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Abstract

The Tui Street Tales is a collection of stories for children aged approximately nine to twelve years. The stories take place in Tui Street, where two boys realise that fairy tale themes are running through the mysteries occurring in their street. They, along with other Tui Street children, set out to solve these mysteries. Contemporary issues facing children today are explored, such as divorce, cyberbullying, parental death and environmental pollution. Archetypal expectations are often subverted, as characters forge their own paths. The New Zealand setting is often a character itself and influences events and characters.

The exegesis accompanying this thesis explores how the European fairy tale has both influenced and been influenced by society and culture throughout history. It explores how, over the last fifty years in particular, writers have re-written fairy tales not only as a vehicle for social change, but to restore them to something more like their original selves. It also explores how elements of the traditional fairy tale have appeared and might yet appear in a modern New Zealand context. This research both enriched and informed the process of writing *The Tui Street Tales*.

Kia Ora,

Fairy Tale

by Anne Kayes

Kia Ora, Fairy Tale

An exploration of how a collection of contemporary New Zealand fairy tales might be influenced by, incorporate and resist genre constraints and conventions

Introduction

Synopsis

Once upon a time, a fairy tale came to Tui Street and visited the people who lived there. Some things were not going well: Jack's mother had secrets, the creek had dried up and Terri was being cyber-bullied, to name a few. The children began to notice fairy tale themes to these problems. Jack and Tim were forced to put their detective skills to work. Much was at risk: a friend's safety, a morepork's life, the privacy of a Pacific princess. Furthermore, Aotearoa's landscape, birdlife and folklore became involved. Luckily, facing challenges led to unexpected achievements. The children found themselves coaching a wheelchair soccer team, pacifying a wild creature from Maori folklore and re-thinking their stereotypes about giants. Almost everyone lived happily ever after. Well, sort of.

The Tui Street Tales is a collection of stories set in New Zealand for children aged nine - twelve years. The stories explore elements of the European fairy tale genre in a modern New Zealand context. The stories are connected by two key characters, Jack and Tim, who realise that there is a fairy tale theme underlying the events occurring in their street. They, along with neighbouring children, become involved in solving the puzzles and challenges facing them in each Tui Street story.

Motivations and aims

The development of this collection of New Zealand children's stories is motivated by a curiosity about how and why the traditional fairy tale has inspired so many re-tellings and re-writings in literature, film, television and other arts. I wondered whether the reason for this could be that, though the individual plots change from era to era, their fundamental ideas continue to resonate for children today. I also wondered how they might resonate in a small cul-de-sac in contemporary, suburban New Zealand, where those same themes could be explored through present-day concerns, such as blended families, divorce, illness, cyberbullying and environmental issues. This led to my first aim: to re-write and re-contextualise traditional European fairy tales into modern, Kiwi versions and explore how original themes might 'play out' in contemporary situations.

Another motivation is my discomfort with traditional fairy tale endings. I remember as a child, feeling that Hansel and Gretel should not have returned to live with a father who had previously tried to abandon them in the woods. This interest in and frustration with power relations that are deeply embedded in societal structures, led to my second aim: to write as a socio-political act, to question this allegiance to authority for authority's sake found in fairy tales. My stories take the twenty-first century reader to a place where gender equality, racial equality and more respectful treatment of children are explored. This place may already be familiar to a child, or it may simply highlight the possibility of such a 'home' in the future. To build this contemporary Aotearoa 'home' or Turangawaewae[1], I included Maori folklore, Te Reo and characters with Maori and Pasifika names and of a variety of ethnicities. I included girls who, like boys, actively

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[1] Turangawaewae – in the sense that a place culturally and psychologically feels like home

shape their lives. I decided to interweave objects that are distinctly Kiwi or Pasifika, such as a tui or a lavalava, alongside aspects of contemporary culture today, such as Facebook.

A further motivation for these stories is that, in this era of global warming and terrorism, children need to be reminded of the fact that there is hope. Therefore, my third aim is to incorporate reasonably happy endings, rather than the often impossible and unattainable 'happy ever after' of traditional fairy tales. The Tui Street characters actively work towards endings that show how, at the other end of difficulty, things can be reasonably good.

c) Exegesis Outline

The following discussion is divided into four parts. If my creative work is to explore how and why elements of the traditional fairy continue to feature in modern tales and how these elements might express themselves in contemporary Aotearoa, my research needs to begin with the traditional fairy tale. Therefore, the first part, "Literary Theories", will explore the history of the fairy tale. I categorized this into three phases: the early fairy tale, the impact of single authorship and the sanitization of the fairy tale. This first part will also explore how the fairy tale survived over time. I have separated this into three categories too: a discussion of the "meme", the debate between traditionalists and revisionists and the concept of "home" in the re-written fairy tale.

