

MCW: Exegesis

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EXEGESIS: *Don't Tell My Mother*

THESIS: The Impossible Story of Hannah Kemp

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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 acknowledgments), 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.

Signed: Leonie Agnew

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ABSTRACT

The Impossible Story of Hannah Kent is a young adult manuscript focused on 12 – 15-year-old readers. The story has magical realist elements and is set in small town New Zealand. The female protagonist's journey centres around coming to terms with her adoption and related childhood traumas. For this reason, I chose to use first person, present tense. This narrative style allows the reader clear insights into the protagonist's thought processes and emotional state, potentially deepening the connection between the reader and a flawed heroine.

The accompanying exegesis *Don't Tell My Mother* examines two aspects of the writing process. Firstly, how researching the psychological impact of adoption influenced the development of Hannah's character. Secondly, the thematic importance of mother archetypes and their relationship with fairy tales, which also formed a psychological approach to my creative thesis.

MCW: Thesis and Exegesis

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EXEGESIS: *Don't Tell My Mother*

THESIS: *The Impossible Story of Hannah Kemp*

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Exegesis: *Don't Tell My Mother* Introduction

Don't Tell My Mother is a critical exegesis which accompanies my thesis *The Impossible Story of Hannah Kent*. My exegesis details how research informed the character development of my protagonist during the construction of the creative thesis, focusing on a psychological approach.

I will explain how I attempted to rectify weakness in my initial draft by exploring relationships between characters as my primary focus. It became clear that Hannah's character was hugely impacted by the role of her mothers, both biological and adoptive. In order to better understand how these relationships ought to impact on Hannah's character arc and bring a sense of realism to her interactions, I needed to research the psychology of adoption. Furthermore, in an attempt to understand the unconscious patterns of emotional and psychological weight which humans give their parents, I also researched the Jungian mother archetype and how fairy tales might reveal the way we respond to this archetype. In doing so, I hope to have developed a realistic, psychological portrait of a teenager within the context of a magical realist text.

Synopsis: The Impossible Story of Hannah Kent

What would happen if you found a library full of true stories? Better still, these magical books contain the secrets of people in your town. People who made your life miserable. Is this an opportunity for revenge, or something more?

Fourteen-year-old Hannah Kemp finds a mysterious mobile library and sees an opportunity. She's already a small-town pariah, thanks to town gossip around a car accident and her tendency to act without thinking. Hannah buries herself in books and tries avoiding everyone, including her parents. Hannah dreams of running away and finding her biological mother, Jasmine, a woman who lost custody of her when Hannah was only four.

Hannah uses the stories to blackmail Taylor, a girl from school, and grows increasingly distant from her adoptive parents, in particular her mother, Ellie, who Hannah finds controlling and judgmental. Their relationship worsens when Hannah is accused of harming local animals and Ellie, initially, believes the worst. Even when Ellie realises her mistake, Hannah feels the division between them has grown insurmountable. Hannah assumes everyone hates her and wonders if her personality has been damaged by early childhood trauma relating to her adoption.

Hannah finds her own story in the library and takes the book without permission. This infringement on the magical boundaries of the library causes characters to fall out of the book and enter the 'real' world, specifically Hannah's biological mother. Hannah ends up hiding Jasmine in a granny flat under her house. This is an opportunity for reconnecting because, even if Jasmine isn't 'real', she is an exact copy of her mother at the time of Hannah's adoption. Now, Hannah can consider Jasmine's choices and, also, wonders if her own tendency for making mistakes is the result of nature or nurture.

However, a brother also appears out of the book, Max, whom Hannah doesn't remember. When Hannah learns that he died because of Jasmine's neglect, she must face the truth about her mother. However Jasmine insists she has learnt from her mistakes and they can have a second chance at being a family. Jasmine also claims she is the only one who can truly love and understand Hannah, as they're genetically bonded. This is Hannah's weak point, her need for love and acceptance from Jasmine, especially given she has idealised her missing mother as being someone who might fill emotional gaps in her life. As a result, Hannah can't decide.

