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# SCARY TALES FOR ALL AGES

Restoring fairy tale horror through illustration

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**BRIDGET MONRO**



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College of Creative Arts,  
Massey University  
Wellington, New Zealand.



## Abstract

Fear is a primal emotion, there are no age limits to experiencing it and yet horror, which has its roots in mythology, folklore and fairy tales, is generally restricted to adults. There is evidence to suggest, however, that the horror genre has psychological benefits for its audience as it allows them to confront their fears in a safe and fictional setting and that contrary to popular belief these benefits are not restricted to adults. Child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim believed that instead of sanitising fairy tales considered too dark for children, we should allow them to read the original darker folk versions. He argued that children were able to grapple with themes of loss, abandonment, injury and death and in so doing be better equipped to deal with challenges in real life. I aim to widen the age range typically associated with horror by creating an illustrative narrative that approaches the genre with both adults and children in mind. To do this I am retracing the roots of horror in fairy tale texts that resonate with all ages and which deal with universal themes and fears. In particular, my project investigates how illustration can be applied to the fairy tale *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* to reprise the darkness of the early Brothers Grimm narratives.



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# Introduction

*“Where there is no imagination, there is no horror”*

*-Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1886, para. 7)*

As an illustrator, my practice sits within publishing and encompasses producing commissioned work for children’s fiction to illustrations for novel covers, natural history and speculative fiction. When I first started out at Massey University I was very much inspired by the illustrators who brought to life the wonderfully macabre stories from my childhood and motivated by a desire to create creepy illustrations for kids. However, since graduating I have found the reality of working in children’s publishing, with the over cautiousness that permeates the industry, to be extremely restrictive and stifling of creativity. As a commissioned illustrator, I rely on others to provide me with stories to illustrate. For the majority of publishers, producing something that might frighten or disturb children in any way is much too risky as they can open themselves up to complaints, bad publicity or even lawsuits from angry parents. Unfortunately this means that good horror that caters for children is rather lacking.<sup>1</sup> My interest primarily lay in finding a strategy that could be employed by illustrators who, like me, might want to create horror narratives for both children and adults. However, it can also be viewed as a critique of the industry and what I believe to be missing.

Fear is an innate primal emotion, which evolved to allow us “rapid and energetic response to imminent threat or danger” (Poulton & Menzies, 2002, p. 127). Today, most of us are not threatened with danger on a daily basis but consuming horror literature and films has the effect of taking us back to our primal past. Experiencing fear is universal and children are certainly no strangers to it - childhood is a time where monsters lurk under the bed and in the wardrobe, dreams are populated by unspeakable beings and the dark hides all sorts of terrors. Children also love scary stories and yet are often excluded from the horror genre. There is a very natural reaction to shelter and protect children from what we perceive to be traumatising or corruptive, and horror is an easy target for social media critics. It is often blamed

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that horror for children does not exist, there are some excellent examples such as that produced by Neil Gaiman, but unfortunately they are few and far between.

for inciting violence or causing psychological distress and as such it is often the victim of censorship.

Prior to undertaking *Masters*, I had come across Bruno Bettelheim, a child psychologist known for his work with emotionally disturbed children. In *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), he theorised that the early folk fairy tales provided children with a means for confronting their fears and anxieties in a safe setting and in so doing better equipped them to deal with their fears in real life. He was convinced that rather than sanitising, we should allow children to read the darker folk versions, such as the early editions of the Brothers Grimm. Bettelheim's theories became a springboard for me to explore the topic in more depth. I was particularly interested in investigating how his theories could be applied to creating a more inclusive approach to the horror genre and, in particular, how illustration can be critically applied to restoring the horror in traditional fairy tale narratives.

I argue illustration to be an ideal vehicle with which to approach this topic due to the visual power of images to deliver an emotional response; I believe this is particularly relevant to the horror genre as its aim is to arouse intense feelings such as dread, disgust and terror. In fact, Bettelheim (1976) maintains that by translating internal processes into imagery, fairy tales are able to speak directly to children's unconscious. In *Cinderella* for example, we are told that she goes every day to her mother's grave and weeps. Bettelheim asserts that this simple image is much more powerful than if the fairy tale had gone into detail about how grief-stricken and alone she feels. Thus illustration should be seen not solely as a pictorial representation of the author's work, but an extension of the story and as integral to the narrative as the text. It is employed to give visual representation to abstract concepts and thereby make the invisible visible. Moreover, the illustrator can read between the lines and hint at what is not being told as well as what is.

The following exegesis traces the journey I undertook in researching the topic and theories and applying the findings to the concept development and finished design. I start by reviewing Bettelheim's theories as a context for this project, specifically fairy tales as an aid for children to work through difficult emotions. This is followed by an examination of horror in which I define the genre, its history and appeal and where I outline Glenn D Walters' theories regarding tension, relevance and unrealism. Further on, I examine the function of horror in fairytales and its links and influence on the modern horror genre and I will explain how mainstream media has stripped fairy tales of their original darkness and used them as a tool to impose hegemonic codes of behavior. I will describe how my project counters this and is a critical restoration of the tradition of horror in folk fairy tales. I used case study analyses and comparative analysis between literature and film to identify potential methods

for adapting a fairy tale through illustration. These findings informed the selection of my key text, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*.<sup>2</sup> My design response attempts to synthesize my research into Bettelheim, Walters, the horror genre and my case study analyses. Finally, I will discuss my findings, evaluate the success of the design work to meet my aims and identify further trajectories and potential industry links.

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout my exegesis, when I refer to “text” I am using *Oxford Dictionaries’* (2015) definition of text as “written or printed words, typically forming a connected piece of work”, while the key text is my selected story *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*.

## Bruno Bettelheim

**B**runo Bettelheim came to the forefront in the 1970s for his work with severely disturbed children. He was deeply dissatisfied with much of children's literature, which he saw as "fail[ing] to stimulate and nurture those resources [the child] needs most in order to cope with his difficult inner problems" (1976, p. 4). He maintained that folk fairy tales provided the fulfillment lacking in children's fiction, and that they spoke "simultaneously to all levels of the human personality", reaching "the uneducated mind of the child as well as that of the sophisticated adult" (1976, p. 5-6).

In *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), Bettelheim analyses fairy tales through Freudian psychology and argues that rather than sanitising tales considered too upsetting for young minds we should allow children to read the older folk versions. He asserts that children's literature that denies our dark side and pretends that people are inherently good serves more harm than good, as "children know *they* are not always good" and this therefore "makes them a monster in their own eyes" (p. 7). Bettelheim was convinced that, contrary to traumatising or encouraging violent or destructive thought patterns, fairy tales reflect what is already inside children's minds and correspond to the way they see the world. The dark content of fairy tales is in fact a valuable tool as it enables children to discuss thoughts that might be disturbing or socially disapproved of without them feeling guilty.

In order to achieve any control or mastery of their inner processes, Bettelheim argues that children somehow need to externalise or distance themselves from them. Fairy tales allow children to do this by using a symbolic language that Bettelheim is convinced they understand.<sup>3</sup> Their fantastical, unrealistic nature and opening phrases such as "once upon a time" serve as signposts that the reader is leaving the real world and entering the world of the unconscious. They employ rites of passage and "depict in imaginary and symbolic form the essential steps in growing up and achieving an independent existence" (p. 73). The symbolic language provides psychological distance and allows children to "disregard what they are not ready for by

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<sup>3</sup> He contends that fairy tales become truly meaningful at 6 years old, when children are able to distinguish reality from fantasy.

responding only to what has been told on the surface”(p. 279). As they mature they can then “peel off layer by layer, some of the meaning hidden behind the symbol”(p. 279). This multilayered structure means that children are confronted with basic human fears and predicaments, such as injury, death, aging, isolation, abandonment and loss, and through repeated readings are better equipped to deal with real life fears.

