

Monstrous Fairytales: Towards an *Écriture Queer*

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Introduction

This paper is an investigation into writing that describes, and in many ways objectifies and marginalises, the queer. Specifically, the paper looks at the fairytale, and discusses how such narratives might be rewritten by authors informed by Queer Theory. This analysis is undertaken to reflect on, theorise, and position the creative writing strategies and practice of queer writers working within the field of fairytale fiction.

A major proposition of this paper is that many fairytales feature what will be defined as “Monstrous Queer” figures. A further delineation of this paper is to foreground the moment of narrative closure – the fairytale ending. This is done because fairytale endings routinely involve the Monstrous Queer being destroyed or punished. This paper is concerned with how queer writers have undertaken a positive rewriting of these figures of the Monstrous Queer and how a critical engagement with Queer Theory might further inform this rewriting. It will be shown that writers of queer fairytales have utilised the very familiar figures of the fairytale – narrative clichés as it were – in familiar settings, with familiar plot devices but, significantly, with a shifted emphasis, a revaluation, that has a considerable deconstructive potency.

To date, Fairytale Studies has not been significantly impacted by Queer Theory. However, as Jennifer Orme notes, a handful of papers pre-



senting Queer Theory–inspired readings of fairytales have recently been published.¹ This paper contributes to this emerging convergence of Queer Theory and Fairytale Studies. However, this paper goes beyond queered readings of texts to theorise the specific queer writing practices employed in the production of queer fairytale fiction.

This discussion is provoked by the emergence over the last decade or so of queer rewritings of fairytales, including works such as: Emma Donoghue’s *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997) and William Holden’s *A Twist of Grim: Erotic Fairytales for Gay Men* (2010). There have also been a number of edited anthologies: *Happily Ever After: Erotic fairytales for Men* (Michael Ford 1996); *Sleeping Beauty, Indeed & Other Lesbian Fairytales* (JoSelle Vanderhooft 2009); *So Fey: Queer Fairy Fiction* (Steve Berman 2009); as well as the journal *Polluto*’s queer/fantasy themed fourth issue, *Queer and Loathing in Wonderland* (2008).

Defining Fairytales

Pauline Palmer has noted that many fairytales were traditionally “employed to acculturate young girls into accepting codes of conventional femininity” and that the fairytale heroine was “frequently relegated to the conventional heteropatriarchal role of trophy and object of exchange.”² Of course, not all fairytales are aimed at socialising or conditioning girls, some target boys (eg, *The Golden Goose*, *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *The Tortoise and the Hare*). We can infer then that fairytales that target boys are employed to acculturate them into traditional masculine roles such as that of vigorous competitor for access to women’s bodies and procreative capacity, and that of simultaneous master of economies of exchange, gender and power.

Elizabeth Harries defines fairytales as “compact narratives.”³ Ruth Bottigheimer concurs when she argues that short length “is central to defining a fairytale.”⁴ Jack Zipes defines fairytales as stories that include magical motifs, miraculous transformations, a happy (or fairytale) ending and that feature stock characters and settings.⁵ Often the fairytale involves a sequence of events leading to the downfall of the narrative’s antagonist or villain, often depicted as a monster (witch, troll, giant, or beast). Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, the fairytale will be defined as a short or compact narrative that typically features mythical or fantasy figures such as fairies, goblins, ghosts, witches, trolls, giants or mermaids and usually magic and/or magical transformation with a narrative trajectory that leads to the death, punishment or humiliation of the villain or monster.

It has been argued that the traditional fairy story engages in proscriptive discourses that create, describe, maintain and repair gender bounda-

ries.⁶ These boundaries form a binary division between what is normal, most often constructed as masculine and heterosexual, and what is abnormal or abject, constructed as feminine (or effeminate) and as sexually non-normative (or queer). Furthermore, fairytales are concerned with appropriate sexual behaviours and routinely close with two events: the death or punishment of the antagonist, and a wedding or heterosexual union.⁷ In this context, the paper will describe and consider methods for a positive (re)writing of the fairytale queer which might be employed by authors of queer literature, notably queer writers of short fairy stories.

This paper conceptualises ways of engaging with these kinds of fairytale monster narratives not only as a reader but as a writer. In other words, by theorising the fairytale, particularly at the level of characterisation, queer theories that inform and invigorate writing practice within that genre will be described.

Fairytale Figures: The Monstrous Queer

I am concerned here with certain *figures* – types of one dimensional or stereotypical characters – common to the fairy story that are constructed as queer *and* as somehow monstrous. These figures include ghosts, witches, freaks and of course fairies themselves.

Ian Reid observes that what really distinguishes shorter narrative forms like the fairy story from the novel is not length but “the fact that its leading characters are not of the sort normally found in extensive narratives”; rather, they are described as “outlandish people.”⁸ Reid includes in this category of outlandish people midgets, humpbacks and violent individuals.⁹ Fairy stories, as short narratives, routinely rely on the outlandish, the unusual and the uncanny. It is clear that the queer, the gender different and the androgynous also fit into this (abnormal) category. Max Luthi, differentiating between short-story figures and the more fully developed and psychologised characters of novels, observes, “figures, like those of the fairy-tale, are not primarily individuals, personalities, characters, but simply figures: doers and receivers of actions.”¹⁰

The actions such figures are allowed are limited. Fairytale figures are either protagonists or antagonists to the narrative trajectory towards heteronormative fulfilment. For the most part, antagonist (monstrous) figures engage solely in actions constructed as negative and threatening to heteropatriarchal order. They either act against the protagonist and heteronormative narrative trajectory or they are the recipients of punitive actions by the protagonist and the narrative. These actions predispose the narra-

tive to punishing these antagonist figures at the moment of narrative closure.

As noted earlier, the antagonist figures at the heart of much fairytale fiction are often monstrous (witches, giants, beasts) and, in that they resist or transgress heteronormative gendering and sexuality, can be described as queer. These monstrous constructions of the queer are routinely positioned in direct conflict and opposition to heteronormative discourse. For these reasons, I will be employing the term “Monstrous Queer” to describe these types of characters: figures that are equally monstrous and non-heteronormative.

The Monstrous Queer as Abject

The monster is defined here as a figure that carries signs or marks of *abjection* as outlined first by Julia Kristeva,¹¹ and later by Barbara Creed and others.

It is not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the shameless rapist ... [A]ny crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject.¹²

I am appropriating Kristeva’s work, primarily that work which implies a form of writing that demarcates proper and improper behaviour, or in other words a proscriptive discourse, in a limited way. I am using this Kristevan analysis primarily to theorise abjection – that which is cast out or expelled from the physical and/or social body.¹³ I am employing Kristeva’s theory of abjection, which focuses primarily on the novel, in an analysis of the fairytale in much the same way as Creed, who appropriated Kristeva’s conceptualisation of the abject to inform an analysis of cinema.¹⁴

In the quote above, Kristeva infers that abjection – that which is horrific and must be expelled or destroyed – is inscribed on individuals who commit crimes against established systems, laws, borders or orders, particularly crimes that highlight, or draw attention to, the fragility of those structures.

