – reflect the perspectives of their creators, and the creators of narratives for children are almost always adults. In some ways, the ASb folktales can be seen to offer open and safe environments: at least, spatially open and simplistically safe (neither of which necessarily contribute to Lester's vision of open and safe). But, as my analysis has shown, openness – when linked to rurality – can be a constraint on characters and their agency, and can actually result in a limiting of possibility. And an adult vision of safe environments is replete with adult decisions about what is safe and unsafe for children, as well as mediated adult apprehensions. Furthermore, resistance of dominant discourses can be uneven and partial, and nurturing intentions can have their limitations – can impose boundaries rather than challenge dichotomies and present diverse subjectivities.

Narrative and classroom environments can be opened by critical perspectives, which in this study envisage the real and imagined borders of ASb folktale narrative

space as a reminder to creators of storybooks that children need access to many story worlds in various genres, settings, representations and imaginary spaces. All children should have access to sufficient and varied reading material in familiar languages – and thereby access to multiple narrative places and spaces in which to locate themselves. Herein lies the potential for children to find positions for themselves as agents in past, present and future narrative worlds – and by extension, in real worlds.

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Appendix A: Forty ASb folktales analysed in this study

Title	Author
An egg for bride wealth	Nambi Sseppuuya
Baby snatched by cranes	South African Folktale
Boy nobody loved	Phumy Zikode
Children of wax	Southern African Folktale
Crushed louse	Zimbili Dlamini
Danger of abandoning a mother	John Nga'sike
Demane and Demazane	South African Folktale
Dima and Owl	Traditional San story
First man and first woman	Southern African Folktale
Grandmother and the Smelly Girl	Southern African Folktale
Greedy Hyena	John Nga'sike
How night came to Opio's village	Robert Ekuka
Jaaka the fisherman	Tom Sabwa
Kalabushe, the talkative	Gaspah Juma
Katitu Momambo, the clever little girl	Traditional San story
Khayanga and her Gourd	Ursula Nafula
Lion that wanted friendship	Joachim Muhindo
Mulongo and the hyenas	Sarah Nangobi
Mulongo and the ogre	Fabian Wakholi
Musau saves his father	Kanyiva Sandi
Namukhaywa	Matthews M Wanga
Nelima Agagawala	Salaama Wanale
Ng'amorutung'a	Simon Ipoo
Nonkungu and the imbulu	Kenyon & Kenyon
Nozibele and the three hairs	Tessa Welch
Pam-Pam bird	Traditional San story
Rabbit under the tree	Phumy Zikode
The baboons that went this way and that	Southern African Folktale
The blacksmith's dilemma	Ugandan folktale
The generous fish	Kholeka Mabeta
The girl with one breast	Cornelius Wekunya
The Honeyguide's revenge	Zulu folktale
The Rain Bird	Joanne Bloch (retold folktale)
The Smell Thief	Joanne Bloch (retold folktale)
The talking bag	Caroline Lentupuru
The tree wife	Southern African Folktale
The wise man	Cornelius Wekunya
Tjenga and the eland man	Traditional San story
Tselane and the giant	Lorato Trok
Young Palinyang'	Gaspah Juma

