

INTRODUCTION

Once Upon a Queer Time

KAY TURNER AND
PAULINE GREENHILL

Transgression carries the limit right to the limit of its being.
—Michel Foucault, “A Preface to Transgression”

OPENING FORMULA

In the two hundred years or so that the Grimm brothers’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*KHM*, *Children’s and Household Tales*) has circulated in publication, its stories have been reproduced in countless editions; translated many times; interpreted by scholars, writers, and artists; and rewritten from a number of theoretical and political perspectives. The *KHM* has inspired compelling interpretations representing a wide variety of cultures, historical periods, and disciplinary directions. Indeed, the Grimms’ versions, arguably more than those of other compilers and scholars, have shaped and defined academic and popular understandings of the fairy-tale genre. Thus, this work focuses primarily, though not exclusively, on the Grimm oeuvre.

In the history of narrative and folklore scholarship, the Grimms’ *KHM* became canonical despite scholarly skepticism about the collection’s authenticity in representing oral tradition or the stories as originally told. The first edition of the *KHM* was published in 1812 and 1815, and over a period of forty years, the brothers, especially Wilhelm, revised, edited, sanitized, and bowdlerized the tales, publishing the seventh and final edition in 1857.

Indeed, a source of continuing intrigue in analyzing the Grimms' redactions stems from their assiduous and continuous expurgation and removal of sexual—read heterosexual—details.¹ Maria Tatar (e.g., 1987, 1992) and Jack Zipes (e.g., 1983a, 1988a, 1988b), among others, have followed this story within the story of the fairy tales' emergence. For example, by the time "Little Red Cap" (ATU 333) had been worked over, by Charles Perrault at the end of the seventeenth century, then by the Grimms at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Red's bawdy striptease for the wolf masquerading as grandmother had disappeared along with references to peeing in the bed and the scatological "making cables."²

But if the Grimms and other earlier and later collectors attended vigilantly to the task of excising heterosex, they likely never even thought about ridding the tales of homosexual implications or other counternormative, counterhegemonic queer alliances. We nevertheless note a lack of transgender—cross-dressing or sex change—in their collection (see, for example, [chapter 8](#) in this volume) but frequent expression of transbiology—man to frog or woman to swan, for example. Yet despite the Grimms' repeated moves to expurgate sexual, nonretributively violent, and class-inappropriate references and interactions within the tales, these stories don't just provide instruction in compliant behavior for children but offer considerable significance for adults. Awash in perverse possibilities, they beg for a queer(y)ing. Hence, the fertile ground we plow in this book.

The long-lived history of oral and literary fairy tales offers remarkable testimony to their enduring popularity. Certainly no other folk narrative genre has been as widely told and retold, interpreted and reinterpreted, or translated into other art and performance forms: ballet, folk dance, films, novels, short stories, games, cartoons, and graphic and other visual arts.³ Writers from A to Z have reworked the genre—from Margaret Atwood (1993), A. S. Byatt (1998), and Angela Carter (1979a) to Eudora Welty (1942) and Fay Weldon (1977) (see, e.g., Preston 1995; Bacchilega 1997; de Caro and Jordan 2004; Roemer and Bacchilega 2001). *Transgressive Tales* is in league with those who have found much to say about the profound meanings of fairy tales: the psychological reflections of Marie-Louise von Franz (1996), Alan Dundes (1993), and Bruno Bettelheim (1976); the culturally and socially attentive scholarship of Ruth Bottigheimer (e.g., 1987); the wide-ranging historical scholarship of Jack Zipes (e.g., 1979); the lesbian

reworkings of Emma Donoghue (1997; see Orme 2010) and Jeanette Winter-son (1989; see [chapter 6](#) of this volume); the fierce reimaginings of Angela Carter (1979a; see [chapter 5](#) of this volume); the art of Cindy Sherman and Meret Oppenheim (discussed in Marina Warner 1994) as well as of Kiki Smith (see Bernheimer 2006) and Carrie May Weems (see Watts 1993); the postmodern interpretations of Cristina Bacchilega (1997 and [chapter 1](#) of this volume) and Jessica Tiffin (2009); the essays collected by Christine A. Jones and Jennifer Schacker (2012); and the feminist revisions of Kay Stone (e.g., 2008), Cathy Lynn Preston (2004), Maria Tatar (e.g., 2004b), Marina Warner (e.g., 1994), and those compiled and discussed by Donald Haase (2004a, 2004b). Yet, as Vanessa Joosen (2011) points out, queer readings seem absent from feminist fairy-tale criticism, and even in Haase's collection, only one article, by Patricia Anne Odber de Baubeta (2004), mentions such interpretation, dealing with late twentieth-century examples.

QUEER(Y)ING TALES

Transgressive Tales opens exploration of some specifics of the imaginative worlds of fairy tales—queer, lesbian, homosexual, transgender, and transbiological—for their function not only as fantastical creations but also as incarnations calling for sustained and informed inquiry. Surely the genre is not only the fair(y)est of them all but also the queerest of them all. Applying contemporary queer eyes to the Grimm guys, the lens shifts focus from normative sexual dynamics—like the happy ending of wedded heterosexual bliss—or patriarchal moral lessons—like the punishment of curious girls—to the tales' internal struggles, suggestive of multiple and more complex desires and their perversely performative nature.⁴ Fairy tales, oral or literary in derivation, feature human and non-human principal characters in developed fictional narratives, along with elements of wonder and the supernatural. In the realm of the simultaneously weird and wonderful, traditional fairy tales may be peerless. The worlds they imagine, and the characters who inhabit them, have always been drawn far beyond the limits of the actual world and its characters. Imaginative worlds can, arguably, open conceptualization. As Jack Zipes put it,

Folk and fairy tales remain an essential force in our cultural heritage, but they are not static literary models to be internalized for therapeutic consumption. Their value depends on how we actively produce and receive them in forms of social interaction which leads toward the creation of greater individual autonomy. Only by grasping and changing the forms of social interaction and work shall we be able to make full use of the utopian and fantastic projections of folk and fairy tales. (1979, 177)

Transgressive Tales thus willfully crosses boundaries of scholarship, and we read the Grimms anew—and askew.

