Trick or Treat: The educational value of the trickster tale

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ABSTRACT

This paper will explore the potential educational value of two trickster folktales; namely the Maori folktale *Hatupatu and the Bird Woman* from Oceania and the Indonesian folktale *si Kecil (Tiny Boy)* from SE Asia. Whilst defining the nature of the trickster tale is a tricky business, what is immediately apparent is that trickery and deceit of various sorts are employed by the protagonists of these tales in order to overcome an ogre/ogress (as befitting the Aarne/Thomson *Tale Type 327 The Children and the Ogre*). What is interesting about this folktale comparison is that, despite cultural particularities that are embedded in the surface narrative and visual illustrations of the focus picture books, both stories speak to a common childhood fear, if not an actual reality: how does one overcome the monster (however defined) when one is, in the scheme of things, powerless? Powerlessness or a lack of agency is a consequence of many events in children's lives that arises in such contexts as poverty, abandonment and abuse. Both these tales enact these realities in that, it is the tiny and/or the youngest child who is left abandoned and hungry, who must finally fend for himself, who is confronted by an all-consuming, cannibalistic ogre and who must, of necessity, employ trickery to survive. Are these protagonists "cultural heroes"?

In order to unpack common deeper patterns of meaning across diverse cultural stories, the use of a structural analysis template will be demonstrated as a teaching strategy that can be used to scaffold a classroom discussion of any text. This template invites educators to identify a range of dualisms within the focus text (as determined by the nature of the narrative conflict) and for each dualism explore issues that relate to that which is particular to the text and that which is universal for all readers. Additionally, the template enables those issues that must be critically examined to be made clear and at the same time produce positive social action. Central to a common curriculum is the necessity to both recognize the hope and implied resilience that can be learnt through the trickster tale as well as critique the real-world ethics of the trickster tale itself. Now that might be a tricky business!

KEY WORDS: trickster, carnivalesque, structural analysis, education, ethics

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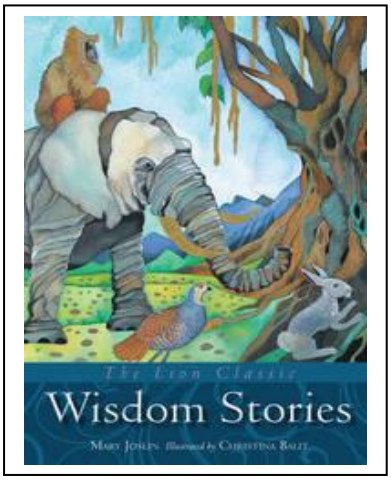
Introduction

Recently I reviewed a collection of folktales by M. Joslin (2013) entitled *The Lion Classic Wisdom Stories* for the Australian Children's Book Council's journal *Reading Time.* Here is part of my review:



Mostly a collection of folktales, fables and literary fairytales, this is a beautifully designed, illustrated and presented volume that contains a range of stories from across the world, that collectively speak of what it is to be wise. Central to many of the stories (and indeed is found in the first story of the collection) is the role of the trickster. Let's look at this first story. Kwaku Anansi the spider, who self-identifies as a trickster, desires to collect all of the world's wisdom and keep it to himself but the pot is too large and too obvious and Anansi fears it may be stolen. He tries many ways to climb a tree holding the large pot and hide it there, but there are limits to what a spider can do. It is his son Ntikuma who solves the problem but however, father slips, and the pot is broken. Thunder, lightning and pouring rain occur and, with the consequential flood, wisdom is scattered across the world. This is a good story to start

> the journey of discovering what the nature of wisdom actually is. There is a difference between wisdom and egocentricity; the powerless and the powerful. Often it is the foolish and the poor who are wise rather than the seemingly clever and the powerful. It is the son (the youngest, smallest and less powerful) who was wise, though father is nominally the clever trickster.

What is fascinating to me is how central the trickster tale is to this idea of wisdom. It is a trickster tale that begins, and is found throughout, the collection. Is the trickster tale truly a source of wisdom? Is it ethically acceptable to extol the virtues of trickery? Are these stories just entertainment or do they really matter and potentially impact on children's emerging sense of ethical behaviour? What then is the educational value of these tales?

Let's face it, trickery, broadly defined, is a real social issue.

In a rather startling programme on New Zealand's national television station (TVNZ One, November 23rd, 2012) it was revealed in a Colmar-Brunton poll of over 400 18-30 year-olds that 87% were satisfied with their personal ethics and character despite 71% having "confessed" to **cheating** in games and 52% having cheated at school (homework/exams), and with 25% having cheated 4-5 times in the previous year; 60% had **lied** to their friends and 28% of 25-30 year-olds had lied to their partners, with 48% arguing that it was justified to protect their feelings/interests; and 48% had **stolen** from a shop, 42% from their parents with 66% of males between 18-21 believing that it was not stealing if they are given too much change and they don't return the money. Indeed, the poll concluded that 92% of participants have cheated in one form or another and that "this high (and expected) percentage was well summed up by one of the participant's answers to why they thought cheating was common [the argument being that] **'every person is constantly pressured by the media and the society to bend the rules. The image of a person who is successful due to not playing by the book is extremely popular, so everyone gives in to it at some point'**." The poll notes that there is a high acceptability of lying with self-interest being a dominant rationale, even though 72% felt guilty. It was noted that the younger group (18-21 year-olds) had a more casual outlook at what is to be considered stealing than the older group and **the poll finally concluded that the vast majority of people cheat, steal and lie despite being satisfied with their ethics and character and indeed believing themselves to be better than others in knowing what is right and what is wrong.**