What is not overtly stated here is that the borders referenced include those between sexual and gender norms – norms associated with a Self, an assumed reader, or the dominant subjectivity of a discourse – and the abnormal. The abnormal is constructed as other to the presumed reader, and other to the heteronormative narrative trajectory itself. The presumed reader is most often heterosexual, most often male.¹⁵ This presumption is considered somehow normal or natural and the abnormal (queer) is there-

fore constructed as feminine, or in many instances as a feminised male,¹⁶ and as unnatural.

Creed articulates this border between the natural and the unnatural, between norms and the abnormal, when she states that the border is “between human and inhuman, man and beast ... or between the normal and the supernatural, good and evil” and that the abject exists at the border which “separates those who take up their proper gender roles from those who do not” or where “the border is between normal and abnormal desire.”¹⁷

It has been noted by Creed that the narrative figures most often categorised as breaching this “archaic authority,” as Kristeva calls it, are women who do not conform to gender or sexual norms.¹⁸ By extension, it is reasonable to argue that others who transgress these borders and frameworks are the queer, particularly the gender ambiguous. These narrative (fairy tale) figures are marked by certain discourses as, or are associated with, the abject, arguably because they are identified with the feminine. In other words, the queer in narrative is presumed to be abject, and thus is a monstrous figure.

Gloria Anzaldúa puts it this way:

Humans fear the supernatural, both the undivine (the animal impulses such as sexuality, the unconscious, the unknown, the alien) and the divine (the superhuman, the god in us). Culture and religion seek to protect us from these two forces. The female, by virtue of creating entities of flesh and blood in her stomach (she bleeds every month but does not die), by virtue of being in tune with nature’s cycles, is feared. Because, according to Christianity and most other religions, woman is carnal, animal, closer to the undivine ... Woman is the stranger, the other.¹⁹

Likewise, the non-heterosexual male is constructed as abject, as a metaphorical woman, because, in heteropatriarchal parlance, he is *like a woman*, or, perhaps more to the point, is a *doubling* of two worlds, two (gender) terms: masculine and feminine.²⁰ Creed has argued “whenever male bodies are represented as monstrous ... they assume characteristics usually associated with the female body.”²¹ In other words, they bleed, they sweat, they are soft rather than hard, they behave improperly, they excrete bodily fluids and are pale.²² She elucidates her argument by writing “it seems clear that in the process of being constructed as monstrous the male is feminised.”²³ I would go one step further and argue that when males are constructed as monstrous it is the effeminate male that is chosen as the template for the monster. The effeminate male is constructed as



monstrous precisely because he refuses traditional masculinity; because he is somehow not a man at all. More to the point, the effeminate male is monstrous in that he signifies an abject (queer) desire; he transgresses the border between normal and abnormal genders and sexualities.

Ellis Hanson has made connections between the abject, the horrific monster, and the gay male, especially the gay male with HIV/AIDS. He writes that gay men are represented as “the embodiment of evil sexuality.”²⁴ Hanson argues that essentialist discourses represent gay men as:

sexually exotic, alien, unnatural, oral, anal, compulsive, violent, protean, polymorphic, polyvocal, polysemous, invisible, soulless, transient, superhumanly mobile, infectious, murderous, suicidal, and a threat to wife, children, home, and phallus.²⁵

Paulina Palmer has argued that negative stereotypes of women in traditional fairytales (the witch, the wicked stepmother, the hag) are “grossly misogynistic representations of femininity” that can be read as metaphors for lesbian desire and subjectivity.²⁶ She writes that these non-heteronormative women are “eccentric and disruptive” subjects “who transgress sexual and social conventions.”²⁷

The fact that the fairytale monster figure is “eccentric and disruptive” and acts against the protagonist and heteronormative narrative trajectory by threatening “wife, children, home, and phallus” is precisely why the fairytale monster is marked as abject, and as queer. Along with being the necessary recipient of punitive actions by the protagonist, these are the limited actions of the fairytale figure mentioned earlier. Put simply, any figure that resists heteronormativity must be executed or punished for its monstrous abnormality; and the abnormal *is* the queer. As Sue Ellen Case articulates: “The queer is the taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny.”²⁸ Case outlines the connections between the monstrous and queer desire even further when she writes “queer desire punctures the life/death and generative/destructive bipolarities that enclose the heterosexist notion of being.”²⁹ The queer is a threat to the heteronormative subject’s existence and as such is monstrous.

The characteristics Hanson and Case outline with regard to the monstrous are also characteristics often used to describe not only narrative figures but actual individuals constructed in discourse as abject: gay men, lesbian women, the androgynous and transgender, bisexual men and women and those who defy chromosomal boundaries – the intersex.

As we have already seen, Kristeva argues that “[t]he in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” give rise to abjection, or are associated with the abject.³⁰ The queer, particularly the gender ambiguous, fit these descrip-

tions neatly. Indeed, non-heteronormative genders and sexualities can themselves be considered abject. In other words, queer and gender ambiguous individuals resemble – in that they share certain aberrant characteristics – the abject figures of discourse that much of Kristeva’s work attempts to define.

As Judith Halberstam has pointed out, the representation of the monstrous, that which “scares and appals,” varies from one historical period to another as do the traits, the marks of abjection, that combine as monstrosity.³¹ Halberstam also argues that the “preferred interpretations of monstrosity” change over time.³² I would posit that for some time the monster has often signified, among other things, the anxiety felt by heterosexual men and women at the increasing visibility of homosexual desire. This anxiety has increased exponentially since the advent of the Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement at the time of the Stonewall Riots in 1969. Thus, we can see the monster of much discourse as a similitude of actual lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people. The monster is a (mis)representation of those who transgress social and gender boundaries.

To summarise, the Monstrous Queer is an abject narrative figure that resists and transgresses heteronormative genders and sexualities and that, in traditional fairytales, is allowed a limited range of actions; namely actions that hinder the heteronormative protagonist and narrative trajectory. The Monstrous Queer is also the necessary recipient of punitive actions by the heteronormative protagonist for having breached the archaic laws governing the boundaries between normative and abnormal genders, sexualities and desires. The Monstrous Queer of fairytale and other narratives is also a similitude for non-heteronormative individuals (queers) and for non-heteronormative sexuality itself.