Fairy tales are queer, at the very least, in the nineteenth-century usage of the term, to mean odd, strange making, eccentric, different, and yet attractive. Roderick McGillis, addressing “the queering of fairy” in George MacDonald’s literary fairy tales, comments, “By queer, I mean what MacDonald and his contemporaries meant by the word: that which is puzzling or confusing” (2003, 88). But the genre and its tales also explore queerness in the sense given by twentieth- and twenty-first-century understandings (see Pugh 2008); they implicate lives and theories relating to sexes and sexualities beyond the mainstream and deviating from the norm (see Seifert 2008). Annamarie Jagose helpfully deconstructs the term, noting that “some claim that it radically erodes the last traces of an oppressive gender coherence, whereas others criticise its pan-sexuality as reactionary, even unfeminist” (1996, 2–3). Queer, she argues, can be understood in terms of “those gestures or analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire. Resisting that model of stability—which claims heterosexuality as its origin when it is more properly its effect—queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender, and desire” (3).

Yet defining principles of queer also include an emergent body of literature that addresses issues specifically dealt with in fairy tales: concerns about marginalization, oddity, and not fitting into society generally. Queerness, then, embraces more than sex/gender/sexuality to deal with the problematics of those who for various reasons find themselves outside conventional practices. As Lee Edelman defines the term, *queerness* “marks the excess of something always unassimilable that troubles the relentlessly totalizing

impulse informing normativity” (Dinshaw et al. 2007, 189). Such excess is discoverable in the traditional fairy tale. Nevertheless, with only a few exceptions (e.g., Solis 2007; Greenhill 2008),⁵ queer fairy-tale readings have looked at revisions and rewritings, not at traditional texts (see Joosen 2011, III–17).

Trans theorist Susan Stryker distinguishes queer from transgender theory: “If queer theory was born of the union of sexuality studies and feminism, transgender studies can be considered queer theory’s evil twin: it has the same parentage but willfully disrupts the privileged family narratives that favor sexual identity labels (like *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, and *heterosexual*) over the gender categories (like man and woman) that enable desire to take shape and find its aim” (2004, 212). Under trans, we include both transgender and transbiology. Here, *transgender* signals a disconnection between conventional gender identity (social, cultural, psychological) and canonical sex identity (biological, physiological). As an encompassing term, it includes transsexuals, who identify as another sex than that of their birth, who may or may not want or enact hormonal or surgical interventions to match their sex identity to their gender identity; intersexuals, whose biological identity includes markers of both male and female; cross-dressers or transvestites, who clothe themselves as another sex; and genderfuckers, who feel their sex/gender identity to be between, beyond, or in addition to the binaries of male and female.⁶ We recognize that these are not the only or even the least contested uses of the term (see, e.g., Heyes 2000; Hird 2002a; Namaste 2005; Noble 2006; Stryker and Whittle 2006).

Transbiology is a more recently developed and broadly interpretable concept. Scholars such as Sarah Franklin (2006), Judith Halberstam (2008), Myra Hird (2004, 2006), and Noreen Giffney (Hird and Giffney 2008) have begun to map the territory, but we retroactively include much anticipatory scholarship (Berger and Walker 1989; Haraway 1991, 1997). Franklin calls transbiology “a biology that is not only born and bred, or born and made, but *made and born*” (2006, 171). When manufacture precedes parturition, she includes cloning, stem cell research, and embryology. She notes, “It is a world of cyborgs, but also of mixtures in which it is the symmetry of parts that allows translation, so that the mouse, the sheep, the cow, the pig and the dog move together as animal models susceptible to re-engineering and improvement” (176). The fairy tale, like myth, imaginatively anticipates the

transbiological wonders and worries of today. Transbiology here includes animals or humans who masquerade as or transform into another species (in whole or in part) and/or who otherwise mess with hard-and-fast distinctions between species, including between human and non-human.

Perhaps more than any other kind of folk narrative, the fairy tale's generic conventions define a kind of queerness in the story's own form. This quality, first and foremost due to the interpenetration of fantasy and reality and the acceptance of a magical world within the tales, allows for eccentricity and strange making. It also invites ambiguity and ambivalence, which often spill into the arena of sex and gender. Queerness and temporality uniquely meet in the fairy tale. Elizabeth Freeman calls normative temporality "a mode of implantation through which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts" (2007, 160). If straight time acts more like a straitjacket, the queer time of fairy tales invites participation in the realm of enchantment. The experience of enchantment knocks out previously binding temporalities and dominances; it refreshes potentiality. The fairy-tale surface story may be moralistic, socially restrictive, and gender/sexuality normative, but the fairy tale's deep structure, represented by the realm of enchantment, is antimoralistic, agency oriented, and gender/sexuality expressive in terms that challenge normativity. As Tiffin puts it, while the fairy tale's "basic principles—life, death, love, hate, quest, challenge, reward, punishment—are those of human existence, the world in which such principles are enacted is significantly different from the real, so that normal expectations are completely transcended" (2009, 13). Transcending the normal, we argue, opens possibilities for rising above sociocultural expectations.

A second feature, the fairy tale's use of ordinary people as primary protagonists often faced with the psychosexual challenges all humans face (love, marriage, desire, jealousy), centers a number of narratives on the quest for identity and thus makes them sources for expressing unconscious fears and desires. Steven Swann Jones summarizes this feature, following the extensive work of Max Lüthi, saying, "Fairy tales are dominated by the fantastic perspective, which is a product of the unconscious, intuitive and imaginative aspects of the mind" ([1995] 2002, 12). Or, as Tiffin argues, "Fairy tale symbols function resonantly rather than illustratively to suggest multiple meanings rather than to illustrate one aspect of reality" (2009, 15).