## Defining Horror and its Appeal

The *Oxford Dictionary* online (2015) defines horror as “a feeling of fear, shock, or disgust”, “a thing causing a feeling of horror”, or a “literary or film genre concerned with arousing feelings of horror”. The word horror derives from the Latin word *horrere*, which means tremble or shudder. While the modern horror genre is only about 200 years old, Howard Phillip Lovecraft (1927) maintains that horror is, in fact, “as old as human thought and speech themselves” (para. 8). In *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1927) he traces the evolution of the genre back to the earliest stories of mankind, finding its seeds in the “fertile soil” (para. 11) of folklore, and charts its development from these early folk tales through to the gothic novel and finally to horror masters such as Edgar Allan Poe, M. R. James and Walter de la Mare.

In *Horror Film Aesthetics* (2010), Thomas Sippos defines horror as an unnatural threat existing in the context of a natural universe (chapter 1, section 4, para. 5), which affirms Lovecraft’s (1927) definition of the “weirdly horrible tale” as “a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of nature” (para. 6). Thus, when Alice encounters talking flowers in *Alice in Wonderland*, her reaction should not be one of surprise but one of horror. (Lupo, 1987, as cited in Sippos, 2010).

Many different psychosocial theories have been put forward over the years to explain why we enjoy horror, some of which include psychoanalysis, catharsis, curiosity/fascination, sensation seeking and societal concerns. In his essay *Understanding the Popular Appeal of Horror Cinema: An Integrated-Interactive Model* (2004), Glenn D. Walters examines these theories and from them identifies three common features of horror film appeal, namely: tension, relevance and unrealism.

### **1. Tension**

In contrast to other genres, what defines tension in horror is the presence of other-worldly or as Sippos would say “unnatural” forces. Walters describes horror films as creating tension through mystery, suspense, gore and terror.

## 2. Relevance

Walters contends that horror films spark interest through relevance to the viewer. This can be achieved through any of the four categories: universal, cultural, subgroup and personal.

*Universal:* It has been theorised that our most common fears are ingrained and universal and have evolved because in our past they gave us some sort of evolutionary advantage (Poulton & Menzies, 2002). These particular fears, which include fear of the dark, strangers, spiders, separation or isolation, have become common horror tropes because they appeal to everyone on a base and primal level.

*Cultural:* A defining trait of horror is that its audience actively seeks to be confronted with things they would usually rather avoid. Consequently, it is a useful vehicle for social commentary where horror's monsters can be seen as a dark mirror of the beliefs, fears and desires of the time.<sup>4</sup>

*Subgroup:* Horror often employs fears relevant to a particular subgroup and Walters makes an example of “adolescent-relevant issues of independence and identity [which] figure prominently in horror pictures” (para. 20)

*Personal:* Relevance can also be achieved on a more personal level through identifying with a particular character or situation. A recent Australian film *The Babadook* (2014) deployed a monster as a powerful symbol of the mother's grief over her dead partner and her fears of bringing up her child alone. Similarly, the young adults book *A Monster Calls* (2011) uses a monster as a metaphor for the child's turbulent emotions in coming to terms with his mother's death.

## 3. Unrealism

Horror is often criticised for causing lasting psychological distress, however Walters contends that the fictional and extremely unnatural or abnormal nature of the threat in horror media actually allows a psychological distance between the viewer and what they are watching. It is because of this distance that viewers are able to engage with real issues that, if confronted directly and realistically might be too off-putting or traumatic. Indeed this seems to align with Bettelheim's argument that

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4 For example, Bram Stokers' *Dracula* reflects anxieties about the collapse of the British Empire and the public's fear of 'the other' as embodied in foreign invasion and revenge (Metzdorf, 2012), George A Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* can be seen as a warning of the dangers of mass consumerism, and the original *Godzilla* film, which came out less than 10 years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and was a metaphor for the destruction caused by nuclear war.



the exaggerated and unrealistic nature of fairy tales allows children to distance themselves from inner processes, thereby gaining mastery of complex emotions that might otherwise overwhelm them.

In the following chapter I examine the function of horror in fairy tales, the links between these traditional texts and modern horror and how these dark and macabre tales became tame children's stories.

## The Function of Horror in Fairy Tales

It is only recently that the fairy tale has become synonymous with the children's story. The German term for what we now know as fairy tales was *märchen* which simply means little story. These though were far from the comforting pastel shade Disney stories that we know today. Instead they were complex, multilayered narratives that were dark, at times very violent, and didn't always have a reassuring happy ending. They have ancient origins in oral traditions and were passed down from generation to generation as entertainment for the entire community, both adults and children. These stories shifted and evolved with each telling to reflect what the storyteller considered to be the concerns of the times. As such they were "purveyors of deep insights" that embodied "the cumulative experience of a society as men wished to recall past wisdom for themselves and transmit it to future generations" (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 26).

It wasn't until the early 19th century, as a reaction to the industrial revolution and what was seen as a threat to these older oral traditions, that writers such as Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm began transcribing these tales. The first edition of the Brothers Grimm collection, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812-1815) was very much a scholarly effort to preserve the folk traditions that they saw as an integral aspect of their cultural heritage (Zipes, 2014). The macabre stories in the two volumes of this edition were quite different to the versions many people today have grown up with.<sup>5</sup> Although they were not specifically for children, it was the Grimm's intention to "give pleasure to anyone who could take pleasure in [them]" (Grimm, 1815, as cited in Zipes, 2014, p. xxix). They were convinced that it was unnecessary to alter their tales for children since in their traditional form they resonated with all ages, and that "what children do not grasp about them, all that glides away from their minds, they will do so when they are ready to learn it" (Grimm, 1813, as cited in Zipes, 2014, p. xxix).

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<sup>5</sup> For example, early versions of *Little Red Cap* (or *Little Red Riding Hood*) had the girl unknowingly cannibalise her own grandmother. While in *Aschenputtel* (or *Cinderella*), the stepsisters mutilated themselves by chopping off pieces of their feet in order to fit the slipper.

However the first half of the nineteenth century also saw the rise of Romanticism, which resulted in the idea of childhood as a separate and defined phase of life. Childhood was increasingly viewed as a brief but idyllic period in which children needed to be shielded from the harsh realities of the outside world. It was also during this time that the genre of children's literature emerged and that fairy tales began to be written primarily for a young audience and with the aim of encouraging certain models of behavior. The Grimms' collection of tales consequently underwent a series of revisions to make them more "appropriate" for children.

It was not until the early twentieth century that the complete sanitisation of folk fairy tales took root. Moreover these stories came under heavy criticism when, contrary to the romantic notion of childhood as a time of idyllic innocence, developments in psychoanalysis revealed how "violent, anxious, destructive and even sadistic a child's imagination is" (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 120). It was thought that the darker content of fairy tales was causing or at the very least contributing to this. What followed was the bowdlerization of these tales by Disney which Jack Zipes (2006), a retired professor of German and one of the foremost scholars of fairytales, describes as "a major regression" that "caused many of the liberating aspects of the fairy tale to be tamed and to turn against themselves" (p. 191).

