

Aloha mai kākou.

I come to this conversation as a scholar of fairy-tale studies and folklore & literature, and as a settler in Hawai‘i nei who seeks to be an active ally for Hawaiian sovereignty, social justice, and sustainability.

All too often fairy tales in popular culture today promote a capitalist and heteronormative promise of happiness, with fairy-tale magic providing a technology for and spectacle of immediate wish fulfillment, especially for children. Also all too commonly, in colonial contexts the label of fairy tale has been imposed on non-Euro-American traditional stories with damaging results. Referring to mo‘olelo, for instance, as fairy tale overlooks the intimate relationship of narrative, place, and culture that mo‘olelo articulate, disconnects them from their native generic identification, and reduces their ways of knowing to signs of primitivism and ignorance. Fairy tales within the mutually supportive frameworks of capitalism and colonialism put and keep children and Natives in their place. Furthermore, in spite of Albert Einstein saying “if you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales,” these tales are easily dismissed as narratives “of no real account” that demand

suspension of disbelief on the part of adults who know better; tales that, as the narrative of progress in our skeptical age goes, should be eventually discarded.

What is the potential value, then, of bridging indigenous and science fiction studies with fairy-tale studies? I believe that shifting our focus from commodified magic to wonder helps to reimagine and revitalize this disciplinary conversation, to undo the hegemony of the Euro-American fairy tale over other wonder genres, and perhaps more significantly to recognize how indigenous and non-indigenous artists are deploying wonder across cultures and genres for activist projects.

Naming a marvel to behold as well as the emotional response that it engenders, wonder spreads, like mist, across the divine, the natural, the human, the artificial. Quite different from the magic of “consumer romance” as instant gratification, wonder is complex: it invites us to dwell humbly in a world that is continuously transforming itself and us; and it invites us to explore new possibilities and futures; to wander off socially sanctioned paths and to imagine what might be. Wonder springs from awe and inspires curiosity; compounds fear and desire; it is unsettling and thus transformative. As a state of being

and an action, wonder is both the trigger and the product of transformation, ours and the world's. In its making "the impossible possible" (Hopkinson and Nelson 98), then, lies the activist and decolonial potential of wonder.

I think of stories where transformation depends not on a fairy's wand, but on the connection and communication of human, wind, ancestor, forest, frog sister, fruit, land, bodies. Placing us in a landscape where everything is animated (Warner 2014), that is living and conscious, such fairy tales are wonder tales that are surely distinct from indigenous literatures and oratures, but inhabit an affinity with their ways of knowing and being in the world, their interconnectedness of human bodies, land, nature, spirit, and art forms.

Conjuring wonder in their social critiques and visions for the future are what Cherokee writer and scholar Daniel Justice recently called "indigenous wonderworks." I think of artists in this very room. And also of Nalo Hopkinson, Dan Taulapapa McMullin, and non-indigenous artists like Emma Donoghue, Sara Maitland, Aimee Bender, and Guillermo del Toro—each of whom has been rethinking the canonical fairy tale starting from situated knowledges, decolonial and queer desires, ecological and social struggles.

Looking to the future, why does pursuing a conversation between indigenous, science fiction, and fairy-tale studies matter?

Overall, I feel that as scholars in different disciplines it is our responsibility and privilege to attend to this insistent and emerging poetics and politics of wonder, one that questions established lines between history, fiction, and science, between the natural and the supernatural; one that embodies counter-hegemonic perspectives; and does so to help us imagine and act together on better futures. Part of our attending to wonder, then, demands us to restore situated and interrelated histories to the fantastic or “visionary” in its many forms. This means, more specifically, for those of us in fairy-tale studies, that we have a lot to learn from indigenous studies and indigenous wonderworks. “Fairy tale” when applied to the folk narratives of the rest of the world is a colonial concept; it is time to focus on what makes a fairy tale, past or present, and fairy-tale adaptations not only activist, but potentially decolonial. Doing so may change our definition of a genre that should not be discussed as *the* wondertale, but as one among many culturally-situated wondrous genres.

Is the fairy tale, when understood as wonder tale, foremost an activator of transformations, deploying

heroic optimism to make what seemed impossible possible, especially for so-called unpromising heroes who often succeed because of standing firm and clever rather than destroying, choosing reciprocity over greed? In bringing about wonder as their effect and affect, inviting us to know and feel the power of the world's continuous transformations as well as the power of human desire for change and a better life, today's wonder tales by queer, indigenous, and other activist artists push powerfully against equating that better life with "consumer romance," the **unsustainability** and **injustice** of which we experience every day. Because it is commonplace today for commodified fairy tales to emplot lives, that is to "offer a plot that makes some particular future not only plausible but also compelling" (Frank 10), all the more it matters to attend to and be moved by narratives that make alternative futures rooted in wonder desirable and compelling.

Thank you for your willingness to journey into this conversation....