Shortly afterwards, Jasmine accidentally sets fire to the house while Hannah's adoptive parents are out. Jasmine claims Hannah will get the blame and insists they all leave, immediately. However, Hannah recognises that Jasmine's desire to stay with her comes from a selfish place. Jasmine doesn't mind if Hannah takes the blame and drops out of school, nor does she care about the impact on Hannah's adoptive parents. Hannah is forced into a decisive moment and chooses to stay. Opting for a life with the adoptive parents causes Jasmine and the brother to dissolve into a pile of letters. Hannah feels distraught, but rushes inside to save her pet.

Hannah rescues the pet and also a friend, Dylan, who enters the building in an attempt to save her. Hannah grieves the loss of Jasmine, despite her faults. However she also sees her idealised mother more clearly and appreciates her adoptive parents for their stability and support. Hannah's adoptive parents don't blame her for the fire. During a conversation, Ellie also decides it's time she shows unconditional support, which was always there but not fully expressed. Hannah realises she has been making assumptions about how her parents view her, based on her own negative self-view.

Finally, Hannah realises the purpose of the library was to revisit the story of her life and understand she was always the author of her own mistakes and successes.

Motivation

The idea for this manuscript first presented itself when I was teaching at primary school and the mobile Health bus came to school. This was a travelling puppet show for children which taught them about nutrition and selfcare. I sat inside, down the back, and watched the kids being entertained in the dark. As the lights went down, I experienced that strange sense of otherness which, sometimes, accompanies a moment of inspiration. This came from two places. Firstly, the kids were transported to another psychological place while watching a play in the dark, giving the van a feel of 'otherness'. Secondly, the van reminded me of mobile libraries.

Being inspired by the idea of a mobile library relates to my childhood experiences. I've had a life-long love affair with books, thanks partly to a mother who took us to the library every week. I know they open worlds and the idea of a magical library on wheels seemed intriguing because the experience could literally chase the reader. I've also enjoyed fantasy since childhood and, in particular, the moment when the impossible collides with the real world, i.e., the discovery of the closet in *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe*.

However, the library itself speaks to the uncanny nature of magical realism, in that it appears normal but distorts the familiar and unsettles the protagonist. The genre of Magical Realism also felt fitting because it speaks to that moment in fantasy, when the impossible seems real in the everyday world. Indeed, the genre is defined by the online Encyclopedia Britannica as:

The matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction. (Britannica, T. 2021)

And so, I immediately knew the story would involve an ordinary girl finding something magical within her everyday world. I was instantly interested in how it would feel to step inside the bus. What would be the outcome? How would these books affect a character's real life in the ordinary world? These questions provided the impetus for sketching out a plot about a girl who finds a magical, mobile library.

I then had to ask – what do these books do? I decided these books were true stories about people from Hannah's town. They look like normal books, but contain impossible levels of private details, as if someone were always observing the characters, potentially even Hannah herself. It was then interesting to consider how a troubled teenager might deal with such private information. I then took another step – what if she found her own book?

As a keen reader, I understood that fictional books show characters going through stages of catharsis. The character of Hannah could be presented with difficult truths about her own life, including repressed memories from her past. How would she deal with these? Would she grow or implode?

I began researching the psychology of adoption, as set out in the next section of the exegesis, which continued throughout the writing of my creative thesis. I had ideas at this stage, but not a satisfactory ending, and I needed to explore the psychological ramifications that reading these library books might have upon the characters. It was also interesting to explore how the books could act as a window into the self. The magical library was in keeping with magical realism, the physicality of the magical portal sitting firmly in the real world, grounded, as it were, with rusting wheels and grimy windows. But what would be the ramifications of entering this portal and reading your own books? What would ensue? Chaos or catharsis? How would the opening of these books affect Hannah and the story world she inhabited?

I decided that Pandora had a box; my Hannah had a book.