Zipes' critical examination of Disney revealed how he deployed fairy tales to stamp his conservative ideology on America and the rest of the world. Zipes reviews how Disney used design as "divertissement" – where gentle, soothing colours and imagery "narrate through seduction" and "engender a sense of wholeness, seamless totality" (p. 205). In Disney's adaptations folk narratives were stripped of their complexity and rather than encouraging critical thinking, the audience was meant to be "carried away by the spectacle controlled by the master builder" (p. 205). This is clearly illustrated in Disney's 1937 animation *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. In this animation (Fig. 1) the menacing forest, symbolic of our fear of the unknown, has been tamed and pacified by pastel colours and cute fluffy animals,



Fig. 1 Walt Disney, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*

while there is a “continual emphasis on washing and cleaning and turning the dwarves cottage into a nice little middle class suburban habitation” (Brunette, as cited in Zipes, 2006, p. 204). This emphasis is even more apparent when contrasted with illustrations produced by Arthur Rackham for an early edition of Grimms fairy tales (Fig. 2).



*Fig. 2 Arthur Rackham, illustrations for Grimm's Fairy Tales*

While many have grown up with the disinfected Disney versions it is still possible to see clear traces of the darker origins of fairy tales in the modern horror genre. The Brothers Grimm believed that their society owed their literate culture to the oral traditions that preceded it (Zipes, 2014). Similarly it can be argued that modern horror shows a likewise debt in the pervasive influence of folk fairy tales throughout the genre. Indeed, Lovecraft (1927) maintains that the types and characters of early folklore still survive in horror, even if “disguised and altered by modern technique” (para 11). Edgar Allan Poe’s short story *Ligeia* (1838) is generally credited with the birth of body horror which contemporary directors and authors such as David Cronenberg and Clive Barker have made their names from. However this form is evident in early fairy tales such as *The Juniper Tree*, *The Maiden with No Hands*, *Bluebeard*, *Fitcher’s Bird* and *The Robber Bridegroom*, all of which focus on violence, mutilation and destruction of the body. Many classic horror films derive

their plot and/or characters from fairy tales. The film *Carrie*, for example, can be seen as a modern day Cinderella story in its thematic portrayal of ostracism, torment, fairy godmother goodness, a ball and prince, while the ending is more in keeping with the fairy tale's violent origins. A further example of horror taking its cue from fairy tales is illustrated by the now stereotypical horror trope of the cabin in the woods, which can be argued as assuming the same narrative function as the gingerbread house in *Hansel and Gretel*. Like this tale, horror films such as *The Blair Witch Project*, *The Evil Dead*, *Friday the 13th* and *The Cabin in the Woods* use the forest as a threshold symbol to signal the entry into the realm of the unconscious, isolation and the unknown. The house or cabin often gives a false sense of security, appearing on the surface to be a civilized safe haven from the wild forces surrounding it. This notion is quickly and easily dismissed, as the cabin either becomes contaminated by natural or evil forces (as in the possession in *The Evil Dead*) or is revealed to be a trap (the kindly old woman revealed as a cannibalistic witch). This trope taps into our fear of the unknown suggesting that there are unexplored parts of the world and our minds that conceal horrors from which there is no safe haven; the only way out is through confrontation. Thus in both horror and fairy tales this trope "symbolizes the place in which inner darkness is confronted and worked through" (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 93).

Since beginning this project the dark origins of fairy tales like *Hansel and Gretel* and *Cinderella* came back to the forefront when in November 2014, Jack Zipes restored the horror and gore to the Brothers Grimm tales in the first ever complete English translation of the original *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812-1815). In addition to darker versions of well-known tales there are stories that would be unfamiliar to many readers, such as *The Children who played at Slaughtering*, a short but brutal story that ends in the death of an entire family. Zipes maintains that these stories are perfectly suitable as bedtime reading, insisting "it is time for parents and publishers to stop dumbing down the Grimms' tales for children" (as cited in Flood, 2014, para. 12). Zipes' assertion confirms Bettelheim's view that the element of real and extreme threat is crucial to fairytale narrative because it reflects how children see life, even if they have grown up very sheltered. According to Bettelheim (1976) children view their life as periods of safety and security which seem to be "suddenly and incomprehensively interrupted" and "the friendly world is turned into a nightmare of dangers" (p. 145).

From this review it is evident that both modern horror and fairy tales operate on a deep psychological level and serve as a dark mirror to the collective fears and anxieties of the era. My research into horror revealed that its exaggerated, unnatural or fantastical nature provides a psychological distance that better allows its audience to engage with deep-seated fears that might otherwise strike too close

to home if they were presented in a strictly realistic way. My examination of traditional fairy tales showed they provide emotional and psychological benefit to children, in addition, the horror element in the older folk narratives plays an critical function; by allowing readers to vicariously explore the darker side of the psyche it serves as “an exploration of possibilities which avoids all dangers inherent in actual experimentation” (Freud, as cited in Bettelheim, 1976, p. 119). Based on these findings I decided to select a fairy tale for adaptation, I therefore set out to develop a strategy that would allow me to reprise the horror of traditional folk narratives. The following section explores the development of my design strategy through case study analyses of literature, film and illustration.

## Development of Design Strategy

In this section I expand on my strategy for adapting a fairy tale for horror illustration treatment. I discuss how my approach and criteria for selecting the key text were informed by the writing of Jack Zipes and my research into horror and fairy tales. In *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (2006), Zipes describes two potential methods for creating a modern fairy tale, namely the transfiguration tale and the fusion tale. The transfiguration tale assumes the reader is already familiar with the story and rather than completely obliterating its narrative features, it “depicts the familiar in an estranging fashion” (p. 177) by rearranging or shifting traditional motifs. A fusion tale, on the other hand, uses a combination of references to disturbing contemporary events or issues with familiar fairy tale motifs employed in a startling fashion. Both methods are anti-authoritarian and use alienating techniques where the familiar is made unfamiliar in order to jar readers into reflecting on the status quo.

I was interested in discovering how Zipes’ theories could be applied to my illustrative adaptation. My search criteria for selecting a key text were established by reflecting on the findings of my research. In order to use Zipes’ transfiguration method, the key text had to be recognisable to the reader but I felt that there should not be too many recent adaptations. I decided to narrow the scope down to the Brothers Grimm canon as it includes texts that I am personally familiar with and which have had a profound influence on western culture. Further, it includes the tales that Bettelheim focuses on in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976) and which, in early editions, attempted to stay true to their folk origins. I eventually settled on *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (or *The Children of Hameln*), a tale based on the legendary disappearance of many children from a German town in the Middle Ages. This text met my criteria as well as dealing with darker universal themes of death and loss in a powerful way.<sup>6</sup> The basic plot is as follows:

- A town is infested with rats and the people are desperate to get rid of them.
- A stranger arrives in town and offers to get rid of the rats for a fee.

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<sup>6</sup> Since beginning my project there is now a recent adaptation by Russell Brand.

- The Pied Piper plays a tune on his pipe that puts the rats into a trance state and makes them jump in the river, where they drown.
- The townspeople renege on their promise to pay the Piper.
- The Piper enacts revenge by playing a tune that lures the children away from the town, never to be seen again.

