Transplanting the Fairy Tale: An Afrocentric Perspective

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Abstract

In the light of #FeesMustFall, decolonisation has come to the fore in the South African higher education landscape. Decolonisation proposes the overthrow of entrenched European power relations in higher education and the study of fairy tales within a pre-service teaching degree in a university English curriculum provides an ideal opportunity for lecturers to challenge this dominance. All too often, cultural fairy tales are analysed and studied within the European trajectory of the structuralist/formalist classification tradition, often rendering the tale to an oversimplified outline which has been reduced to archetypes, motifs and memes which are universalised across cultures and texts. Epistemic awareness of Afrikology has been suggested as a way of facilitating the inclusion of Afrocentric thinking in the English curriculum and giving pre-service teachers a voice in their own learning. The purpose of this paper is to track the creation of context-relevant cultural capital in the writing of fairy tales. An analysis of the results shows that deep critical engagement with the cultural metaphors presented in fairy tales leads to the development of Afrocentric cultural capital that is highly contextualised and rooted in the language and customs of the cultural identity of the writers who transcoded the fairy tales.

Keywords: decolonisation; Afrikology; fairy tales; transculturation

Introduction

> The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story. (Adichie 2009)

Decolonisation is a concept that has come to the fore in South Africa over the past two years in the light of the #FeesMustFall movement and proposes the overthrow of entrenched European power relations in higher education (Fomunyam 2017, 6797). An area of acknowledged Eurocentric power imbalance is that of the study of literature in the English curriculum, where lecturers are confronted with the challenge of changing the current ethos of the Anglophilic canon. As English lecturers, we concede that we still rely heavily on "the canon" in English studies and also acknowledge that decolonising or "Africanising" a curriculum does not merely mean adding a few novels or short stories by African writers. We realise that a radical perspective transformation needs to occur and that an African perspective, not only on fairy tales, but on the didactics thereof, must be inculcated within the existing curriculum. By only gaining knowledge of the traditional canon in English studies and children's literature, our pre-service teachers are only hearing what Adichie (2009) calls "the single story," and so, in an effort to address this imbalance in the curriculum and in order to give them a voice, it is imperative that our curriculum meets not only the cognitive needs of all our students but also allows for knowledge construction that is indigenous and culture based.

The study of fairy tales within a specific pre-service teacher English curriculum has provided an ideal opportunity for lecturers to come to grips with the concept of decolonisation, implement the paradigm of Afrikology, and in general challenge the status quo of our course. In order to argue for this conclusion, we embarked on an investigation into how pre-service teachers are able to transcode "Eurocentric" fairy tales so that the study thereof can be presented within a decolonised context where the metaphors of location and the import of African ideas provide a situated framework for authentic learning.

The purpose of this paper is thus not to try and offer a definitive definition of "decolonisation" but rather to rethink a small part of the English curriculum and look at an African approach to teaching the fairy tale in particular in the English language curriculum at a faculty of education. It also aims to challenge the authority of the Eurocentric canon or "Bildung" and that which often marginalises the doxastic traditions that take the African perspective seriously (Prinsloo 2016, 165).

Theoretical Framework

The first half of the 20th century had a very particular view of children's literature, which was dominated by stories of prepubescent, white, middle-class children with heterosexual parents (Reynolds 2005, 37). The study of fairy tales followed in a

similar vein, being dominated by the Eurocentric formalist approaches of Vladimir Propp (1928) and Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson (Aarne and Thompson 1961). Both Propp's morphology (1928) and the Aarne-Thompson (1961) index classification systems have been used as units of analysis by Western academics since the 1950s and are still used in folkloristics today to organise, classify, and analyse folklore narratives and fairy tales. Indeed, "the identification of folk narratives through motif and/or tale type numbers has become an international sine qua non" (Dundes 1997, 195). It must be noted that although Propp's morphology has not been updated for an international audience, the Aarne-Thompson indices have, and are now in their third iteration called the Aarne-Thompson-Uther Tale Type Index (Uther 2009). These classification systems have been employed as tools for European and near Eastern storytellers to build their tales (Ashliman 1987) and are also used in Eurocentric literature studies, but it is interesting to note that the classifications only cover Indo-European folktales and do not take many African perspectives into account. Zipes (2012, 1167) is not fond of these classification systems and states that the danger of categorisation is that it universalises stories and reduces symbols to archetypes, motifs and memes which tend to create a levelling of texts across cultures. He goes on to say that a text can only be understood within its own context; that being so I ask, why then would one want to use this generalised system to study a unique milieu?