The idea was that chaos was possible. Terrible things might happen once those books were opened. However, if a person were able to read an account of their own life story, it would also be impossible to escape seeing how their actions directed the course of their own lives. In essence, they learn they are the author of their own story, so a cathartic end for Hannah was possible – one in which the teenage protagonist could become empowered by realising she has control and responsibility over her own future, rather than allowing it to be directed by reactions to past issues.

Seeing the narrative potential of this idea, the closure lying within reach of the problem, I knew I had a story and began to write.

The Psychological Impact of Adoption

In order to understand the psychology of the protagonist, Hannah, and create a realistic portrayal of her struggles with identity, research was required into the impact of adoption on adolescents. According to Cecilia Baxter (2001):

The adolescent's primary developmental task is to establish an identity while actively seeking independence and separation from family. The adopted adolescent needs to make sense of both sets of parents, and this may cause a sense of divided loyalties and conflict (p.282).

Firstly, this research was affirming because it suggested the content of the thesis would reflect and engage the adolescent reader's own search for identity and independence by magnifying the issue through the lens of adoption. The sense of divided sense of loyalties would also add drama.

Secondly, the research provided character motivation and backstory. The need to make sense of both sets of parents, in order to establish her identity, presented a clear reason for why Hannah needed to reconnect with her birth mother.

Also, studying the impact of adoption on adolescents influenced further decisions about the plot. The mobile library was originally envisioned as a means for revenge, allowing Hannah to access secrets about people in her town. Understanding Hannah's psychological needs meant finding ways within the text to resolve her trauma and complete her character arc. The library was then re-envisioned as a means for allowing Hannah to interact with her past and

resolve her psychological issues. This also worked because Hannah was portrayed as a keen reader and libraries, arguably, have an educational purpose. Throughout the text, Hannah tries to learn and understand more about herself through reading.

Researching YA books showed the genre of Magical Realism held strong possibilities, as will be shown later in the exegesis, and that characters could even come out of the books and physically interact with the protagonist. This enabled Hannah to delve into the trauma of early neglect and adoption, helping the story to move away from focusing on revenge and forming an arc for healing and catharsis.

The need to provide an emotionally and psychologically accurate account of adoption was also motivated by the need to connect with readers. Teenage readers are better able to empathise and engage with complex and believable protagonists than, perhaps, junior fiction readers. Author Maggie Harcourt (2015, as cited in Mushens, 2015) reflects on one key element to all YA fiction:

One thing all the great YA books have in common is their emotional honesty (p.25).

It's also the reason why so many YA novel are written in first person, and why I chose to write this creative thesis in first person, present tense. As Juliet Mushens (2015) notes:

A lot of YA novels are written in the first-person, present tense POV. This has obvious benefits: it lends an immediacy to the work and also allows us to get inside a character's head very quickly to understand them from the start (p.10).

Building a realistic portrayal of what being adopted might feel like, included researching society's views on adoption and how this might affect the protagonist. For example, Baxter comments (2001):

Adolescents may experience shame and loss of self-esteem, particularly because society's image of birth parents is often negative (p.282).

This was layered into the text during rewrites. For example, Hannah's attitude towards her biological mother, before meeting her, was both critical and defensive. I rewrote the character of Hannah to show her reacting towards other people's comments about her mother, illustrating Hannah's desire to protect her mother's image.

We've never talked about my first mum, and I've got a wild urge to say – *shut up, it's none of your business*. Trouble is, I'm the one who brought her up. So out loud, I say,

‘I dunno, she might’ve changed. I don’t really know her, so I don’t want to judge her, okay?’ (p.83)

Furthermore, during early drafts, Hannah’s inner turmoil and behavioural challenges were solely caused by the emotional impact of her late adoption and repressed traumas. However, research indicated that Hannah might also have genetic challenges. Courtney Janaye Grenke (2012) noted this in her honour’s thesis on adoption:

Most studies conclude that adopted children are at an increased risk for more behavioural problems due to the unique struggles and challenges they must overcome with genetics playing a bigger role than environment (p.3).