*The Pied Piper of Hamelin* is unique in the fairy tale genre in that it is believed to have been inspired by a historical event (the exact origins of the event are uncertain). The earliest reference to the story is a stained glass window in the church of Hamelin, which was made around 1300. There is also a record in the town chronicles from 1384, which states that, “it is 100 years since our children left” (Harty, 1984, p.89). Further, there is a law forbidding music on the street where the children were said to have last been seen (Pearson, 2005). There has been much speculation about the origins of the tale and there are several different interpretations in existence. It has been theorised that the story is a metaphor for a large number of children dying from the plague or that the children in the story refer to the townspeople who voluntarily chose to migrate.<sup>7</sup> Further theories about the figure of the Pied Piper speculate that he could be a symbol for a slave trader who sold the children into slavery or an army recruiter who recruited the town’s youth into military service only for them all to die in battle (Harty, 1984). It is also possible that the story refers to two different historical events which have since been merged together, one, the loss of many children, and the other, the plague.

In developing a strategy for my adaptation, I selected Guillermo Del Toro’s 2006 fantasy/horror film *Pan’s Labyrinth* for analysis, as a contemporary fairy tale that meets Zipes’ fusion tale category. It is also an excellent example of how fairy tales and horror can be used as social critique. Familiar fairy tale motifs are used in a jarring fashion to convey the horrors of a particular historical context, namely, post civil war Spain and the impact of Franco’s regime on the Spanish culture. Like folk fairy tales, *Pan’s Labyrinth* is rich in symbolic imagery and can be interpreted on many different levels. This is evident in the challenges undertaken by the young protagonist Ofelia. The first challenge sees Ofelia retrieve a golden key from a grotesque toad that is killing the tree under which it lives.<sup>8</sup> Del Toro employs the

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<sup>7</sup> It has been speculated they settled in the Baltic region as the surnames there are similar to in Hamelin (Harty, 1984)

<sup>8</sup> Del Toro appears to be influenced by the Grimm’s fairy tale *The Devil and the Three Golden Hairs* in which the protagonist is confronted by three challenges along his journey. The toad in *Pan’s Labyrinth* seems to be a mix of two of the puzzles; first, the market fountain once flowing with wine, now dry and no longer even giving water; second, the golden apple tree which now doesn’t even put forth leaves. The protagonist solves these problems by discovering



common fairy tale trope of the toad, augmenting and enhancing it to provoke our disgust reflex and to convey the cancerous nature of Franco's regime on Spain.<sup>9</sup> The second challenge is to retrieve a dagger from the child-devouring Pale Man, who Del Toro based on Tenome, a monster of Japanese folklore. The Pale Man mirrors the monstrous nature of the real world villain Captain Vidal (Fig. 3) and symbolises the death of children during the Franco regime. The pile of children's shoes in the Pale Man's lair echoes photographic documentation of Nazi concentration camp practices, thereby invoking a visceral response of horror (fig. 4). Through their symbolic imagery Ofelia's tasks can thus be understood as the transition from child to adult and the loss of innocence that accompanies it.<sup>10</sup> The final task sees Ofelia mature and become a mother figure to her younger brother through self-sacrifice and moral disobedience.<sup>11</sup>



**Fig. 3** *The Pale Man and Captain Vidal*

Through examining *Pan's Labyrinth* I was able to identify two main areas which became key for me in the development of my own strategy. First, the method by which Del Toro juxtaposes visual references of real life events and traditional fairy tale motifs, thereby invoking a deep-rooted sense of unease and horror. The second, his use of fairy tale symbolism to create a multilayered narrative that is rich for interpretation. The death of Ofelia demonstrates the unsettling ambiguity

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there is a toad sitting under the fountain and a mouse gnawing at the roots of the tree, which if killed will allow the wine to flow and the tree to bear golden apples again.

<sup>9</sup> This is done through the setting and appearance of the toad; the dark, muddy underground lair is crawling with bugs, while the toad is huge and its slimy innards are expelled through its mouth leaving deflated empty skin.

<sup>10</sup> The tree resembles fallopian tubes with a vaginal opening, while blood imagery is seen in the red corridors of the Pale Man's lair and in the pages of Ofelia's book (Perschon, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> *Pan's Labyrinth* subverts the common fairy tale theme of obedience in favor of disobedience, rebellion and straying from the path.

that runs through Del Toro's fairy tale. We are never quite sure if the fairy tale world is real or if it is just Ofelia's fantasy and her way of coping with the harsh reality of her life. Therefore we cannot be sure whether Ofelia achieves her happy ending through immortality in the fairy underworld. Likewise much of what I feel makes *the Pied Piper of Hamelin* such a fascinating tale is the uncertainty over what the story's events refer to, who the Pied Piper was and what the disappearance of the children means.



*Fig. 4 Shoes in the Pale Man's Lair*

While *Pan's Labyrinth* is marketed as a fairy tale for grown ups, I am targeting my adaptation at both children and adults and as such I identified crossover fiction as the space in which my work would be situated. Crossover fiction seems to function today in a similar fashion to the early folk fairy tales in that they are stories that are enjoyed by all ages and often tackle darker and more serious themes. Further, they encourage critical thinking by challenging the status quo, while their "deceptively conventional and benign surface" often allows them to evade censorship (Knoepfmacher & Myers, 1997, para. 13). Shaun Tan is an illustrator/author working within this area, whose work is usually found in children's reading sections yet unquestionably speaks to adults as well as children. In *The Red Tree* (2001) Tan employs symbolism to deal with the difficult subject of depression. The text is minimal so as to allow his incredibly powerful imagery to be the primary conveyor of meaning. In each page the reader follows a young girl as she progresses through different dreamscapes, each one visually representing complex and dark emotions (fig. 5).