Knowledge of and about all aspects of literature should allow for the personal development of the student body, and I argue that this can only happen in our classes if all aspects of diversity of our population are addressed within an African cultural context. As Pieper (2006, 6) states, works should in essence be taught in a manner "in which language, culture, and literature are seen as a continuous whole." The English language curriculum should provide phonological representations, seek literary selections that provide authentic cultural information, develop critical thinking skills, and emphasise both historical and literary customs (Stanof 2015, 459)—aspects that up till now have had a marked Eurocentric slant. So, if the Propp and Aarne-Thompson-Uther descriptors are the recognised tools for the partisan analysis of folklore and fairy tales, how does one then move away from that dominant Eurocentric tradition within an English curriculum, which is Anglophilic by nature? Drawing on the decolonisation work of Laenui (2000) as a starting point for this study, I propagate the awakening and "recovery" of our students' cultural voices and language identity, and the interweaving of the epistemic notions that underlie the philosophy of Afrikology into the English curriculum. Before a discussion of how this was done in our case, it is essential to understand how we defined and used the concept of Afrikology. Afrikology is seen as the African-centred study of concepts, issues and behaviours, which aims to build on the accomplishments of African people and serves to engender the idea of emancipation from the dehumanisation imposed by Western civilisation (Nabudere 2011, 159), with a genuine acceptance of and endorsement of contextual analysis. It is a restorative movement (Nabudere 2012, 3) that challenges us to "unlearn" our ways of thinking, to change the way we understand and interpret new

situations and has developed in the face of what Tlostanova and Mignolo (2009, 7) call the "colonial matrix of power." It is one of the quintessential ideas put forward by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his seminal work *Decolonisation of the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), in which he states that shame in the face of colonial oppression is something that we need to unlearn.

By using an Afrocentric orientation in the teaching of fairy tales, one is able to assert that consciousness determines being, ontology is communal, and epistemology validates reality by relating historical knowledge that is framed as a metaphor of location. Afrikology asserts that we move away from the Cartesian grid that informs our academic disciplines (Nabudere 2012, 19) and rather lean on knowledge generation and application that have roots in African cosmology, where knowledge is created by different languages, is cross-cultural in nature and is based on a self-creating ethos where indigenous knowledge comes to the fore (Nabudere 2012, 171). Within the educational context of this study, indigenous knowledge refers to the self-representation of knowledge creation which is entrenched in African philosophical thinking and is understood as constituting a challenge to Western thinking and conceptualisation (Letsekha, Wiebesiek-Pienaar, and Meyiwa 2013). Buntu (2013, 6) asserts that Afrikology presents the perfect platform for learning that manifests indigenous knowledge and the "collective self," and which is rooted in critical enquiry.

With the epistemic roots of Afrikology as the foundation from which to work, the theory of transculturation was also used as a pedagogical lens through which to view this study. The theory of transculturation is rooted in the work of Fernando Ortiz (1995) who states that cultures "merge and diverge" all the time. Transculturation is seen as the "adoption of cultural practices and their socio-cultural recontextualization" (Hermann 2007, 257) and is a composite of the related concepts of hybridity and indigenisation (Rogers 2006, 493), where new cultural elements are shaped from the merging of multiple cultural ideas, leading to what Rogers (2006, 474) refers to as "the creation of hybrid forms." Dagnino (2012, 5) agrees and further relates the concept of transculturation to the creation of new cultural forms from the cultural influences and fusions between what has been identified as the "peripheral" and colonising cultures. The tensions between the use of indigenous knowledge as highlighted by Afrikology and indigenisation, with its ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating being reflected in the curriculum, need to be acknowledged. Within the context of this study, indigenous knowledge is incorporated in the contextualised study of fairy tales which then becomes a vehicle for building bridges between local cultures and the "colonial" language of English, through cultural translations of metaphors (Manus 2015) and the indigenisation of the curriculum.