From a Social Darwinian perspective, deceit can be argued to be as natural as camouflage. We hide behind it as carnivores-in-waiting and employ deceit to avoid being the victims of other carnivores. If the trickster tale then is about this evolutionary reality, is it reasonable to argue that trickery is a valid strategy against the powerful who would consume the individual? Alternatively, most religious/moral/legal systems tend to abhor deceit or trickery (namely, cheating, lying, and thievery) for egocentric purposes, be it in terms of relationships (as for example in strictures against adultery), property (as for example in stealing), official matters (as for example border security) or business practices (as for example in deliberate false representation in the marketing of goods or ponzi schemes in financial affairs). Politicians and religious figures that are proven to be tricksters are not beloved figures in democracies. The question needs to be asked: are we are using texts that encourage or interrogate such practices?

Given that one of the characteristic, defining features of children's literature is "morality," then there is good cause to ask if children's literature contributes to, or interrogates, this phenomenon. As Cuthew (2008) puts it:

> Children's literature has been shown as an historically instructive literature. Whether authors intend [or not] their works to be didactic ones, the necessary imbalance of power and knowledge between adult writer and child reader means that every reading experience for the developing reader is a didactic one. However, it has also been shown that children's literature has historically been

> concerned with morality. Children's literature is an institution through which morals and socially dominant values are inherited. 'Adults see it as their task to socialise children...' (Knowles 1998, 54), and this is perhaps particularly true of children's authors. Morality must be seen as a vitally important constituent in children's literature because it primarily concerns actions. The child protagonists in children's literature are virtual role models for the child reader and so their actions and behaviour carry great relevance. (p.96)

One of the most ubiquitous tale types found across time and cultures is the trickster story. Whether it is to be found in the traditional story like *Anansi the Spider* told around the fire or a contemporary story like *Home Alone* enacted on a screen in the dark space of a cinema, the trickster tale seems to intrigue us all. Yet, if we extol the trickster folktale as a source of wisdom, are we potentially misleading our young people in saying that deceit is okay when faced with life's hurdles? This is a tough question.

This paper proposes that the educational value of these tales is not so much in the content of the tales which are problematic from an ethical perspective. From a positive perspective, they arguably act as a form of emotional release through humour for those children who are vulnerable and feel a lack of agency in their lives and in identifying with the trickster as a "cultural hero," the powerless child is given the opportunity of building mental resilience in the face of personal difficulties and therefore the tales enact wish-fulfilment fantasies. However, it is proposed that these tales offer the possibility of deeper critical thinking about ethical systems, moral values and consequential behaviours when faced with difficult choices. This paper will demonstrate the possibilities of a meaningful critical literacy curriculum where the negative behaviours of lying, thievery and deceit can be interrogated. Let's look at this [i]"tale type" more closely[1]. What then is this phenomenon known as the trickster tale?

Defining Terms

Defining the trickster story is, as to be expected perhaps, tricky. Different cultures have different histories that contextualise the development of their stories so that a universal definition is highly problematic and is perhaps, an act of colonisation (Aguilar, 2000). Furthermore, given that folktales are not fixed, and given that ideologies of childhood have changed over time, what is a trickster figure in a children's story today may not be the same as in the past, in that overt descriptions of sexuality, the lewd and the profane that perhaps defines an element of the trickster in adult folktale (defined as the selfish buffoon) would not be seen as essential in defining the trickster in children's literature today. Indeed, the notion that a trickster is a cultural hero because "he" brings benefit to humanity through his behaviour (as for example in the story of Maui and the gift of fire) orientates the trickster story to "high culture" of the adult and the mythic rather than the "low culture" of the folk, the child and the mass media. If a character employs lying, deceit and stealing for individual gain at the expense of others as a matter of course (defined as the clever hero), is this sufficient to identify this character as a trickster? Is some "good" a necessary outcome of the tales (and hence the notion of "cultural hero" broadly defined) even if unintended?

For the purposes of this paper, I propose that Bahktin's idea of the carnivalesque[2] is a useful paradigm to explore in defining the nature of the tale, not only the character of the trickster but also

[1] Given the ubiquity of the trickster/trickery across cultures, it is not surprising perhaps that the trickster story is not officially recognised as a Tale Type in the Aarne/Thompson classification system. Hence the inverted commas.

[2] Here I draw upon the argument of a previous paper I have written; namely McKenzie, J. (2004) "Bums, Poos and Wees: Carnivalesque spaces in the picture books of early childhood. Or has literature gone to the dogs?" *English Teaching. Practice and Critique*. Vol 4 No.1 http://www.soe.waikato.ac.nz/english/ETPC/ In this paper I focus on the body as a space of the carnivalesque and the representation of the body in picture

the nature of the reception to the trickster tale. It is arguable, given the oral sources of the folktale as genre, that the definition of the trickster as type lies not only in the nature of the tale itself but also in its reception. The carnivalesque refers to those literary *experiences* that resonate with carnival as a socio-cultural event. A teacher who uses the trickster tale could reasonably expect laughter as normative expectations are turned upside down, taboos are broken and the incongruous writ large. If the tales are truly a moral guide to behaviour (and there is no critical reflection on the tales), this teacher could expect some strange happenings in his/her classroom immediately following the telling of the tale!