Source: www.africanstorybook.org

Appendix B: Excel spreadsheet count analysis for 40 folktales

	Urb/Rural	Twn/Vllg/Ss/Cty	In/Outside	Expand/Restrict	Pres/Pst/Rmte P	Male/Fmle/Both	Adlt / Chld / Both	Anml/Hmn/Oth	Gd/Bd/Neu/?am	Character type Prgnn	ATU Type	Thompsn Motif	Thompsn Motif
An egg for bride wealth													
Setting	R	S	Ou	E	RP	Once upon a time					formula	humour	
Main1: Grandmother						F	A	H	G-	D			
Main2: Grandson						M	C	H	G-	Ho			
Other: egg						O	O	O	N	-			
Baby snatched by cranes													
Setting	R	V	Ou	E	Pa	Once upon a time					supernat	supernat	animal
Main1: "a family" (mthr, fthr, son, dghtr, baby)						bth	B	H	G-	-			
Main2: cranes						NC	*A*	An	G	-			
Other: frog						O	*A*	An	?	-			
Boy nobody loved													
Setting	R	S	Ou	E	P	Once upon a time					supernat	supernat	test
Main1: "a boy … so ugly that nobody loved him"						M	C	H	?	ah			
Main2: magic old woman						F	A	O	?G	D			
Other: magic root						O	O	O	?	-			
Children of wax													
Setting	R	S	Cb	E	RP	Once upon a time					supernat	supernat	
Main1: "a family" (esp. the 3 wax children)						bth	B	H	G	-			
Main2: wax son who melts						M	C	H	?	-			
Other: --													
Crushed louse													
Setting	R	S	Cb	E	RP	Long time ago					supernat	supernat	animal
Main1: "two young men"						M	A	H	?	ah			
Main2: the louse						NC	*A*	An	?	-			
Other: --													
Danger of abandoning a mother													
Setting	R	V	Ou	E	Pa	There lived a man					realistic	rwd/pun	
Main1: Lopido (husband)						M	A	H	Ng	-			
Main2: Akai (1st wife)						F	A	H	G	-			
Main3: Lopido's blind mother						F	A	H	?G	-			
Main4: Akitela (2nd wife)						F	A	H	Ng	-			
Demane and Demazane													
Setting	R	S	Cb	R	RP	Once upon a time					supernat	supernat	ogres,
Main1: Demane						M	C	H	G	Ho			
Main2: Demazane						F	C	H	G-	Vm			

Main 3: "huge hairy man" (cannibal?) (turns into tree)						M	A	O	Ng	V			
Dima and Owl													
Setting	R	S	Ou	E	RP	In the old days							
Main1: Dima ("magician")						M	A	NC	?G	Ho	supernat	supernat	myth
Main2: Owl						M	*A*	An	?Ng	?V			
Other: elements (sun, moon, fire, water)						O	O	O	G	-			
First man and first woman													
Setting	R	NS	Ou	R	RP	Long long ago							
Main1: snake (male) / first man						M	A	H	N	-	supernat	supernat	myth
Main2: snake (female) / first woman						F	A	H	N	-			
Other: Creation						O	O	O	G	-			
Girl who got rich													
Setting	R	S	Ou	E	RP	Once upon a time							
Main1: Nelima						F	C	H	G	Ho	supernat	supernat	rwd/pun
Main2: Namuya						F	C	H	Ng	V			
Main3: old woman						F	A	NC	?G	En			
Grandmother and the Smelly Girl													
Setting	R	S	Ou	E	RP	Tasneem was							
Main1: Tasneem						F	C	H	N	Ho	*not sure*	rwd/pun	
Main2: grandmother						F	A	H	Ho	En			
Other: Tasneem's parents						B	A	H	?	-			
Greedy hyena													
Setting	R	S	Ou	R	RP	Atabo and Akiru							
Main1: Atabo (daughter)						F	C	H	N	Ho	supernat	supernat	animal
Main2: Mother						F	A	H	G	Ho			
Main3: Hyena (villian)						M	*A*	An	Ng	V			
How night came to Opio's village													
Setting	R	V	Ou	E	RP	Long ago							
Main1: Opio						M	A	H	G	Ho	supernat	supernat	
Main2: man from another village						M	A	H	G	En			
Other: --													
Jaaka the fisherman													
Setting	R	S	Ou	E	Pr	This is Jaaka							
Main1: Jaaka						M	A	H	G	Ho	anecdote	chnc/fate	
Other: the Nile river						O	O	O	?	VEn			
Kalabushe, the talkative													
Setting	R	V	Cb	E	RP	Long time ago							
Main1: Kalabushe						F	C	H	G-	Ho	supernat	supernat	animal
Main2: Sinson (hynena changed into a person)						M	A	O	Ng	V			
Main3: Mother and Aunt						F	A	H	N	-			