Death of the Monster: Monstrous Death as a (Heteronormative) Happy Ending

As noted in the introduction, this paper foregrounds the moment of narrative closure, or the fairytale ending. This moment of narrative closure is the point at which the Monstrous Queer is destroyed, limited, or punished. The Monstrous Queer who, as a figure of discourse, disturbs and denies culturally prescribed norms, is an entity whose story often culminates with death or exclusion. The final scene of a narrative is the moment at which the Monstrous Queer, who has threatened to destabilise the narrative order, is sadistically dealt with, excised, exterminated. Such extermination, entrapment or enfoldment at the moment of closure limits the reading possibilities for non-heteronormative individuals and encourages a kind of masochistic reading for queer-identified readers who are constructed as alike the mon-



ster (the Monstrous Queer) of the narrative. The execution or punishment of the Monstrous Queer routinely precedes a heterosexual union or reunion (often in the form of a wedding) and thus this punishment can be seen as a necessary precursor to heterosexual fulfilment. To put it bluntly, the death of the Monstrous Queer is precisely what constitutes a heteronormative happy ending. This moment of closure then, becomes a site of contestation between cultural norms and those outside them, those whose sexuality, gender, or physicality resist conformity to such norms.

A very cursory review of the narrative endpoint of a number of fairy stories is sufficient to reveal that the figure of the Monstrous Queer is routinely and repetitively executed, exiled or subjected to other forms of punishment by story's end. In at least one of the extant versions of *Sleeping Beauty* – that published in 1697 by Charles Perrault – the Monstrous Queer, this time in the form of an ogress, is consumed by vipers.³³ In *Snow White* (published in 1857 by the Grimm Brothers) the Monstrous Queer takes the form of a stepmother and witch.³⁴ As punishment for the witch's wickedness, her antagonism to the heterosexual union of Snow White and the prince, the witch is forced to step into a pair of heated iron shoes. The scene of the witch's punishment is, significantly, Snow White's wedding. Wearing the white hot shoes, the witch is forced to dance to death. In an earlier version of *Jack and the Beanstalk*,³⁵ a tale filled with phallic imagery published anonymously in London by Benjamin Tabart in 1807,³⁶ the protagonist, Jack, murders the giant (queer and monstrous due to his aberrant size and cannibalistic tendencies) in order to keep secret the fact that he has stolen the dowry to acquire a beautiful bride. Bruno Betterlheim notes that *Jack and the Beanstalk* is "a story which asserts the desirability of social and sexual self-assertion in the pubertal boy and the foolishness of a mother who belittles this."³⁷ In other words, *Jack and the Beanstalk* acculturates boys to assert their heterosexual subjectivities. The trial through which this is achieved is the murder of the Monstrous Queer.

In a number of versions of *The Little Mermaid*, the Sea-Witch is variously drowned, impaled or stabbed to death. It is intriguing that in the animated version of *The Little Mermaid* (1989), the Sea-Witch is modelled on outrageous drag performer Divine.³⁸ Through intertextual reference, this relationship between Divine and the Sea-Witch connects the paradigms of the effeminate male and the Monstrous Queer. In *The Light Princess*, written in 1864 by George McDonald, a spinster aunt curses a princess so that she cannot marry.³⁹ By narrative close, a prince has discovered that by making the princess cry (show weakness) the curse is broken. The wicked aunt drowns as the prince and princess are wed. It is interesting to note that all of these stories feature a villain (Monstrous Queer) who is pre-

sented as an antagonist and obstacle to heterosexual union between the male and female protagonists of the story.

In *Little Red Riding Hood* (also published in 1697 by Perrault), the cross-dressing Big Bad Wolf is hacked to death by a woodsman and then, to add insult to injury, drowned. Another wolf, in the Grimm fairytale *The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids*, masquerades as the kids' mother in order to be let into their house where he proceeded to eat them. This wolf is eviscerated and his stomach filled with stones and sown up again after which he falls in a well and drowns. It seems that these wolves' tendencies towards gender bending are dangerous indeed. In *Hansel and Gretel* (first published by the Grimm Brothers in 1912), another Monstrous Queer witch is featured. She is burnt to death in a kitchen oven. In the Norwegian fairytale *Three Billy Goats Gruff* (published by Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe in 1844) the Monstrous Queer, a troll with a talent for language and a queer penchant for rhymes, is cast over a bridge and left to drown.⁴⁰ In *Rumpelstiltskin* (another published in 1812 by the Grimm Brothers) the queer figure is a faerie able to weave straw into gold. In the unsanitised version of this tale, Rumpelstiltskin meets his end by tearing himself in two! Needless to say, this kills him. In the Brothers Grimm fairy story *The Two Brothers*, a bullet-proof witch can only be dispatched by silver bullets hastily fashioned out of the hero's silver coat buttons.

Other stories, though perhaps fairytale fusions with fantasy or Gothic styles, also feature a litany of violence against the Monstrous Queer. In J M Barrie's *Peter Pan*, the foppish Captain Hook is summarily fed to a crocodile.⁴¹ In George Oliver's *The Beckoning Fair One*, a kind of Gothic fairytale, a female phantom possesses the protagonist and compels him to murder the woman who loves him and nearly starve himself to death.⁴² The short story *Le Grande Bretèche* by Honoré de Balzac also features a foppish male, though this one a foreign (Spanish) count. As a compact story concerned with marriage and sexual behaviour, it meets part of the definition of a fairytale, though is also decidedly Gothic. The magic in this tale is divine magic, in the form of a divine retribution that turns a disobedient wife into a living phantom. The effeminate count is being held a prisoner in France during Napoleon's reign and the wife helps him to escape and hides him in her closet. This act is one of both treason and marital disobedience. The count of *Le Grande Bretèche* – a pale, thin man with an unnatural shyness and priest-like demeanour – is bricked into the closet by the wife's angry husband and allowed to starve to death. The reason for the count's punishment seems to be related more to his appearance than for any suspected adultery; he is, after all, "priest like," which connotes celibacy and a



lack of masculine virility. The way the count is described illustrates his queerness:

Ah! He was a handsome young fellow ... He was not more than five feet two or three in height, but so well made; and he had little hands that he kept so beautifully! Ah! You should have seen them. He had as many brushes for his hands as a woman has for her toilet. He had thick, black hair, a flame in his eye, a somewhat coppery complexion, but which I admired all the same. He wore the finest linen I have ever seen, though I have had princesses to lodge here.⁴³

Whatever shape the Monstrous Queer takes – whether witch or fop, troll or ghost – it is routinely executed or excised from narrative, and the methods are predictably violent: drowning, stabbing, staking, suffocation and starvation, burning, dismemberment and shooting with silver bullets.

A number of Queer Theorists have focused on possibilities for multiple and pleasurable readings of the monster figure. To support the notion that queer readers can enjoy these Monstrous Queer figures, these theorists have avoided analysis of the moment of closure at which the monster is destroyed, restrained or exiled.⁴⁴ Such analyses, by failing to significantly address this key narrative element, fail to imagine other trajectories, other possibilities, for the Monstrous Queer figure. By highlighting the sadistic exclusion or excision of the Monstrous Queer at the moment of enclosure, it becomes clear that new trajectories, new articulations, of the Monstrous Queer, are required if queer readers and writers are to find an unambiguous pleasure in these narrative figurations.