In the carnival event, normal social order (social class hierarchies, gender relations, power relations and social values) are disrupted, inverted and parodied in an orgiastic time of liberating freedom. For a period of days in the medieval European context for example, the dominant discourse of authorities such as the Church was, through such social institutions as The Feast of Fools, disrupted and the young clown or fool acted as a hero, mocking and challenging authority figures, structures and acceptable modes of behaviour (Mallan, 1999). For Bakhtin, carnival laughter is first of all, a festive laughter. Therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated "comic" event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people against the notion of absolute power, wherever located. To a degree, it is a form of venting anger against being subject to others. This is the essence of the trickster tale: the high are made lowly and the fool seen to be wise (or given the incongruity of life itself where the unpredictable happens, even the fool is seen to be more foolish inviting further laughter).

However, when the carnival is over (and the covers of the book slammed shut and the teacher hush-hushing whilst reminding the class what good behaviour actually is), order is restored and, after a collective sigh of relief, normal social relations and discourses resume. And so, given its institutionalised nature, the community is given, for the time of the carnival, permission to explore those paradoxes that construct human experience. For the time of the carnival, joyful relativity reigned supreme (Toohey *et al*, 2000). In this sense, the laughter of the carnival was an emancipatory laughter where dominant discourses of the powerful were brought "down to earth," revelling in the pleasure of dirt, mud and the body!

Thus, in the telling of the trickster tales in the classroom, there are two elements to note. Firstly in the nature of the narrative, there is a play of oppositions that is essential to the story where the trickster crosses socio-cultural boundaries to create new possibilities. Secondly, this playfulness with borders creates in the audience a laughter that is not only focused on the foolishness of authority and the normative but also invites a degree of empowerment. "I don't have to be always subject to the powerful but I too can overcome the bully through trickery, even if it is only in my imagination for the period of the carnival/story." What are these oppositions that are explored in the trickster tale? I would suggest that the following are particularly pertinent, depending on the cultural context and the particular tale: the creative *versus/within* the destructive; the powerful *versus/within* the powerless; the sacred *versus/within* the profane; order *versus/within* chaos; the female *versus/within* the male; the community *versus/within* the outsider; the human *versus/within* the animal, and the clever *versus/within* the foolish.

Note the use of *versus/within* in the above descriptions of "oppositions." The trickster is the character that plays with these boundaries, these apparent oppositions causing grief for other characters and laughter in the audience. The "*within*" of these oppositions is the heart of the trickster whereby the oppositions are seen as malleable and a space of playfulness by the trickster.

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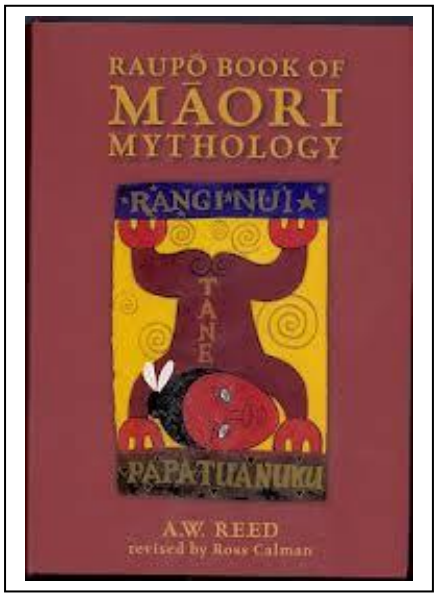
books for children. In this space, the taboo of political correctness is overturned as children delight in the representation of "bums, poos and wees."

At the same time, this socio-cultural play invites reflection. From a parent or teacher's perspective, what is the value of these tales and how can we scaffold new learning based on these reflections?

We will now explore two picture books in detail, namely the Maori folktale *Hatupatu and the Bird Woman* from Oceania and the Indonesian folktale *Si Kecil (Tiny Boy)* from SE Asia. Both seem to fit within the Aarne/Thomson Tale Type 327 The Children and the Ogre (Aarne, 1961).[3] One well known example of tale type is the story *of Hansel and Gretel.* It needs to be noted that this tale has often been associated with the trickster tale both as a type and motif (Ziegler 1973; Blume, 2007). The Children and the Ogre has the following key plot structures based around causes for, and consequences of, action:

- Children (number and gender vary) leave home because of family difficulties (incest, hunger)
- They arrive at an ogre's dwelling (gender varies) who has cannibalistic intent
- One member (often the youngest/weakest) overcomes the ogre through trickery
- The ogre is destroyed (or members of the ogre's family)
- The children escape and find peace/treasure/return home.

Two focus texts of the Type 327 from Indonesia and New Zealand

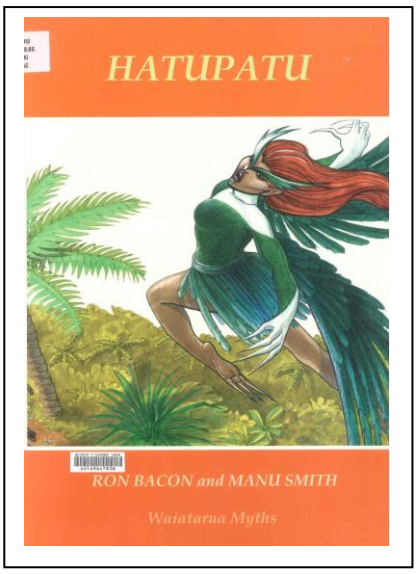


Firstly, we need to note that folktales that are adapted for children often have significantly different details compared to their "original" oral/written source (henceforth called source text in terms of written sources). Whilst contemporary cultural retellings of *Hatu Patu and the Bird Woman* by the particular tribal source may well differ, the standard written source text would be A.W. Reed's *Raupo Book of Maori Mythology* (revised by R. Calman in 2004). In contrast to all the versions adapted for children, this source text clearly indicates two key episodes. The first is well known: the story of the Hatupatu's capture and escape from the Bird Woman. The second episode follows on from this event whereby Hatupatu is again confronted by sibling rivalry when the brothers are challenged by the father to seek revenge on a long-standing family grievance and Hatupatu further shows his trickster capacity. Hatu Patu in this episode reveals his true mana or status and sense of presence.[4]