Katitu Momambo, clever little girl													
Setting	R	V	Ou	E	RP	Once upon a time							
Main1: Katitu Momambo						F	C	H	G	Ho	supernat	supernat	animal
Main2: Katitu's 2 sisters						F	C	H	Ng	V			
Other: Katitu's brother & "young men of the hmestd"						M	C	H	G	Hh			
Khayanga and her Gourd													
Setting	NC	S	Ou	NC	NC	Khayanga lived							
Main1: Khayanga						F	C	H	G	Ho	supernat	supernat	
Main2: Khayanga's dead parents						bth	A	H	G	Hh			
Other: the Gourd						O	O	O	G	En			
Lion that wanted friendship													
Setting	R	S	Cb	E	RP	Once upon a time							
Main1: the lion						M	A	An	?	-	anecdote	animal	
Main2: the man						M	*A*	H	?	-			
Other:--													
Mulongo and the hyenas													
Setting	R	V	Cb	R	NC	There was once							
Main1: Mulongo						F	C	H	G	Ho	supernat	supernat	animal
Main2:"the big hyena"						M	*A*	An	?Ng	V			
Other: Perhaps: parents													
Mulongo and the ogre													
Setting	R	V	Ou	E	RP	A long time ago							
Main1: Mulongo						M	A	H	Ho	Ho	stupid ogre	ogres, gnts	
Main2: Nambuya						F	A	H	G	Hh			
Main 3: Ogre						M	A	O	Ng	V			
Musau saves his father													
Setting	R	V	Cb	R	Pa	Once upon a time							
Main1: Musau (son)						M	C	H	G	Ho	realistic	fortune	
Main2: Syonzola (father)						M	A	H	NgG	-			
Other: --													
Namukhaywa													
Setting	R	V	Cb	Cb	Pa	Long time ago							
Main1: Namukhaywa (wife)						F	A	H	G	-	realistic	fortune	
Main2: Ndong'a (husband)						M	A	H	?	-			
Main3: Mulongo (abandoned twin)						F	A	H	G	Ho			
Namoratunga													
Setting	R	V	Ou	E	RP	Long time ago							
Main1: Villagers who dance edonga (turn to stone)						NC	A	H	N	Vm	supernat	supernat	myth
Main2: "a stranger" (villian)						M	A	O	Ng	V			
Other: "the site of Namoratunga" stone shapes						O	O	O	N	-			

Nonkungu and the imbulu

Setting	R	V	Ou	E	RP	Once upon a time							
Main1: Nonkungu						F	C	H	G	Ho	supernat	supernat	
Main2: imbulu						F	C	O	Ng	V			
Main3: Mtonyama (uncle)						M	A	H	H	En			

Nozibele and the three hairs

Setting	R	V	Cb	Cb	RP	A long time ago							
Main1: Nozibele						F	C	H	G-	Ho	supernat	supernat	animal
Main2: the dog						M	*A*	An	Ng	V			
Other: the three hairs						O	O	O	N?	-			

Pam-Pam bird

Setting	R	S	Ou	E	RP	Pensa was							
Main1: Pensa						M	A	H	G	Ho	supernat	supernat	animal
Main2: Pam-Pam						*M*	*A*	An	G	En			
Main3: "the wise man, their healer"						M	A	H	G	D			

Rabbit under the tree

Setting	NC	NC	Ou	E	Pa	Rabbit was							
Main1: the boy						M	C	H	N?	D	formula	humour	animal
Main2: rabbit						F	*NC*	An	N?	ah			
Other: other animals rabbit meets						NC	*A*	An	N?	-			

The baboons that went this way and that

Setting	R	V	Ou	E	RP	There was much							
Main1: Families (Humans who become baboons)						bth	B	An	(Ng)	-	*not sure*	animal	supernat
Main2:--													
Other: --													

The blacksmith's dilemma

Setting	R	V	Cb	E	RP	Once upon a time							
Main1: Ratshipi (blacksmith)						M	A	H	G	Ho	*not sure*	supernat	test
Main2: Kgosi Mogale (chief of the village)						M	A	H	G-	D			
Main3: Rapule (the old man)						M	A	H	G	Hh			

The generous fish

Setting	R	V	Ou	E	RP	Once upon a time							
Main1: Nosisa						F	C	H	G	Ho	supernat	supernat	animal
Main2: Mpunzi (step-mother)						F	A	H	Ng	V			
Main3: the fish						F	*A*	An	G	En			

The girl with one breast

Setting	R	S	Ou	E	RP	A long time ago							
Main1: "a man"						M	A	H	?	ah	supernat	supernat	
Main2: "A tall, slender … beautiful girl"						F	A	O	Ng	V			
Main3: the man's wife						F	A	H	G	Vm			

The Honeyguide's revenge

Setting	R	S	Ou	E	RP	This is the story						
Main1: Ngede (Honeyguide bird)						M	*A*	An	G	Ho?	supernat	supernat
Main2: Gingile ("a greedy young man")						M	A	H	Ng?	FH?		
Main3: Leopard						F	*A*	An	N	Hh		

The Rain Bird

Setting	R	V	Ou	E	RP	In a country called							
Main1: Ketti						F	C	H	G	Ho	supernat	supernat	animal
Main2: "Ketti's father"						M	A	H	Ng-	V?			
Main3: "the bird that made rain"						F	*A*	An	G	?			