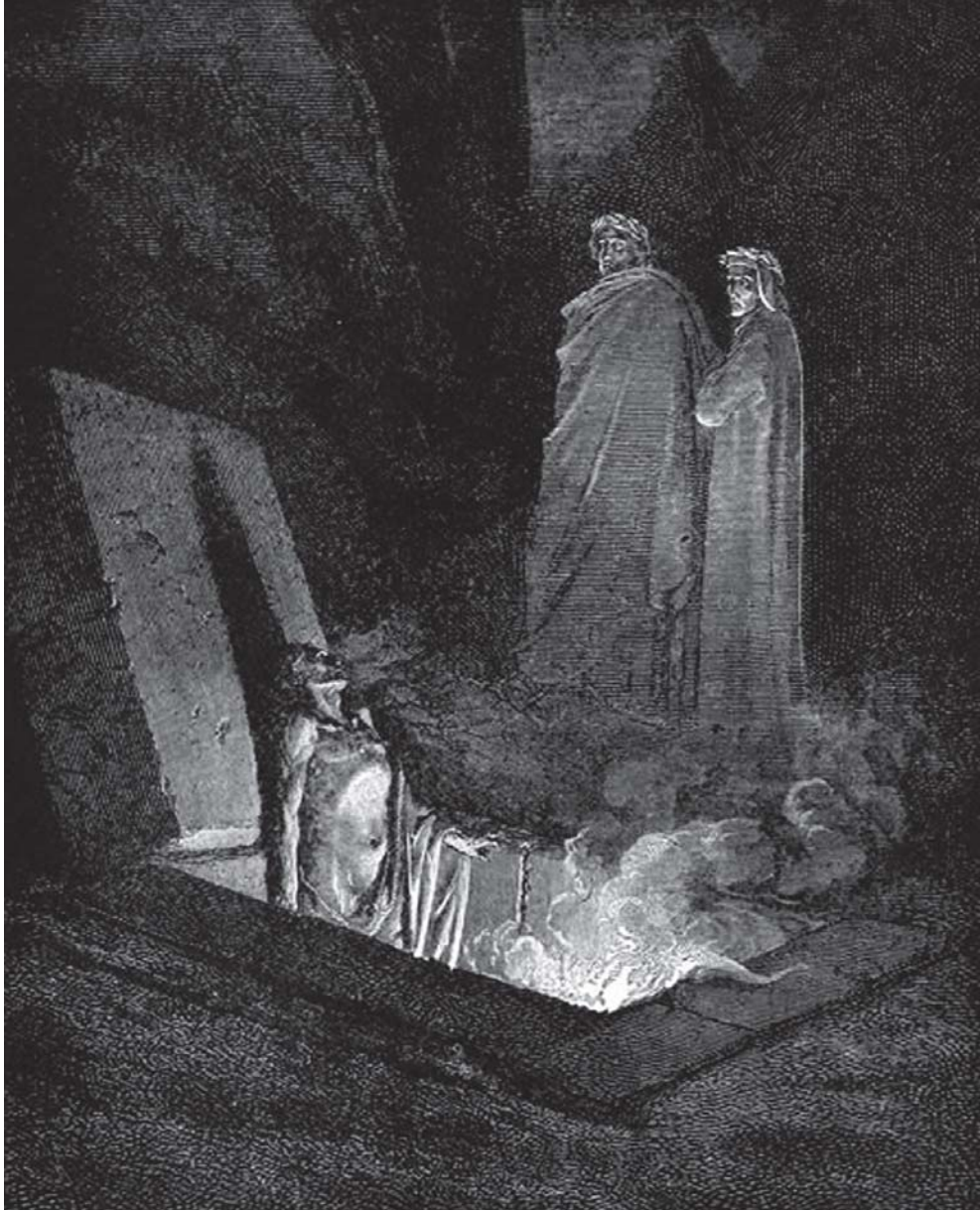


*Fig. 5 Shaun Tan, The Red Tree*

In order to create a visual language of horror I also reviewed illustrators working within the genre to analyse how they have used design to create tension and an atmosphere of dread or horror. I decided to examine the work of illustrator Gustave Doré who illustrated fairy tales in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well as some of the texts that have had the most influence on the modern horror genre, namely Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven* (1845) and Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* (1308-1321).<sup>12</sup> Doré primarily produced wood engravings for his illustrations, combining romanticism, symbolism and social critique. His body of work shows an interest in classical mythology and mortality. His illustrations for Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1861-1868) are considered by many to be his masterpiece and are characterized by "an eclectic mix of Michelangelesque nudes, northern traditions of sublime landscape and elements of popular culture" Audeh, n.d., para 3). Figure 6 employs dramatic chiaroscuro giving it a sinister air and adding to the unnatural setting, while figure 7

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<sup>12</sup> Other artists I looked at included Harry Clarke, Vania Zouravliov, Junji Ito, Sam Harrison, Nico Delort and Mark Summers. I also looked to silent film as a way of communicating horror through image.



*Fig. 6 Gustave Doré, illustration for Dante's Divine Comedy*



**Fig. 7** *Gustave Doré, illustration for Dante's Divine Comedy*

depicts a surreal scene with bodies frozen into a sheet of ice. Doré uses somber tones with just a few highlights on the tormented figures. Both images clearly illustrate Sippos' and Lovecraft's definition of horror, showing a grotesque disruption of the laws of nature through the nightmarish surroundings of hell. Although the settings in Doré's work show a "theatrical other-worldliness" (Dover Publications, 2012, para. 4), the body language and expressions of Doré's figures captures universal human suffering which still resonates with people today.

My adaptation will synthesize my research into horror, fairy tales and artist precedents. Specifically, illustration will be used to apply Walter's theory regarding tension, relevance and unrealism. The adaptation methods identified by Zipes, along with my case study analyses of *Pan's Labyrinth* and Gustave Doré were key in my strategy to create tension, which will be achieved through use of gothic aesthetic, juxtaposition and pacing. Further, my research into folk fairy tales revealed a rich oral history where narratives were altered by what the storyteller considered to be the prime concerns of the time. Likewise my adaptation will be culturally relevant today and I will be looking at the narrative through the lens of fear. Specifically this will be the fear of loss of autonomy, which is the fear of being "immobilized, paralyzed, restricted, enveloped, overwhelmed, entrapped, imprisoned, smothered,

or controlled by circumstances” (Albrecht, 2012, para.10), it manifests as claustrophobia and is conceptually applicable to societal and power-based situations. Finally, my research into both horror and fairy tales showed that a sense of unrealism creates a psychological distance that allows the reader/viewer to better engage with their fears. I will achieve this in two ways; first, through a fairy tale style of language, and second, through use of grossly abnormal or fantastical elements of horror, in this case amplifying the effect and horror of the rat infestation. The following section will outline my creative response that was informed by these findings.

## Creative Response

Having conducted case study analyses and defined my strategy I began my own design exploration. Initially I was concerned with creating an appealing aesthetic that drew inspiration from my research into mood, atmosphere, juxtaposition and tension. To achieve this I produced a series of studies in which I experimented with mark making and tone through pencil, pen, ink and scratchboard (see appendix.). I found, by experimenting, that scratchboard's graphic quality enabled me to achieve larger areas of darkness as well as a more dramatic chiaroscuro effect. The result was a moody aesthetic very compatible with horror (fig. 8).

Initially my aim was simply to amplify the effect and horror of the rat infestation. However, after initial storyboarding, I realized that it was not adequately conveying my theme of the horror in loss of autonomy and that some changes to the narrative would be necessary, in particular the nature of the infestation. In the original version and other variations of the story the townspeople's greed and waste causes the infestation while their refusal to pay the piper directly results in the loss of their children. I conceived that the infestation in my adaptation needed to be modified to become a symptom of loss of autonomy. I therefore decided that it would make more sense if the physical infestation became an infestation of the mind, where the rats are a hallucination or symptom of mass psychosis (fig. 9)

The feedback I received during critiques included questioning why rats were needed as a visual metaphor for horror and that a more fluid, mutable symbol might be more appropriate for representing psychosis. A designer/illustrator in children's publishing felt that my work was lacking a hook for younger readers and that I needed to have a young protagonist for them to identify with. People also thought that I needed to further reflect on how my adaptation mirrored the current social context, that there was a sense of hesitation in my work over age-appropriateness and that I needed to further push the boundaries of horror. This feedback was invaluable in refining my design strategy. As a result I decided to follow a common fairytale convention of having two siblings as protagonists, in this case sisters; one bordering on adolescence, a common age for fairytale protagonists, and the other I conceived as 6 years old, the age theorised as when fairytales start to become meaningful.



