

# **Zigzags and Leapfrogs: a Memoir**

**Maris O'Rourke**  
**MCW**

**2015**

Zigzags and Leapfrogs: a Memoir

Maris O'Rourke

A thesis submitted to  
Auckland University of Technology  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of  
Master of Creative Writing (MCW)

2015

School of Language and Culture

### *Attestation of Authorship*

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Candidate's signature

Maris O'Rourke

## *Acknowledgments*

I'm grateful to the editors of the following magazines and on-line journals in which some of the poems and stories included first appeared:

*Essential New Zealand Poems: Facing the Empty Page* by Siobhan Harvey, Harry Ricketts & James Norcliffe, Random House, 2015.

*Flash Frontier* January, 2013.

*Landfall* #224, November, 2012.

*Poetry New Zealand*, Guest poet: Issue #44, 2012.

*Singing With Both Throats*, David Ling, 2013.

*Takahē* # 67, Winter, 2009.

*Tangi Time* selected for National Poetry Day's *Put a Poem in Your Pocket*, 2013.

The *SuperStela* graphics have been created by Daniel Ido, with partial financial support from the Auckland University of Technology.

No one completes a work like this alone. I've been fortunate to have the support of my family, friends, and the Master of Creative Writing staff and class at the Auckland University of Technology. My whānau and the whānau of the late Tarutaru Rankin (Ngāpuhi) have kindly given permission for me to include them in my work.

I've also had the privilege of working with Siobhan Harvey, *Mentor Extraordinaire*, without whose clear evaluative assessments, constructive critical feedback and constant support this work would not have been completed.

*Zigzags and Leapfrogs: a Memoir* is my personal memories. It may not be how others remember events, I will read their accounts and future memoirs with interest. On matters of fact I've tried to depict events accurately. All mistakes are mine.

## ***Intellectual Property Rights***

All intellectual property, including copyright, is retained by the candidate in the content of the candidate's thesis. For the removal of doubt, publication by the candidate of this, or any derivative work, does not change the intellectual rights of the candidate in relation to the thesis.

## *Confidentiality*

The content of the candidate's thesis is confidential for commercial reasons: that is, the possible publication of the thesis, or a derivative of it, as a work of creative non-fiction for sale.

The confidentiality remains after any commercial publication. For the removal of doubt, publication does not change the intellectual property rights of this or any derivative work.

## *Abstract*

*Zigzags and Leapfrogs: A Memoir*, is a description of my quest to reconcile two, often conflicting, aspects of my existence. One is my search for a place to belong, a place to be assimilated into, a place to stand, my tūrangawaewae; the other is my obsessive desire to achieve, and preferably succeed, to be different from/to stand above the crowd.

The memoir begins in the present day and, come the conclusion, returns to it. Between first chapter and last, important events and influences in my life are examined in roughly chronological order. However, a variety of approaches has been taken to create a collage, rather than a straight chronology: for example, a graphic comic sequence, poems, anecdotes, photographs, a fairy tale, a questionnaire, and excerpts from an interview of me by someone else.

The accompanying exegesis, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, details the process I went through to deal with things such as facing difficult issues, ethics and truth, genre, archiving of material and the shape and structure of the memoir.

Combined, thesis and exegesis strive to create what Natalia Rachel Singer calls a *hybrid memoir*:

...in which a writer presents a life through a lens that reflects both inward and outward... [T]he best memoirists allow their life experiences to shed light on a culture, a historical moment, a time, a place, a social problem, a political issue that remains timely.

This aspect of the memoir needs further development and deepening.

## CONTENTS

Attestation of Authorship	5
Acknowledgments	6
Intellectual Property Rights	7
Confidentiality	8
Abstract	9
The Past is a Foreign Country (Exegesis)	13
Introduction	13
First Steps	13
Ethics and Truth	14
Genre	16
Structure	17
Archiving	19
Shape	22
Next Steps	24
Appendix A: Bibliography	25
Appendix B: Bibliography of Maris O'Rourke in the public domain	30
Zigzags and Leapfrogs: A Memoir (thesis)	35
ONE - They had kept his name a secret	35
On Being Told I'm to be a Grandmother: a Villanelle	37
TWO - The room at the top of the stairs	38
THREE - Despite the darkness	41
Strop	45
FOUR - A bright, talented girl	46
FIVE - Like a chameleon	51
SIX - Coupe de foudre	57
SEVEN - History came and found me	74
EIGHT - Meeting Mr. Wright	76
NINE - Wear the pram wheels down to the rim	80
TEN - Nothing to lose	82
ELEVEN - A big Māori guy	86
TWELVE - Winters on Ruapehu	90
THIRTEEN - Summers at Otama	96
Selling the Family Tent	99



FOURTEEN - Burning Up	101
Restless	106
FIFTEEN - Meeting Mr. Wright - again	107
SIXTEEN - Dying by inches	109
SEVENTEEN - Coming apart	111
A Fairy Tale for Feminists	113
EIGHTEEN - With a little help from my friends	114
NINETEEN - Tall, blond, good-looking	117
TWENTY - All I ever wanted	124
TWENTY-ONE - Baptism of fire	132
TWENTY-TWO - Hands around the candle	139
TWENTY-THREE - SuperStela	146
TWENTY-FOUR - Not an ordinary bank	158
TWENTY-FIVE - Lessons learned	170
TWENTY-SIX - A gap year	172
TWENTY-SEVEN - Living apart together	181
TWENTY-EIGHT - Giving Thanks	184
Road Trip	186
TWENTY-NINE - It's never too late to have a happy childhood	187
Spells to Tame Children	193
THIRTY - A frisson of fear	195
THIRTY-ONE - Let's climb a mountain!	200
Tangi Time	203

*The Past is a Foreign Country*  
**(Exegesis)**

**Maris O'Rourke**

**2015**

## THE PAST IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY (EXEGESIS)

*The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.*  
L. P. Hartley *The Go-Between* (1953).