Writing – Disseminating the Real

[T]he frequency of defilement rites in societies without writing leads one to think that such cathartic rites function like a “writing of the real”. They parcel out, demarcate, delineate an order, a framework, a sociality without having any other signification than the one inhering in that very parcelling and the order thus concatenated. One might ask, proceeding in reverse, if all writing is not a second level rite, at the level of language, that is, which causes one to be reminded, through the linguistic signs themselves, of the demarcations that precondition them and go beyond them. Indeed writing causes the subject who ventures in it to confront an archaic authority.⁴⁵

In the excerpt above, Kristeva implies that writing, in cultures where writing exists, acts to describe and disseminate an order, a framework, which could be called “a writing of the real”; or a systematic discourse that posi-

tions borders and establishes and reinforces taboos.⁴⁶ Kristeva argues that this discourse is akin to defilement rites (ceremonies) that clearly articulate the abject, how the abject is to be viewed, and how transgressions – movements into abjection – can be purified or managed.⁴⁷ Kristeva infers that writing, as a second-level defilement rite, acts as a normalising discourse that marginalises difference and insists on conformity to socio-cultural rules. She indicates that this kind of writing also guards against defilement or transgression – meaning transgression of the perceived order or authority – by prohibiting certain behaviours.

Having described writing as a process which disseminates and reinforces boundaries, laws, and taboos, Kristeva has nominated writing as a discourse which is concerned with the abject – or that which must be expelled or excluded – and a discourse that is concerned with the characteristics of the monstrous and the processes that expel or destroy the Queer Monster. To put it simply, Kristeva defines all writing as scripture. Kristeva is of course primarily talking about the novel; however, these theories of abjection can be transferred to other genres and mediums, much as Creed has transferred it to the study of abjection and the “monstrous feminine” in horror cinema – the blurred boundaries between the narrativity of the novel and other kinds of writing enabling this transposition. The Monstrous Queer seems itself to be a transposition – a position that cuts across boundaries, exists in many (narrative) realms – and so Kristevan analysis, appropriated in a quite transcribed way, can facilitate a re-reading of the Monstrous Queer in fairytales.

Changing tack a little and returning to a point made earlier, I would argue that through an analysis of written representations of abjection, or the Monstrous Queer figure, in certain fairy stories the Monstrous Queer of discourse can be recognised as a similitude – or representative likeness – of actual beings who are non-heteronormative or gender ambiguous. These narratives of entertainment, as we presume them to be, can be seen as *scriptural* outpourings, as Kristeva defines them – indictments of, and proscriptions against, the perceived evil of the Monstrous Queer.

Although it has recently been argued that fairytales are a literary construction and do not necessarily have their genesis in folklore or oral storytelling,⁴⁸ the truncated form of the fairytale and its focus on magic and fantastic figures shows, at the very least, linkages between the motifs of fairytales and myth or superstition. Indeed, the project of fairytale authors such as the Grimm brothers might have been to create a literary equivalent to the highly engaging myths and ghost stories told and retold in domestic and social settings as precursors to urban legends. These similarities illuminate the construction of the queer as a discursive monster. Charles E May has



argued that the short story is a form “that embodies and recapitulates mythic perception, and whose characteristics are ... concentration rather than distribution.”⁴⁹ It is easy to argue that certain fairy stories are influenced – in terms of their motifs and narrative trajectory – by the proscriptive discourses, known in anthropology as myth or folklore, that are passed down in an oral tradition within certain cultures. May supports this when he states that “the short story ... is the structural core of all fiction in its derivation from folklore and myth.”⁵⁰

The leading figures of myth are indeed *figures*, not characters, in that they have limited characterisation and exist for the most part to enunciate morality, to define what is good and what is bad. Many of the literary fairy stories have their beginnings as an attempt to replicate the pleasurable affects of oral stories circulated in close-knit communities and families.⁵¹ These sorts of unreconstructed stories – given that their primary concerns are the dissemination of a code of behaviour and a set of norms that locates those who breach these codes as abject, as monster – are clearly cautionary tales. These cautionary tales are primarily concerned with the exclusion of the abject; in this context the Monstrous Queer.

Given the above, how might writers who identify with certain characteristics nominated as abject (whether that is gender ambiguity or non-heterosexual sexual preference), rewrite certain figures of the fairytale in a way that privileges difference, or foregrounds in a positive way, the Monstrous Queer figure, the embodiment of abjection? I would argue that engaging the philosophy of Hélène Cixous, particularly her conceptualisation of *écriture féminine* as a kind of discourse that can evade the limits of traditional ways of writing – traditional that is, in a constrictive and proscriptive way – offers many radical possibilities for such a *rewriting*. I am drawing particularly heavily on Cixous’s notion of *écriture féminine* as a writing that leaves behind the kind of “writing as dissemination,” or writing as proscriptive discourse, that has typified much literature in the last century or two.⁵²

Cixous sees writing as not merely proscriptive discourse, a discourse that attempts to limit the Other, but also, perhaps paradoxically, as a way for the Other to be enunciated without limits.⁵³ She acknowledges a space in between writing and proscription. It is this space that allows subversive possibilities. For Cixous, this subversive possibility within writing is realised by acknowledging that writing, by describing the norm, the “One” or dominant subjectivity and its territory, also describes the Other and through this description brings it out into the light, makes known the existence of other positions, resistant positions or subjectivities. She writes:

To admit writing is precisely working in the in-between, inspecting the process of the same and of the other without which nothing can

live, undoing the work of death – to admit this is first to want the two, as well as both, the ensemble of one and the other, not fixed in sequence of struggle and expulsion or some other form of death but infinitely dynamized by an incessant process of exchange from one subject to another.⁵⁴

Cixous conceptualises *écriture féminine* as a discourse that is not limited to a repetition of binary terms but, rather, a discourse which is open to terms that sit outside of binaries and refuse solidification.⁵⁵ Cixous calls this sort of writing as “Other bisexual” or “feminine” and sets it up in opposition to traditional (heteronormative) discourses.⁵⁶ As Toril Moi describes:

For Cixous, feminine texts are texts that “work on the difference” ... strive in the direction of difference, struggle to undermine the dominant phallogocentric logic, split open the closure of the binary opposition and revel in the pleasures of open-ended textuality.⁵⁷

Furthermore, Moi explains that Cixous defines much writing as trapped in patriarchal binary thought⁵⁸ and that Cixous, in the vein of Derrida, argues that terms such as “man” only acquire meaning in relationship to other terms such as “woman,” or in the absence of other terms.⁵⁹ Within this system the terms that are more closely related to the term “man” subordinate all other terms. She adds to this by arguing that for one term to acquire meaning it must destroy the other.⁶⁰ The other term, more simply “the Other,” must be destroyed for the dominant system to come into meaning, to find purpose, to have a sense of itself and its boundaries. Thus the violent excision of the Monstrous Queer that occurs at narrative close, for the Monstrous Queer is most certainly other to heteropatriarchal discourse.