The text was construed to show Hannah reflecting on the impact of genetics on her behaviour. Earlier in the text, this question of identity, and whether her behaviour is influenced by genes, cannot be answered due to her closed adoption. As a committed bibliophile, she reads *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (2012) and refers to Charles Dicken’s work *Great Expectations* (1992), both texts which deal with themes of adoption and parenting. Hannah constantly makes connections between herself and these texts which are, to some degree, subconscious, but also forms a basis for internal monologues on the nature of action and responsibility as she questions whether biology or parenting can define her character:

My life was already ruined.

Look at my file, lady. My problems started long ago and far away, like the beginning of a story. Spoiler alert, there’s no happy endings. Only heroines get those, and I’m the villain in someone else’s story – just ask Mrs O’Halloran. I don’t deserve sympathy.

Rubbing hot tears out of my eyes, I picture my weekend spread out before me, endless hours of boredom. Even if Mum has calmed down, I’m not keen on going inside. So I reach into my bag, fingers curling around the edges of my latest book. Folding back the pages, Dr Frankenstein whines in my ear, ‘*I thank you for your sympathy, but it is useless; my fate is nearly fulfilled ...*’

Leaning back on my bag, my feet dig into the dirt. Words dash past my eyes like black ants, hurrying along a white tablecloth and racing towards the scent of food.

‘*You are mistaken my friend, if thus you will allow me to name you; nothing can alter*

my destiny; listen to my history, and you will perceive how irrevocably it is determined.' (p.20).

This is reinforced later as she talks with her father:

'Look, I've gotta go.' I turn away, reaching for the kitchen door handle. 'Um ... I've been reading *Frankenstein*.'

Now I'm inviting comparisons, but he doesn't answer. What can he say? Yes, you're damaged goods? You're turning into a monster? (p.140).

Furthermore, the question of genetics played into the climax and denouement of the creative thesis. The narrative required an autonomous protagonist and so, her realisation that she can choose her own path, regardless of nature or nurture, is a turning point in the novel. Initially this began with weaving in genetic connections relating to personal faults, such as:

She (Jasmine) blinks for a moment. 'You've got a temper.' Then her frown splits down the middle, one side switching to a smile. 'You get that from me. I didn't take crap from anyone, either.' (p.113).

And Hannah often wonders if she would have a stronger connection with Jasmine because, genetically speaking, they would have a similar temperament.

Maybe, my real mother would know I could cause an accident and be really sorry, but not want to say it.

Maybe Jasmine would understand because she was like me (p.83).

However, during the climax, Jasmine shows her true colours as she encourages Hannah to run from the fire and leave her family behind. Hannah finally rejects the idea of being similar to her mother and responds:

I'm staring at a woman who runs away from messes and, for the first time, I know we're different. I run towards mine, stupid perhaps, but true. It's a sharp thought, puncturing darkness inside me and letting in glimpses of light. 'I'm not like you, okay? I'm *not*.' (p.163).

Finally, looking at the psychology of adoption also altered the depiction of the relationship between Hannah and her adoptive mother, Ellie. Baxter (2001) noted these difficulties:

All adolescents may have a natural reticence about talking to their parents, and adopted adolescents may not share questions about their origins with their parents. The parents' willingness to accept their child's dual heritage of biology and environment will help their child to accept that reality (p.282).

For this reason, in later edits, the text was adapted to show Hannah reflecting on *wanting* to leave with Jasmine while feeling both guilty and unwilling to share her thoughts with anyone. After the climax she admits this to Ellie, then discovers Ellie is accepting of these feelings and the issue was simply that they hadn't communicated with each other. The response from Ellie was crafted according to the research which showed adoptive parents needed to be accepting of their child's dual heritage.

'Mum, she wanted me to go with her.'