### ***Introduction***

I've toyed with the idea of writing my life story since 2006 when I did a genealogical search and wrote a family history: *Through My Eyes: looking at my 'family' - Lyons, Hackworth, Robertson, Broughton, O'Rourke and sundry others*. Until I did this search I knew nothing of my parental background, family or history; and there was no one left to ask. I don't want the same silence for my children and grandchildren. I want to leave a record.

### ***First Steps***

First, I had to overcome my reluctance to write. Did I really want to re-live my past? In an exercise from Deena Metzger's *Writing For Your Life, A Guide And Companion To The Inner Worlds*, she asks you to make a list of everything you must NOT write about because:

- it is not generally important enough from the point of view of literature
- it is too private and therefore trivial from the point of view of literature
- it would embarrass you to speak about it
- it would embarrass and offend your family and associates
- it would embarrass or offend the reader
- it is taboo

My list was:

- anything bad that's happened to me
- anything bad I've done
- any time I've failed
- anything that would upset my kids
- anything that will make someone else feel bad
- anything about my sex life at whatever age

- the names of men I've slept with
- anything that contradicts the life story I've invented for myself
- anything that puts me in a bad light
- anything that is going to ruin a hard won peace of mind and a good life
- anything where people will get to know the real me
- anything about abuse and loss

Faced with this list, I set the idea of writing my life story aside. However, over the next few years I kept circling back to it. I knew, as William Zinsser says in *The American Scholar* article "How to Write a Memoir":

Writing is a powerful search mechanism, and one of its satisfactions is that it allows you to come to terms with your life narrative. It also allows you to work through some of life's hardest knocks - loss, grief, illness, addiction, disappointment, failure - and to find understanding and solace.

I did a number of self-guided courses, including Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* and *The Right to Write*. This helped me surface the difficult issues I'd need to tackle in a memoir and I decided to proceed. I also knew I needed support. I needed a structure, mentor, deadlines, a group to work with and lectures with content. I enrolled in a Master of Creative Writing at the Auckland University of Technology. Two questions interested me:

- How to write a memoir using non-traditional narrative?
- How to create a 'true' narrative while encompassing cross-genre creative techniques and mediums including poetry, fiction, the graphic novel and imagery?

### ***Ethics and Truth***

So I began. Immediately I faced a number of issues, in particular, ethics, privacy and confidentiality. As a senior public servant I'd signed confidentiality agreements under the Official Secrets Act and, as a professional, I'd adhere to those. Then there was the question of upsetting people. Should I leave things out that they'd wish to keep private and which might offend? I made the decision that I wouldn't censor myself. I'd write it all, or depict it in some other way e.g. graphically, and decide later what to include. I also tackled the five most difficult to write areas first.

A good deal of my life is in the public domain (see Appendix B Bibliography). However, I'm a first-person narrator telling the events from my perspective. Sometimes first-person narrators deviate from the truth, or have mental conditions that limit their abilities to tell the story accurately. We call these characters 'unreliable narrators,' a term first coined by Wayne C. Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). It could be argued that any first-person account is, by definition, 'unreliable' and some literary critics argue that there is no such thing as a reliable first-person narrator since every character is affected by his or her past experiences in the telling of a story. However, most first-person narrators do attempt to give an accurate version of events and I was aiming to do that. The reality is that the only 'truth' the writer of a memoir can work with is what it's been like for them, not others. As Witi Ihimaera says in *The Matriarch*, "All truth is fiction, really, for the teller tells it as he sees it, and it might be different from some other teller."

I'm a woman who has spent a lifetime trying to reconcile two aspects of myself. The first is my deep-seated desire to *belong*. This often requires inclusion, focusing on the needs of others, staying put, and compromise. The other is my obsessive need to *achieve*, and preferably succeed. This usually requires exclusion of others, focusing on myself, moving on, and little or no compromise. On this quest I've blanked out areas of my life, repressed memories and rewritten events. What is the truth then? Adrienne Rich in *Women and Honor: notes on lying* says:

There is nothing easy or simple about this idea. There is no 'the truth' or 'a truth' - truth is not one thing or even a system. It is an increasing complexity. The pattern of the carpet is a surface. When we look closely, or when we become weavers, we learn of the multiple threads unseen in the overall pattern, the knots on the underside of the carpet.

As I surfaced my blanked out areas and rewritten stories I began to see the underside of the carpet. I then had to decide whether to be honest about these in the memoir. Rich argues that women's honour is seen as:

... virginity, chastity, fidelity to a husband. Honesty in women has not been considered important. We have been depicted as generically whimsical, deceitful, subtle, vacillating. And we have been rewarded for lying.

I've been creative about my life story over the years and rewritten and reframed it in more ways than one. However, I decided to follow Lee Gutkind's mantra in *You*

*Can't Make This Stuff Up: the complete guide to writing creative non-fiction from memoir to literary journalism and everything in between.* He says:

The word 'creative' in creative nonfiction has to do with how the writer conceives ideas, summarises situations, defines personalities, describes places - and shapes and presents information. 'Creative' doesn't mean inventing what didn't happen, reporting and describing what wasn't there. It doesn't mean the writer has a licence to lie. The word 'nonfiction' means the material is true. The cardinal rule is clear - and cannot be violated. This is the pledge the writer makes to the reader - the maxim we live by, the anchor of creative nonfiction. 'You can't make this stuff up!' (p. 6).