There are considerable differences between different picture book adaptations compared to the source text both in terms of the depth of the narrative and the quality of the illustrations in different children's adaptations. This is particularly the case when one compares the "blown up" book or basal reader used for shared reading as pedagogy (with a literacy learning intention clearly in mind) with trade picture books (that is, commercially available texts). For example, the Bacon & Smith (1996) basal reader version focuses purely on the capture of Hatupatu by the Bird Woman and removes any

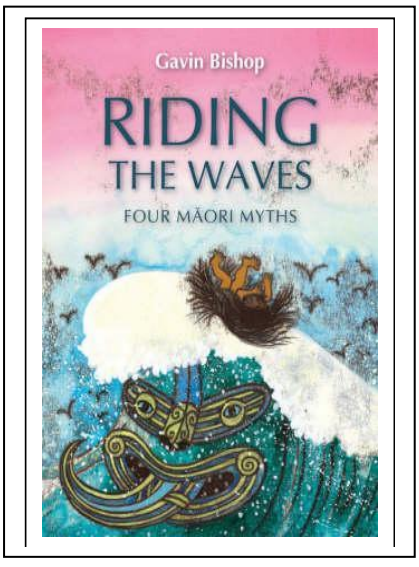
[3] It needs to be noted that in the motif-index (as opposed to Tale Type) the author M. Bunanta has identified the motif numbers as L311 Weak (small) hero overcomes large fighter and G520 Ogre deceived into self-injury. The author is comfortable with my classification of *Si Kecil* as Tale Type 327.

[4] A children's adaptation of this source text where the cultural context of oral storytelling is additionally embedded in the structure of the narrative is A.W. Reed (illus. A.S. Paterson) entitled *Maori Tales of Long Ago* (2010). However this children's version of the source text does not include the second episode.



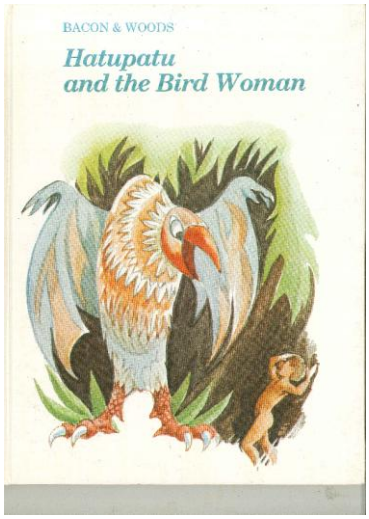
references to the necessity to leave home, references to sibling rivalry that results in the murder of Hatupatu, and references to cultural beliefs about the supernatural, where for example, Hatupatu is "resurrected" by the intervention of parents, who pray to the gods who then send forth a magic blowfly to bring Hatupatu back to life. Furthermore, the motive of the Bird Woman in Bacon's (1996) version is cannibalism whereas in the source text, the Bird Woman captures Hatupatu as a pet (as part of her accumulation of treasures). This difference may be the result of English story of *Hansel and Gretel* or it may be a cultural variation. The reduction of the story to the climatic episode (a boy going into the forest and is chased by a monster), whether it be motivated by a concern about representing violence as a moral issue for younger readers, or for literacy purposes to make the text more "readable," results in a much more reduced curriculum possibility. The basal reader basically leaves us with a story of hero/monster and the dangers of the forest (with stranger danger being perhaps a curriculum possibility). From an illustrative perspective, it is ironic perhaps that the cover image shows a much more sexualised image of the female aspect of the Bird Woman compared to other versions!

Other children's adaptations offer a more reduced version compared to the source text or even a different story. For example, the story of HatuPatu is found as a chapter in Gavin Bishop's (2006) *Riding the Waves: Four Māori myths*. Here HatuPatu is initially described as being his "mother's pet" which gives us perhaps as readers more sympathy for the older brothers who bully the youngest. It shifts the dynamic or guilt from the children to the adults. There is no sense that there is famine through overuse of resources and the boys needing to go on a long journey but instead the episode of going hunting for birds is seen as normal. The element of self-harm as a trick to deceive his brothers through pretending to be hurt by their enemies is removed in this version. When the brothers discover the deceit, he is simply sent home (as opposed to being beaten and killed).



However his capture by the ogress reflects the source text: the ogress wants him as a pet. The ogress is more kindly and offers to feed him well (as he clearly had been starved by his brothers). Thus, Bishop's version presents both mother and the ogress as more nurturing. Clearly Hatupatu has no desire to be a pet of the Bird Woman; he deceives the ogress by directing her to go to great distances to collect food and then, when she is away, he proceeds to destroy the other "pets". The Bird Woman gets wind of the deceit (a bird that escaped the carnage), chases HatuPatu (who offers a karakia or prayer to the gods and is rewarded) and the Bird Woman is destroyed in the hot mud-pools of Rotorua. He returns home and there is no revenge on the brothers (who are pleased that he is home and they are not in trouble). In this version, sibling rivalry and the intense emotions that this involves is minimized and indeed, to a degree, the mother/ogress/female is the source of their problems. This is quite a different version that creates quite a different curriculum that could focus on parenting styles and the impact on children.