If queer and trans interpretations have hitherto been lacking in that mix

of multiple meanings, we now liquidate that lack, remembering the wise words of one famous old story maker, Gertrude Stein: “It takes time to make queer people” ([1925] 1968, 21). Our time has come. And at the heart of our project are queer fairy tale listeners or readers. They may be straight, gay, bi, trans; young, old, middle-aged; come from Boston or Beijing. But what distinguishes them most of all is a propensity for what Bonnie Zimmerman (1993) calls “perverse reading.” Our perversity willfully turns away from the conventionally correct or responsible. That’s just the kind of riot grrrl scholars we are. But we have, nevertheless, some eminently respectable forebears. We follow on feminist reader-response and German reception theory, which clear the way for a direct acknowledgment of the potential for queerly reading the Grimms. For example, in a critique of Heinz Rölleke’s implicit campaign for “responsibility” in tale scholarship—his insistence on an objective evidentiary history of each narrative—Haase comes to the aid of the irresponsible and, we would add, the perverse. Defending the fairy tale’s tendency to invite multiple levels of interpretation, he maintains that “1) fairy tales consist of chaotic symbolic codes that have become highly ambiguous and invite quite diverse responses; and 2) these responses will reflect a recipient’s experience, perspective, or predisposition” (1993, 235). Ultimately, he maintains, the significance of the fairy tale lies in its reception (234). Haase is in synch with queer scholar Freeman who, writing on the dialectic between sex and temporality, suggests that “as new readerly responses become possible, new modes of writing emerge and older modes become suddenly, dazzlingly accessible to us. Readerly responses, erotic in the broadest sense of the term, depend on the sensations possible, thinkable, and tangible in a particular historical period” (2007, 168).

And so the queer eye lands on a fairy tale and begins to read, to work. For according to Roland Barthes, reading is a kind of work: “To read, in fact, is a labor of language” (1974, 11). The written fairy tale offers an ideal working text in Barthes’s sense; it impels the labor of dialogic interaction. Reader and text participate in a making of meanings similar to those associated with the oral precedents of teller and story. A fairy tale cannot finally or necessarily mean anything; it can only reveal particular meanings through the performance of the reading act. Theorizing is but one part of that revelation, which is why this book offers in closing two complete tales as well as analyses/interpretations.

But fairy tales—and theory—also offer pleasure. “The pleasure of accepting wonder in experiencing the fairy tale is . . . complex, based both in the enjoyment of the marvelous and in the geometric pleasures of pattern” (Tiffin 2009, 19). For us, part of the enjoyment relates to four recurring qualities—the eroticized, tabooed, perverse, and women focused. All provide alternatives and sometimes even active resistance to mainstream cultural constructions. These four are sometimes quite overt, and sometimes “secret messages . . . inscribed in plain sight” (Tatar 1987, 177). By no means discrete, they interweave in complex fashion in the tales, as they do in other symbolic manifestations of discourse. We use the familiar tale of “Little Red Riding Hood” as a demonstration (see, e.g., Dundes 1989; Zipes 1983b). As with every orally based fairy tale, multiple versions exist, and like most that have become popular and literary over the past three hundred years, significant aspects have been expurgated as they increasingly have been directed toward children.

In terms of eroticism, many fairy tales express, explore, and celebrate sexual content. Some folklore scholars (e.g., S. S. Jones [1995] 2002) argue that traditional stories must be subdivided (implicitly on the basis of their sexual and violent content) into those intended for small children, those for developing adolescents, and those for mature adults. Yet we need not simply accept this distinction as inevitable, especially given that audience members will understand texts differently (see, e.g., Radner 1993; Falassi 1980). Our project is more interested in how the erotic—ever fluid and subjective—can be said to radiate across time. In “Little Red Riding Hood,” the wolf’s intentions toward Red may be understood as fulfilling desires for food, for sex, or both. As eloquently argued by Rosalind Coward, food and sex inter-refer in many aspects of Euro–North American discourse,⁷ from the terms of endearment that are also food terms—honey, sweetheart, peach, sugarplum (1985, 87)—to the ways in which appetites for food and sex are equally deemed illicit and pornographic, especially for women (102; see also Greenhill 1998 and [chapters 1](#) and [11](#) of this volume).

A second aspect of the tales involves their citation, indeed glorification, of a series of cultural taboos; as Maria Tatar succinctly puts it, the Grimm tales deal with “murder, mutilation, cannibalism, infanticide, and incest” (1987, 3). For example, references to the wolf eating Red and her grandmother implicate a kind of cannibalism (see also Tatar 1992, 2004a). Marianna

Torgovnick (1990, 179) articulates how cannibalism becomes so much a quintessential “unthinkable” as to stand metonymically for the primitive and savage itself. Although cannibalism signifies eating one’s own species, its primary meaning involves humans eating humans, an activity so proscribed that the tale mitigates it. While the wolf (the eater) is arguably not perfectly human (and thus unlike his food), his ability to speak and disguise himself marks him as not perfectly wolf, either. Note that other Grimm tales are not so sensitive on this practice; “The Juniper Tree” (ATU 720) involves a kind of incestuous cannibalism, where a father eats his own son, murdered by the mother, as a black pudding or stew (see Greenhill and Brydon 2010). Yet, in this volume, Turner discusses the evolution of the witch Frau Trude’s (in ATU 334) desires from cannibal to connubial, thus further complicating the relationship between the sensual and the criminal in Grimms’ tales.

Perversity in the fairy tales arises because when sex and sexuality are involved or implicated, they do not necessarily take the form of mainstream heterosexual practices. Certain tales present a choice to turn away from heteronormativity. Fairy tales reference same-sex erotic attraction, symbolically yet multivocally. One could argue that the Grimm tales, for example, largely reference a female-centered world, where relationships between women—whether or not they are sexualized and/or eroticized—become the primary areas of concern (see, e.g., chapters 7 and 11 of this volume). They also open possibilities for understanding female desires and women’s *jouissance* outside heterosexual relationships (see chapter 1 of this volume).