## **Genre**

Next there was the issue of genre - was I writing an autobiography or a memoir? The accepted idea is that if you're writing about your whole life it's an autobiography, whereas a memoir focuses on one aspect, period or incident in your life e.g. Bill Bryson or P. J. O'Rourke's travel memoirs, or Waris Dirie's life as a desert nomad, or Sattareh Farman Farmaian's life in her father's harem. In his introduction to *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir* William Zinsser says:

A memoir is defined as some portion of a life. Unlike autobiography which moves in a dutiful line from birth to fame, omitting nothing significant, memoir assumes the life and ignores most of it. The writer of a memoir usually takes us back to a corner of their life that was unusually intense or vivid, childhood for instance, or that was framed by unique events. By 'narrowing' the lens the writer achieves a focus that isn't possible in autobiography; memoir is a window into a life. (p. 21).

Gore Vidal says about his *Palimpsest: A Memoir*: "A memoir is how one remembers one's own life, while an autobiography is history, requiring research, dates and facts double-checked." (p. 5).

I knew I'd be researching dates and facts, and trying to ensure my story was accurate, but I didn't want to write a straight chronology of my life from birth to death (an autobiography). I wanted to avoid the trap of writing something which was too general, temporal and linear. However, I also didn't want to restrict myself to one aspect, or time of my life, and write something too narrowly focused.

As I explored the literature (see Appendix A Bibliography), I found that most people's autobiographies were narrative and chronological, as were many of the memoirs. However, a few did take different approaches e.g. Edmund DeWalt's innovative *The Hare With Amber Eyes* where he explores his past through a set of

inherited netsuke, or Fiona Farrell's *The Broken Book* examining stability and instability through walks and the Christchurch earthquake, or Leonard Cohen's *The Book of Longing* which incorporates photos, drawings, poems and songs.

I felt mine was a memoir, although not the normal definition of one. I envisaged something more eclectic, like a display in a Museum for example. *The Guardian* provided a podcast from a Guardian Live event (June, 2015) of a conversation between critic Alex Clark and Jeanette Winterson (*Why Be Happy When you Could Be Normal?*) and Helen McDonald (*H is for Hawk*). In the interview the two writers shared their tips on memoir writing. One tip was: 'Don't try to fit the genre.' Jeanette Winterson says:

Write what you write at the time and don't worry about the future. It's not about the obvious successes, it's not about where it lands you in the world: you have to be able to hold your head up and know it was the best you could do.

That seemed good advice and I put aside whether I was writing an autobiography or memoir and focused on writing my life story as a quest.

### ***Structure***

Another tip from Winterson and McDonald was: 'Choose your chronology.' Neither of their memoirs conform to chronological order. The order is set by a progression of emotions and themes not constrained by a linear idea of time. Winterson says: "The way we remember things doesn't happen in sequence, things sit side by side according to their emotional impact." I found this often e.g. when I wrote about my first son's birth and then immediately thought of, and wrote up my second son's birth story, which actually occurred 10 years later. As Margaret Atwood in *Cat's Eye* says: "You don't look back along time but down through it, like water. Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing. Nothing goes away." (p. 3).

Other writers have taken the same approach to memoir as Winterson and McDonald and bucked the trend, e.g. in *Safekeeping: some true stories from a life* Abigail Thomas sets aside a straight-forward narrative for brief passages of vivid prose. She revisits pivotal moments and tiny incidents that have shaped her life-long.

Some biographers have, in effect, told their own story through others e.g. Malcom Cowley's *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920's* about his contemporaries, American writers in Paris and New York, or Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle's haunting

prose poetry *Autobiography of a Marguerite* which is as much about her mother as herself.

Two memoirs about the same event, widowhood, take very different approaches. Joyce Carol Oates' *A Widow's Story* is largely diary entries and switches between first and third person. It objectifies her as 'a widow.' Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking* on the other hand, is essayistic and concise, seeking external points of comparison and trying to set her case in some wider context.

The definitive 'different' life story is probably the poet Lyn Hejinian's *My Life*. It is in English and full sentences yet, at first reading, seems incomprehensible. It is more of an experience than anything else. You have to dive in. The words flow over one like water, and it is at an almost subconscious level that you come to understand her childhood. Lisa Samuels has written *Eight justifications for canonizing Lyn Hejinian's 'My Life'* and in it calls Hejinian's story an autography. She says: "I use the word 'autography' because this is the story of a languaged self, a written 'I', rather than the autobiography of an experiencing human."

I didn't expect to scale the heights of these luminaries but I felt I could produce something exploratory that told my life story in a different way. Alex Hamilton in *Writing Talk: conversations with top writers of the last fifty years* tells us that when Kurt Vonnegut was asked if a story of his life would be a chronicle or a collage he replied "a collage." (p. 28). That resonated with me. I had a wealth of material e.g. poems, journal entries, short stories, newspaper articles, flash fiction, photographs, anecdotes and vignettes. I envisaged my memoir as more of a cross-genre bricolage than a conventional chronological setting down of events.

In Zinsser's *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, Annie Dillard says about writing her book *An American Childhood*: "...the writer of any first person work must decide two obvious questions: what to put in and what to leave out." (p. 25). She then added:

It's not enough just to decide what to put in - it has to have vitality and drama as any good story does - it has to feel like the truth. You have to heighten the reality or use fiction to conjure up what is 'real.' (p. 25).

In the same book Russell Baker says: "The autobiographer's problem is that he knows too much; he knows the whole ice-berg not just the tip."



However, the issue of what we think we know about ourselves is also complex. In *The Undiscovered Self* C. G. Jung (1958) says:

...the so-called normal person possesses only a limited degree of self-knowledge. Most people confuse 'self-knowledge' with knowledge of their conscious ego personalities. Anyone who has any ego-consciousness at all takes it for granted that he knows himself. But the ego knows only its own contents, not the unconscious and its contents. People measure their self-knowledge by what the average person in their social environment knows of himself, but not by the psychic facts which are for the most part hidden from them. (p. 6).

He goes on to say, that the way we commonly devalue the psyche and resist psychological enlightenment are based in a large measure on fear i.e. on panic-fear of the discoveries that might be made in the realm of the unconscious. He continues that often the fear is so great that one dares not admit it, even to oneself. (p. 49).