The version that I have chosen to use is R. Bacon's (1979) version as illustrated by S. Woods. Though there are later versions by Bacon with different illustrators that are more elaborate than the basal reader described above, the 1979 version is close to the source text (minus episode two) and, in my view, is better illustrated. Firstly, the watercolour naturist style (as opposed to the more common cartoon style of other versions) gives more historical truth to the story: it grounds the story in realism. Indeed, given that monstrous birds actually existed in early New Zealand eco-system and were part of Maori experience (the giant herbivore Moa that could reach four metres high and the carnivore Haast Eagle that had a three metre wingspan; both being the largest birds ever), the distinction between myth and reality is highly problematic. In some Māori legends, Pouakai or eagle kills humans, which scientists believe could have been possible, given the massive size and strength of the bird. Indeed, you can go online and locate a photograph of the rock where Hatupatu is believed to have hidden! (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haast's_Eagle).



In contrast to the many textual variations in the representation of *Hatupatu and the Bird Woman*, M. Bunanta & Hardiyono's (2001) *Si Kecil Tiny Boy* reflects more stability in the recording and translation of the story (Bunanta; private communication, March 2013). Clearly, there is educational value in comparing and contrasting versions of a particular folktale (especially by senior students) in order to determine which version is more authentic and also allows a more complex negotiation of what the story might "mean." The following chart gives a brief outline of the similarities and differences between these tales. Variations from the source text in the story of Hatupatu are noted in brackets and italics.

Arne Thompson (A/T) Tale Type *327 Children and the Ogre*

	German/European	Maori/Pasifika	South Sulawesi/Indonesian
Title Sequence	**Lesser & Zelinski (1984) *Hansel and Gretel***	**Bacon & Woods (1979) *Hatupatu and the Bird Woman***	**Bunanta & Hardiyono (2001) *si Kecil Tiny Boy***
Stasis	Poor woodcutter family and two children (older brother/younger sister).	Family and four brothers.	Poor farmer family with seven children.
Crisis	• Famine causes loss of food. Wife persuades husband to abandon children in forest. • The parents attempt to deceive children as to their intent but the children overhear them and plan accordingly.	Lack of food through unsustainable practices. Brothers told by father to go to a distant forest and catch birds and store for future. They do so.	A flood destroys their food source resulting in abject poverty. Father intends to abandon the older four boys; wife sadly agrees. His intention is enacted.

Consequences	• The children are resourceful (using pebbles and then bread to illuminate path home) but are defeated by birds. A bird leads them deeper into the forest.	• Younger boy Hatupatu is mistreated by older brothers and left hungry. • He attempts a trick that backfires: he consumes the stored food yet asserts that enemies have done it having wounded himself. Brothers see through the deceit, beat him up and Hatupatu runs away. Wanders alone. *(He is killed by the brothers. The brothers return home and the parents immediately suspect the brothers and send forth a magic blowfly to rescue Hatupatu. He wanders home alone).*	• The oldest brother Si Kecil though smallest (who was also brave and smart) shows leadership.
	• They arrive at an old woman's home and are deceived by outward appearances (the cottage and the welcome) to enter. They are captured and Hansel is caged by the witch/cannibal for fattening.	• He is captured by a giant bird ogress who desires to fatten him and eat him. He is placed in a cave with many treasures (birds/cloaks etc). He is hungry and kills the birds. • One bird escapes and warns the Ogress who returns and chases Hatupatu who flees. • Almost captured but is saved by a powerful karakia/chant. A rock opens and shelters him.	• Whilst brothers rest, Si Kecil espies a distant light that is a hut and how to get there. They go and discover it is a giant ogre's hut who has cannibalistic qualities. They retreat and hide. • Si Kecil devises a trick and organises his brothers to collect resources and gives further instructions.
	• Hansel deceives the ogress (bone) and prolongs the seeming inevitable and Gretel finally uses her wits to trick the witch into climbing into the oven and she is caught (and burnt).	• Eventually the ogress is self-deceived about the environment and is killed by falling into a hot mud pool.	• The giant ogre arrives and a verbal exchange begins. The trick has three parts. The giant is persuaded that he vulnerable and the giant flees.
Transformation	They find treasure in the witch's house and set off for home.	Hatupatu returns home and tells parents his story (not the trick) and seeks revenge/utu. He is given a valued weapon t(aiaha) and hides. Brothers return and tell their story (but not the beating they inflicted). Hatupatu re-appears and enacts revenge. Brothers run away.	There is treasure to be found in the cave and all eventually return home victorious.
Stasis	Father delighted to receive them and mother meanwhile had died. Lived happily ever after.	Hatupatu reunites with parents and is recognised as powerful. Brothers now absent.	Parents delighted with their return and with the wealth brought home, they lived happily.

The educational value of these trickster tales

There are a range of opportunities to develop a critical literacy curriculum based on these tales. A critical literacy curriculum is about scaffolding readers to see how they are being positioned to take

up different ideological positions as they read/watch a text and to critically examine such positioning. I propose to look at three possibilities; firstly one can examine the moral dilemmas evoked by the trickster tale, secondly one can explore the monstrous in our imaginative lives and the problem of subject positioning and finally one can deconstruct the art of "persuasion."