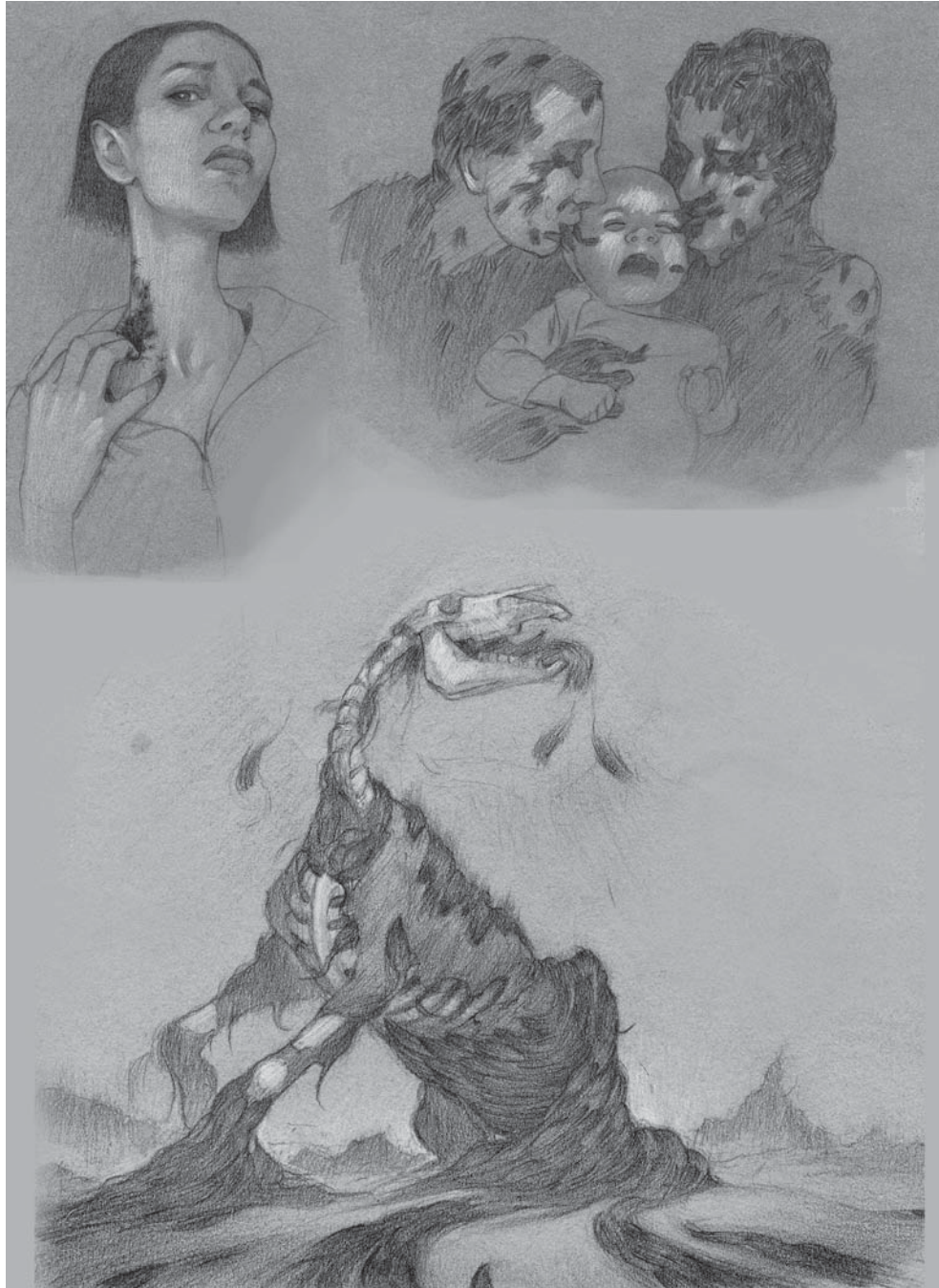
*Fig. 8 Experimenting with scratchboard*





Fig. 9 Storyboards - introducing the psychosis

After some initial exploration (fig. 10) I decided that the form the psychosis takes would be shifting and mutable. I further determined that cultural relevance could be achieved by making each different manifestation of the psychosis symbolise a particular contemporary fear or concern, much like the use of fantastical elements in *Pan's Labyrinth* mirror the real issues of post civil war Spain.



*Fig. 10 Exploring the form of psychosis*

Although the lavish illustrations in early fairy tale books enriched the narrative, they came secondary to the text and served to support it rather than providing alternative ways of interpreting it (Zipes, 2006). My project explores the relationship between text and image and the symbolic power of illustration to transform rather than support the meaning of the text. My adaptation seeks to create a tension between text and image to convey conflict and imbalance of power, and the theme of individual agency versus social structure. The text thus performs an authoritarian role in the style of a heavily sanitized fairytale while my illustrations show a different angle. The first sequence sets the scene and introduces secondary elements within the illustrations that communicate aspects of contemporary culture. My aim is to use these secondary elements to undermine the idealistic tone of the text and introduce tension through an uneasy text image relationship (figs. 11&12). It is my hope that this illustrative adaptation will encourage critical thinking in young readers and the questioning of authority. The second sequence of images is where I start to introduce the psychosis. I decided that in order to reflect the blurry boundaries between fantasy and reality in childhood the affected individuals would be the town's youth while the inability of the adults to see the horror shows willful ignorance and brainwashing on that part of the affected population. In each page spread the psychosis assumes different forms and draws on contemporary ideas of horror, for example the idea of North Korea as a cultural trope (a horror evocative of hermeticism, isolation and surveillance) and the horror of Obama's drone warfare. Figure 13 shows the first appearance of the psychosis. As a symbol, the rats refer to the original story of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* and also symbolise deceit, trickery, filth, disease and rottenness, while the teacher signifies authority. Seen together, they represent lies and corruption, the covering up of crimes of history and control of children through literature and education.

In keeping with Zipes' theories, it was my intention to take traditional motifs and use them in a jarring or alienating way. For example, in the sequence of images before the introduction of the Pied Piper, I combined the traditional fairy tale motif of the red rose with the iconic image of the poppy field (fig. 14). Black, red and white are a commonly occurring combination of colours in fairy tales, for example Snow White's mother wishes for a child as "as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the window frame" (Grimm, 1812). In fairy tales red often symbolises blood and maturity, as evidenced in *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Goose Girl*, and is often used in horror for its physiological effect in activating the fight or flight response. In wider terms the red rose symbolises love, beauty, and maturity while its thorns have connections with pain, deep sleep and death.<sup>13</sup> Images of

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13 As well as being linked with Christ's pain, in the Brothers Grimm tale *Briar Rose*, the protagonist pricks her finger and falls into a deep sleep, while she is sleeping thorns grow around the castle on which many young men die in their attempt to wake her up.



### North Korea steps up surveillance of citizens with 16,000 CCTV cameras

North Korea purchased 16,420 closed-circuit surveillance cameras from China in the first 11 months of last year as the regime stepped up the monitoring of its own people.



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 Nearly 18 months after Edward Snowden's disclosures upended the secret world of US surveillance, the US Senate has rejected the most ...  
**US Senate blocks Obama's surveillance reform bill**  
 Telegraph.co.uk - 18/11/2014

### Whistleblower backs mass surveillance claims

Updated at 10:17 pm on 15 September 2014



Former NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden says he can confirm this country is under mass surveillance because while employed by the National Security Agency he had easy access to New Zealanders' email, social media, text messages and internet searches.