Transcultural writing or the creation of hybrid cultural capital is thus a non-European expression developed within a European trajectory. Writers select and adapt European discourses (in this case, the fairy tale) to the task of creating autonomous decolonised

cultures while retaining European values. Such cultures, according to Pratt (1992), utilise "the dynamics of self-representation" within these writings. Castaneda (2009) goes one step further and alludes to the concept of transcultural appropriation, which relies on a range of borrowings, fusions, mixings, re-adaptations and hybridisations in order to produce truly authentic cultural texts. Transcultural writings also show how cultural metaphors can be recycled by another culture through the use of symbols, artefacts, genres, rituals or technologies (Rogers 2006, 499). But Lull (2000, 243) warns that it is a more complex process than just blending and that "it is a process whereby cultural forms literally move through time and space where they interact with other cultural forms and settings, influence each other and produce new forms which change cultural settings." This article does not aim to critique the assumptions of transcultural writings, but seeks rather to determine if the writings on fairy tales produced in the pre-service teacher English classroom can be classified as hybrid cultural capital and if these writings have led to the self-representation of the culturally diverse student body and the beginnings of an indigenised curriculum.

Transculturation may seem counter intuitive to the notion of "decolonisation" and its purpose of overthrowing entrenched European power relations, but we argue that although the use of the Eurocentric approach of categorisation still has a valid place in the curriculum, it is also possible to transcode cultural metaphors and centralise an Afrocentric frame of reference when studying and writing about fairy tales. Le Grange (2016, 6) agrees with this method when she suggests that the process of change does not necessarily involve destroying Western knowledge but "decentring" or "deterritorialising" it.

Methodology

Using our pre-service teacher third-year English second language curriculum as a starting point, we decided to change the manner in which the fairy tales were taught and written. This course has only been taught from a Eurocentric structuralist perspective, and has not taken any Africanised notions into account. Initially, the lecturers agreed that we would move away from teaching only European culture-bound fairy tale theory and analysis and focus on the development of transcultural texts that communicate more than the sum of what Haase (1995, 22–3) calls its "cultural parts," but also teach the need for critical awareness of transcultural contexts within an Afrocentric paradigm. This approach was central to our attempts at decolonising the curriculum and involved rethinking the subject (Le Grange 2016, 8). We asked students to choose a typical fairy tale that they had grown up with, and to do an in-depth analysis of how icons and archetypes within that fairy tale were geographically and socially coded (Beckett 2008, 3442). They were then asked to rewrite this fairy tale in a local or regionally cultural manner, as suggested by Le Grange (2016, 9). These suggestions were rooted in the philosophy of knowledge production as propagated by the Afrikological paradigm that stresses the notion of self-representation and the creation of indigenous knowledge in learning.

As storytelling is recognised as a narrative in qualitative analysis (Sandelowski 1991,165), a narrative analysis of the data was employed. The recitations or symbolic actions of the storytellers were interpreted and narrative threads were generated which defined the core themes within the retelling of the fairy tales. The analysis of the stories aimed to uncover an in-depth understanding of patterns of meaning-making in a culturally diverse setting. Having placed Afrikology at the centre of this work, I also wanted to know if it was possible for participants to transcode cultural metaphors and metaphors of location in their transcultural adaptations of European fairy tales. What storylines and metaphors guided their undertakings? I also wanted to know if the development of transcoded metaphors led to the development of unique and context relevant cultural capital and how this could be tested.

Findings and Discussion

The qualitative narrative analysis of the retellings of traditional fairy tales revealed that pre-service teachers were often able to tap into their unique cultural heritage and engage in self-representation of their cultures in their rewritings of fairy tales. What was also evident though, was that a concern came to the fore. On the one hand, there was evidence of serious critical engagement with the topic and cultural metaphors, but on the other hand, often superficial attempts at engagement revealed an over reliance on the entrenched Eurocentric conventions of this genre. The success of this exercise rested on the students' ability to engage in deep critical engagement and if this did not happen, a mere stereotypical retelling of the story occurred.

Translocation of the Setting and Suffering

When participants engaged in critical exploration and contextual analysis of the fairy tale, the development of deep and meaningful renditions of indigenised cultural metaphors and language identity that were rooted in either urban or rural African environments came to the fore. Retellings spoke of social issues and modernisation which reflected a nuanced understanding of the true meaning of "evil" within personalised paradigms.