It is interesting to note that in each of these stories; it is the lack/need and desire for food that begins the story. What we are not talking about here is the desire for great wealth, kingship or romance (power in all its guises) that motivates action but the basic necessity to survive. This is the reality for many families then and now. There are no insurance policies, charitable organisations or social welfare agencies here but the ugly face of hunger. And so the hunger games begin!

In *Hatupatu and the Bird Woman,* the parents, though they were arguably aware that the siblings were jealous of the youngest (given their immediate assumption of the brother's guilt when they return without Hatupatu in the source text), they nevertheless send them forth into the wilderness without any apparent strictures or warnings. Faced with the "monstrous" behaviour of both his brothers and the ogress, Hatupatu, like many small animals in a carnivorous world, uses trickery (literally camouflaging his theft in terms of deceiving his brothers and creating a diversion in terms of deceiving the ogress). This issue of trickery by deceit is also found on *si Kecil* where it is the father (compared to the step/mother in *Hansel and Gretel*) who, when faced with abject poverty and possible death, decides to abandon four (oldest?) sons and he deliberately conceals or camouflages his actions when he leaves them (by pretending to be concerned for their welfare by getting them water).

What is immediately apparent in all these stories is the issue of parental abuse of trust and the lack of an ethic of reciprocity and togetherness when faced with disaster. The common drive in each of these tales is the individualistic "survival of the fittest" ethic. Is natural law then, the basis for morality in these tales? Are we, in the end, just animals? Here are some amazing websites that detail how nature employs trickery (deceit) to survive:

http://webecoist.momtastic.com/2010/02/15/deception-trickery-in-plants-12-masters-of-disguise/
http://www.rsc.org/images/Iridescence%20In%20Nature_tcm18-182769.pdf
http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/07/100708141620.htm
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/camo/mati-nf.html
http://blog.nwf.org/2012/03/animal-trickery-its-no-april-fools-joke/

What other responses could the parents/brothers have enacted that could have maintained a sense of secure attachment and trust in the children? Students could invent other possible actions and develop a rating scale (good versus bad actions).

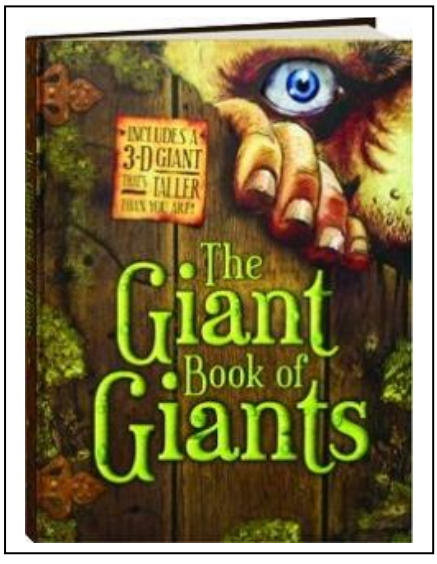
The first possibility of an in-depth curriculum can therefore be a critical examination of the basis of ethics. What is the right thing to do when faced with (natural) disaster and how do we know that we know what is the right thing to do? Is rightness determined by egocentric needs or community needs? One can, for example, modernise the story so that the moral dilemma matches children's reality. For example, a current social issue in New Zealand is the abandonment of children in casinos whilst the parents gamble (TVNZ News 29th March, 2013). Get children to imagine this scenario. *Parents are facing major financial problems and stand to lose their homes. They don't leave their children at home and they take them to the casino. They leave the children to wander around alone (and this includes the children choosing to wander the busy city streets at night). They spend what little they have left and hope to win the big prize. They do. Their problems are seemingly solved.* How would students assess parenting skills during (before the outcome of consequence of gambling is

known) and at the end of this story (when seemingly all is well)? What are their expectations of parenting?

What could be introduced to older students at this stage is the difference between consequentialist and non-consequentialist ethical systems. Is good intention sufficient whereby if a good consequence is being sought (but may not necessarily occur) then this is sufficient for acting in a particular way (consequentialism)? Or, are there behaviours that are wrong in principle whether a good outcome occurs or not (non-consequentialism)? Do folktales in general and trickster tales in particular orientate to either one of these positions? Do endings that have treasure at the end for the parents/family where they all "lived happily ever after" (suggesting a good consequence) mask the inherent evil that is enacted in the tales and the lack of accountability (non-consequentialism)? Now there is a curriculum that will invite endless debate!

In both *Hatupatu and the Bird Woman* and *Si Kecil,* the enemy is the giant ogre, both female and male (no doubt this would disappoint Freud). Rather than accepting at face value the monstrosity of the giant, a critical literacy curriculum invites us to dig deeper into story and critique how we are positioned to read the world in the word. The giant is as natural as you and me. What if we were to assume a more empathetic stance towards the giant? There is a wonderful possibility of integrating a literature and science study here as gigantism is a reality in nature and a brief excursion into natural gigantism is bound to fascinate. Children will really be excited when they look at the following websites that detail natural gigantism:

http://webecoist.momtastic.com/2010/08/02/animal-gigantism-13-real-life-godzillas/
http://dinosaurs.about.com/od/dinosaurevolution/a/bigdinos.htm
http://www.unexplained-mysteries.com/column.php?id=232744
http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/current-exhibitions/whales-giants-of-the-deep



However, what the giant evokes in the imaginative realm however is the idea of the monstrous, the outsider, that strange freak who is found on the periphery of society. Another book that I have reviewed recently is *The Giant Book of Giants* by Quarto Books (2012). What is magical about this book (other than the retelling of six folktales of gigantism) is that the book includes a three-dimensional giant that is taller than "you are" (the "you" being the child as an implied reader). As you can see from the cover image, the giant is clearly positioned as an outsider, a monster that is out to eat you up.