I certainly felt a level of fear, and over-whelmed with how much had happened in my life. I struggled throughout with what to put in and what to leave out. Hamilton tells us that Graham Greene said his problem with *A Sort of Life* had also been what to leave out. In the end he had been run by his conscience as a novelist and dropped many sequences that broke the story line. (p. 286). The goal, Gutkind says, is to make nonfiction stories read like fiction so that readers are as enthralled by fact as they are by fantasy. That became my aim.

### ***Archiving***

The crime novel writer Sue Grafton has a detective, Kinsey Millhone, who uses index cards to solve mysteries. She writes facts, scenes, ideas, people and so on onto separate index cards and then plays around with them. Shuffling, arranging and re-arranging them into new and different configurations until solutions, often unusual, appear.

I decided this would be an interesting method for me to try. I made three cards that listed (in date order): everywhere I'd lived; every job I'd had (paid or unpaid); and all the education, training and self-development courses I'd done. Apart from the wide-ranging and peripatetic nature of my life, nothing jumped out at me.

Then I made a card of 'turning points', major changes in my life. Many I'd initiated but some had just happened to me. This card proved to be a turning point. A number of them were major successes and achievements, usually to do with professional work and education. I also saw that I'd often been the first to do something.

Others were about significant events to do with relationships such as birth, death, marriage, divorce, partners and friends. Patterns began to emerge. I was creating a 'personal archive' meaningful to me.

In 1998 French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), commonly known as the founder of deconstruction, wrote *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. In it he posits that the way we archive things changes things. He says that there is a fluid relationship between the archive and what it archives. The archive, its structure, formulation and operation is informed by its contents, along with any number of external bodies of knowledge. Derrida asserts then, that the archive cannot remain outside what it memorialises. This removes the objectivity with which records and archival documents are typically treated. Derrida says *archive fever*:

...is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement. (p. 91).

In other words, we want to get to the bedrock of our memories. A difficult task. Derrida tells us that Freud conceives of: "a psychic archive distinct from spontaneous memory." This psychic archive is an internal inscription in the mind that is virtually housed and remote but from which psychoanalysis may be able to gather "documents" as the products of a successful psychoanalytic session.

By indexing in a certain way, and through my choices of what to include, I was changing not only my past, also my present, and possibly my future. Derrida asserts that:

...the technical structure of the archiving archive determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archiving produces as much as it records the event. (p. 17).

Thus archiving technology determines, "the very institution of the archivable event." informing, as well, the conception of the future, and possibly the future itself. (p. 18).

Meanwhile, I continued with my personal archive. I put the various vignettes, scenes, short stories, anecdotes and poems that I'd written onto separate cards. No matter how I shuffled them around it was a messy mish-mash, with no apparent form or structure.

Bianca Zander (Master Class, 2015) talked to us about scaling our project, and the key concepts of its architecture: protagonist, antagonist, setting, conflict, theme, symbolism, foreshadowing and irony. She then elaborated on the components of the Three Act Structure: One: exposition (beginning); Two: inciting or transformative incident, rising action, climax (middle); Three: falling action and resolution (end). This was helpful. The marriage break-up had split my life in two. I therefore put it in the middle and tried to arrange the cards around it. Many were different approaches to the same event e.g. a poem, anecdote and short story. These I stapled together. It was still a muddle.

In May, I took the pile to my mentor Siobhan Harvey. She set me a structure exercise in which she asked me to place all episodes I wanted to include in the work onto cards, one card per chapter/event. She asked that those which were already written appear in blue coloured font; those which were yet to be written appear in red coloured font; and those that were partly written appear in both colours. She set me a month to complete the archive exercise before returning to her office with the cards.

At our next meeting, she asked me to line them chronologically on the floor in a peak with the transformational incident in my life, my marriage break-up, roughly at the apex of the peak, events before that on the incline and events after this on the decline. I'd been resisting a straight chronology as boring. However, I laid them out on her floor like a mountain rising to the apex of the separation and descending again. They began with the present day, and came back full circle. In between there was some moving backwards and forwards in time. It worked. Arriving at this structure was a key turning point in my writing.

Interestingly, I'd found while doing this exercise that there were huge gaps where I'd written nothing. I'd completely blanked out sections of my life. They became red cards. Unsurprisingly, these red areas turned out to be significant. As Peter Wells in *The Long Loop Home* says:

...isn't the past always elusive when you set out, on safari, as it were to capture it? The past is an elusive being, half mythical then astoundingly, painfully real. If you don't watch out when your back is turned, it can gore you to death. (p. 277).

The cards, and subsequent structure, showed me that I have two driving forces in my life. The first is a deep-seated desire to *belong*. The other is the obsessive need to

*achieve*, and preferably succeed. These two, often opposing, forces in my life have been a fecund source of creative tension and resulted, as with many women, in zigzags, leapfrogs, strange trajectories and unusual choices. This gave me my working title, *Zigzags and Leapfrogs: a Memoir*.

## ***Shape***

In *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir* Zinsser says:

Ego is at the heart of all the reasons why anybody writes a memoir. Memoir is how we validate our lives. The writer of a memoir must become the editor of their own life. They must cut and prune an unwieldy story and give it a narrative shape. (p. 24).

This is not easy. However, half-way through the year, with a first draft completed, I became clearer on the shape my memoir would take. It was a collage. As well as prose it had five poems, a graphics comic sequence, a short story, excerpts of interviews of me by someone else, a few photos and a fairy tale. It was also a chronicle, and roughly in date order.

Gérard Genette in *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* introduces an influential new term into the debate, namely “distance.” He explains that:

...the narrative can furnish the reader with more or fewer details, and in a more or less direct way, and can thus seem (to adopt a common and convenient spatial metaphor, which is not to be taken literally) to keep at a greater or lesser distance from what it tells. (p. 162).

