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Turner, Kay and Pauline Greenhill, eds. *Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2012. Notes, Bibliography, Index, 358 pp. \$29.95 (paper). ISBN 978-0-8143-3481-2.

Transgressive Tales collects thirteen diverse studies applying queer theory to the Grimm brothers' collections and associated topics. Originating in Kay Turner's 1998 University of Winnipeg course in feminist and queer theory in folklore, this compilation has had a long gestation, as reflected in the formidable review of contemporary scholarship that the contributors present. There is good work throughout, though the breadth of analysis may be disconcerting to readers with tight preconceptions of what queer studies should encompass.

Turner and Greenhill's introduction gives a good accounting of how "queer" is defined for this volume's purposes. At its broadest, queer theory discusses and problematizes "any non-normative expression of gender, including those connected with straightness" as well as questions about "marginalization, oddity, and not fitting into society generally."⁽¹¹⁾ This scope allows for a wide spectrum of perspectives, including analyses that would have been considered feminist in other contexts (all the protagonists here are female except those in the last chapter), as well as creative interpretations of the body and desire in the Grimms' tales and their successive reinterpretations.

Transgressive Tales' first section, "Faux Femininities," addresses subversion in heteronormative stories through the expansion and transformation of female-gendered protagonists' roles, bodies, and relationships. Christina Bacchilega's chapter contrasts two similarly-titled tales, "Clever Gretel" and "Clever Else," where the two characters, one conventionally shrewd and the other ironically dense, play trickster in reconstituting the power dynamics of their marriages. Jeana Jorgensen explores protagonists who avoid marriage altogether (at least temporarily) in three versions of "The Maiden Who Seeks Her Brothers." In each of these tales, a young woman sees her brothers transformed into birds, and her own marriage is either disrupted or postponed until

she reverses the enchantment. Jorgensen frames the tales as concluding with a thoroughly queered familial relationship, as opposed to a marriage that conventionally closes the fairy-tale cycle.

The first section's other two chapters focus on bodily transformation and desire. Kevin Goldstein's critique of "The Goose Girl at the Spring" examines how the old woman in the tale exemplifies the midwife-related roles of "witch" or "wise woman." The old woman cares for a young princess, magically disguising her charge as an ugly girl until she allows a royal suitor to see the princess' beauty as she bathes. Goldstein does not belabor the salacious transformation, however. Rather, he focuses on potentially queer dynamics of the relationship between the two women, albeit in terms of homosocial rather than (necessarily) homoerotic desire.

Margaret Yocom closes out the first section with a chapter on the multiple queer aspects of "Allerleirauh (All Kinds of Fur)." The story begins with a princess escaping her father's incestuous desires by disguising herself with furry camouflage. Captured by the King's men, the protagonist eventually becomes part of the royal household. Yocom makes the case that, while dressed in furs, the character loses gender, constantly being asked "What are you?" Indeed, in the German original, neuter pronouns replace feminine references while the character is in furs. When the princess emerges from the suit, eventually marrying the king, she resumes her female gender. Amid these queer gender switches, Yocom wonders openly if the princess doesn't marry her father after all; the tale does not expressly state if there are one or two kings involved, adding to the queer potential.

The second section, "Revising Rewritings," focuses on adaptations of the tales. Kimberly Lau's chapter explores the intertextual relationship between the Grimms' "Little Brier Rose" (along with other "Sleeping Beauty" tales in traditional folklore) and Angela Carter's vampire story "Lady in the House of Love," showing how Carter transfers agency from the Grimms' fairy-tale prince to a vampire Countess. Jennifer Orme takes on an arguably trickier text, Jeanette Winterson's novel *Sexing the Cherry*, which

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borrowed from the Grimms' "Twelve Dancing Princesses." Orme traces how Winterson's intertext reimagines princesses working for shared interests into prostitutes with widely divergent desires and motivations. While Lau and Orme both recognize how twentieth-century fiction has opened classic tales to "queer voices and queer choices" (159), Andrew Friedenthal laments how Disney's adaptation of "Snow White and Rose Red" sapped that tale of its transgressive power. The film transforms the active Snow White of the Grimms, who frees a metamorphosed bear-prince from his curse by challenging a misanthropic dwarf, into a passive character with no control over her life. Later interpretations by children's author Dan Andreasen and graphic novelist Bill Willingham have reclaimed some of this spice, largely by reviving the discarded character of Rose Red and imbuing her with the agency sapped from her folkloric sister.

The four chapters in the third section, "Queering the Tales," shift to transformatively queer readings. The section opens with a tour-de-force chapter by Pauline Greenhill, Anita Best, and Emilie Anderson-Grégoire. They note the many Grimm tales where a man must discard an enchantment that makes him ugly, but must reach through several strains of world folklore (including several versions of "Peg Bearskin") for tales where an ugly woman must transform to become beautiful; that trope is absent in the Grimm corpus. Joy Brooke Fairfield also takes up queer transformation, showing convincingly that "Princess Mouseskin" grows horizontally through her tale of misunderstanding and reconciliation, adding the capabilities and limitations of a peasant man as she progresses rather than ascending socially as a "straight" paradigm would have her do. Kay Turner takes on perhaps the most radical transformation, casting the tale of "Frau Trude," where a girl is transformed into firewood by a witch, into a story of queer desire and fulfillment. Turner is particularly personal here, reflecting on how the girl's rejection of her parents' warnings about Frau Trude resemble a familiar coming-out story. The odd chapter out here is Catherine Tosenberger's treatment of "Fitcher's Bird." Tosenberger shows the inversion of gender power and the powerful woman-centered imagery throughout, but this chapter

would go better with the themes of the first section; it could easily be switched with Yocum's chapter, which better fits the transformative model.

The final section offers two "odd one out" chapters. Margaret Mills shares an excellent analysis of an Afghan tale about a presumptive "mullah" (whose religious studies amount to one book) and the clever wife who cleverly thwarts his amorous ambitions—in a very embarrassing and scatological way. The book ends with Elliot Gordon Mercer's attempt to write a queer update to the Grimms' "The Grave Mound," a tale already offering queer possibilities in its homosocial exposition and ending. Mercer changes the main characters from tradesmen and soldiers to drag queens playing trickster against a now-defunct mortgage lender. Audacious as Mercer is, he may have missed a real opportunity here. The Grimms portray a wealthy farmer who dies regretting his un-Christian selfishness. It would have been satisfying to see this character queered as a closet case who dies with regret, but perhaps that would cast a heteronormative shadow that Gordon eschews here.

As noted above, this collection has many strengths. The contributors' rigorous use of contemporary queer folkloristics will be especially valuable to scholars in all areas, though it may have been helpful to include explanations of technical nomenclature for non-specialists; for example, the abbreviated citations throughout of the Aarne-Thompson-Uther tale types might make this book a cold entrée to the field for non-folklorists. Likewise, the contributors' expansive definitions of queerness do pose a challenge to purists: by including so many variations under the queer purview, the contributors risk diluting the term's meaning. That said, the analyses offered show a great deal of insight and creativity, and this is an exacting, irreverent, imaginative compendium that will prove valuable to those interested in the Grimms, gender theory, or any permutation thereof.

B. Stu Burns
 Editor, *Fine Lines* Literary Journal
 Omaha, Nebraska, USA

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