Finally, some feminist readings of the Grimm tales and their analogues (e.g., Gilbert and Gubar 1984; de Lauretis 1984) would see Little Red as the victim, both sexually innocent and passive in the face of the wolf’s phallic male persona and requiring rescue by the equally phallic male huntsman (also discussed by Stone 1986). Yet female figures—Red, her mother, and her grandmother—are pivotal. Further, versions of some Grimm stories are virtually patriarch(y) free. Collected almost entirely from women, to a large extent their women-centeredness survived the Grimms’ various redactions and expurgations. Woman centering and lesbian orientations signify in the doubling of the female image—reflections in mirrors, for example—or in the reproduction of female counterparts—sisters with parallel but different qualities, mothers and stepmothers, and so on (see Greenhill 2008). For

example, as Kay Turner discusses in this volume, a tale like “Frau Trude” could be read as a warning to girls against disobeying their parents, with the horrible outcome of being turned into a burning log by an evil female figure. Or alternatively, it celebrates the transformative potential of the transgressive same-sex relationship between an old witch and a young acolyte.

Feminist scholarship has added much to our understanding of these tales. But in contrast to the wealth of feminist material, queer and trans fairy tale interpretations, beyond reinventions and new tellings (see, e.g., Donoghue 1997), are rare. Many scholars, including those represented in this volume, have found such rewritings compelling (see, e.g., Bacchilega 1997). That critical literature can nevertheless potentially be extended by the work here, using queer and trans perspectives on the Grimms to unlock new appreciation for the lasting power of the fairy-tale genre. A queer interpretation of “Little Red” awaits the duly-inspired scholar.

QUEER THEORY AND FAIRY TALES

Annamarie Jagose lauds queerness for “its definitional indeterminacy, its elasticity. . . . Part of queer’s semantic clout, part of its political efficacy, depends on its resistance to definition” (1996, 1). Certainly, the extensive discourse in GLBTQ scholarship on the diverse meanings of queerness is daunting. But for our introductory purposes, Alexander Doty, in his work on film, helpfully outlines how the concept of queer is theoretically employed. His catalog suggests the various and sometimes contradictory uses of the term:

1. As a synonym for either gay, or lesbian, or bisexual.
2. In various ways as an umbrella term
 - (a) to pull together lesbian, and/or gay, and/or bisexual with little or no attention to differences. . . .
 - (b) to describe a range of distinct non-straight positions being juxtaposed with each other.
 - (c) to suggest those overlapping areas between and among lesbian, and/or gay, and/or bisexual, and/or other non-straight positions.
3. To describe the non-straight work, positions, pleasures, and readings of people who don’t share the same “sexual orientation” as the text they are producing or responding to. . . .

4. To describe any non-normative expression of gender, including those connected with straightness.
5. To describe non-straight things that are not clearly marked as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, or transgendered, but that seem to suggest or allude to one or more of these categories, often in a vague, confusing, or incoherent manner. . . .
6. To describe those aspects of spectatorship, cultural readership, production, and textual coding that seem to establish spaces not described by, or contained within, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, or transgendered understandings and categorizations of gender and sexuality—this is a more radical understanding of queer, as queerness here is something apart from established gender and sexuality categories, not the result of vague or confused coding or positioning. (2000, 6–7)

Thus, queer theory's defining principles problematize sex, gender, and sexuality. They refigure the possibilities of relationality along lines that challenge fixed or normative categories but also address concerns about marginalization, oddity, and not fitting into society generally. Our queering of the fairy tale is, as much of queer theory proposes, a taking stock of various unspeakable and unspoken desires. But as Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon insist, it is also about "reckon[ing] with desire itself, not as an essence to be explained but as a formation that rarely has a single objective correlative by which to be measured" (2005, 1611). In a sense, the entire *Transgressive Tales* project hinges on agreeing with the critical importance of understanding desire(s) *as*, and *in*, formation.

Trans theory explores the potential for expressing individual and collective identities that reverse, transcend, complicate, or deny sex/gender binaries of male or female or species binaries of human or animal. Transgender theory addresses in particular how a lack of correspondence between gender identity (social, cultural, psychological) and sex identity (biological, physiological) could illuminate understandings not only of sex and gender but of the sociopolitical (in)formation around character and humanness. Transbiology theory concerns scientific and popular representations of animals (including humans who masquerade as or transform into another species or vice versa and/or who mess with hard-and-fast distinctions between species). It

demonstrates the awkward knottiness/naughtiness of the boundary between human and non-human.

It's sometimes hard to fathom how extensive has been the absenting and denial of queer and trans culture readings in folklore studies. Much of that process has taken the form of a dogged heterocentric norming of manifest queer content.⁸ For example, A. L. Lloyd explains away the many British traditional and broadside ballads that feature women dressing as men and going to sea or to war—and being the object of sexual attraction by women as well as men—as a heterosexual fantasy in the homosocial male context of barracks or ship's cabin (discussed in Greenhill 1995). And Barre Toelken explains the floating verse “Sister's gonna kiss my ruby red lips / And I don't need no man” as anything but the obvious lesbian relationship it indicates (discussed in Greenhill 1997). Presumptions absenting queer culture from discussions of literary texts were sardonically enumerated by the late great Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick:

1. Passionate language of same-sex attraction was extremely common during whatever period is under discussion—and therefore must have been completely meaningless. Or
2. Same-sex genital relations may have been perfectly common during the period under discussion—but since there was no language about them, they must have been completely meaningless. Or
3. Attitudes about homosexuality were intolerant back then, unlike now—so people probably didn't do anything. Or
4. Prohibitions against homosexuality didn't exist back then, unlike now—so if people did anything, it was completely meaningless. Or
5. The word “homosexuality” wasn't coined until 1869—so everyone before then was heterosexual. (Of course, heterosexuality has always existed.) Or
6. The author under discussion is certified or rumored to have had an attachment to someone of the other sex—so their feelings about people of their own sex must have been completely meaningless. Or (under a perhaps somewhat different rule of admissible evidence)
7. There is no actual proof of homosexuality, such as sperm taken from the body of another man or a nude photograph with another woman—so the author may be assumed to have been ardently and

exclusively heterosexual. Or (as a last resort)