What is interesting to note is that retellings of fairy tales that are transplanted in an urban environment relied more on a contextual analysis of social issues rather than a deep engagement with cultural metaphors, while those that are transplanted in rural settings spoke to cultural rites and African mysticism. Many of the fairy tale characters were relocated in urban township environments and tales of suffering and hardship came to the fore. Themba and Gobisa ("Hansel and Gretel") live in Soweto but many of the fairy tale characters found homes in the localities of Cape Town. Sleeping Beauty grew up in rich suburbia, and some princesses found themselves transplanted in the beautiful Bo-Kaap. Gerrida ("The Little Mermaid") frolics in the waves at Hermanus and Little Red Riding Doek ("Little Red Riding Hood") resides in Fort Beaufort today. Depictions of Ndanji ("Cinderella") in particular were evident

and she can be found living in varied settings, from Simon's Town, and the city centre to the gang-infested areas of Athlone.

When the setting was transplanted from the urban surroundings to rural environments Snow White became a member of the Himba tribe, Anathi ("Cinderella") lived in Canzibe in the Transkei and Little Red Riding Hood became a girl in a San community in the Kalahari Desert. Thandi ("Sleeping Beauty") was known as the princess of the Lesotho mountains and the 12 dancing Xhosa maidens danced the *umdudo* (traditional wedding dance) under the Hole in the Wall at Coffee Bay, examples of which are illustrated below:

> Once upon a time in Namibia, there lived a family of Himbas. They lived in the North, where mountains kept them safe, in their little village. The king had two beautiful wives and one son.

> Once upon a time in a small village, Canzibe in Transkei, lived an African little girl with the name Anathi

The setting of Keiskammahoek allowed for the depiction of the initiation rites of *intonjane* (rite of passage into womanhood) and *ukwaluko* (traditional circumcision and initiation into manhood), lending cultural authenticity to the retelling of "The 12 Dancing Princesses":

> A few years ago in Keiskamma-hoek in the Eastern-Cape lived the Chief of Undwebeni together with his twelve daughters and six sons. Eleven daughters of the Chief already went through the ritual of intonjane, meaning that they have already went to the elderly women of the village to get shaped into women and get married. The Chief's six sons had already gone to the bush to be shaped into a man and went through the ritual of ukwaluko, the initiating process.

The narrative analysis of the writings shows that when pre-service teachers do not engage in critical thinking about their African or cultural identity, rewritings depict a shallow engagement with the metaphors and cultural elements presented in the fairy tale. This "shallow" engagement with the text is displayed in rewritings that only wrought the most basic retellings, and involved merely the insertion of "generic" Africanisations, which include changing the setting, the insertion of African names and reliance on African stereotypes. In relation to the depiction of the setting, some of the vagaries were very generic "africanisatons" and the stories were usually set in "a traditional African" or "Zulu/Xhosa village," thereby using the broadest definition of "an African setting" as shown in the examples below:

> There once was a little girl, Nonhle, who lived with her mama Mam'Ngcobo in a hut far away from the village and it's people.

> Once upon a time, long, long ago a chief and his wife ruled over an African village.

> Once upon a time there was a King who lived in a small village.

> Thabo and Grace are brother and sister, who lived in a village. They are part of a Zulu tribe.

Suffering and hardship was evidenced in the retellings of "Thumbelina" as Lindelwa and her mother who lived in a shack at the back of someone's yard and of "Snow White" who was betrayed by seven little *impimpies*, while evading capture by an evil sangoma. Furthermore, the condition of Cinderella's poverty was attributed to the fact that her parents were divorced or that she had tragically lost her mother to HIV/AIDS or was a victim of a hijacking in Athlone. In one instance, Cinderella was cast as a black maid, who was forced to work in a white family's home due to her financial situation. In many instances, Cinderella's father had to leave her alone with family because he had to go away to work on the mines, e.g. in the Copperbelt Masaiti District, and in another, because he was in the navy. In a rewriting of "Beauty and the Beast," one student also attributed the absence of a father figure to the fact that he was away working on the mines. A retelling of "Sleeping Beauty" made a tongue-in-cheek quip about the state of parastatals in South Africa when she awoke from her long sleep, in total darkness, and thought that there was load-shedding:

> At first, she thought Eskom shut down the power, but later she found out why her parents said she should stay inside. She was terrified and screamed, but nobody heard her. She had been drugged to keep her quiet.