The discourse that engages in this process of destruction of the Monstrous Queer, the script of exclusion, is known to Cixous and Derrida as Speech, which implies a proximity to a self as opposed to an other. Speech is in opposition to language/writing, which is more open, and opposed to *écriture féminine*, the discourse of plurality. Put simply, Speech is dominant discourse. Moi argues that Cixous “sets multiple, heterogeneous *différance*” against “any binary scheme of thought.”⁶¹ In Speech, the other is always at a distance, indeed deliberately put at a distance, and is always somewhat unknown, and therefore two dimensional and limited in its traits. It is a figure, not a character, and certainly not a fully-fledged being equivalent to the Self. Speech can only describe the other in reference to this process of extinguishment, the process of ejection and enclosure, and so can never give the other equal space. In the same sense, the Monstrous Queer never survives the narrative trajectory of the traditional fairytale which is also a form of “patriarchal binary thought.”



Connections between Derrida's and Cixous's uses of the term and the notion of the *figure* are immediately apparent. These connections occur between the other at the level of grammar and language and the Monstrous Queer at the level of figure or character. For me a term *is* a figure, or more precisely a figure is a further enunciation of terms. In this sense, we can see language as a kind of implement used to quarantine the Monstrous Queer – to subjugate it to the narrative trajectory leading towards an anti-queer ending.

Following on from the demarcation of a figure as different from a fully developed character, it is evident that a character carries a complex array of terms; complex in that the character can express terms (or traits) that are constructed as being in conflict. The figure, on the other hand, is most likely written as carrying terms which are less complicated. A protagonist figure, the hero – the representative of heteronormative order – rarely carries terms that bring this role into conflict. The hero is always good, always well behaved, always heterosexual, and always discretely gendered as male or female. In contrast, the Monstrous Queer figure carries terms that are constructed as always bad, always a threat, always improper, badly behaved or unclean and is routinely constructed as gender ambiguous.

Paradoxically, it is also often the notion of ambiguity, a refusal to occupy one or other position – good or bad, self or other, normal or abnormal – that defines the Monstrous Queer as most abject. The Monstrous Queer is often abject precisely because it carries a conflation of terms or a fusion – such as man/woman (androgyny). In many fairy stories a breach of minor terms, for instance active/passive, is interpreted as acceptable if this breach doesn't threaten heteronormativity. However, any breach of major terms (principally the terms man/woman) is constructed as reprehensible. It is this conflation of terms, this collapse of binaries and boundaries, that elicits a violent response within the narrative that collapses the narrative trajectories of the Monstrous Queer so that the only possibilities are death, imprisonment, disfigurement or exile.

The Monstrous Queer is an enunciation of terms, and so to free the Monstrous Queer from a terrible narrative end it must be liberated from the limiting movement of heteronormative narrative (of Speech). It seems then that the pernicious binary oppositions that corrupt narrative are the problem. The displacement of the Monstrous Queer follows directly from this narratological conflict between subject and object, and it appears that the figure needs rewriting at the level of story and of binary oppositions – the Monstrous Queer needs to be allowed to be a conflation of terms, a plural third term.

The “Other bisexual” writing advocated by Cixous allows the Monstrous Queer to be a conflation or hybridity of terms – to be ambiguous and open in terms of gender and sexuality – and splits open “the closure of the binary opposition and revels in the pleasures of open-ended textuality.”⁶² This form of discourse can be seen as a template for a kind of writing employed by authors attempting to rewrite and revalue abject representations of the queer that could be called, in this instance, *écriture queer*.⁶³

Écriture Queer – Rewriting

There is a long history of rewriting of fairytales.⁶⁴ Most notably, feminist writers have appropriated fairytales to “explore possibilities of liberating women from the passiveness of many classical tales from Perrault, to the Brothers Grimm, to Hans Christian Andersen.”⁶⁵ Crowley and Pennington briefly outline this history when they write:

We are familiar with numerous fairytale retellings and reappropriations, some of which have themselves become classics: Anne Sexton’s poetic reimaginings in *Transformations*, Angela Carter’s self-described “moral pornography” in *The Bloody Chamber*, Margaret Atwood in *Bluebeard’s Egg* and *The Robber Bride*, and A. S. Byatt in *Possession*, *The Djinn and the Nightingale* and *The Children’s Book*. One should not forget the important anthologies that collect fairy tales by women writers, particularly Jack Zipes’ *Don’t Bet on the Prince* and *The Trial and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*.⁶⁶

Jack Zipes has noted that feminist revisions of fairytales are created out of “dissatisfaction with the dominant male discourse of traditional fairy tales” and that “the feminist fairy tale conceives a different view of the world and speaks in a voice that has been customarily silenced.”⁶⁷

Amy Shuman contends that any rewriting of traditional fairytales must “negotiate between the world the authority describes and the world we describe”⁶⁸ and “analyse the ways in which boundaries are maintained, reproduced, transgressed, or shifted.”⁶⁹ This is certainly what queer rewritings of fairytales are doing. Cristina Bacchilega argues that feminist reworking of fairytales must entail “substantive though diverse questioning of both narrative construction and assumptions about gender.” She argues further that:

Postmodern revision is often two-fold, seeking to expose, make visible, the fairy tale’s complicity with “exhausted” narrative and gender ideologies, and, by working from the fairy tales’ multiple versions, seeking to expose, bring out, what the institutionalization of such tales for children has forgotten or left unexploited.⁷⁰



It is clear that queer writers of fairytale fiction – also with a different view of the world and a voice that is routinely silenced – seek to expose the traditional fairytale's complicity with gender ideologies and, therefore, have a strong affinity with the feminist project of the revision of fairytales.

Queer Rewritings

I described earlier the process of patriarchal binary thought, in which Speech can only describe the other in reference to a process of the extinguishment of it, the process of ejection and exclusion (abjection). The process of abjection can never give the Monstrous Queer equal space. Heteronormative discourse would be silenced if the Monstrous Queer were to be given equal space and equal voice, because the presumption of self, as fixed with specific (heterosexual) qualities (as true), would itself be extinguished. As Toril Moi insists, writing “that presumes self located truth embeds within itself patriarchal binary thought, which pretends to be natural, and which flows directly from the presumption of self-presence as truth.”⁷¹

At this point – at the collapse of self-presence as truth – the spectre of death, of loss of identity, arises and the other suddenly looks just like a corpse – pale, fluid, wet, bleeding – because the other threatens to dissolve the self, to bleed subjectivities into each other. The other pales, blurs and corrupts boundaries. With regard to traditional fairytales, this means that the other takes the form of the abject Monstrous Queer. Therefore, I would argue that it is precisely the characteristics of the fairytale monster (the clichés that are core to discourses of abjection) that will enable a writing that reclaims, revalues and refigures the Monstrous Queer figure of the fairytale.