In real life, the term giant is seldom applied to those who are simply "tall" or "above average" whose heights appear to be the healthy result of normal genetics and nutrition. Gigantism is usually caused by a tumour on the pituitary gland of the brain. Indeed, it is fair to say that any variation of the normative body that is obvious (like people who suffer from cerebral palsy, dwarfism or excessive obesity) invites the gaze. I know this having experienced over many years people staring at my brother who suffers from mild, but noticeable, cerebral palsy. For 57 years he has been subject to the gaze as he walks down the street (now it is more children than adults). The gaze, in the context of body variation (as opposed to sexual interest by the opposite sex), reinforces difference (me versus the other), separation and the other being the outsider. This book reinforces the idea of the gaze as a legitimate form of human behaviour that is designed to emphasize the

grotesque and evoke the laughter of revulsion at otherness. This reader positioning is presupposed in our two focus texts. We are invited to gaze at the images of the ogre(ss) as an outsider and consequently express relief and delight in its comeuppance. This is particularly the case with the cover art of *Si Kecil* where a grotesque and distorted body position is presented using a frontal close-up design. Furthermore, we laugh at the paradox of the monstrous giant being frightened by bodily "parts" as it were: tortoises as lice!

Of course, there are monsters in the world and folktales often warn the small child about wandering from the narrow path, stranger danger and all that (as in *Red Riding Hood*). Whenever clever tricksters defeat the monstrous we collectively laugh in the carnival event as the powerful are seen to be fools and the smallest can become king. We sigh with relief when the normative returns. There is therapeutic value in these tales as children are able to vent their anxieties about the monsters that inhabit their dreams, let alone life. But there is the possibility of a critical literacy curriculum here that focuses on the relationship of literature, subject positioning towards the Other and our consequent behaviour. What is the impact of our gaze on the self-esteem of the Other who, in our gaze, construct him/her as the monstrous? Clearly there is a good critical literacy curriculum here in exploring how folktales position us to read difference, often in negative ways.

So how do tricksters do their work? One of the techniques used by tricksters in many tales is the art of persuasion, the business of convincing another to their way of thinking, inducing them to do what the trickster needs or desires that is not necessarily in the other person's interest. "Persuasion" can come in many forms: rhetoric (the art of using effective language), psychological manipulation (the art of playing with emotion), hypnosis (the art of altering states of consciousness with heightened receptivity to suggestion and direction), and plain deceit. Paul & Elder (2006) examined the art of mental trickery and manipulation and identified forty-four "foul" ways to win an argument. The trickster si Kecil uses six of them!

***Appeal to experience*:** Si Kecil knows who the giant is and reflects on common knowledge
Appeal to authority: Si Kecil assumes an authoritative voice and gives instructions
Appeal to fear: Si Kecil focuses on the giant's worst fear: powerlessness
Question your opponent's conclusions: Si Kecil plans increasingly persuasive baits so that the opponent doubts his previous conclusions
Create a straw man: Si Kecil ignores the reality of the giant's power and creates a straw man (false image of power)
Make your opponent look ridiculous: Si Kecil masquerades tortoises as lice

files.meetup.com/391323/**Fallacies**2006-DC.pdf

The value in this critical literacy curriculum is the empowerment of students as they examine the different ways that people can be manipulated and reflect on their own weaknesses both as actants and as subjects. Here knowledge is power. From a literature perspective, it would be an interesting task to locate examples of psychological manipulation in other folktales as part of this study.

It is evident that there is much educational value in sharing the trickster tales and using different critical perspectives to question hidden ideologies or world views that may or may not be useful in the social, cultural and ethical development of the students. One strategy to scaffold this learning is to use a structural analysis template as detailed below.

Scaffolding deeper layers of meaning through structural analysis

Earlier, we noted the significance of the "betwixt and between" space of oppositions where the trickster has much fun. He can dress as a woman, overturn power and become king and though small and weak, be the most powerful. Let us use this idea of oppositions as a scaffold. A series of binaries or oppositions (and the space betwixt and between) are located in any given text based on the conflicts that are evident in the story. Then questions are designed using the following template as a scaffold. To scaffold (verb) then is also to introduce these questions in a way that is partially age-appropriate and clearly in a language that communicates. However, this does not mean that children's capacities to think outside the square are negated, a persistent problem with developmentalism as a structuring principle in curriculum development. Quirky readers do not need to be put into the box called "age appropriate" or "my beliefs about what it is to be a child" but need the opportunity to engage actively in the world that surrounds them, both in their homes and neighbourhoods and both lived experientially as well as mediated through the media. The following dimensions are then explored specific to each opposition:

P: Questions that relate to how this ***particular narrative*** deals with the focus dualism (and the space betwixt and between) grounded on the conflict found in the story.
U: Questions that touch on ***universal ideas*** evoked by the focus dualism grounded on personal/shared experiences of socio-cultural, gender, economic and environmental issues.
C: Questions that provoke ***critical thinking about the text*** inclusive of circumstances of media production, hidden ideologies and/or theories about (human) nature that the text proposes or seemingly ignores, and possibilities of media effects.
P: Questions that inspire ***productive action*** to make a difference in the personal, local and global dimensions.