A woman's right to education also came to the fore in some of the "Cinderella" retellings. In one instance, Cinderella met a handsome young man who helped her fill in application forms for university and because of this, she left home never to be bothered again and in another, instead of attending a ball, Cinderella wore a beautiful golden *chitenge* when she attended a woman's empowerment conference in Cape Town.

Issues of the abuse of women were also highlighted in the story of "Sleeping Beauty," who was kept in a state of drugged sleepiness by abductors who held her for ransom.

> Suddenly two men jumped out of their vehicle, covered her mouth, and pulled her into the car. She tried to scream, but suddenly felt very tired and fell asleep. When she woke up everything around her was pitch black. She slept a lot, because the kidnappers gave her sleeping pills to keep her calm and quiet. During the day she got nothing to eat or drink, but every evening they brought her a bowl of mealie meal porridge and a glass of water.

Transmission of African Names

Retellings that engaged significantly with cultural metaphors were able to tap into the notion that African names carry deep meanings (Appiah 2010, 15). "Thumbelina"

became *Lindelwa* ("one who was awaited") and "Little Red Riding Hood" was renamed *Nonhle Obomvu* ("Red mother of beauty") or Little Red Riding *Doek* ("Hood"):

> When Naledi leaves her home she always wears her favourite doek. Her father gave her this special red doek, dyed with red ochre, as a gift, before he died. Naledi wears it out of love and respect for her father.

"Cinderella" was renamed as "Ash" in many languages including Sesotho (*Molora*) and isiZulu (*Umlotho*). Her evil stepmother was named Bubi (*ububi* is "evil" in isiXhosa) and the wolf trope in "Little Red Riding Hood" was called *Nobubi*, relying on the connotations with evil that the work invokes. The evil stepsisters in "Cinderella" were also named for their cruel intentions, with *Mwaba* ("thief" in isiXhosa) and *Mubanga* ("living in a cave") reflecting the idea that they would steal or turn a blind eye to Cinderella's suffering.

In some of the retellings, African names were inserted in the fairy tale without critical interpretation given to the context or the use of those names. Critical interpretation would entail a nuanced understanding of the meaning given to African names and how this translates into the name of the fairy tale character. The mere insertion of African names into the fairy tale is further compounded by the fact that no cognisance was given to the meaning of the name. "Snow White" became *Thandi* ("loving one" in isiXhosa), "Goldilocks" became *Thando* ("love" in isiXhosa), "Cinderella" become *Sandiswa* ("expanded" in isiXhosa), *Nkechi* ("honey" in isiXhosa) and *Anathi* ("with us" in isiZulu), while the evil stepsister became *Adanma* ("beautiful girl" in Igbo). Simply changing the names of the characters will not necessarily change a Eurocentric story into an African story. The story is more than the sum of its parts; it is the knowledge that it carries, the cultural norms, the idioms, the essence of a people, their beliefs, their way of life.

Transbranding of the Princely Image

The prince also underwent a cultural transmogrification in some of the retellings and became the son of a well-known wine maker from Tulbagh or found himself working in a fish-and-chips shop in the Bo-Kaap. This was also evident in Gerrida, the tale of "The Little Mermaid," where the prince is a local coloured fisherman who falls overboard and is saved by Gerrida. A princely Cape Malay boy named Mikhail also made an appearance in an adaptation of "The Princess and the Pea." Examples of this can be seen in the extracts below:

> Tulbagh Estates was well known for its wines and every two years there was a huge wine festival where the whole village come together and partied till late. This time the well-known winemaker's son was going to attend the festival.

Once upon a time on the most southern point in Africa there was a Cape Malay boy named Mikhail who wanted to find a wife. The perfect wife would have to be part of a strong culture and would have to be a great cook. He was very picky and would not eat anyone's bredie except for his mother's. Mikhail told his mother that he will only marry a girl who truly knows how to make a delicious bredie with the secret family ingredient.