The second part of this discussion, "Finding 'home' in Aotearoa", researches re-written fairy tales over the last half-century in Aotearoa.

The third part discusses how my research into the genre has shaped and informed my creative work.

The conclusion evaluates the successes and difficulties of developing my creative work within the context of my research topic and my initial motivations. It then sums up how my creative work might now connect to the world of marketing, publication and readership.

Literary theories on the fairy tale

History – Three phases

Phase 1: The Early fairy tale

Fairy tales began with the ancient art of oral story-telling. As time passed, they became the stories of less-educated, rural, peasant communities, enjoyed by adults and children alike. Communal authorship meant fairy tales were archetypal[2] rather than personal and that numerous versions of fairy tales were told, rather than one single, original, literary version. Even the same story-teller's words would vary in each telling of a story (Vandergrift, 1997). "Like the wizards who roam through enchanted woods, the tales themselves are shape-shifters: elusive, mysterious, mutable, capable of wearing many

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[2] Archetype- refers to both ancient, (for example 'earth mother'), and Jungian archetypes appearing in fairy tales.

different forms. This fact is at the core of their power and is the source of their

longevity" (Windling, & Datlow, 1998, p.1-2).

These ancient tales shared similar features. Archetypal male and female characters

were equally active in the plot. Magic and supernatural helpers were involved. A hero

faced obstacles, trials and tests on a journey to a better physical, emotional or moral

situation. Violence and sex were integral to the stories, (although it's likely these were

played down when children were awake).These original fairy tale elements appear in

an old version of *Sleeping Beauty*, discovered by Midori Snyder (1999), and set in

Arabia. The story involves Sleeping Beauty and a Sultan's son equally experiencing

emotions, sexual pleasure and a long, death-like sleep. Snyder comments on how this

mutual experience of 'death' signifies the end of childhood and waking each other

initiates adulthood, leading to a marriage of equals. Both are heroes travelling an

ancient plot structure involving tests, death and resurrection (Vogler, 1985).

Phase 2: The Impact of Single Authorship

Transcription of fairy tales led to single authorship, causing a shift in power to take

place.

> The particular variant rendered into writing took on borrowed authority from the page.
> Quite simply, it *became* the tale. Not only listeners seated in a particular audience at a
> particular time could hear the tale. Audiences separated by time and space could hear it
> as well. …… Authority is a word that grew from the root *author*. And so author and
> power became inextricably linked. By setting down a tale onto a page, the scribe
> became the "owner" of a story. (Yolen, 1981, p. 23)

An example of this is Charles Perrault's version of *Cinderella*, published in 1697, and the most widely-known today. Disney films and Little Golden Books have been based on this version. Prior to this, however, were many Cinderella stories, ranging from the earliest-known Egyptian *Rhodipus*, recorded in the first century BC, by Strabo, a Greek historian, to a Chinese version, written between 856-860 AD, where a fish gives magical help to the young woman instead of a fairy godmother (Heiner, 1999-2007, see also Salda, 2007 & Snyder & Windling, 1997).

The fact that widely-distributed, written fairy tales had male authors meant that, over time, female characters had less active involvement in the stories. *Sleeping Beauty*, for example, was no longer a tale of equals. Giambattista Basile's version, called *Sun and Moon and Talia* (1634), involves the young woman being impregnated by a married king and giving birth while asleep. Her twins wake her by dislodging the flax in her thumb. The king's wife attempts to have both the children and Sleeping Beauty murdered. The king has his wife put to death and marries Sleeping Beauty. A woman's lot, if this fairy tale is an indication, was to sexually gratify, bear children or, if barren, disappear quietly or be murdered.

Basile's story was later re-written by Perrault (1697), who exchanged the first wife for a cannibalistic ogre mother-in-law, also murdered at the end. Snyder (1999, p. 2) notes the difference between these and the earlier Arabian version: "Sleeping Beauty is still the centerpiece of the tale - but less as an actor and more as an object of power to be acquired, even at the expense of one's marriage and one's mother." The powerlessness

of women at that time is clearly reflected in both Perrault and Basile's versions of

Sleeping Beauty.

Despite this gender bias, seventeenth century women were actually writing and

publishing fairy tales. Between 1690 and 1715, seventy-four of the one hundred and

twelve "comtes de fees" published in France were written by women. Faithful to earlier

traditions, they often had "the same themes of challenge to patriarchal authority,

continuous conflict between the adult and the young, alarming tendency to self-

discovery, self-respect , and self-reliance, by both young women and young men, …"

(Summerfield, 2002, p.2). The protagonist in one particular story, *L'Oranger et*

l'abeille, shares the concept of a good marriage portrayed in the original Arabian

Sleeping Beauty. She believes a marriage "must not be a forced servitude, and

unbalanced contract of do's and don't's but an alliance between two individuals who

have decided to be together because they love and respect each other" (Summerfield,

2002, p.2). These women reflected the lives of real women in their stories and, though

unable to change institutional gender discrimination, they were able to show women

that they too could be powerful. The value of this is encapsulated in socio-narratologist,

Arthur Frank's view that "Stories work to emplot lives: they offer a plot that makes

some particular future not only plausible but also compelling" (2010, p.11). While some

girls were 'emplotting' Perrault's narrower version of how females ought to behave,

others were fortunate enough to have read these stories of lesser-known women writers

in Europe.