For the purposes of this article, we will focus mostly on those oppositions that are relevant to the trickster tale.

Focus text: *Hatupatu and the Bird Woman*

Dualism: crisis *versus/within* stasis	**P**	What caused the brothers to leave the safety of the nest?
	U	What happens to children's behaviour when an adult leaves children on their own?
	C	Does hardship bring out the best in people or the worst?
	P	Design a poster: "When the going gets bad, the good get going."

Dualism: powerlessness *versus/within* power	**P**	What trick did Hatupatu play on his brothers when they were mean?
	U	Have you ever been picked on? How did you cope?
	C	What is better: brains or brawn?
	P	Make a chart of good and bad tricks you can play on friends. Can you decide what "good and bad" means in this context?

Dualism: the sacred *versus/and* the profane	**P**	In what way did prayers/karakia help Hatupatu?
	U	Can you think of other folktales where prayers/priests/God(s) helped a character? What type of character usually gets help?
	C	Do you think people who use tricks (lie, cheat and steal) should get supernatural help?
		How important are sacred places in your community? Interview a

	P	person who is involved and find out what makes a good person and what makes a bad person.

Dualism: the clever *versus/and* the foolish	**P**	Do you think Hatupatu was really clever or a little bit naive?
	U	Who was the most foolish person in this story?
	C	Is wisdom the same as being clever?
	P	Who is the cleverest person that you know (about)? What makes him/her clever? List the qualities of a clever person

Dualism: the outsider *versus/within* community	**P**	What made Hatupatu lonely?
	U	Would you want Hatupatu as a friend? Why? Why not?
	C	Who are the people who others see as weird or odd in our community? Is this "outing" good or bad?
	P	Find out what community organisations try to help people to integrate into our communities. Give a talk.

Dualism: the human *versus/within* the animal as monster	**P**	Who is the most/least monstrous: the parents, HatuPatu, the brothers or the Bird Woman?
	U	Can you tell a story when you or another person acted like an animal? What do you mean by the word "animal" here?
	C	Find out how animals can act like humans. In a group, make up a picture book.
	P	Find out about the SPCA. Why do their workers care about animals?

Focus Text: *Si Kecil: Tiny boy*

Dualism: crisis *versus/within* stasis	**P**	In what ways does the beginning of this story describe a "perfect storm"?
	U	Can you recall a time when 2 or 3 bad events happened almost at the same time? Were there any hard decisions that had to be made?
	C	When you make a hard decision, do you try and guess the likely outcome first or just make a decision on what you think is right and just wait and see?
	P	Listen to someone else's hard decision they had to make. What good advice could you give them?

Dualism: powerlessness *versus/within* power	**P**	What the difficulties a tiny boy like si Kecil might have? Does size make a difference to success in life?
	U	To what extent are heroes/heroines in folktales smaller, younger, weaker, poorer and uglier than others? Make a chart.
	C	Do folktales stereotype some children?
	P	Would you want to be the most powerful in your class? Identify the advantages and disadvantages.

Dualism: courage *versus/within* cowardly	**P**	In what ways was si Kecil a courageous young person?
	U	What was the most courageous action that you have ever done?
	C	When do heroes "fall off the rails" and become anti-heroes?
	P	Find out about the life story of a sports/war hero. Are heroes in folktales or films similar or different?

Dualism: the clever *versus/and* the foolish	**P**	In what way was si Kecil clever in tricking the ogre to run away?
	U	Find out about other clever and/or foolish people in other folktales. Are these qualities the same in other cultures?
	C	Was si Kecil clever or just plain lucky? What is the difference between a good risk and a foolish risk? Can a hero be a trickster?
	P	Write a list of risks that young people should not make if they are to be healthy and safe

Dualism: the outsider *versus/within* community	**P**	Is part of the ogre's problem the fact that he doesn't belong in the community?
	U	Have you ever stared at a person whose body is different? How did this make you feel? How do you think this stare made him/her feel?
	C	When do lonely outsiders become dangerous to themselves and to others?
	P	What can we do to help people who are marked as outsiders in our school?

Dualism: the human *versus/within* the animal as monster	**P**	In what ways has the illustrator made the ogre more/less monstrous? What would you want to add/delete/change if you were the illustrator?
	U	What is the worst monster you have seen in books and films? What made this monster so scary?
	C	Can nightmares about monsters be helpful/unhelpful when growing up?
	P	Design a poster: Beat the Monster...(*name the monster eg. alcohol*)..!

Conclusion

One of the educational values of this approach is the recognition that, though we come from different socio-cultural backgrounds, we all face dilemmas, some of them similar and some of them different. How we respond to them is sometimes informed by culture, gender and social class and sometimes our responses arise from rich shared experiences and personal choice. This template recognises the particular aspects of the tale grounded in difference as well as the need to recognise the universal tensions that construct our life stories; it invites a critical analysis of the themes that potentially can be read into the tales and the necessity for productive action within the local as well as global space. Within the carnival space of book event, as the normal world is turned upside down by the trickster, there will be the laughter of recognition of need, desire and relief perhaps but additionally, the paper argues that there is a need for critical and productive reflection once the book is slammed shut that seeks to unlock the mysteries and marvels of the tales.

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