A nuanced understanding of the violence in the taxi industry was evidenced in a rendition of "Beauty and the Beast," which was rewritten in a manner that removed the anthropomorphical elements of the beast and made him very real. He became the menacing Vince Cupido, who states:

Do you know who I am? I am Vince Cupido, some people call me the Beast, and some call me a crime lord. I own the largest taxi business in town and those men who hijacked you work for me.

In another example, Jan van Riebeek was cast in the role of the Beast, and Maria, whose father was a local Dutch fisherman, was held captive in the Castle of Good Hope.

Transmutation of the Magic Helper

The sangoma is represented as a "magical helper" in many tales: in retellings of "Cinderella" the fairy godmother often becomes a sangoma while in "Sleeping Beauty" the queen requests aid from a sangoma:

She never had a child and then a sangoma blessed her.

Although not referred to directly as a sangoma, the idea of magic helper is further developed in the following extract:

The umlingo threw his bones on the ground and a big wind came along that twisted Umlotho around ten times.

Another retelling taps into notions of African mysticism depicting the magic helper as a spirit of the forest:

Molora, I am the spirit of the forest, I live in all living things, the wind, the river, the ground and trees. I have watched you for years, you are so much like your mother. She also had a talent to feel my presence among nature. Because you have always taken care of my home and treated all living thing with respect I am going to help you tonight.

But in many tales, the sangoma also becomes a metaphor of "evil," a stereotypical rendition of something to be afraid of, and is found in depictions of characters with

wicked dispositions. Examples include the transformation of the anthropomorphic alligator in "The Gingerbread Man":

> He jumped on the sangoma's back and get to the other side of the mountain safely and easily.

This is also seen in the morphing of the old witch in "Hansel and Gretel":

> Now, he was trembling with fear, because everyone who went into the sangoma's house, never came out again

and the mutation of the sea witch in "The Little Mermaid":

> Before the Sangoma left, she reminded the King that when the mutti was finished, and that all hope was lost. All of her powerful ingredients were used and it could not grow again.

This stereotypical depiction of evil is also found in most depictions of "Rumpelstiltskin," which rely on the tokoloshe typecast, as can be seen in the following examples:

> He would meet a Tokoloshe who would promise him wealth if he would wear the skin of an Eland and not wash for 7 years.

> The way I would teach it is to tell the story but maybe change the name of Rumpelstiltskin to the well-known "Tokolos."

> The Tokoloshe only appears in the night but the mutti would keep him away.

Similarly, the wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood" also becomes the tokoloshe:

> "Naledi!" screamed her grandmother as she fell out of the tokoloshe's stomach, "You saved me!"

Translanguaging Identity

There were many examples of stories that tapped into cultural language and authentic contextual analysis in order to create unique hybrids of non-European fairy tale expressions. These authentic retellings included examples from "Sleeping Beauty" and "Goldilocks," which were rewritten with translations attached, as can be seen in the following examples:

> A long time ago there were a chief and his wife who said every day, "Ah, ukuba ngaba sinomntwana kuphela (if only we had a child)" but they never had one. "Molo, sisi" said the chief's daughter, "Wenzantoni apha (What are you doing there)?" "Ndiyijika (I am spinning)," said the old woman, and nodded her head. "Luhlobo luni lento yinto

leyo, ephikisayo ngokukhawuleza (What sort of thing is that, that rattles round so merrily)," said the girl, and she took the spindle and wanted to spin too.

and

"Sukugeza wena, Thando," his Gogo shouted. "Yenza lento ndiyithethayo!" (Don't be naughty, Thando! Do as I say!) "Tyini! Imnandi!" He takes a big scoopful with his fingers. "Eish! This pap is very salty," he cries out.

Moreover, often isiXhosa words were inserted in the text, adding to the authenticity of the story:

Once upon a time in a very dusty town called Mthatha, lived a girl named Dreadlocks. One day, while Dreadlocks were playing with sand, making cakes in the sand, she hears her mother calls her. "Ntombi! Girl! Dreadlocks! Come here! Yiz 'apha wena!"

and

When the seven bhutis came from work they found her and mourned for three days and three nights. They made her a beautiful case with African prints on it, they lifted her into the case. She looked like she was asleep.