Phase 3: Sanitization

The sexual, magical and violent content of fairy tales underwent a sanitization process during the Victorian era. More complex human behaviour was "watered down" too, so that the depth of character and relationships was diminished (Datlow & Windling, 1998). This process was partly due to the Victorians' romantic view of childhood. Fairy tales from the countryside's past became part of that quaint image. The adult material in older versions of the tales became "edited, glossed over, or deleted over the years, primarily sex, incest, murder, and cannibalism to name a few" (Heiner, 2009, para.5). This process of making the fairy tale more child-friendly, according to Datlow and Windling (1994), was like "pulling the teeth of the darker old tales – and in that process something of their heart and lifeblood was lost to us as well" (p.3).

The Grimms' first and second editions of *Rapunzel* are an example of this dilution. Rapunzel's nights of passion with the prince are revealed in the first edition, when Rapunzel's pregnancy is implied by her request for help from the sorceress to do up her too-tight dress. However, in the second edition, Rapunzel simply remarks that the sorceress is heavier to lift to the top of the tower than the prince (Zelinsky, n.d.). The pregnancy has disappeared. During this period, according to Zipes (1994), fairy tales also became, "new moralistic tales that were aimed at the domestication of the imagination" (p.14&15). Like the editing of *Rapunzel* by the Grimms, Zipes explains that popular writers in the 1800's **"**exercised self-censorship and restraint in conceiving and writing down tales for children." One could argue that the Victorian fairy tale was so reduced that it metaphorically resembled the thirteenth fairy in the recent movie, *Maleficent,* (Krisher, 2014 & Woolverton, 2014) whose wings were brutally clipped. By

the nineteenth century, the fairy tale genre, so reduced at the hands of the didactic

Victorian era, had barely survived (Salway, 1976). It had become a vehicle for

communicating morals, facts or religious information.

Another aspect of the traditional fairy tale that 'had its wings clipped' was the magical

content. Jack Zipes, (2012), explains that European societies once believed that magic

could be performed by certain people, such as wizards, witches and fairies. Animals

could also perform magic and were often able to speak. These became dangerous beliefs

by the 1400's when, due to Christianity, magic of any sort was linked to the devil. By

the end of the eighteenth century, the Age of Enlightenment in the West, contributed to

a further 'watering down' of magic in fairy tales. God, the supernatural, the devil and

magic were all replaced with rationality, reason and science.

Removing devilish, magical content meant that powerful, magical, archetypal

characters were most at risk of 'having their wings clipped'. Even more at risk were

the female magical archetypes. Zipes (2012) explains that "in early tales about women

as witches and fairies, there were certainly thousands of stories …… in which

heroines were assertive, confident and courageous – in short, nobody's slave" (p.80).

However, as seen in the journey of *Sleeping Beauty*, the patriarchal view of women as

servile, domestic breeders meant that female characters were portrayed as passive and

helpless. It is possible too, that those male collectors and writers of fairy tales

transferred their own disapproval and possible fear of these powerful women by

painting them as evil. Walker (1996) argues this in the case of *Snow White*:

> …..the last bastion of female spiritual power fell when the church declared its all-out war on witches, the name they gave to rural midwives, herbalists, counselors and village wisewomen, inheritors of the unravelling cloak of the pre-Christian priestess. A queen who was also a witch would have been a formidable figure, adding political influence to spiritual mana. Snow White's step mother, therefore seems to me a projection of male jealousies. (p.19)

Much like the women of the bible, female characters could only now be depicted as saintly or sinful. However, despite this 'clipping' or mutilation of magical 'wings', some fairy tales still managed to fly from one century to the next.

Survival

The Meme

The life of a fairy tale spans over generations because, according to Jack Zipes, that particular fairy tale is a "meme" (2012). The concept of a meme was introduced by Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* (1976). Dawkins believed that an idea could be replicated, like a gene, throughout evolution. Zipes calls the meme a "unit of cultural transmission" (2012, p.18). He believed that, "an epidemiological approach to fairy tales can enable us to understand how strains of fairy tales are formed and spread as types of memetic communication" (2006b, pp.100-101). If a piece of oral, written or symbolic information is important enough, the fairy tale will focus the audience on that information, increasing readers' awareness of risks in their own situation, either individually, socially or politically.