My first draft was mainly in the first person. However, there were scenes, where I’d distanced myself through use of the third person e.g. *Like a chameleon* and *Wear the pram wheels down to the rim*. I also used other means to allude to events e.g. *SuperStela* a graphic, and *Questions I wish I could ask my mother* written in the second person. I got the idea for this piece from Kim Adrian’s *Questionnaire for My Grandfather* published in: *You. An Anthology of Essays Devoted to the Second Person*.

For the second draft I decided to ‘own’ the story and try to close the psychic distance. I redrafted the third person pieces to the first person, thus creating a continuity of voice.

Gutkind says people remember facts longer when they are part of a story. Information and ideas need to be presented in story form. He says:

...this is done through crucial scenes with characters and suspenseful and surprising turning points - important life decisions based on memory and with vivid recreations of a scene. 'The scene is the foundation and anchoring element of creative nonfiction.' They are the building blocks - they must be factual and true and make a point or communicate information and they have to fit into the overall structure of the book. It's about show not tell. (p. 92).

My first draft was largely narrative, a lot of 'show not tell' and missing the 'story beats' that would provide it with rising action. It was also missing subtext. We had a useful Master Class from Siobhan Harvey (May, 2015) on Subtext, Imagery and the Secondary Story. In particular, this immersed students in considering the power of motifs and themes to create underlying meaning. I identified what my conflicting themes might be e.g. belonging versus achieving and the motifs e.g. tauhou/ wax-eyes, mountains/ volcanoes and layered them throughout the memoir as sub-text: a subsidiary story that would hopefully entwine with the main facts.

Christopher Booker, in *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* argues that just seven basic plots run throughout world literature (including movies, plays, and operas as well as novels and short stories):

1. Overcoming the Monster
2. Rags to Riches
3. The Quest
4. Voyage and Return
5. Rebirth
6. Comedy
7. Tragedy

I think this may apply to memoirs too and, although my life story seems to have aspects of all seven, The Quest seems the best description. That is I've been looking for success, and looking to belong, and looking to resolve the basic conflicts and constraints between these two things. The memoir, therefore, needed to demonstrate that quest. As I redrafted I kept in mind what Zinsser says: "Remember that you are the protagonist in your own memoir, the tour guide. You must find a narrative trajectory for the story you want to tell and never relinquish control."

## *Next Steps*

The memoir does deal with all the fears I expressed in my initial list - one way or another. Through closer examination and documenting what happened I've redefined 'bad events' and 'failure'. I discovered they were basically learning experiences, some even turned out to be successes and a 'good thing' over time. By surfacing repressed events, archiving them onto 'red cards', writing them into blue cards, then including them in the memoir, I've expanded and accepted more of my elusive past, and therefore myself. I tried to mesh in difficult issues, e.g. abuse and loss as an integral part of the narrative using a collage approach. With respect to my two initial questions I've been able to write a memoir using some non-traditional narrative and also created a 'true' narrative whilst encompassing some cross-genre, creative techniques and mediums including poetry, fiction, the graphic novel and imagery.

Nevertheless, issues remain. In 2004 Natalia Rachel Singer contributed to "The Short List: The Most Influential Books" (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 10/22/04). I aspire to her notion of the *hybrid memoir*:

...in which a writer presents a life through a lens that reflects both inward and outward.... [T]he best memoirists allow their life experiences to shed light on a culture, a historical moment, a time, a place, a social problem, a political issue that remains timely.

In the first draft, I didn't place myself in a social and historical context in any sort of sophisticated way. In subsequent redrafting, I've included more reflective thinking about what happened in my life and how. However, this aspect of the memoir needs further development and deepening. I've produced the quantity. I now plan to improve the quality.

## ***Appendix A: Bibliography***

- Adrian, Kim (2013). *Questionnaire for my grandfather* in Kupperman, Kim Dana, Simons, Heather G., & Chesbro, James M., (Eds.) (2013). *You. An anthology of essays devoted to the second person*. Gettysburg, USA: Welcome Table Press.
- Atwood, Margaret (1988). *Cat's eye*. New York: Random House.
- Amnesty International (2007). *Dear to me: 100 New Zealanders write about their favourite poems* Random House: NZ.
- Astley, Neil (Editor) (2002). *Staying Alive: Real Poems for Unreal Times*. Miramax.
- Awatere, Donna (1984). *Māori sovereignty*. Auckland: Broadsheet Magazine Ltd.
- Berendt, John (1994). *Midnight in the garden of good and evil: a Savannah story*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Booker, Christopher (2006). *The seven basic plots: why we tell stories*. USA: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Booth, Wayne C. (1961). *The rhetoric of fiction*. USA: University of Chicago Press.
- Bronte, Emily (1846). "Stanzas" published in the collection: *Poems By Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* (under Emily's nom de plume 'Ellis Bell').
- Bryson, Bill (1998). *A walk in the woods: rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Bryson, Bill (1999). *I'm a stranger here myself: notes on returning to America after 20 years away*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Bryson, Bill (2006). *The life and times of the thunderbolt kid*. London: Doubleday.
- Butcher-McGunnigle, Zarah (2014). *Autobiography of a marguerite*. Hue & Cry Press.
- Butler, Pamela E. (1981, 1992). *Self-assertion for women*. Harper Collins: San Francisco.
- Cameron, Julia (1994). *The artist's way*. London: Souvenir Press Ltd.
- Cameron, Julia (1998). *The right to write: an invitation and initiation into the writing life*. New York: Tarcher Penguin.
- Chopra, Deepak (1993). *Ageless body, timeless mind: a practical alternative to growing old*. London: Rider
- Collins, Billy (2000). *Taking Off Emily Dickinson's Clothes*. USA: Picador.
- Cohen, Leonard (2006). *The book of longing*. London: Penguin Books.
- Colquhoun, Glenn (2010). *The art of walking upright*. Wellington, Aotearoa NZ: Steele Roberts.
- Colquhoun, Glenn (handwritten and illustrated by Nigel Brown) (2009). *North south*. Wellington, Aotearoa NZ: Steele Roberts.
- Coney, Sandra (1990). *Out of the frying pan: inflammatory writing 1972-1989*. Auckland, NZ: Penguin Books.
- Conway, Jill Ker (1993). *The road from Coorain*. London: Minerva
- Cowan, James (1996). *A mapmakers dream: the meditations of Fra Mauro, cartographer to the court of Venice*. New York: Warner Books.
- Cowley, Malcolm (1994). *Exile's return: a literary odyssey of the 1920's*. Penguin Classics.