The Smell Thief

Setting	NC	T	In	R	Pr	Mr Shabangu was						
Main1: Mr Shabangu (baker)						M	A	H	Ng-	ah	realistic	wise/fool
Main2: Ma Shange ("who slept on a bench…")						F	A	H	G	Ho		
Main3: judge Ngwenya						M	A	H	G	Hh		

The talking bag

Setting	R	NC	Ou	E	RP	Once upon a time							
Main1: "a female giant"						F	A	O	Ng	V	supernat	ogres, gnts	supernat
Main2: little girl who "is loved by both parents"						F	C	H	G	Vm			
Main3: man (who saves girl)						M	A	H	G	Ho?			

The tree wife

Setting	R	V	Ou	E	RP	Once upon a time						
Main1: "a man who had plenty of everything"						M	A	H	?	Ho	supernat	supernat
Main2: tree wife						F	A	O	?	?		
Other: "young men from a neighbouring village"						M	A	H	Ng	V		

The wise man

Setting	NC	S	NC	E	Pa	Once upon a time						
Main1: "a man who thought that the youth…"						M	A	H	Ng-	ah	anecdote	wise/fool
Main2: father-in-law to man						M	A	H	G	Ho		
Other: wife (of foolish man, daughter of wise man)						F	A	H	N	-		

Tjenga and the eland man

Setting	R	S	Ou	E	RP	This story is about							
Main1: Tjenga						M	C	H	G-	Ho	supernat	supernat	animal
Main2: Ngu						M	C	H	Ng	ah			
Main3: Tjenga's father						M	A	H	G	En			
Main4: "eland man"						M	*A*	O	?	-			

Tselane and the giant

Setting	R	V	Cb	E	RP	Once upon a time						
Main: Tselane						F	C	H	G	Vm	stupid ogre	ogres, gnts
Main 2: Tselane's mother						F	A	H	G	Ho		
Main 3: the giant						M	A	O	Ng	V		

Young Palinyang'

Setting	R	V	Ou	E	RP	Long time ago…					realistic	fortune
Main1: "an orphan boy called Palinyang'"						M	C	H	G	Ho		
Main2: Alingyang' (cow)						F	*A*	An	G	Hh		
Main3: Lokeyokoni (adopts Palinyang)						M	A	H	G	En		

Appendix C: Vocabulary frequency searches (occurrence per book and total for corpus)

	No. of books	Total occurences
able	2	3
afraid	5	9
age	1	1
alone	6	11
angry	7	11
animal	11	40
apart	0	0
ashamed	1	1
ask	23	60
attack	2	4
aunt	3	15
baby	3	35
bad	7	15
beads	3	11
beat	1	1
beautiful	14	30
big	15	38
bored	1	1
boy	12	45
brave	0	0
brother	6	16
car, bus	0	0
care	10	12
chief	2	8
child	10	25
choice	0	0
chores	3	3
city	0	0
clean	2	6
close	4	4
cook	6	24
count	0	0
court	1	2
cow	6	20
cry	11	31
culture	1	1
curious	0	0
dark	11	20
daughter	10	16
day	34	80

dead, death	6	8
deceive	1	1
different	4	6
dream	1	1
drink	9	12
eat	13	29
enemy	0	0
enjoy	5	5
evil	0	0
excited	2	2
family	15	37
far	9	11
farm, frmr	1	1
fat	2	3
father	15	55
fear	3	5
feel	4	4
field	5	9
fire	12	43
fly	4	13
food	20	45
forest	7	38
freedom	1	2
friend	10	26
fun	0	0
game	1	2
girl	12	53
grandfather	0	0
grandmother	2	17
handsome	1	1
happy	11	18
hate	0	0
healer	1	7
health	1	1
herd	1	2
hero	2	2
hill	6	14
hit	3	6
hope	3	3
house	16	40
human	4	7
hungry	6	6
hunt	6	13
hurt	2	2