Indeed, as Molly Hite argues, “Clichés tend to have unanticipated potency in relevant contexts, and certainly the notion of telling the other side of the story in many ways describes the enterprise of feminist criticism”; “changes in emphasis and value can articulate the ‘other side’ of a culturally mandated story, exposing the limits it inscribes in the process of affirming a dominant ideology.”⁷² To put it another way, the utilisation of familiar figures – stereotypes as it were – in familiar settings, with familiar plot devices but with a shifted emphasis, a revaluation, can have a deconstructive potency that is beyond what one would anticipate for such a, seemingly, simple undertaking. It seems clear that queer appropriations of the fairytale, and the rewriting of same, is a relevant context that promises some considerable potency.

Hite argues further that this kind of rewriting, this mixture of appropriation and *écriture féminine*, is a preferred method to those articulated within

postmodernism. She writes that, though experimental fictions by women share with postmodernism certain “decentring and disseminating strategies,” these experimental narratives are arrived at “by an entirely different route, which involves emphasising conventionally marginal characters and themes, in this way re-centering the value structure of the narrative.”⁷³ This different route privileges a politics of representation which, under the influence of postmodernism, has been largely abandoned, despite the fact that misrepresentation of marginal groups in discourse continues to be the norm rather than the exception.

In the context of a queer rewriting of fairytales, I would argue that the best resistance to normalising discourses is an inscription into reworked fairytales of the very traits of the figure of the Monstrous Queer, such as paleness, a nocturnal nature, bleeding, sweating, unnaturalness, sexual difference, physical difference, androgyny, effeminacy, indeterminate identity, improper behaviour and sex/gender openness. However, this reworking of fairytales would involve creating a significantly different emphasis and a re-valuing of the monstrous figure. This reproduction and dissemination of the Monstrous Queer in new fairytales can evoke instability in the (hetero) narrative system that threatens to destroy it at the moment of narrative enclosure. This is precisely because the most widely disseminated norms, the culturally accepted and acceptable terms put into place by patriarchal binary thought, are perceived as stable, singular and true. When other terms are circulated, a multiplicity – a plurality – arises that speaks of the fiction of the normal, the fixed, the clean, the proper and the righteous.

To put it very simply, to construct a fairy story from the perspective of the Monstrous Queer – that emphasises the queer figure’s struggle against conformity to heteronormativity – has the potential to create a discourse that values rather than excludes difference, in other words an *écriture queer*.

The binaries embedded in our culture are infamous: man/woman, human/animal, activity/passivity, life/death, natural/unnatural, normal/abnormal. If the normal threatens to become abnormal, or the unnatural natural, the other equal rather than subordinate, the binaries cease to operate in any powerful way and (heteropatriarchal) subjectivity destabilises, or at least seems less “real” than it did before.

Discourses of abjection acknowledge that the abject has power over heteronormative subjectivity, and it is precisely this power that makes the Monstrous Queer so dangerous, that provokes the attempt to destroy it. In particular, the refusal of gender norms and the enactment of what Judith Butler calls “gender insubordination” threatens the very existence of the Self as constructed in hetero-narratives. Olu Jenzen illustrates this point



when he writes that Butler “demonstrates in her writings how the binary gender system, and indeed heterosexuality, forms a precondition for one’s identity.”⁷⁴ Butler herself writes that “the very notion of the subject” is “intelligible only through its appearance as gendered.”⁷⁵ The Monstrous Queer that strays “outside of established gender” puts the heteronormative subject’s “very existence into question.”⁷⁶

In the process of rewriting, queer authors would be well advised to simply leave open the breaches that the Monstrous Queer figure signifies; the eruptions, the splits and tears in self (subjectivities) and realities. This is, of course, the agenda of much queer literature, to keep open the breach between terms and agitate and abrade the borders between them so that these borders collapse or reform. If the figure of the Monstrous Queer – written in ways that the Monstrous Queer has always been written, with those familiar differences, those deformities, those queer predilections – resists heteronormative conformity, remains alive at closure and has a narrative trajectory other than death, exile or imprisonment, then a multitude of reading possibilities opens up.

To illustrate this point, referring to lesbian rewritings of fairytales by Emma Donoghue and others, Pauline Palmer writes:

By parodically reworking in their ... stories the grotesquely misogynistic representations of femininity such as the witch, the mermaid and the giantess that fairy tales inscribe, they likewise engage in an attempt to renegotiate and resignify the boundaries of the abject, thus helping to redeem the lesbian from the image of the “monstrous feminine” which homophobic culture projects upon her.⁷⁷

Indeed if the Monstrous Queer is not only alive at closure but also central to the narrative’s movement rather than tangential to it, or a threat to it, or a pause to facilitate the horrific gaze, then the system which hunts it out everywhere else is contained. The Speech of patriarchal binary thought – the dominant voice – is fractured, and multiple voices arise. This is no great literary feat, nor is it theoretically new as it has been the project of Feminist writers for decades,⁷⁸ but the impact on those persons who identify with the qualities of the Monstrous Queer can be great.

Imagine *The Little Mermaid* ending with lesbian *jouissance* between the mermaid and the Sea-Witch rather than another princely wedding. Imagine Jack and the giant yearning for an embrace rather than wanting to kill each other. Imagine Captain Hook and Peter Pan engaged in a rapturous tryst that lasts for an eternity in a queered Neverland. Imagine, under the light of a full moon, a pack of burly werewolves who, rather than being shot by silver bullets, dance in ecstatic frenzy beneath a silver disco ball.

Imagine that the Big Bad Wolf is not hacked to death but rather teaches Little Red Riding Hood the delights of cross-dressing.

This is precisely what queer writers such as Emma Donoghue,⁷⁹ William Holden⁸⁰ and those included in *Sleeping Beauty Indeed, and Other Lesbian Fairytales* (2009) and *So Fey: Queer Fairy Fiction* (2009) have done. In terms of characterisation at least, these rewritings have been undertaken in these suggested generically familiar ways. Although not all of these rewritings include recognisable monsters, they all include abject figures occupying the space of outsider – the abjected and marginalised queer – that, though perhaps not as explicitly monstrous as a witch, hag or troll, are nevertheless figures subjected to narrative excision and destruction in dominant discourse.

Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch* includes lesbian recasting of a number of popular fairytales. In one story, Cinderella runs off with her fairy godmother, in another Sleeping Beauty's awakening is purely erotic rather than romantic. In *A Twist of Grimm*, William Holden rewrites *The Elves*, a story published by the Grimm brothers about naked elves helping a cobbler to make shoes and become prosperous. Holden's version of the story, *Wicked Little Tongues*, is a tale of homosexual awakening in which the naked elves enchant the shoes in a way that brings forward repressed desire in both the maker and the wearer. The result is an untraditional fairytale ending in which the shoemaker discovers the pleasure of "gay" sex, separates from his wife and takes up with a handsome Lord. In *The Prince and His Companion*, Holden retells *The Riddle*, originally a Grimm fairytale about a young prince winning a bride by presenting her with an unsolvable riddle. The riddle itself is the result of a narrow escape from a witch. In *The Prince and His Companion*, the Prince fakes a marriage to the bride and secretly commits himself to his male servant. The bride, complicit in the trickery, also has a same-sex lover. Holden's *Wicked Little Tongues* and *The Prince and His Companion* upend the traditional narrative trajectories of *The Elves* and *The Riddle* respectively. Rather than narratives in which women are objects of a sexual exchange that culminates in heteronormative marriage, Holden produces narratives in which marriage and compulsory heterosexuality are displaced in favour of queer desire.