'Of course she did.' Mum sighs. 'Any mum would want her daughter back. I just never thought she'd find you. The court doesn't give out personal details, but ... I guess she found a way.'

'But, Mum, *I* wanted to go with her.'

Mum takes a deep breath. 'Understandable, but you didn't.'

'I came close.'

She reaches for my hand, our fingers tightening together. She feels like an anchor, holding me in place, while my head spins. Those were words I thought I could never say and, now they're out, my whole body feels lighter. I said the worst possible thing and nothing bad happened. (p.176)

This acceptance by Ellie, provides relief to Hannah and adds to the cathartic impact of the narrative's ending.

Magical Realism and the Psychological

Many YA texts use magical realism as a vehicle for examining the psychological state of the protagonist. Indeed, this seems to be a strength of the genre, for example, *Watch Over Me* by Nina LaCour, (2020) focuses on a fostered teenager dealing with ghosts and trying to decipher whether they are real or repressed memories/events from her past.

This novel has clear thematic parallels with *The Impossible Story of Hannah Kent*, regarding both adoption and the nature of repressed memories. The ghosts turn out to be past versions of many fostered children, frozen at the age of abandonment by their parents. Healing only takes place when they are loved and accepted by the older self. This book had a formative influence on the thesis by showing how the use of magical realism opened up psychological possibilities, enabling characters to interact with their past in a way that wasn't possible in a realistic text. As previously mentioned, this resulted in an authorial decision to take characters out of the book and have them enter the real world, so Hannah could interact with her birth mother.

Similarly, Emily X Pan's *The Astonishing Colour of After* (2018), followed a teenager whose mother commits suicide and returns as a bird. This element of magical realism was used to both disturb the story world and explore the past. This provided a cathartic element for the protagonist, who could learn about her mother's past, culture and family pressures. This text confirmed my decision that magical realism would provide a solid vehicle for helping the character of Hannah to engage with her past. Interestingly, both of these novels used first person, present tense. This also reaffirmed the decision to use this style of narration within the creative thesis. The tense offers immediacy, placing readers into the moment, and builds an emotional connection with the protagonist's viewpoint, as opposed to a more limited external focalization, where the reader primarily observes.

In summary, in the context of *The Impossible Story of Hannah Kemp*, the use of magical realism allowed Hannah to meet a projection of her birth mother and, in doing so, confront the psychological impact of her abandonment and adoption. Most importantly, it allowed her to learn about her genetic history. This is important because, as Baxter (2001) notes:

Adopted adolescents will want to know details about their genetic history and how they are unique ... they will attempt to ascertain where they belong and where they came from (p.282).

Using this information, the thesis was adapted to enhance Hannah's opportunities for learning about her past and her genetic history, through the vehicle of magical realism and the characters of Jasmine and Max. Also, the presence of the biological mother allowed Hannah to make comparisons with her adoptive family and decide that, ultimately, she belonged with Ellie. Furthermore, comparisons between herself and Jasmine allowed Hannah to realise that biology was not a defining factor, rather she had the free will to shape her own future. Thus,

the use of magical realism in the form of a mobile library and the consequential appearance of Hannah's mother and brother from the library books, allowed Hannah to complete unfinished emotional business with her family. In doing so, this helped the character of Hannah to address the common needs of an adopted child and achieve the character arc needed for the narrative's completion.

The Role of Mothers

Hannah's relationship with both her adoptive and biological mothers, both real and magical, fundamentally impacts upon the plot. Further research into the role of mothers was needed to avoid Ellie becoming too stereotypical as the disapproving, strict and emotionally distant mother who fails to give Hannah the emotional support she needs. Failing to do so would also make it difficult to understand why Hannah would choose to stay with this parent, rather than leave with Jasmine who offered understanding and acceptance of her faults.

Likewise, in earlier draft, Jasmine was hampered by her magical origins. Hannah was constantly reminding herself Jasmine wasn't real until this became the focus of their relationship. Thus, when Hannah rejected Jasmine and her biological parent vanished, the reader might struggle to sympathise because the emotional impact of Jasmine's disappearance had been weakened. This moment was a necessary part of Hannah's catharsis and it required a sense of personal cost and loss in order for the stakes to be fully realised.