husband	6	14
inside	8	10
joke	0	0
judge	1	10
kill	8	17
king	2	2
laugh	6	13
laws	3	6
leader	1	1
learn	3	3
lie	4	4
light	9	14
listen	9	12
love	15	38
man	18	57
marry	5	10
mother	17	73
mountain	3	4
near	10	11
new	12	22
obey	1	1
old	15	73
open	11	38
outside	5	7
parent	14	27
path	3	7
peace	2	2
person	7	13
place	12	25
play	8	17
poor	2	3
power	1	1
pretty	1	1
problem	4	5
proud	3	3
queen	1	1
quiet	5	7
read	3	3
respect	2	2
rich	7	10
ride	1	1
river	8	29
road	1	1
rules	1	1

run	9	43
sad	7	11
safe	4	5
save	9	13
school	5	7
shout	8	10
sick	1	3
sister	5	25
sleep	13	19
small	9	13
smile	3	5
solve	1	1
son	10	19
speak	3	4
stranger	3	11
strong	5	5
talk	9	17
television	1	1
tell	11	13
thin	2	2
thirsty	3	3
time	34	75
together	8	12
town	2	5
tradition	7	20
travel	1	1
tree	18	68
tribe	0	0
truth	0	0
ugly	1	2
unable	0	0
uncle	4	12
village	19	84
walk	18	47
watch	4	4
weak	3	4
wheel	0	0
whisper	2	2
wife	11	50
woman	12	65
work	10	12
worker	0	0
working/ed	2	2
works	0	0