This memetic warning can be seen in *Cinderella* and *Snow White*, where the death of a child's mother might result in re-marriage, jealous stepmothers, sibling rivalry,

neglect, abandonment, physical abuse or paternal death. A child may also be at risk of

sexual abuse or incest, like the girl in an older, lesser-known fairy tale, *Donkeyskin*

(Heiner, 2002), whose father wishes to marry her. All of these possibilities are still

relevant today. In New Zealand, for example, "at least twenty confirmed cases of

child abuse and/or neglect occur every day, resulting in an average of seven deaths

due to child abuse every year" (Shanahan, 2011, para.7). American and Canadian

studies specify which adult is abusive: "a co-residing step-parent was approximately

seventy times more likely to kill a child under two years of age than was a co-residing

genetic parent, and this odds ratio was still about fifteen for teenage victims" (Daly &

Wilson, 1998, p.32). Not surprising then, that *Cinderella* and *Snow White* still

resonate today.

Another possible reason the fairy tale has become a meme, is that it shows a

powerless individual triumphing over adversity and abuse. *Cinderella* is an example

of this utopian ideal. Zipes (2006b) describes how storytellers wished to "keep alive a

certain hope that powerless folk could overcome obstacles, determine their own

destinies, outwit giants and prevent ogres and witches from eating them" (p.239).

Traditional versus revisionist analyses of fairytales

There are those who analyse fairy tales by placing them in their historical context and

those, often referred to as 'revisionists', who use contemporary understandings to

analyse them. The former included psychologist, Bruno Bettelheim, who believed that

tampering with the traditional fairy tale could interfere with a child's developmental

process.

> Fairy tales offer figures onto which the child can externalize what goes on in his mind, in controllable ways. Fairy tales show the child how he can embody his destructive wishes in one figure, gain desired satisfactions from another, identify with a third, have ideal attachments with a fourth, and so on, as his needs of the moment require. (Bettelheim, 1976, p.65 & 66)

In *Hansel and Gretel* for example, Bettelheim believes that food is about nurture and individuation. The mother/stepmother becomes the 'bad mother' who refuses to feed the children anymore, enforcing Hansel and Gretel's developmental separation from their mother. The gingerbread house is a symbol of the archetypal 'mother', who nourishes with her body. By eating this house, the children regress to the blissful state of living off their mother, akin to breastfeeding, which negates steps taken towards necessary independence (Bettelheim, 1976).

Bettelheim emphasises the risks of altering symbolism such as the 'good mother' and 'bad mother'. Gould (2005) expands on this, explaining that, in stories of wicked stepmothers, "although the girl never suspects the truth, it's Nature as the Terrible Mother, taking the form of wicked stepmother, witch or thirteenth fairy, who is the agent of growth, propelling the girl out of maidenhood and forward into sexuality, which is something the Good Mother – who wants her child to remain a child forever – could never do" (p.4).

This psycho-analytical argument against the re-writing of traditional fairy tales has received much criticism from revisionists. From a feminist perspective, Seifert (1996) argues that the concept of women as 'good mother' or 'bad mother' was often due to the notion that women were linked to the phases of the moon, evidenced by menstrual

cycles. Unstable emotionally, their moods correlated with their cycle. Summerfield

(2002) further argues that the good mother/bad mother archetype was due to a mother's

lack of autonomy in her role as mother within the patriarchal system. Furthermore,

young women's marriages were often arranged. "Thus bearing children was nothing

more than a continuation of an imposition and a resentment that was to reflect itself in

their relation with the offspring, fruit of this unfortunate and forced relationship"

(Summerfield, 2002, p.3.). Zipes (1979) argues that, although fairy tales "have played

and continue to play a significant role in the socialization process," he finds "the

manner in which Bettelheim would impose meaning onto child development through

the therapeutic use of the folk tale authoritarian and unscientific" (para.3).

More recently, the field of psycho-analysis has approached fairy tales in a less

restrictive way. Sheldon Cashdan (1999) deconstructs fairy tale themes, for example,

'vanity' in *Snow White*, 'envy' in *Cinderella* and 'gluttony' in *Hansel and Gretel*. In the

latter, the characters' greed opens up discussion on the struggle between pleasing

ourselves and caring for others. Cashdan suggests the deeper significance is "knowing

when enough is enough" (1999, p.13). Essentially, it seems Cashdan is talking about a

meme. Furthermore, despite Cashdan's less-regimented psycho-analytical treatment of

traditional fairy tales, the sexist, authoritarian power structures that underpin those tales

still remain.