### NEW ZEALAND LAUNCHED MASS SURVEILLANCE PROJECT WHILE PUBLICLY DENYING IT

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AUCKLAND, New Zealand—The New Zealand spy agency, the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB), worked in 2012 and 2013 to ...

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- THE USAIN DEMONISE COMPANIE ALLIES



Smiling over the city with fatherly devotion was the Great King, the most wise and just king in all the land. He wore a golden crown and lived in a magnificent palace which was so high it was said the whole world could be seen from its windows.

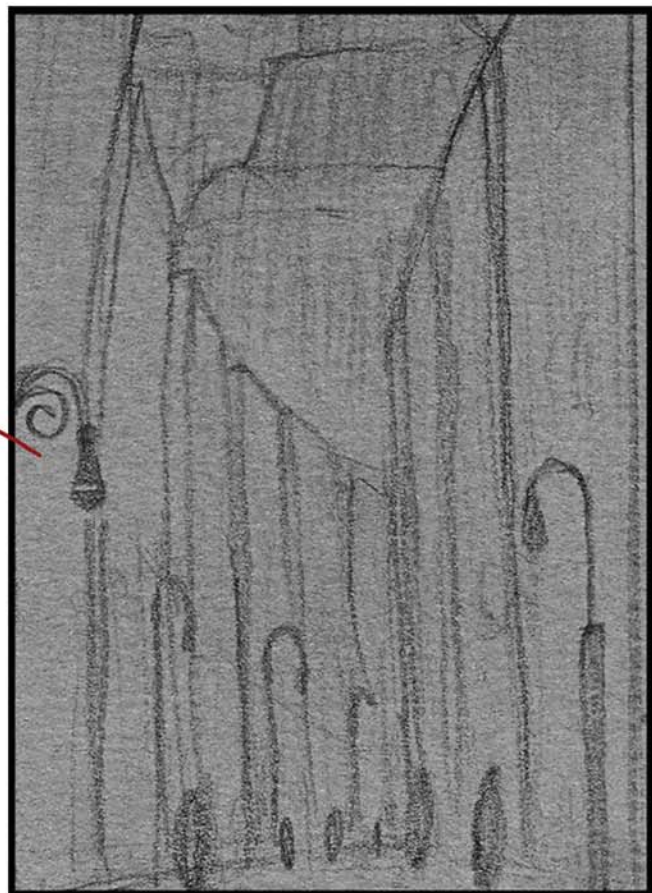
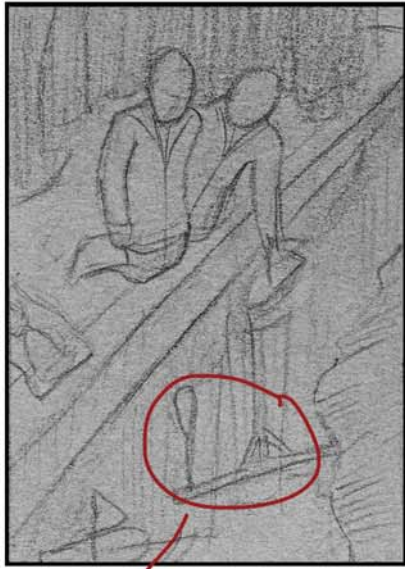


Fig. 11 Surveillance



dragonfly  
reflection of  
bomber planes

secondary element  
reflection gallows



### NEW IMAGE OF NEURON EUROPEAN STEALTH KILLER DRONE'S FLIGHT TRIALS EMERGES

DEC 07 2013 - 5 COMMENTS



#### Drones: Obama's Invisible War

By Dr. Ismail Salami

Global Research, May 05, 2014

Region: Asia, Moyen-Orient et Afrique du Nord  
Theme: Militarization and WMD

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In the midst of a crisis which has in recent weeks created a political chasm between Russia and the United States, there is an ongoing carnage in the name of combating terrorism against Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Somalia.

The story of the CIA-led killer drones which are killing women and children on a daily basis is a tale accorded inexcusably scant on in media. Indeed it is being ignored.



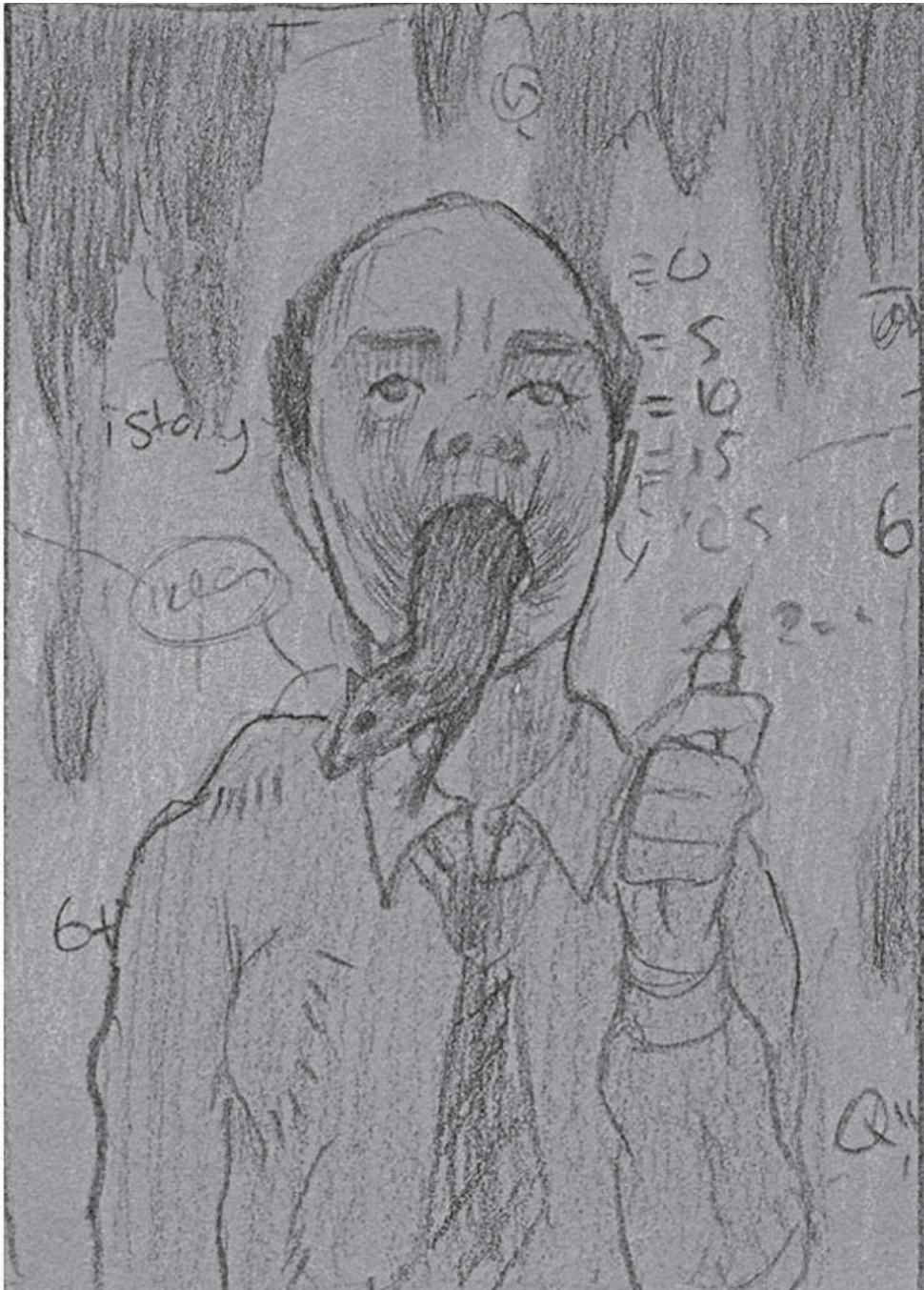
Butterfly carries symbolic meanings of hope and death, also often used as decorative element



Butterfly reflecting  
stealth drone

Such was his love for his people that word spread far and wide, precious gifts came from faraway lands to sing his praises, and mothers across the oceans told their children stories of the Great King and his shining city that lived in eternal summer and was so bountiful and prosperous it had forgotten what hunger, pain and disease were.