8. The author or the author's important attachments may very well have been homosexual but it would be provincial to let so insignificant a fact make any difference at all to our understanding of any serious project of life, writing, or thought. (1990, 52–53)

Despite folklore and fairy-tale studies' lack of engagement with it, queer theory has gained in both academic sophistication and scholarly reputation over the last twenty-five years.⁹ Queer theory quite fittingly emerges in our focus on the fairy-tale genre's frequent refusal to confine sexuality to strictly heterosexual norms. As we have continued to think about queering the Grimms over the years, we have come to feel that the tales scream out for queer and trans theory. We counter Rölleke's admonition/dictation with our own call for responsibly *irresponsible* analysis. Admitting the impossibility of exhaustively outlining what queer theory can offer readings of the fairy tale, we instead demonstrate some of its multiple pathways, strewn with delicious bread crumbs of discovery and provocation. Here we name in programmatic fashion certain arenas of queer theory and its discourse that seem most applicable to fairy-tale analysis. Dependent on the feminist and gay and lesbian theories that precede it, and inspiring the trans theory that comes after it, queer theory nonetheless critiques the subject beyond identity in trenchant ways, including the following:

1. Queer theory problematizes all forms of gender, sex, and sexuality, addressing "the political ramifications, the advantages and dangers, of culturally 'fixed' categories of sexual identities and the ways in which they may . . . be performed, transgressed and queered" (Goldman 1999, 525).
2. These moves consequently query what is conventionally seen as "the family," its historical and social construction and its possibility for transformation into new forms.
3. Queer theory neither privileges nor denies the power of evidence or proof but also, following Raymond Williams (1977) on "structures of feeling," relies on categories of knowledge and experience that are felt and intuited, and often expressed in art.¹⁰
4. Queer theory questions all forms of dominant social and political

relationships in the interest of transforming the world, effecting what José Esteban Muñoz calls “queer worldmaking,” the disidentificatory performance through art and other means of alternative views that “disavow that which majoritarian culture has decreed as the ‘real’” (1999, 196).

5. Queer theory accepts what Sedgwick calls the “performative aspects of texts, and . . . what are often blandly called their ‘reader relations,’ as sites of definitional creation, violence, and rupture in relation to particular readers, particular institutional circumstances” (1990, 3).
6. Queer theory claims, again quoting Sedgwick, “that something about *queer* is inextinguishable. Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive—recurrent, eddying, *troublant*. The word ‘queer’ itself means *across*—it comes from the Indo-European root—*twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*. . . . The queer . . . is transitive—multiply transitive. The immemorial current that queer represents is antiseparatist as it is antiassimilationist. Keenly, it is relational, and strange” (1993, xii).

Though the foregoing is no exhaustive list to be sure, it lays the ground for many of the essays in this book and allows us to give further consideration to our perverse readings of the tales. We want to say a bit more about ephemerality, queerness, and fairy tales. Queer theory privileges the ephemeral, momentary sites and phenomena that appear and quickly disappear (see, e.g., Muñoz 1996). Deciphering these sites can be accomplished through an understanding of coding, and Joan N. Radner’s *Feminist Messages* (1993) is as useful for queer readings as it is for feminist ones. Queer people survive by learning to read implicitly coded messages—where even the presence of coding can be disputed, so that both senders and receivers can be protected from the consequences of their decodings. Queer readers learn to read signals that others cannot read. Codes simultaneously conceal and reveal hidden messages. Queerness is also a site of ephemeral sexualities. Muñoz remarks that “queerness has existed as innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances.” Ephemeral acts of queerness “stand as evidence of queer lives, powers, possibilities” (1996, 6). The queer reader of fairy tales is attuned to such innuendo, to fleeting moments of unconventional engagement in the stories, especially sexual engagement.

We also invite a reinvestment in analytical modes that may gain new life by being theoretically queered. For us, structural analysis—the good old-fashioned kind Claude Lévi-Strauss, Dundes, Elli Köngäs Maranda, and others performed on traditional narratives decades ago—still stands up as a way to unloose tales from their superficial, syntagmatic drive. Dundes said it best years ago when he claimed that “structural analysis is not an end in itself, but is rather a means to other ends, ends such as gaining an understanding of concrete human behavior and thought” (1971, 173). For queer readers, structural analysis gives what Lévi-Strauss, in analyzing myth, called a certain potential to undo the perversion of unilinearity. His famous instruction reads thus: “The myth will be treated as would be an orchestra score perversely presented as a unilinear series and where our task is to re-establish the correct disposition” (1955, 432). Here those terms *perverse* and *correct* return, in direct opposition to our previous sense. Where the willful is the unilinear, our task is to correct this perversity with “the correct disposition”; that is, to assert the paradigmatic—the music—over the syntagmatic. This move amounts to a reordering or restructuring in an attempt to reveal the narrative’s latent content. It also allows for a deeper look at its transformations and projections along social and sexual lines and especially makes analysis of minor characters and symbols more central (see K. Turner 2009).

As Dundes suggests, “The manifest/latent dichotomy gives the structural analyst a role comparable to the psychoanalyst who must see through or past the manifest content in order to reveal the ‘true’ secret organization and meaning of a folk narrative” (1971, 172). This search for the subject and for what Mieke Bal calls “narrative subjectivity” reveals it as a network, not an unquestionable identity (see Bacchilega 1997, 13). A queer reader intuitively seeks a tale’s structural distinctions—polarities, binaries, or relational chains—that fail to conform to heteronormative claims. The “correct” binary for the queer reader may not be father/prince or mother/princess. In a number of the tales, including “Frau Trude” (ATU 334), “Mother Holle” (ATU 480), “Rapunzel” (ATU 310), “The Robber Bridegroom” (ATU 955), and “The Three Spinners/Spinsters” (ATU 501), the polarity girl/witch or girl/old woman serves as the source of dramatic tension for the queer reader. This tension can be a latent—or sometimes very manifest—sexual one, as Frau Trude and Rapunzel exemplify. Other problems of relationship,

including the denaturalization of the normative family, can also be worked out in the orchestra of queer structural analysis.