Revisionists are concerned with how traditional fairy tales perpetuate this repression

of minority groups. In *Hansel and Gretel* children are fattened to be eaten. Zipes

(2006b) argues that there is "a common thread running from ancient times to the very

present that underlies many of our tales: we eat our young, and if we don't succeed,

we confront them with the question, to be or not to be eaten" (p. 226). He argues that

today we see corrupt governments that do nothing to stop the murder of innocent

children, (Syria and Palestine come to mind). Whether our children are forced into

becoming child soldiers in Ethiopia or forced into the cut-throat world of capitalism,

we are preparing them to become either consumers or the consumed. Zipes (2006b)

asks the question, "Do we tell fictional stories and maintain illusory traditions that

foster intolerance, ignorance, racism, sexism and wars?" (p. 226) or do we use the

same storytelling to increase understanding of other cultures, to "feed listeners and

tellers alike so that they will not have to fear abuse, abandonment and betrayal?"

(p.227).

Although traditional fairy tales are clearly problematic in the ways Zipes describes, they

also provide valuable insights into how communities functioned in the past. Traditional

archetypes and archetypal journeys provide much to explore in the field of psycho-

analysis and in the arts. The plethora of re-written versions of fairy tales shows that they

are rich fodder for writers as a vehicle for change. Zipes (2006a) describes this re-

envisaging process as one where writers "don't worship the past and tradition, but

demand that the past and tradition justify themselves in the present. In turn, they ask

that their remoulding of the past and tradition be questioned" (p.241). Re-written fairy

tales seek to project a different or better future. They are a political act as well as, often,

a good read.

Finding 'Home' in the Re-written Fairy Tale

One aspect of revisionist analysis of fairy tales is the concept of 'home'. In New Zealand, the word 'Turangawaewae' resonates with this concept. The Utopian idealist and Marxist philosopher, Ernst Bloch, believed that the hero's journey modelled how oppression could be overcome and how the archetypal underdog could survive through quick-thinking and intelligence in order to eventually have a better life (Bloch, 1971). He likened this happy ending to finding 'home':

> Once man has comprehended himself and has established his own domain in real democracy, without depersonalization and alienation something arises in the world which all men have glimpsed in childhood: a place and a state in which no one has yet been. And the name of this something is home or homeland. (Bloch, 1971, p.44-45)

Zipes (2006a) draws on Bloch and Freud's concept of 'home' to illustrate "the liberating potential" of the fairy tale both psychologically and on a collective human level. Freud's view of 'home', he explains, describes a familiar place of comfort within us. "The process of reading involves dislocating the reader from his or her familiar setting and then identifying with the dislocated protagonist so that a quest for the…real home can begin" (2006a, p.173). This happens in two ways: 1) through the reader's inner psychological journey and 2) within the tale itself, where the protagonist experiences a socialization process and learns about social values that empower him or her.

Many re-written fairy tales end with the protagonist's disappointment in the ending. This compels the reader to explore why that reality did not feel like "home". A feminist example of this is *The Paperbag Princess* by Robert Munsch (1980), where the

princess, who has fought a dragon to save the prince, realises she doesn't want to marry him because all he notices after her huge efforts, is that she looks dirty and dishevelled. This story asks its readers to re-negotiate what 'home' is, alongside the disappointed princess.

There are many creative methods a writer might use to write a 'liberating tale' that re-negotiates our concept of 'home'. Zipes (2006a) outlines two of the most common methods. Firstly, there is 'transfiguration' of the classical tale, where recognizable features are "transfigured so that their repressive substance is subverted" (p.181). Though the original and transfigured version may contain some of the same features, there is "reversal of form, characters and motifs…. to expand the possibilities to question the fairy tale discourse within the civilizing process" (p.181).

Some feminist examples of transfiguration are *Prince Cinders* by Babette Cole (1987), where the gender of the archetypal hero and heroine is swapped. Prince Cinders is thin and weak and bullied by his big, ape-like, hairy brothers. Other examples subvert stereotyped behaviour. In Barbara Walker's 'Feminist Fairy Tales' (2006) Snow White's stepmother defies stereotypes through her fondness for her step-daughter and willingness to greet aging with wisdom and acceptance. Others subvert plot structure expectations, such as the recent movie *Snow White and the Huntsman* (Mercer & Roth, 2012), where denouement expectations were subverted by ending without a marriage at all.

Many examples of transfiguration simply have female characters who are more active in the plot. An example of this is *The Sisters Grimm* (Buckley, 2005), where fictitious female descendants of the Grimm brothers are the protagonists. *The Wide-Awake Princess* (Paterson, 2000) has the protagonist blessed with being fully awake. In her present-ness, she sees poverty and inequality and sets out to right them.

Similarly, some transfigurations ask that the reader apply a more humane, just approach to the fairy tale. *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by John Scieszka (1989) asks the reader to question the evilness of the 'villain', as the wolf relays his version of the story to the writer. These and the multiple versions of re-written fairy tales continually ask that we re-think our ideas of 'home'.