world	3	6
worry	5	5
write	0	0
young	12	34

Appendix D: Additional graphs for Chapter 4

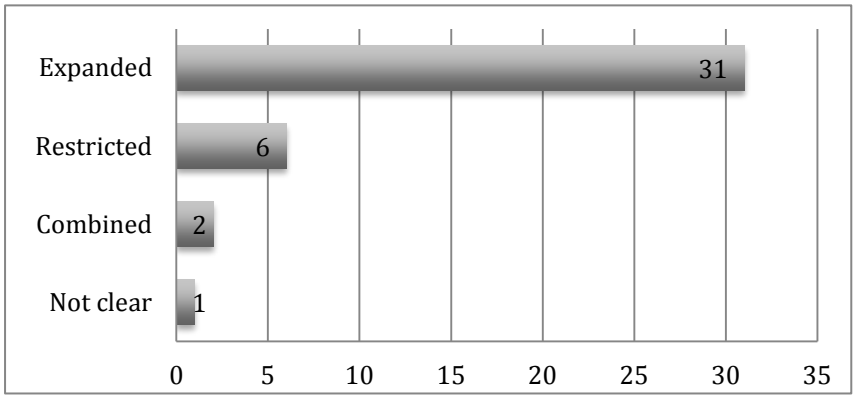

Figure 4.4. Expanded and restricted space in the folktales

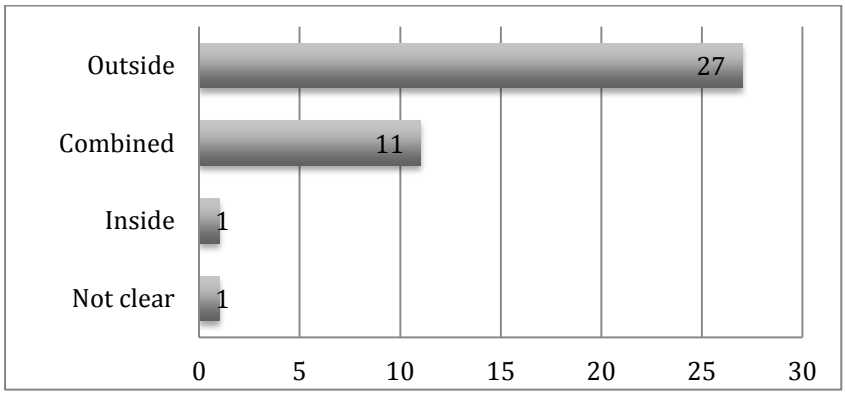

Figure 4.5. Characters and events mainly inside or outside of dwellings

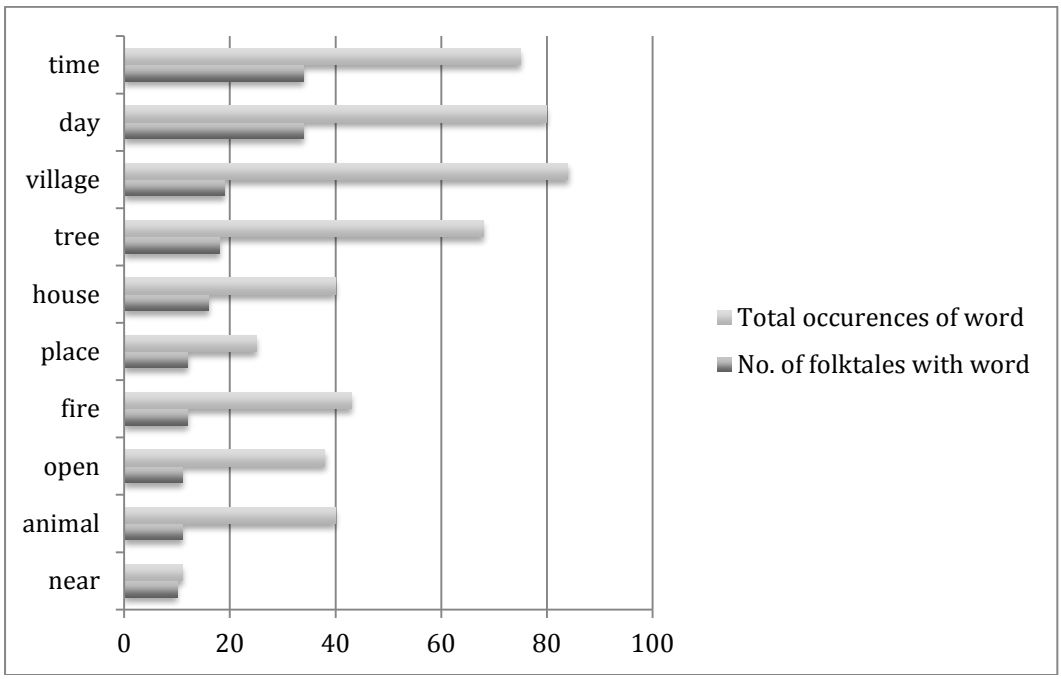

Figure 4.6. Ten most frequently occurring words related to setting (space, place and time) (includes suffixed forms)

Appendix E: Additional graph for Chapter 5

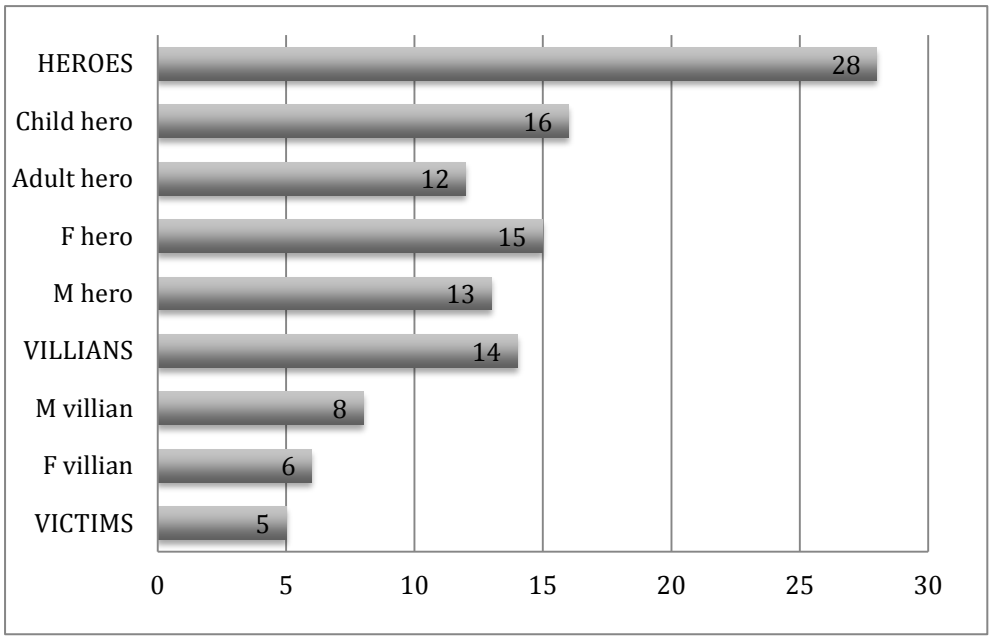

Figure 5.4. Number of heroes, villains and victims identified in folktales