Transgender theory (Greaney 1999; Stryker 2004; Stryker and Whittle 2006) “invites an interpretation of gender as precarious outcome, achieved at significant cost” (Hird 2002b, 51). Transgender moves may be obvious in tales like “The Shift of Sex” (ATU 514) where a girl literally transsexes into a boy in most versions (see Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire, forthcoming). But arguably, gender fucking manifests whenever girls and women do work more associated with boys and men, as in “Mutsmag” (ATU 327B/328), or boys or men demonstrate “femmey” characteristics of sensitivity and physical weakness, like Mutsmag’s counterparts the boy Thirteen and quite a few Jacks (ATU 328). Indeed, for all the genre’s passive ingenue princesses who wait for brave handsome princes to rescue them, there remain characters who hardly instantiate mainstream notions of hegemonic masculinity or femininity. Transgender in folklore genres has also been underresearched (exceptions include Greenhill, forthcoming; Mills 1985), but the extensive use of the element of disguise (including cross-dressing) in folktales has received some consideration (e.g., Muhawi 2001).

In transbiology, we would argue, the concepts of biology and humanity both transform, and the allegedly rigid boundaries between species become permeable.¹¹ Literary scholar Howard Bloch points out how “the fable is a repository of anxiety about changing social status, capturing in terms of animal species the relation between nature and culture in the determination of social worth. . . . The motif of changing habitat, body type, or species is a thinly veiled metaphor for the principle of social mobility” (2004, 71–73). Social anthropology has explored in depth how animal metaphors and taboos actually express notions about human culture (e.g., R. Willis 1974; Douglas 1966; Lawrence 1990; Leach 2000; Waddell 2003). Historian Harriet Ritvo (1997, 2004) points out the complexities of animal taxonomy and the use of the term *monster* to describe animals that do not fit what are considered normal (human) heterosexual patterns, such as creatures which are intersexed or “hermaphrodite.” In classical Greece and Rome, as well as in medieval and Renaissance Europe, human-faced animals were frequently depicted (Rowland 1973). Making animals stand for humans takes place in fairy tales, too, but human-animal (and vice versa) transformations also offer possibilities that implicate not only those relationships but also sex/

gender dichotomies and misplaced, inexpressible, or otherwise wanton desires.

Disguise as an animal in fairy tales (e.g., “Allerleirauh” [ATU 510B], see [chapters 4](#) and [10](#) of this volume) is not uncommon, but the transbiological implications have been underexplored (e.g., Greenhill 2008). If linked with current concerns in transbiology and ethics (e.g., Haraway 2003; Braidotti 2009), interpretation of the fairy tale may find a new frontier in its consideration of otherness. Rosi Braidotti calls for an end to animals as metaphor for human qualities. Rather, she encourages thinking “in terms not of established categories but rather of encounters with anomalous and unfamiliar forces, drives, yearnings, and sensations, spiritual and sensorial stretching of the body’s capabilities.” She says this requires a “qualitative leap” (2009, 531)—and perhaps the fairy tale will provide one means of jumping to a new understanding of transbiological relations.

Fairy tales are emancipatory not in their content but in their reception (Haase 1993, 244); they are good to think and good to feel. We draw on queer theory to better understand the chaotic, fantastic, manipulated, and highly compressed fairy tale. We draw on queer theory not to free the fairy tale from its history but to understand further the complexities of that history—its multiple tellings and readings over time—as a source for solving problems pertaining to the individual, the social being in his or her own history.

TRANSGRESSIVE CONTENTS

But what, specifically, can you as our gentle reader look forward to in *Transgressive Tales*? By dividing the book into parts, we encourage your attention to certain themes. In “Faux Femininities,” Cristina Bacchilega, Kevin Goldstein, Jeana Jorgensen, and Margaret R. Yocom address less familiar Grimm tales, arguing that a process of destabilizing mainstream notions of heterofemininity works within these stories. Bacchilega asks what makes a female character “clever” in the Grimms and discovers that women tricksters actively enjoy exceeding the social, narrative, and rhetorical limitations of their gendered locations. Not surprisingly, given the already noted confluence of food and sex in fairy tales—as in contemporary Euro–North American cultures—their pleasures are simultaneously gustatory and erotic. And eat-

ing and sexual pleasure are also surprisingly similar for Clever Gretel, who is very manifestly the author of her own fate, and Clever Else, who at least initially appears to be the victim of others' misunderstandings. Both tales employ their protagonists' artistry and humor—though Gretel's is arguably more deliberate than Else's—in response to patriarchal attempts to thwart their needs and wishes.

Bacchilega says that both characters have “an appetite for an alternative”—and the same could be said for characters in “The Goose Girl at the Spring,” as described by Goldstein. Like Gretel and Else, the old woman/wise woman/witch goes against narrative and social expectations for one of her age and gender. Her bond with the young princess is mutual and significantly strong. Goldstein broadens our understanding of this benevolent female aide, thoughtfully analyzing her complex status as old woman, wise woman, and midwife, and as a marginal figure demanding recognition. Spinning the tale and the act of spinning within the tale offer a silent testimony to possibilities and limitations for female characters who venture outside the norm.