The second most commonly used method of re-writing that Zipes refers to is 'fusion', where 'traditional configurations' are fused with 'contemporary references within settings and plotlines unfamiliar to readers yet designed to arouse their curiosity and interest" (2006a, p.178). An example of this is a story for older readers, *The Black Fairy's Curse* (Fowler, 1998), where a woman dreams of a man she passionately loves. Waking to her husband on top of her, she knows she must hide her anger for the rest of her life. Through fusion, the contrast between this ending and Sleeping Beauty's 'happily ever after' is highlighted.

Re-written versions of fairy tales set in Aotearoa ask also that we re-think our ideas of 'home'. In her analysis of postmodern fairy tales, Bacchilega (1997) describes the fairy

tale as "that in-between image where folklore and literature, community and individual, consensus and enterprise, children and adults, Woman and women, face and reflect (on) each other" (p.10). The fairy tale itself is a "magic mirror, because it conflates mimesis (reflection), refraction (varying desires), and framing (artifice)." Using this mirror analogy, New Zealand would merge and interact with the fairy tale in distinct and unique ways. 'Home' in contemporary Aotearoa would be unlike 'home' anywhere else.

Finding 'home' in Aotearoa

"Not least among human freedoms is the ability to tell the story differently and to begin to live according to that different story" (Frank, 2010, p.11). How true Frank's words are for the European fairy tale which, arriving in Aotearoa, had the indigenous folklore, people, culture, language and landscape to integrate with.

Pre-colonial Aotearoa included rich folklore, filled with magical creatures. Patupaiarehe, forest fairies, were not unlike the Irish fairies who disliked fire or steam and whose keening voices have been compared to the Maori nose flute, the koauau (Cowan, 1930). The Maeroero, the monstrous, ape-like creature that can tear a human to pieces, appears often in tales. There are stories of magical birds, such as Pou-rangahua, who flew home to Aotearoa on the back of a Moa (Howes 1913 & Reed, 1999). There is the bird-woman who captured people in her claws and the human-eating bird, the Poua-kai (Reed, 1970 & 1972).

It seems too that, like early European female fairy tale characters, female characters in Maori folk tales were as equally active in the plot as men were. In one story, recorded by Grace (1901), a young woman named Putangi is kidnapped by a Maero. When her husband comes to rescue her, she assists him with her quick-thinking and trickery, leading the Maero into a fire where he, a bloodless creature, cracks and burns like wood.

Archetypal journeys and characters abound in Maori folklore. There are tricksters, foolish youngsters who do not listen to their elders, heroic men and women and wise Koro and Kuia. There are moral tales, like *Rona and the Moon*, where Rona is punished for her constant anger and forced to live on the moon. There are stories of lost love and disempowerment, like that of Ina, who longed for her earth-home after the moon took her for his wife (Howes, 1913).

A European fairy tale set in contemporary Aotearoa can further interact with on-going struggles for a more egalitarian society. Feminism, bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism invite writers to create characters, plots and endings that role-model a more just world than that of our colonial ancestors. Jane Yolen (2000) explains this political motivation in her introduction to *Not One Damsel in Distress*, a book of international folktales she has edited with strong, heroic female protagonists, "….for the longest time I didn't know that girls could be heroes too. ….For once upon a REAL time, there were actual young women who, ...went off to do battle."

New Zealand writers have explored the 'liberating potential of the fairy tale', although not as prolifically as international writers. One example of transfiguration for children over ten is Racheal King's novel, *Red Rocks* (2012). Celtic Selkie folklore is interwoven with the story of a boy, who is staying in Wellington with his father over the summer holidays. The modern reality of living between two homes and the impact of parental separation on the lonelier parent, are addressed in this eerie, thrilling children's novel.

Transfigurations of fairy tales aimed at pre-school or early school readers have been easier to find. Margaret Mahy's *Rotten Red Riding Hood* (1999)*,* has a deliciously naughty Red Riding Hood. The notable series, *The Kiwi Corkers - Great New Zealand Yarns*, by Chris Gurney, weaves a New Zealand setting, colloquialisms and a little Maori language together with European fairy tales. *Cindy and the Lost Jandal* (2009) has a kumara that turns into a sporty V8, a barbecue instead of a ball and guests who say, "Now this is an ending that really is CHOICE!". *Goldie and the Three Penguins* (2012) has jelly tip ice-creams, a dairy and a hammock of flax. Goldie says, "My oh my, this is really ka pai!". *The Little Blue Duck* (2009) has pavlova, "that beaut Kiwi treat", made using the Edmonds Cookbook. Tui, weta and kea won't help with the cooking. *The Mayor's Flash New Clothes* (2010) involves the mayor of "Waikikamukau" whose suit is made from merino wool, flax, honey, kakapo feathers and kiwfruit juiced. A rugby scarf is offered to hide his bottom, while a child shouts, "The Mayor is doing a streak!"