But what was also evident in the examples where no deep engagement with the text occurred was that there was often an inability to recognise that an authentic cultural retelling requires the use of authentic language examples. This may have been because of the fact that students were not prepared before the time on how to write transculturally. The juxtaposition of a sangoma opening the door of her hut in the forest and the manner in which she addresses Hansel and Gretel is evident in the following statement:

Ah, you dear children, what has brought you here? Come in and stop with me, and no harm shall befall you.

Similarly, it is almost impossible to picture an African maiden in the Transkei speaking like the Queen of England, as in the following example:

I have scarcely had a wink of sleep all night. Heaven knows what there was in my bed! I have been lying on something hard, for my whole body is black and blue! It is perfectly frightful!

There is also an over-reliance on the use of the chorus in fairy tales, and the insertion of the recognised refrain bleeds away all cultural authenticity in the text:

"Thou, O Queen, art the fairest of all." One morning when the queen asked, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?" she was shocked when it answered: "You, my queen, are fair; it is true. But Lira is even fairer than you."

This may also have been evidence of the fact that the only guidelines given to the students were that of the European structure of the fairy tale, making a true Afrocentric reproduction difficult.

In this scene from "Snow White," the juxtaposition of Thandi being born "as white as snow" highlights the lack of real engagement and authenticity in the reproduction of the story:

> Soon afterwards her dream comes true and her little daughter was born … as white as snow and cheeks as red as blood and with hair as black as the wool of goats. The beautiful little girl was named Thandi, after the queen's favourite goat with her black hair.

Linked with this inability to match the language with the cultural context of the story was the fact that Eurocentric semiotic indexes like crystal balls and castles were also found in the stories, as can be seen in the following examples:

> Thandi's new step-mother used to look into a crystal ball on her table

and

> A man from the city arrived with a letter from the king to invite women to his castle.

This once again highlights that the mere transferal of Eurocentric fairy tale elements cannot lead to an authentic retelling within an African milieu.

Reliance on Eurocentric Formulaic Examples

The European formula that was given to the students meant that they did not know that they could base their fairy tales on Africanised criteria. Consequently, almost all of the stories that were analysed in this study made use of the formulaic conventions of the Eurocentric fairy tale, particularly with reference to the use of the phrase "Once upon a time," no matter what the setting of the story. Examples of this include the following:

> Once upon a time on a farm named Lemoenfontein Outside Beaufort West lived a poor farm-worker and his wife Anna and two children Tom and Lee-Ann.

> Once upon a time in a very dusty town called Mthatha, lived a girl named Dreadlocks.

> Once upon a time, there was a woman who couldn't have children. She tried everything, but still nothing worked. She heard about a witchdoctor in her village and went to her. The witchdoctor threw her bones and asked the ancestors for help.

> Once upon a time in Africa, this is a Cinderella story so, there lived a girl with the name Lerato.

The reason for the use of this formula could be that there is an over-reliance on the entrenched Eurocentric conventions regarding storytelling in this genre and that participants did not know how to break free from this or how to overtly challenge it, as they were not knowledgeable on how to do it nor were they given criteria from other cultures that could have been used.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to determine if pre-service teachers could move away from the "one story" of Eurocentric fairy tales and embrace the assumptions of Afrikology that were imbued in the teaching and presentation of fairy tales in an English curriculum at a university in the Western Cape. I aimed to challenge the Eurocentric conceptualisation of our curriculum and replace this with the centrality of African ideas and values, thus allowing the recovery of the pre-service teacher's voice, an idea which is a tenet of the decolonisation movement. With this frame of reference, participants were able to critically engage with Eurocentric fairy tales and transcode the cultural metaphors of location and spirituality, thereby creating hybrid forms of cultural capital. Cultural capital was created where students presented a voice and were given a sense of autonomy and where experiences were contextualised within lived experiences in an African milieu. A rich description of the culture of Cape Town and its surrounds emerged from the stories and although there were instances of superficial engagement with texts, which led to a mere translating of African ideas in some of the retellings, and an over-reliance on the formulaic use of "once upon a time," the general feeling at the end of this exercise was that participants experienced a sense of autonomy and that their learning was authentic, made real in an Africa that they understand.

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