All these tales avoid heteronormative expectations for their female characters—but in “The Maiden Who Seeks Her Brothers,” as discussed by Jorgensen, it's difficult to fit any of the main protagonists into conventions. And again food (or alleged food, inappropriate food, cannibalized food) enters into an equation with sexuality. But this is not the joyous food that Gretel eats, or even the beer that Else spills; instead it's the blood of procreation, of menstruation, of women's fearful sexuality—feared by other women, not by men, who are instead (perhaps equally inappropriately) interested in tasting it themselves (see Kane 1988). Of course in this case the feeling is mutual; the heroine loves her brothers and father as much (and apparently as indecently) as they love her. This familial queering leads beyond an exploration of femininities and directly into the exploration of sexualities.

Margaret Yocom's work on “Allerleirauh”/“All Kinds of Fur” shows the difficulty of assigning pronouns to a figure who is both but also neither male and/or female and who messes with the transbiological boundary between humans and other animals. A tale constituted in what Yocom calls “ambiguous pronouns and ambiguous bodies,” it is ripe for queer decoding. Though Allerleirauh finally resolves into a female figure, she travels through a variety of positions to get there. Yocom knowingly places

her analytical emphasis on the long middle section of the tale, where the heroine's journey is expressive of the kind of multiple ambiguities that can make diverse meanings for readers.

In the second section, "Revising Rewritings," Kimberly J. Lau and Jennifer Orme address the intertexts between traditional, oral versions of two tales—"Sleeping Beauty" and "The Twelve Dancing Princesses"—and rewritings by Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson that foreground queer possibilities in these texts. Lau addresses how Carter's "The Lady of the House of Love" combines vampire and fairy tale to make explicit not only the necrophilia inherent in the collected version (for the Grimms, "Little Brier Rose") but also the anything-but-passive possibilities of a somnambulist title character who is no innocent persecuted heroine (see Bacchilega 1993).

Orme's chapter considers how even a rewriting of a story of overtly transgressive women (the twelve princesses disobey express directions from their father the king and do so covertly and, at least at first, quite successfully) by a lesbian writer resists designation as inherently queer. Though it is one of the few Grimm tales in which wayward women escape the severe punishment of a gruesome death, and one in which women work together for their own common interests, in Winterson's version they do not all have the same desires and interests. Some are arguably heterosexual, others more obviously far from that position. Both chapters show how, once having approached these familiar stories with a queer eye, they can be shown to hold complex meanings derived from aspects of the characters not conventionally explored.

Andrew J. Friedenthal's chapter begins at a different point—not with queer rewritings, but instead with the straight Disney version of "Snow White." Arguing that the queer possibilities of the title character manifest in the tale that pairs her with her sister, Rose Red, Friedenthal finds the latter's relative muting in Euro-North American culture a suppression of lesbian implications. Happily, he notes that Rose Red finds a simpatico and potentially—if not overtly—queer milieu in graphic novels and comics. Here, sexy Rose Red plays freely with her possible transgressive significations. But Friedenthal also finds the intimate friendships in these later readings clearly marked in the Grimms' version—prefiguring our third section.

In "Queering the Tales," Pauline Greenhill, Anita Best, and Emilie Anderson-Grégoire; Catherine Tosenberger; Joy Brooke Fairfield; and Kay

Turner turn more directly to the ways that Grimm and other tales can redirect presumptions of sexuality and marriage away from the hetero norm. Greenhill, Best, and Anderson-Grégoire look at Canadian versions—one English and one French—of a composite tale about the adventures of a masculine girl, Peg Bearskin or La Poiluse, whose final sought-for reward is femininity and marriage to the best-looking, most prized prince. By being equally good at conventionally masculine tasks like war making and troll conquering and feminine tasks like cooking, s/he finally transsexes into the woman she clearly wants to be. Peg and La Poiluse underline the absence of these kinds of characters in the Grimms.

Tosenberger, beginning with her own reaction to “Fitcher’s Bird” (“Rescue by the Sister”), shows how this tale simultaneously invokes and undermines the male gaze and performative femininity. True and false brides abound, yet no marriage results. But rather than establishing gender expectations and then undermining them, Tosenberger suggests, this tale exposes a heroine who acts well beyond narrative conventions (including those in similar Grimm and international tales).

Fairfield addresses a different queer character, Princess Mouseskin, who, like Fitcher’s Bird, takes on an animal disguise but whose actions seem unplanned and unconscious in comparison to the latter. Initially, the princess is as uninterested in marriage and heterosexual relations as the protagonist of “Fitcher’s Bird.” And though in the end she pairs with a prince, her journey to “maturity,” Fairfield argues, entails not growing *up*, but queerly growing *sideways* (see Stockton 2009). This heroine enacts what Fairfield calls “repeated performances of incomplete becoming” or partial transformations, yet such “sideways growth” puts her very much in charge. Her sensual focus on food (again) and interest in roles not usually considered princely—mousehood, manhood, servanthood, and princehood—mark her as a queer figure who benefits from her exploration of difference.

Turner investigates compelling attractions between an older woman and a girl in “Frau Trude.” The story tells of a girl who, against the interdiction of her parents, goes out of curiosity (equaling desire) to a witch—also characterized as a flame-headed devil—who has been waiting for her for a long time. No typically gruesome devouring of flesh ends this version of ATU 334, but rather a quite marvelous union occurs between the fiery

hag and the girl transformed by her into a burning log. Fire meets fire in elemental passion. Turner reads “Frau Trude” as a paradigmatic tale of cross generational, same-sex desire—the “lost motif” of attractions, seductions, and affections between older and younger women that motivates action in other tales, such as “Rapunzel.” Using her analysis to introduce the work of numerous queer scholars into fairy-tale interpretation, she invites an encounter with normative taboo reconsidered as transformation.

In “Beyond the Grimms” we present versions of already queer stories. Margaret A. Mills leads us away from Eurocentric narratives and perhaps wins the prize for most outrageous transgressive tale in her recounting of an Afghan boxwoman type, featuring the kind of women tricksters found pervasively in Islamic popular literature and tradition. This particular story, performed by Safdár Tawakkolí and collected by Ravshan Rahmoní, features a powerful woman who exerts extraordinary control over men. Again, this work underlines the absences in the Grimms—not only of riot grrrl characters, but also of the language and interactions of actual tellings of folktales and fairy tales. Elliot Mercer’s hilarious “queer adaptation” of “The Grave Mound” (similar to ATU 815, containing an episode of ATU 1130) shows how the moral lessons of the Grimms’ time can sometimes apply in surprising contexts. Of these, we will say no more.