- Crisp, Quentin (1968). *The naked civil servant*. London: Fontana Collins.
- Davidson, Robyn (1981). *Tracks*. London: Granada Publishing Ltd.
- Davies, Sonja (1984). *Bread and roses*. Auckland, NZ: Australia and New Zealand Book Co.
- Department of Education. (1986). *The curriculum review. Report of the committee to review the curriculum for schools*. Wellington: Government Printer.
- Department of Education (1988) *Education to be more: report of the early childhood care and education working group*, (The Meade Report). Wellington, New Zealand.
- Department of Education (1988). *Before five: early childhood care and education in New Zealand*. Wellington, New Zealand.
- Department of Education (1989). *Learning for life: education and training beyond the age of fifteen*. Wellington: Implementation Unit.
- Derrida, Jacques (Translated by Eric Prenowitz) (1998). *Archive fever: a Freudian impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DeWall, Edmund (2011). *The hare with amber eyes: a hidden inheritance*. London: Vintage.
- Didion, Joan (2005). *The year of magical thinking*. Vintage International.
- Dinesen, Isak (1983). (Edited for the Rungstedlund Foundation by Frans Lasson, Translated by Anne Born) *Letters from Africa 1914-1931*. London: a Picador edition by Pan Books Ltd.
- Dirie, Waris & Miller, Cathleen (1999). *Desert flower: the extraordinary life of a desert nomad*. New York: Virago Press
- Fahey, Jacqueline (1998). *Cutting Loose*. Auckland, NZ: David Ling Publishing.
- Farmaian, Sattareh Farman with Munker, Dona (1992). *Daughter of Persia: a woman's journey from her father's harem through the Islamic Revolution*. London: Corgi Books.
- Farrell, Fiona (2011). *The broken book*. Auckland, NZ: Auckland University Press.
- Frame, Janet (1991). *An angel at my table*. Auckland, NZ: Vintage.
- Frame, Janet (1981). *Living in the Maniatoto*. Auckland, NZ: The Women's Press Ltd. Hutchinson.
- Galloway, Janice (2008). *This is not about me*. London: Granta Publications.
- Guardian Live event podcast: Alex Clark interviews Jeanette Winterson & Helen Macdonald. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2015/jul/17/jeanette-winterson-helen-macdonald-h-is-for-hawk-podcast>
- Genette, Gérard (1972, 1980). *Narrative discourse: an essay in method*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.
- Gilbert, Laurice (2012). *My family and other strangers*. Wellington, NZ: Academy Aotearoa Press.
- Ginn, Ellinore (1989). *The jug of memories*. Wellington, NZ: Daphne Brasell Associates Press.
- Gladwell, Malcolm (2008). *Outliers: the story of success*. London: Allen Lane.



- Gore, Tipper (1996). *Picture this: a visual diary*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Grafton, Sue (1982) *"A" is for Alibi*. Henry Holt and Company.
- Gruar, William (1996) *Spinal dogs: a day in the life of Ivor Disabilitybich*. Auckland, NZ: Valid Press.
- Gutkind, Lee (1997). *The art of creative nonfiction: writing and selling the literature of reality*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. p. 8.
- Gutkind, Lee (2012). *You can't make this stuff up: the complete guide to writing creative non-fiction from memoir to literary journalism and everything in between*. USA: Da Capo Lifelong Books.
- Hamilton, Alex (2012). *Writing talk: conversations with top writers of the last fifty years*. London: Matador.
- Hartley, L. P. (1953). *The go-between*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Hay, Louise L. (1984). *You can heal your life*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House Inc.
- Hay, Louise L. with Linda Carwin Tomchin (1991). *The power is within you*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House Inc.
- Hawke, Gary R. (1988). *The report of the working group on post compulsory education and training (The Hawke Report)*. Prepared for the Cabinet Social Equity Committee: Wellington.
- Hejinian, Lyn (1987). *My life*. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1987.
- Hooper, Joy, Judith & Jillian (2009). *We three: a memoir of the Hooper triplets*. Kuala Lumpur, Sydney, Auckland: self-published.
- Hunt, Shally (1998). *The sea on our left: a couple's ten month walk around Britain's coastline*. London: Summersdale Publishers.
- Ihimaera, Witi (1999). *The matriarch*. Reed Books, NZ.
- James, Clive (1980). *Unreliable memoirs*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.
- Jung, C. G. (1958). *The undiscovered self*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- King, Michael (1985). *Being Pākehā: an encounter with New Zealand and the Māori renaissance*. Auckland, NZ: Hodder & Stoughton.
- King, Stephen (2000). *On writing: a memoir of the craft*. New York: SCRIBNER.
- Koea, Shonagh (2007). *The kindness of strangers: kitchen memoirs* (with illustrations by Peter Wells). Auckland: Random House
- Krakauer, Jon (1996). *Into the wild*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Kupperman, Kim Dana, Simons, Heather G., & Chesbro, James M. (Eds.) (2013). *You. An anthology of essays devoted to the second person*. Gettysburg, USA: Welcome Table Press.
- Lange, David (2005). *my life*. Auckland, NZ: Penguin Viking.
- Leser, David (2014). *To begin to know: walking in the shadows of my father*. Sydney Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Levitin, Daniel J. (2006). *This is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*. New York: Dutton (p. 197).
- Macdonald, Helen (2014). *H is for hawk*. Jonathon Cape.
- MacLaine, Shirley (1983). *Out on a limb*. New York: Bantam Books.