Many of the stories in the anthologies listed above routinely utilise stock scenes of the fairy story genre, stereotypical plot devices, recognisable settings and familiar figures to usurp and appropriate the writing that came before it. Many of these stories have, of course, been queered by giving them an explicit sexual (and often fetishistic) tone. As an example, take Dave Migman's *Alice in the Palace* (included in *Queer and Loathing in Wonderland*) which is a hallucinatory adventure through an orgy with the



White Rabbit, Mad Hatter (and many other figures) in which notions of identity and gender are troubled and complicated.⁸¹ Rewritings of this kind have been done, in part, to reclaim proscriptive discourses that have been widely circulated – discourses of the freakish, the different, the androgynous, the spectral, the sissy, the effeminate, the monstrous – and, in at least a nominal way, diffuse their (heteropatriarchal) voices.

In particular, the stories from *Polluto's Queer and Loathing in Wonderland* rely heavily on radically revalued stock scenes and figures. One such story is Deb Hoag's *Queer and Loathing on the Yellow Brick Road* which features Dorothy (of *Wizard of Oz* fame) cutting off her braids and discarding her gender appropriate gingham frock for "glitter eyeliner, spandex and blood-red acrylic nails" as the prelude to leading a Munchkin rebellion against an alcoholic Glinda (the good witch of the West).⁸² In this way, Hoag has appropriated and queered a highly familiar text in ways that privilege ambiguity and complexity rather than heteronormativity. Other stories that queer traditional fairytales are Catherynne M Valente's *Bones Like Sugar* – which is an explicitly subversive lesbian retelling of *Hansel and Gretel* – and *Sleeping Beauty, Indeed* by Regan M Wann, a queered retake on the tale of *Sleeping Beauty* (both in *Sleeping Beauty, Indeed & Other Lesbian Fairytales*). These retellings of fairy stories constitute an emerging field of queer appropriations and rewritings being undertaken by many writers in English across the globe. As a body of work these individual rewritings gain some considerable significance.

This rewriting, this reclamation and appropriation, can be considered to be the unfolding of another fairytale paradigm, a genre specific form of *écriture queer*. This kind of rewriting, this *écriture queer*, can re-imagine writing and can transcend discursive norms. Furthermore, because it can and will creep into other forms of discourse – academic, social, cultural – *écriture queer* can destabilise, fracture, and multiply positions of speech, of language, of thought, leading to a radical discursive openness.

Admittedly, these kinds of attempts to cut a new course in other queer directions, away from dominant discourse, are often constrained by an inevitable backlash in favour of heteronormative narrativity.⁸³ Yet – simply because it exists – this queer reading and writing (*écriture queer*) makes a lie of the notion of normal, of abnormal even, and makes a lie of all of the constructions around what is good and proper in terms of sex, gender and sexuality. An *écriture queer* can deconstruct the notion that certain positions are fixed, that certain behaviours and, even identities, are "right" and "natural" and that others are not. This is important simply because dominant heteronormative discourse continues to be widely disseminated. In re-

sponse, there must also be a continual reconstitution of the language of difference.

Conclusion

Sexuality and textuality both depend on difference.⁸⁴

The antagonist of many fairytales is a closed figure, an abject or queer figure, what I have defined as the Monstrous Queer. These figures have a limited number of traits, and only these traits. In privileged hetero-dominant readings of certain fairytales, the Monstrous Queer is easily read as a threat to heteropatriarchal order, and as a scapegoat which must be destroyed or exiled so that the order indicated by the hetero-narrative can be maintained. This violent excision of the Monstrous Queer from fairytale narratives generally occurs at narrative end.

Furthermore, the fairytale is a suitable genre for the work of appropriation and reclamation of discourses of the Monstrous Queer that a writer of difference – a writer who identifies with many of the traits of the Monstrous Queer, traits considered aberrant – is compelled to undertake.

Adoption of familiar styles, settings, scenes, and indeed figures – deploying a paradigmatic shift (or revaluation) by refusing to end these narratives, or even begin them, in heteronormative ways – facilitates this rewriting. This form of writing/discourse can be described as *écriture queer* and allows the figure of the Monstrous Queer to be a plural hybridity of terms, to be ambiguous and open in terms of gender and sexuality. *Écriture queer* splits open closed binary oppositions and revels in “the pleasures of open-ended textuality.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, *écriture queer* can be seen as a kind of writing perfect for use by authors attempting to rewrite and revalue abject representations of the queer as monster.

This appropriation of the fairytale sits within a wider movement in queer literature to rewrite the history – and more importantly the folklore, the myth – of the queer. However, this endeavour is not merely theoretical, but cuts to the core of the nature of subjectivity. An individual’s relationship with discourse is heavily implicated – by the processes of interpolation in terms of meaning-making – with the formation and performance of identity, and so a critical rethinking of our relationships to discourse, our reading and writing, is something that is quite crucial. In this sense, *écriture queer* can be seen as a triple threat: an aesthetic movement, a cultural and socio-political engagement and, perhaps most significantly, an ethics of the self,⁸⁶ a queer self-making process.

Finally, this intervention into discourse is part of an ongoing politics of representation that is crucial to any kind of queer social activism and, per-

haps of equal importance, is also part of the reflective practice of queer writers working within the fairytale genre that is crucial to refining the way this kind of writing is conceptualised and undertaken. This reflective practice is also an immensely pleasurable journey for queer readers and writers of fairytale fiction.

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NOTES

¹ Jennifer Orme, "Mouth to Mouth: Queer Desires in Emma Donoghue's 'Kissing the Witch'", *Marvels & Tales* 24 no. 1 (2010) 116-32.

² Pauline Palmer, "Lesbian Transformations of Gothic and Fairytale" in *Contemporary British Women Writers*, ed Emma Parker (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004) 141.

³ Elizabeth Wanning Harries, *Twice Upon A Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairytale* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) 16-17.

⁴ Ruth B Bottigheimer, *Fairytales: A New History* (New York: University of New York Press, 2009) 9.

⁵ Jack Zipes, *The Oxford Companion to Fairytales* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) xvii-xix.

⁶ See Ruth B Bottigheimer and Lalitha Handoo, *Folklore and Gender* (Mysore: Zooni Publications, 1999); Elizabeth Wanning Harries, *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairytale* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁷ Bottigheimer, *Fairytales* 6.

⁸ Ian Reid, *The Short Story* (1977; repr, London: Methuen, 1991) 40.

⁹ Reid, *Short Story* 40.

¹⁰ Reid, *Short Story* 39.