CLOSING FORMULA—WE WENT UPSTAIRS, OUR TALE WAS TRUE

Almost exclusively, *Transgressive Tales* queers female protagonists. A different project might center on masculine subversions, including homosexuality, but our project makes a meeting between feminist and queer scholarly positions that leads us vitally to fraus and fur girls. By their adventuresome nature, their insistent self-possession, their refusal to succumb passively to authoritarian dictates, and their disinterest in necessarily choosing to partner appropriately (i.e., normatively and singularly), these characters open doors to new possibilities for understanding the diversity of women’s desires and affective attachments, their ways of feeling and knowing.

A wholly new approach to the fairy tale, such as we offer here, views the genre not so much as morally transparent—aimed at teaching lessons—but

rather as transgressively emergent and part of what Carolyn Dinshaw calls “contingent history in the postmodern sense—its forms are intelligible but do not emerge out of teleological necessity” (1999, 2–3). Our mode of inquiry moves in the direction of the ambiguous, ambivalent, and indeterminate, even the contradictory. A queer sense of contingency helps us freshen our understanding of the highly ambivalent world of the fairy tale, imbued as it is with fantasy, magic, temporal instability, and transformations, all bound up around wish fulfillment, dreams, family troubles, relational anxieties, status, love, and sex. Freud worked on dreams, but he might have just as well interpreted the fairy tale to exemplify his sense of the human psyche as that realm where the law of noncontradiction does *not* apply. Instead ambivalence reigns, giving license to the coexistence of opposites, and not always for the sake of their ultimate resolution, but sometimes for the perverse differences they inspire.

The fairy tale owes much of its longevity to contingencies and contradictions associated with desire and pleasure. We might even say that the fairy-tale genre conjured the postmodern in its early signaling of the contingent nature of signs and systems of representation, especially in the realm of sex and social relations. This genre, which poses so pointedly and yet so strangely—so queerly—the big questions of life, still offers plenty of room for interpretive shifts and shake-ups as its stories are encountered anew, from generation to generation.

NOTES

1. Though Vanessa Joosen notes that “in a few rare instances, critics have attributed Jacob Grimm’s lifelong bachelor status to suppressed homosexuality” (2011, 11).

2. Perrault also added a moral, warning women and girls, “Children, especially attractive, well bred young ladies, should never talk to strangers, for if they should do so, they may well provide dinner for a wolf. . . . There are various kinds of wolves. There are also those who are charming, quiet, polite, unassuming, complacent, and sweet, who pursue young women at home and in the streets. And unfortunately, it is these gentle wolves who are the most dangerous ones of all” (Ashliman 1996–2011).

The Grimms introduced a patriarchal male rescuer in the form of the woodsman (see, e.g., Greenhill and Kohm 2009 on live-action film versions exploring

pedophilia). David Kaplan's short film, *Little Red Riding Hood* (1997), starring the then teenaged Christina Ricci as Red and Timour Bourtasenkov as the beautiful, dancing wolf, more closely resembles the oral French tales (see Verdier 1980; Velay-Vallantin 1998).

3. See, e.g., Greenhill and Matrix (2010) for discussions of film versions.

4. Similarly, Michelle Ann Abate's (2008a, 2008b) work on tomboys in literature suggests the need to focus not on the compliant ends in stories like *Little Women*, where the erstwhile gender bender grows up to instantiate a more normative sex and sexuality, but instead the resistant middles of those tales, where the tomboy revels in her transgressive social desires.

5. And note that Greenhill's 2008 article was originally intended for this collection.

6. Jacquelyn N. Zita calls "genderfuck" "tampering with the codes of sex identity by mixing male and female, masculine and feminine, man and woman signifiers on one body" (1992, 125).

7. Here and elsewhere, we use "Euro-North American" quite deliberately, because the discourses of African American, Arab American, and other settler cultures, as well as those of First Nations and aboriginal folks, often differ sharply from the hegemonic, dominant cultures of white people of European origin.

8. A few exceptions include Marjorie Garber's (1992) reflection on Red Riding Hood and the wolf, Greenhill's (1995, 1997) consideration of same sex attraction in ballads, and Ruth Vanita's (2005) treatment of same-sex reproduction in an Indian tale.

9. See, e.g., Bersani (1996, 2009); Butler ([1990] 1999, 1993, 2004); Cvetkovich (1998, 2003); de Lauretis (1994); Dinshaw (1999); Doty (1993, 2000); Freccero (2006); Freeman (2007, 2010); Halberstam (1998, 2005); Jagose (1996, 2002); Kirsch (2000); Muñoz (1996, 1999, 2009); Sedgwick (1985, 1990, 1993); Stockton (2009); Sullivan (2003); Michael Warner (1993); Weed and Schor (1997); Wilchins (2004).

10. Raymond Williams refers his meaning of "structures of feeling," specifically to art and literature, "where the true social content is in a significant number of cases of this present and affective kind, which cannot be reduced to belief-systems, institutions, or explicit general relationships" (1977, 133). Phillip Brian Harper's work uses the evidence of felt intuition in relation to racial prejudice and homophobia. He argues for the necessity of taking recourse to the evidence of things not seen, not provable: "Minority existence itself induces speculative rumination—felt intuition—because it continually renders even the simplest and most ephemeral social encounters as possible cases of discrimination" (2000, 643). On the positive

side, ephemeral social encounters in fairy tales—the kind that often occur between protagonists and anomalous beings—are just the kind that illuminate queer possibilities and alliances.

II. Further, Hird argues against “the idea that biology itself consistently distinguishes between females and males. Nature . . . offers shades of difference and similarity much more than clear opposites” (2000, 348).