

Between the Fantastic and Myth in Aotearoa New Zealand: Tina Makereti's *Once Upon a Time in Aotearoa*

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Magic realism has been conceptualized as a mode that transgresses ontological, political, geographical, and generic boundaries. Māori writers, however, have always considered magic realism an “invention” of the West, an aesthetic approach that has nothing to do with the deep structure of Māori values and their metaphysical underpinnings. According to Māori *mātauranga* (understanding), the supernatural and the mythical are naturally part of everyday life. History and myth overlap in the literary genre of *whakapapa* (genealogy), which underlines the centrality of ancestry in Māori culture. In *Once Upon a Time in Aotearoa* (2010), Māori writer Tina Makereti follows this principle. Her short stories explore Māori myths and legends, which are rewritten to explain the present. At the same time, she depicts the gods living in a contemporary world and motivated by human concerns. Old and new worlds coexist, characters connect with each other through ancient wisdom.