In order to strengthen the portrayal of both mother and daughter relationships, it was important to understand their psychological importance for the character of Hannah. Then, these relationships could be crafted in a way that would make them both believable and, also, work towards the needs of Hannah's character's arc. This required research into the role of motherhood and the way it is viewed in society. For the purposes of this exegesis, this has been split into the mother archetype and the fairy tale mother.

Archetypal Mothers

Carl Jung (2010) in his book the *Four Archetypes*, claimed that the psychological impact of the mother isn't just related to a personal experience with one's own mother. Instead, it

carries the weight of how people respond and interact with idealised concepts as well as society's expectations around motherhood. He makes the comment:

That is to say, all those influences which literature describes as being exerted on the children do not come from the mother herself, rather from the archetype projected upon her, which gives her a mythological background and invests her with authority and numinosity (p.17).

These mother archetypes have positive and negative aspects which may influence how motherhood is understood and responded to by both the subconscious and society. If they are imbibed by the subconscious, having been derived from the collective unconsciousness and arguably, according to Jung, present in most world religions and mythology, then they exist in the psychic state and affect personal relationships with mother figures. This theory is somewhat contested but the creative thesis has strong maternal relationships throughout, making this an interesting psychological angle to consider.

Furthermore, in *The Good and the Terrible: Exploring the Two Faces of the Great Mother*, Stromer (2015) points out that archetypal mother figures tend to be defined by two categories of good and bad:

Jung himself defines these two dimensions of the archetypal mother, observing that the positive one reflects "all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, furthers growth and fertility," while the negative aspect "connotes what devours, seduces, and poisons (p.1).

As Erich Neumann (2015) explains in his work *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*:

The wicked devouring mother and the good mother lavishing affection are two sides of the great uroboric mother goddess who reigns over the psychic state (p.9).

This concept impacted upon the rewriting of the characters of both Jasmine and Ellie, and how they interacted with Hannah.

However, the character of Ellie was also viewed by Hannah as having elements of the so-called bad mother archetype, especially in earlier drafts of the creative thesis. She wanted to control Hannah's thinking and behaviour, thereby devouring her independence and free will. This would deny Hannah the ability to find her own answers. This would be problematic

because if Hannah simply did as she was told and never learnt her own lessons, her character would never complete a cathartic growth experience.

Instead, in order to have meaningful character arcs for both Ellie and Hannah, I realised the character of Ellie would need to evolve and become closer to the concept of an archetype known as the Great Mother, as described by Neumann (2015):

The good feminine (and masculine elements) configure the Good Mother who, like the Terrible Mother containing the negative elements, can also emerge independently from the unity of the Great Mother. The Third Form is that of the Great Mother who is good-bad and makes possible a union of positive and negative attributes (p.98).

In other words, to be a realistic and strong mother character, Ellie needed to possess both negative and positive qualities associated with parenting. She had the desire to protect which could, negatively, display itself as control and devour the child. However, she also needed to have the positive urge to nurture with unconditional love, thereby completing her own minor character arc. This balance would lead to a better relationship which could allow for Hannah's personal growth, while still retaining safe boundaries for a fourteen year-old girl. This is why, in the later drafts, Ellie came to the following realisation:

'If I've tried changing you, it's because I wanted to keep you safe, make you happier. But I was wrong. You're growing up and that means making your own decisions and even mistakes. If other people don't understand them, that's their problem – I know you, and you don't need to change. You're feisty and strong.' She clears her throat. 'And I love you just the way you are.'

I glance at Dad, who raises his eyebrows.