Most exciting in the series is *The Elves and the Cloakmaker* (2011), because it integrates Maori and European folklore. Elderly Kahu has many Korowai to weave before Christmas. While he sleeps, golden-red-haired patupaiarehe sneak in and make the Korowai. They chant as they work: "Tahi, rua toru, wha,/ we bring feathers from afar./ Our flying fingers weave a cloak,/ for we are special fairy folk… patupaiarehe!"

There are transfigurations with stories other than fairy tales. There is *Moa's Ark* (2005), where Noah discovers "a land filled with pohutukawa/ and towering Kauri and shimmering paua." It is here that the moa, tui, kea and other native creatures disembark. There's *The Kiwi Night Before Christmas* (2006) that begins with "'Twas the night before Christmas and all round the bach, not a possum was stirring; not one we could catch". This was followed soon after by *A Kiwi Jingle Bells* (2006).

Examples of re-written tales, using the 'fusion' method are harder to find. Margaret Mahy, Joy Cowley, and others write new fairy tales for children, with all of the elements: magic, supernatural beings, archetypal characters and heroic journeys. One example is Mahy's *The Changeover* (1984), where a girl struggling with life with her single mother, falls in love with a male witch. However, these are not examples of fusion.

Examples of fusion can be found, however, on the New Zealand Goethe website, which ran a competition for an Aotearoa version of a Grimm's fairy tale. The winning story was *The Crybaby* by Renata Hopkins (2012), for teenage readers and older,

which fused elements of *Rumpelstiltskin* with a Kiwi mother, her baby, (who won't

stop crying), and a possum. Kate de Goldi (2012), the judge, praises the contemporary

subject of the story: "the writer mines the 'latent truth' of the story: the twinned

emotions a mother may have for a new baby – desperate love and desperate fury"

(para.10). In addition, she praises the Kiwi-ness of the piece, quoting the ending as an

example: "They didn't live happily ever after. But they did their best" (para.12.). She

adds, "In this sentence alone, surely, we have a successful transplant of fairy tale to

Aotearoa in 2012" (para.12).

How this research has shaped my creative work

My aims in my creative work were to: 1) modernize and "Kiwi-ize" traditional fairy

tales, exploring original themes in this contemporary context, 2) re-write the fairy tales

in a way that 'liberates' the reader from the oppressive nature of the traditional fairy tale

and 3) give young readers hope for a better future. The research, above, clarified that

my approach included transfiguration and feminist, post-colonial, bi-cultural and multi-

cultural revisionism. Power relations, whether in the context of patriarchy, teaching,

parenting or bullying, are a recurring theme in my stories and are subverted, in order to

explore a contemporary psychological, political, social and 'Aotearoa' concept of

'home'. The reader journeys alongside protagonists on an internal, (psychological), and

external, (social and political) quest for 'home' in Aotearoa today.

Some traditional elements of fairy tales have been kept in the transfiguring process. I

have kept recognisable plot features from traditional fairy tales. For example, Ella has

two stepsisters and a stepmother, Louie is trapped in his upstairs bedroom and a giant

lives up a tall tree. Symbolic features are also used, such as the pea from *The Princess and the Pea* and the mirror from *Snow White*, (which transfigures into a mobile phone, with access to social networks). Originally, each of my stories began with the ancient structural element, "Once upon a time" in order to signify that the reader was entering the world of fairy tale, where magic, archetypal characters and symbolic objects were at play, heroic journeys were taken and obstacles were overcome. However, in a small survey I conducted, readers who disliked fairy tales perceived "Once upon a time" as a barrier, so I decided against it.

Some traditional elements have been subverted through the transfiguration process. Interactions with a New Zealand setting are an initial point of difference. Examples of this are the creek cursed by a Maero, the shape-shifting tui, Maori names, words and spiritual concepts and colloquial dialogue between characters. The second difference is the subversion of archetypal characters' behaviour. The 'good father/bad stepmother' is an example of this. In *Recycling Ella*, the stepmother is the opposite of traditional expectations. She wishes to forge a relationship with her stepdaughter and is instrumental in healing the 'disconnect' between Ella and her father since her mother's death. In fact, the neglectful parent is Ella's father, whose grief is so consuming, that he leaves her to fend for herself often. Other subverted archetypal 'evil' characters are the giant in *Jack and the Morepork*, who is a boy, in every way like Jack and Tim, apart from his size. The Maero too is not exactly the vicious creature of Maori folklore.