- Mallaby, Sebastian (2004). *The world's banker: a story of failed states, financial crises, and the wealth and poverty of nations*. A Council on Foreign Relations Book/ The Penguin Press.
- Mayes, Frances (2010). *Every day in Tuscany: seasons of an Italian life*. Sydney, Australia: Bantam.
- Mayle, Peter (1999). *Encore Provence*. London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd.
- Metzger, Deena (1992). *Writing for your life, a guide and companion to the inner worlds*. San Francisco: Harper.
- Ministry of Education. (1991). *The national curriculum of New Zealand: a discussion document*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (1993). *The New Zealand curriculum framework*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whaariki: He Whaariki Maatauranga: early childhood curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- McCourt, Frank (1996). *Angela's ashes: a memoir*. New York: SCRIBNER.
- Morland, Miles (1992). *A walk across France*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.
- Morris, Jan (1974). *Conundrum*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Morris, Jan (1985). *Last letters from Hav*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.
- Oates, Joyce Carol (2011). *A widow's story*. Ecco.
- Orange, Claudia (1987). *The Treaty of Waitangi*. Bridget Williams Books, NZ.
- O'Rourke, P. J. (1989). *Holidays in hell*. London: Picador, Pan Books.
- Pollan, Michael (1998). *A place of my own: the education of an amateur builder*. New York: Delta.
- Pollan, Michael (1991). *Second nature: a gardener's education*. New York: Delta.
- Polyp (2002). *Big bad world: cartoon Molotovs in the face of corporate rule*. Oxford, England: New Internationalist Publications Ltd.
- Report of the Taskforce to Review Education (1988). *Administering for excellence. Effective administration in education* [The Picot Report]. Wellington: Government Printer.
- Reynolds, Ted (1990) "The Treaty - what went wrong and what are we doing about it?" *New Zealand Geographic* #5 January-March, p. 32.
- Rich, Adrienne (1979). *Women and honor: notes on lying*. London: Onlywomen Press.
- Rich, Adrienne (2003). *What is found there: notebooks on poetry and politics*. W. W. Norton & Company
- Samuels, Lisa (1997). *Eight justifications for canonizing Lyn Hejinian's 'My Life'* *Modern Language Studies* Vol. 27, No. 2, Poetry and the Problem of Beauty, pp. 103-119.
- Siddell, Peter (2011). *The art of Peter Siddell*. Auckland NZ: Godwit.
- Simpson, Joe (2003). *The beckoning silence*. London: Vintage.
- Singer, Natalia Rachel (10/22/04). Contribution to "The Short List: The Most Influential Books" (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*).
- Slavick, Madeleine Marie (2012). *Fifty stories, fifty images*. Hong Kong: MCCM Creations.

- Steinbach, Alice (2000). *Without reservations: the travels of an independent woman*. Sydney, Australia: Bantam Books.
- Suyin, Han (1966). *A mortal flower*. London: Mayflower.
- Theroux, Paul (1986). *Sunrise with sea monsters*. London: Penguin Books.
- Thomas, Abigail (2001). *Safekeeping: some true stories from a life*. USA: Anchor Books.
- Vidal, Gore (1995). *Palimpsest: a memoir*. New York: Random House.
- Wells, Peter (2001). *Long loop home: a memoir*. Auckland, NZ: Random House.
- Winterson, Jeanette (2012). *Why be happy when you could be normal?* Vintage
- Woolf, Virginia (1977). *A room of one's own*. London: Granada Publishing Ltd.
- Zinsser, William (Ed.) (1987). *Inventing the truth: the art and craft of memoir: Russell Baker/Annie Dillard/Alfred Kazin/Toni Morrison/Lewis Thomas*. Edited with a memoir and an introduction by William Zinsser. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Zinsser, William (May, 2015). *The American Scholar* "How to Write a Memoir: be yourself, speak freely and think small" reprinted from *Essays*, Spring, 2006.

## ***Appendix B: Bibliography of Maris O'Rourke in the public domain***

- Benton R. (1995). 'Towards a Languages Policy for New Zealand Education'. *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*, 4, 161-173
- Butterworth, Graham & Susan (1998). *Reforming education: the New Zealand experience 1984-1996*. Dunmore Press Ltd., Palmerston North, NZ.
- Caffell, Trudi (2012). 'A Frisson of Fear' in *New Zealand Author*, Issue 289, October-November, p. 20-21.
- Caldwell, Brian & Spinks, Jim M. (1992). *Leading the self-managing school*, pp. 187-189, Taylor & Francis.
- Carayannis, Elias G. & Laporte, Bruno (2002). *By decree or by choice: implementing knowledge management and sharing at the education sector of The World Bank group*. World Bank: Washington D.C.
- Clay, Marie M. (1980). 'Research on Child Development in NZ' in *Research in education in New Zealand: the state of the art* (pp. 17-41) NZARE: Delta.
- Clifton, Jane, Young, David W. & Smith, Nick (March 10-16, 2007). 'View From the Top: leading New Zealand women share their strategies for success' in *NZ Listener* pp. 16-19.
- Collins, Simon (1989). 'Hitch-hiker of Education' *Weekend Magazine - NZ Herald*, September.
- Druett, Joan (1988). *Fulbright in New Zealand*. New Zealand-United States Educational Foundation: Wellington, NZ.
- Fiske, Edward B. (1996). 'Tackling the Global Gender Gap' *International Herald Tribune: A Special Report*. Saturday-Sunday, October 19-20, p. 19.
- Håklev, Stian (2010). *The Chinese National Top Level Courses Project: Using Open Educational Resources to Promote Quality in Undergraduate Teaching*. MA Thesis, University of Toronto: Canada
- Harvey, Siobhan (2012). 'Maris O'Rourke - Background' in *Poetry NZ* No.44, p. 8.
- Heyneman, S. P. (2003). 'The history and problems in the making of education policy at the World Bank 1960-2000'. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 23, (3), 315-337.
- Holloway, Karel (1996). 'Education Key to Strong Economies' *The Dallas Morning News: Education Extra*, June 18, (p. 18A).
- Jones, P. W. (1992). *World Bank financing of education; lending, learning and development*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Jones, P.W. (2005). *The United Nations and education; multilateralism, development and globalisation*. London and New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Jones, P. W. (2006). *Education, poverty and the World Bank*. Rotterdam: Sense.
- Mediawomen Writers (1984). *Celebrating women: New Zealand women and their stories*. (Maris O'Rourke pp. 37-41). Cape Catley Ltd.
- McLeod, Rosemary & Chamberlain, Jenny (December, 1994). 'Women in Power', *North and South* pp. 124-147 (Maris O'Rourke p. 143), Auckland, NZ.