¹¹ See "Approaching Abjection" in Julia Kristeva, *Powers Of Horror: An Essay On Abjection* (New York: Routledge, 1982) 1-31.

¹² Kristeva, *Powers Of Horror* 4.

¹³ The term abject is from the Latin word *abjectus*, meaning thrown or cast away.

¹⁴ See Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁵ See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure And Narrative Cinema", *Screen* 16.3 (1975) 6-18.

¹⁶ Creed, *Monstrous Feminine* 121.

¹⁷ Creed, *Monstrous Feminine* 11.

- ¹⁸ Creed, *Monstrous Feminine* 11.
- ¹⁹ Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987) 17.
- ²⁰ Anzaldua, *Borderlands* 19.
- ²¹ Creed, *Monstrous Feminine* 118.
- ²² Creed, *Monstrous Feminine* 118.
- ²³ Creed, *Monstrous Feminine* 121.
- ²⁴ Ellis Hanson, "Undead" in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991) 325.
- ²⁵ Hanson, "Undead" 325.
- ²⁶ Palmer, "Lesbian Transformations" 140.
- ²⁷ Palmer, "Lesbian Transformations" 140.
- ²⁸ Sue Ellen Case, "Tracking The Vampire" in *Writing On The Body: Female Embodiment And Feminist Theory*, ed K Conboy and N Medina (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 383.
- ²⁹ Case, "Tracking The Vampire" 384.
- ³⁰ Kristeva, *Powers Of Horror* 4.
- ³¹ Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (London: Duke University Press, 1995) 8.
- ³² Halberstam, *Skin Shows* 8.
- ³³ All comments on fairytales published by Charles Perrault are based on the following edition: Sally Holmes and Neil Philip, *The Complete Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* (New York: Clarion Books, 1993).
- ³⁴ All comments on fairytales published by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm are based on the following edition: *Brothers Grimm: The Complete Fairy Tales*, trans Jack Zipes (London: Vintage, 2007).
- ³⁵ Paul Adams, Benjamin Tabart and Jeff Fisher, *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Pleasantville, NY: Readers Digest, [1807] 2003).
- ³⁶ Anna E Altmann and Gail De Vos, *Tales, Then and Now: More Folktales as Literary Fictions for Young Adults* (Englewood, Colo: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001).
- ³⁷ Bruno Betterlheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1976) 184.
- ³⁸ Ron Clements and John Musker, directors, *The Little Mermaid* (Los Angeles: Walt Disney Feature Animation, 1989).
- ³⁹ George MacDonald, *The Light Princess* (Stilwell, Kansas: Digireads Publishing, [1864] 2008).
- ⁴⁰ Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Svend Otto Sørensen (illustrator), *The Three Billy Goats Gruff: A Retelling of a Classic Tale* (Lexington, Mass: Heath, [1844] 1989).
- ⁴¹ J M Barrie, *Peter Pan* (New York: Viking Juvenile, [1911] 1991).

- ⁴² George Oliver, *The Beckoning Fair One* (Rockville, Md: Wildside Press, [1911] 2007).
- ⁴³ Honoré de Balzac, *La Grande Bretèche*, trans Ellen Marriage and Clara Bell (Adelaide: University of Adelaide, 2007) date of access: 1 September 2010, <<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/b/balzac/grand>>.
- ⁴⁴ See Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (London: Duke University Press, 1995).
- ⁴⁵ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 75.
- ⁴⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 75.
- ⁴⁷ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 75.
- ⁴⁸ Bottigheimer, *Fairytales* 1-3.
- ⁴⁹ Charles E May, "Metaphoric Motivation in Short Fiction: 'In The Beginning Was The Story'" in *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads*, ed Lohafer and Clarey (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990) 64.
- ⁵⁰ May, "Metaphoric Motivation" 64.
- ⁵¹ Zipes, *Oxford Companion* xvii-xix.
- ⁵² Toril Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1985) 100.
- ⁵³ Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", trans Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976) 875-93.
- ⁵⁴ Cixous, "Medusa" 883.
- ⁵⁵ Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 106.
- ⁵⁶ Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 107.
- ⁵⁷ Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 106.
- ⁵⁸ Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 104.
- ⁵⁹ Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 106.
- ⁶⁰ Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 103.
- ⁶¹ Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 103.
- ⁶² Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 106.
- ⁶³ I first coined this phrase in 2008, in a paper that has not yet been published. Recently, I have become aware of Elizabeth Stephens's coining of the term "écriture homosexuelle," also drawing on Cixous's theory. Stephens describes this term in her book *Queer Writing: Homoeroticism in Jean Genet's Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Although the two terms have a similar genealogy, my term "écriture queer" brings together the theories of Kristeva and Cixous and focuses on the abject aspect of the term "queer," which has connotations of the strange, monstrous or uncanny.
- ⁶⁴ See Orme, "Mouth to Mouth"; Palmer, "Lesbian Transformations"; and Harries, *Twice Upon a Time*.
- ⁶⁵ Karlyn Crowley and John Pennington, "Feminist Frauds on the Fairies? Didacticism and Liberation in Recent Retellings of "Cinderella"." *Marvels & Tales*,

24, no. 2 (2010) 299.

⁶⁶ Crowley and Pennington, "Feminist Frauds on the Fairies?" 299.

⁶⁷ Jack Zipes, ed. *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. (New York: Methuen, 1986) xi.

⁶⁸ Amy Shuman, "Gender and Genre", *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*, ed Susan Tower Hollis, Linda Pershing and M Jane Young (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993) 80.

⁶⁹ Shuman, "Gender and Genre" 72.

⁷⁰ Cristina Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) 24.

⁷¹ Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 107.

⁷² Molly Hite, *The Other Side of the Story* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989) 4.

⁷³ Hite, *The Other Side of the Story* 2.

⁷⁴ Olu Jenzen, "The Queer Uncanny", *eSharp* 9 (2007) 9.

⁷⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990) 33.

⁷⁶ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (London: Routledge, 2004) 27.

⁷⁷ Palmer, "Lesbian Transformations" 143.

⁷⁸ For examples of feminist rewritings of fairytales and fables see Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, and the more recent publications *Where Three Roads Meet* by Sally Vickers and *Girl Meets Boy* by Ali Smith.

⁷⁹ *Kissing the Witch* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

⁸⁰ *A Twist of Grim: Erotic Fairy Tales for Gay Men* (Maple Shade, NJ: Lethe Press, 2010).

⁸¹ See Dave Migman, "Alice in the Palace", *Polluto* 4 (2008) 135-144.

⁸² Deb Hoag, "Queer and Loathing on the Yellow Brick Road", *Polluto* 4 (2008) 33.

⁸³ Note the emergence of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*, which could be read as a backlash against the queer vampire fiction of the 1980s and 1990s.

⁸⁴ Elizabeth Abel, "Introduction" in *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed Elizabeth Abel (Brighton UK: Harvester Press, 1982) 1.

⁸⁵ Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 106.

⁸⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, trans Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1986).