Mum catches the look, then sighs. 'I admit, I won't stop offering advice, you'd probably have to cut my tongue out.' She half smiles at us both. 'But Han, I'll back you ...' (p.175)

At the same time, Jasmine was reconceived as the devouring bad mother who wants to take Hannah away, thereby taking ownership and, effectively, poisoning her future. This was made clear by highlighting how leaving home would reduce Hannah's chances of proper schooling and remove her from both the financial and emotional security of the Kemp family. At the same time, Jasmine wasn't concerned about this and would deflect questions about Hannah's future.

‘And what will I do? You’re not worried about me dropping out of school? How can you afford stuff like food?’

‘Does it matter? We’ll manage, *come on.*’

‘Yeah? Of course it matters because you keep saying you’re my mother. If that’s true, you’re supposed to want what’s best for me. But you don’t.’ (p.163).

Initially, the psychological impact of Jamine on Hannah was impeded by the fact Jasmine wasn’t real, as previously stated. However, playing up the aspects of danger around Jasmine and rewriting the text to show that Hannah was beginning to accept her as replacement mother figure, meant she posed more of a threat to Hannah’s well being.

At the same time, understanding the positive side of the mother archetype was also important. Jasmine also needed to demonstrate a more nurturing side. She did offer unconditional support in the middle of the narrative, but the revelation she was responsible for Max’s death created a division between herself and Hannah. This was not something Hannah could overcome simply by feeling the strong pull towards the biological mother, as discussed earlier in regards to the psychology of adoption. More was required, including Jasmine’s apparent rescue of her children from the fire, though this later also showed her weaknesses because she wouldn’t enter the house. A small scene was added during the final edit, just prior to the fire, where Jasmine leaves a list of small facts about her early years which underscore the fact Hannah was loved. These may not be enough and, beyond the completion of the thesis and before attempting publication, this aspect of the creative thesis will be revisited.

Fairy Tale Mothers

Arguably, the subconscious weight Hannah would give to both her mothers, would not only be informed by archetypal mothers, but also the mother role in traditional fairy tales. According to K. Rowe (1979, as cited in Wittman, (2011) fairy tales may form part of a collective subconscious in Western culture, acting as:

One of culture’s primary mechanisms for in calculating roles and behaviours (p.2).

Furthermore, Wittman (2011) goes onto state that:

Literature forms an integral part of children’s psychological development and aids them in understanding certain aspects of life, morals and behaviour (p.3).

So what did this mean for the characters of Ellie and Jasmine, in regards to their relationship with Hannah? Within the framework of the fairy tale narrative, the two mothers presented Hannah with clear stereotypes relating to fairy tales which also have their echo in the good and bad mother archetypes. As Cate Fricke (2018) comments:

In fairy tales, the only good mother is a dead one. Almost immediately, the wicked stepmother takes her place (para. 6).

This statement had clear ramifications when developing the relationship between Hannah and her two mothers. In this case, there was an ideal mother, Jasmine, (who has died in the sense that she has been removed from the story) and the false mother who raised the daughter, usually a stepmother but, in this case, an adoptive one.

Understanding this meant part of the narrative's denouement would involve Hannah making peace with the concept of her replacement mother and accepting Ellie was not, in fact, wicked. This would also involve finally acknowledging the serious weaknesses of the 'real' mother who had been idealized, and also recognising that the false mother has been demonised partly by comparison.

I remember feeling something wasn't right. Her relief was genuine, but she wouldn't risk her life to save us. She cared more about herself. That was the real Jasmine, like it or not (p.174).

Ellie is initially a false mother who acts like a fairy tale stepmother, or even a witch, criticising Hannah's decisions and trying to keep the daughter from interacting with the world (metaphorically speaking, keeping her in the tower). However, she learns to let go, by working with what they have and taking a more accepting stance.

'But, Han, I'll back you. You're a great kid who makes a few mistakes, that's not the end of the world. And you're also my kid, so there it is. That's the bottom line.'
(p.175)

As seen earlier, Ellie also admits trying to change Hannah, but realises she was wrong. At that point in the narrative she essentially decides to protect Hannah from her (Ellie's) own expectations. She gives up the part of herself that wants to control, protect and be publicly seen as a 'good mother', (the social assumption that Hannah's action reflect on her), in order to give Hannah what she needs. She accepts Hannah's right to be an individual and the need to be loved unconditionally.