- National Library of New Zealand. 142 items for Maris O'Rourke  
<http://natlib.govt.nz/items?text=maris+o%27rourke>
- New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) (1989-1995)
- O'Rourke, Maris (2006). *Through my eyes: looking at my 'family' - Lyons, Horner, Hackworth, Robertson, Broughton, O'Rourke and sundry others*. Self-published, Auckland.
- O'Rourke, Maris (2015). *Lilibutt's Australian adventure* Duck Creek Press.
- O'Rourke, Maris (2014). *Lilibutt's Te Araroa adventure*, Duck Creek Press.
- O'Rourke, Maris (2013). *Singing with both throats*, David Ling Publishing.
- O'Rourke, Maris (2012). *Lilibutt's big adventure*, Duck Creek Press.
- Perris, Lyall (1998). *Implementing education reforms in New Zealand 1987-1997: a case study*. World Bank: Education Reform and Management Series: Vol. 1, No. 1.
- Pratt, Ciara (June, 2012). 'Lilibutt Goes Places: A Pig's Tale to Tell'. *Central Leader*.
- Rivers, Janet (1996). 'Hunt fails to fill top job in education'. *Sunday Star-Times*, Feb. 18, p. A8
- Shaw, Louise (2006). *Making a difference: a history of the Auckland College of Education 1881-2004*. Auckland: Auckland University Press (Maris O'Rourke pp. 196-200)
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2010). 'The politics and economics of comparison'. *Comparative Education Review*, 54, (3), 323-342.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. & Stolpe, I. (2006). *Educational import: local encounters with global forces in Mongolia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Steiner-Khamsi, Gita (2000). 'Transferring education: Displacing reforms'. In J. Schriewer (Ed.), *Discourse formation in comparative education* (pp. 155-187). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Steiner-Khamsi, Gita (2004). 'Less than six degrees apart: the Maris O'Rourke effect in education' a section in 'Blazing a trail for policy theory and practice' in Gita Steiner-Khamsi (Ed.) *The global politics of educational borrowing and lending* (pp. 201-220). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Stewart, Stephen (1989). 'Education head brings reform skills to new role'. *Evening Post*, 5 July: Wellington NZ.
- Taylor, Tracey (1989). 'Education model at helm'. *NZ Herald*, July 5: Auckland NZ.
- Tse, Patrick (1997). 'Speaking personally - with Maris O'Rourke' *American Journal of Distance Education*, Volume 11, Issue 1.
- Whittaker, Emma (May, 2013). 'Poems Reflect a Life of Roaming' in *Central Leader*.
- Williams, David (2013). 'The Full-Throated Sound of Maris O'Rourke' in *The Gardens* Issue 16, October.
- World Bank (1999). *Education sector strategy*. Human Development Network Series: Washington D.C.
- (1989). 'Dr Maris O'Rourke: Appointed Chief Executive Designate Ministry of Education' *Reform of Education Newsletter*, No 7, 11 July.
- (1989). 'Education Jobs Filled'. *Public Service Circular*. Wellington, NZ.

- (1989). 'O'Rourke seeks role of good parent' *Dominion Sunday Times*, 6 August.
- (1989). 'Education the key to the future' *PPTA News*, Vol 10, No 10, p. 4, August.
- (1989). 'The Chief Executive File: Who's in Charge' *Public Service Circular*.15 November, p. 20-21: Wellington NZ
- (1995). 'Resignation: Secretary for Education - Dr Maris O'Rourke' *The Circular*, No 316, 23 August, p. 5.

### **Media**

Radio New Zealand's *Nine to Noon* (29 June, 2012) interview:

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoonoo/audio/2523429/feature-guest-maris-o'rourke>

Radio New Zealand's *Arts on Sunday* (26 May, 2013) interview:

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/artsonSunday/audio/2556402/maris-o'rourke>.

O'Rourke, Maris (2009). 'How to Break the Glass Ceiling Without Cutting Your Wrists' on *Voices: Commonwealth Women and Education* website.

<https://commonwealthwomensvoices.wordpress.com/category/4-region/pacific/new-zealand/>

O'Rourke, Maris (1989-1995) New Zealand Archive of Film, Television and Sound Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua Me Ngā Taonga Kōrero - nine items.

[http://collections.soundarchives.co.nz/search.do?view=label&collection=0&field-18=USER\\_SYM\\_18&bool-18=AND&value-18=O'ROURKE,%20Maris](http://collections.soundarchives.co.nz/search.do?view=label&collection=0&field-18=USER_SYM_18&bool-18=AND&value-18=O'ROURKE,%20Maris)