Fig. 12 Invisible war



*Fig. 13 Rats and the Teacher*

poppy fields bring to mind connotations of remembrance, sacrifice, loss of youth and loss of life. By marking the townspeople with this motif, I hoped to create a sense of foreshadowing or doom, of blood spilled. By further showing the roses growing where their eyes would be, I signal the state of blindness resulting from an extreme sense of patriotism and unquestioning love for country, government, leader, or any authority that physically and metaphorically blinds the population to the atrocities committed beneath the shiny surface of its propaganda. The combination of different symbols is meant to provide a variety of interpretations thus building on the multilayered meaning evident in fairy tales.



*Fig. 14 Roses and poppies*

In terms of format, I decided to reprise the historical style reminiscent of the early fairy tale books that Bettelheim unpacks in *The Uses of Enchantment*. My aim was to design the book as a beautiful object that belies what is contained within.

The way I engage with the formal space and structure of the traditional genre also becomes a central aspect in communicating the theme of horror in loss of autonomy. For example, the tissue paper layer traditionally separating tipped in illustrations from the text is conceptualised as the societal veil propaganda creates in dictatorships such as North Korea. It is also an element in the narrative structure and pacing and deliberately functions to tease out the pace at the beginning, hinting at the illustration before it is fully revealed (fig.15).



*Fig. 15 Test prints - pacing*

The format was further altered to align with the narrative introduction of the psychosis. The first sequence of images consequently conforms to the traditional format conventions and has the text on the left with tipped in illustrations on the right. As the reader peels back the layers the horror element emerges and the images start to dominate, with tipped in illustrations becoming full-page spreads. For the text, I researched numerous fonts before deciding on Baskerville, a traditional serif font contemporary to the Brothers Grimm and known for its legibility and aesthetic beauty.

The final work applies graphic scratchboard illustration and visual metaphor to one of the early Brothers Grimm tales thereby restoring the tone and horror of the original text and opening it up to a wider audience of both children and adults. The following section evaluates the success of my design output to meet its aims, outlines the difficulties and limitations of my research and identifies potential trajectories.



## Conclusion

Through this research project I explored and developed a strategy for creating horror texts that widen the typical age range associated with the genre. I have successfully demonstrated how illustration can be strategically employed to restore the horror implicit in original fairy tale texts. I have also shown how this can be realised by applying Walters' model of tension relevance and unrealism to traditional texts rich in symbolic meaning. The outcome is a narrative that, like the original, has a depth of meaning, is socially relevant and encourages critical thinking and questioning of authority. This method can serve as a template for future works and for other illustrators approaching the horror genre without a background in writing or professional partner who does.

I wanted to use the project to extend the boundaries of my professional practice, both conceptually and technically. In working with my clients in publishing, I typically work with an art director to produce commissioned illustrations while a writer is responsible for the text and a graphic designer, the type and layout. Taking on all three roles was completely new for me and put me very much out of my comfort zone. In addition, I primarily work in the digital realm and wanted to use this opportunity to investigate and gain skills in an analogue medium and technique that I have never used before. This has been a significant learning curve for me and has very much extended my practice as an illustrator, such that I will be incorporating scratchboard into my future professional practice.

An inherent difficulty I had is that the project topic and focus made establishing an industry link quite difficult. Working with my clients in children's publishing wasn't an option, as the horror adaptation would be perceived as much too risky for them to be involved with which was also the area where this project becomes interesting. I do however intend to approach publishers such as *Templar Publishing* and *The Folio Society*. *Templar Publishing* publishes high quality children's books while *The Folio Society* specializes in creating beautifully crafted illustrated editions of timeless texts. Either of these publishers would be good places to start as both pride themselves on creativity and innovation. There is also potential for industry exposure through the New Zealand *Pride in Print* awards, as *Wakefields Digital*, the company that did my printing and binding have asked if they can submit my book.

This project has been successful in synthesizing research from areas ranging from horror to fairytales to child psychology to form an illustration strategy that can be employed to create horror texts for all ages. However, there needs to be further research into how the finished product performs within the context of crossover fiction and its target audience.

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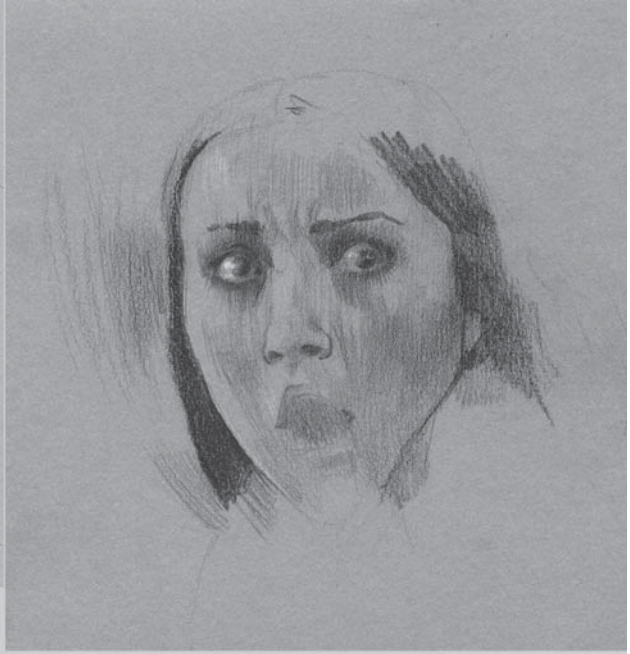
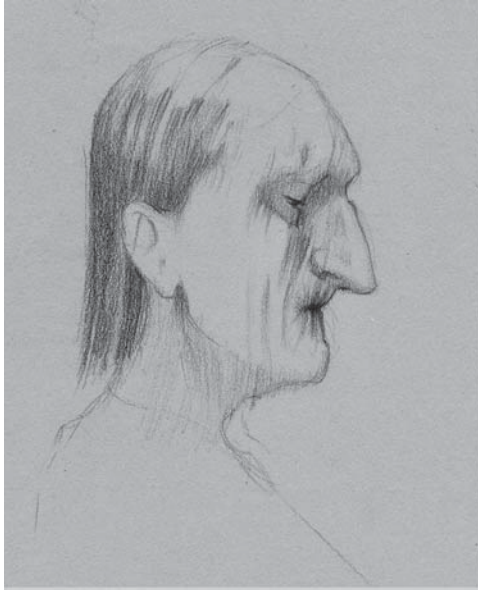
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# Appendix



Why book?  
Why are  
watts my question

how can illustration  
help address this question

how am I addressing  
that with  
design

how am I addressing that with design

how can illustration help address this question