A further look at fairy tales reflects on how children need to feel anger towards their mothers in a safe and socially acceptable context. Reflecting on fairy tales and Bruno Bettelheim's book, *The Use of Enchantment*, Cate Fricke (2018) makes the following comment:

The "splitting up," as he called it, of the mother into two persons "is not only a means of preserving an internal all-good mother when the real mother is not all-good, but it also permits anger at this bad 'stepmother' without endangering the goodwill of the true mother (para. 13).

In other words, the mother's role can be split into two parts. One is the biological good mother and the other is the bad stepmother. This separation allows children to experience anger towards a mother figure, which is not always permissible in real life.

This information impacted upon the development of Hannah's character in nuanced ways. For a start, it became clear that the appearance of Jasmine effectively split the concept of motherhood into two roles within the creative thesis. Hannah believed her biological parent might be good and continued to push away her adoptive, so-called bad mother. However, when faced with the reality of Jasmine's crimes, she had to question her concept of good and bad.

As seen in the previous section, Hannah eventually learns that Ellie could contain both good and bad elements. Interestingly, this acceptance of human complexities and the rejection of childhood views, arguably relates to the developmental stage of Hannah, and also YA readers. In other words, by rejecting the simplification of a child's (fairy tale based) view of mothers, the character of Hannah enters the more nuanced stage of adolescence with its greyer areas of morality.

CONCLUSION

Where to next, for Hannah Kemp?

The YA market in New Zealand is relatively narrow. Scholastic, for example, is the biggest children's publisher in New Zealand and does not publish YA, at all. My first attempt will be the Storylines Tessa Duder Prize because the winner is accepted by Walker Books Australia, which has the potential to forge a relationship with an overseas publisher. Failing that,

Penguin Random House NZ have published my junior fiction in the past and, hopefully, will be interested in my first attempt at YA.

Further edits will no doubt be required and, currently, I question the cultural homogeneity of the main characters. This is something which needs to be explored and possibly rectified given the multi-cultural and otherwise diverse make-up of New Zealand. However, there are complications; for example, if I made Hannah's character Māori would I be entering into a debate on the impact of interracial adoption on Māori tamariki? As a Pakeha writer, I also open myself up to the risk of stereotyping minority cultures, either by accident or unconscious social conditioning, so consultation may be needed in this area.

During the course of writing my creative thesis, I have learnt a great deal about the value of research. This has been most useful for developing a psychological understanding of the protagonist. Hannah's character and her psychological makeup drives the plot and engages the reader's interest and sympathy, thereby keeping them within the story world. Any errors in this area would risk losing the reader – and what is a book without a reader?

In regards to engagement, creating an emotionally honest protagonist was important for YA, as discussed earlier. For this reason, specifically researching the psychological impact of adoption held important significance, in order to accurately show the emotional state of adopted teenagers as they navigate the world between childhood and adulthood. A developing sense of identity is naturally complicated by questions about parentage and genetics, and my research emphasised the importance of letting the child know they are loved and accepted.

The research into the importance of the mother archetype, and the way humans respond to conditioning through fairy tales, also related to the need for emotional honesty within the creative thesis. The theory of mother archetypes, when viewed alongside fairy tales as a means of social conditioning, makes it at least interesting to consider how the reader might have a shared understanding with the protagonist. Both inhabit a world where mother figures have a strong influence. Hopefully, after all my research, readers will recognise the emotional truth in a shared experience and will connect because they find Hannah's turmoil identifiable, even if their lives are very different. After all, this common search for identity and questioning one's relationship with parental figures, is arguably a shared teenage experience as they journey throughout adolescence. I can only hope my creative thesis will one day be published and become a brief companion on that winding road towards adulthood.

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