Subverting traditional gender roles in fairy tales is another point of difference. For example, Terri is better than the boys at soccer. Jack's mother builds a platform in a tree

for the giant boy to recuperate on. In *Waimoe*, Ella interacts most assertively with the frightening Mr Thompson. Boys are attributed with more sensitivity than in a traditional fairy tale. For example, Tim often expresses concern for others and Jack sobs at his dog's near-death. Although Jack and Tim thread the stories together, the seven stories focus equally on both female and male central characters.

Some archetypes are simultaneously maintained and subverted. The archetypal nurturing or mentor role, usually given to supernatural or ordinary women, is instead given to Mr Tāmati, Tim's father and Jason. The archetypal, persecuted, innocent heroine is the creek, linking with ancient connections between the earth and women in both Maori and European mythology. The subversion is eco-feminist: nature voices her discontent. Serena is a fairy godmother to Ella, as well as stepmother. The children too set out on heroic journeys to 'put things right', but, unlike the almost de-personalised hero archetypes of traditional fairy tales, have inner struggles that become the central or equal focus in most of the stories.

The subversion of plot expectations aims to give children a 'puzzle' to work through. For example, the seven small letterboxes will lead a child to assume that seven dwarves live down the driveway, when, in fact, seven people in wheelchairs live there.

I have tried to stay true to the memes of the traditional fairy tales. In *Recycling Ella*, parental death, grief and neglect are central themes. In *The Way Home*, Greta and Harry

experience the insecure jealousies of a step-parent and feelings of abandonment by their father.

Conclusion

I set out to create a collection of stories set in contemporary New Zealand that, as well as drawing on traditional fairy tales, are fairy tales in themselves, an entity of their own. I have accomplished this. They fulfil my three aims set out in the introduction.

Symmetry occurred between the process of writing the stories and the exegesis. The research gave my aims a framework to work within. I discovered concepts, theories and associated language that explained my intentions for my creative work. For example, Freud and Bloch's concept of 'home' named both the deep disconnect I felt with traditional fairy tales and clarified my search for 'home' in the re-written fairy tale in Aotearoa today. The concept of Zipes' 'liberating potential of the fairy tale' underpinned my writing process. The term 'transfiguration' named the method I was unknowingly employing to re-envisage fairy tales and made possible more complexity and deeper exploration of themes, character and plot. This led to a tandem narrative structure in *The Driveway at the Bottom of the Street*, producing a distinct plot and relationship line and the interaction of both Maori and European folklore in two stories.

I began to realise that the growing complexity of my stories was more suited to nine-twelve year old children, rather than my original seven-nine year old readership. Experiments with readers within the older age group showed that younger readers in that age bracket enjoyed the stories on a more plot-based level. The action kept them

reading. Older readers in that bracket enjoyed further aspects, such as themes and subtexts in character relationships. For example, in a scene where Tim and his father, (a single parent), are discussing whether Ella's father is neglecting her, the two characters are discussing a home set-up like their own. An eleven or twelve year-old might explore these sub-textual comparisons, whereas younger readers might simply experience the discussion about Ella and her father. However, to keep that younger, more plot-focussed reader engaged in what was quite a long conversation, action needed to happen within the conversation.

Most stories are longer than originally envisaged, (five are between 8,000-10,500 words). Because of their length, if published, they might work better as a series of books, rather than a collection. Either way, the arrangement of the stories needs to allow for the range of readership age too. Faster-moving, plot-focussed, action stories or capers have to alternate with more character relationship-focussed stories. The arrangement also needs to alternate the emotional quality of the stories, interspersing sombre, tense or poignant stories with playful, comedic and magical stories.

Jack and the Morepork needs to be the first story for two reasons. Firstly, it is short, with a simple one-act plot structure, easily engaging a younger reader. Secondly, it introduces three key aspects of the overall collection: classic fairy tales are woven into new stories, magic appears and family relationships are explored. In a series, though, *Jack and the Morepork* would need to be longer and more targeted to the slightly older audience. *Recycling Ella* works well as the second story, because characters from the first recur, while it expands to introduce other characters in Tui Street. The last story is

The Driveway at the Bottom of the Street, because it connects least obviously to the

classic fairy tales, has no magic in it and has themes requiring more maturity. The

premise is that a child will journey in maturity alongside the stories.

The Tui Street Tales adds to a thriving international re-written fairy tale genre that aims

to give voice to those minority groups that are often disempowered through the

traditional fairy tale. It speaks to a new 'home' for the fairy tale, a Turangawaewae for

children in Aotearoa. It adds to the voices of other Kiwi writers who seek to a) set their

stories in New Zealand and b) convey socio-political and moral messages around

gender, the environment and bi- and multi-culturalism. Through puzzling, funny and

thought-provoking stories, children are encouraged to explore how they might 'emplot'

their lives. The stories reflect on the possibilities through the lives of the characters and

the real world in which they live. **Once upon a time………**

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