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 **Mouth to Mouth: Queer Desires in Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch***

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**Abstract**

This reading of Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch* attempts to magnify the "queer moments," textual and formal, that any reader may (or may not) notice and (re)focus them so that their disruptions come to the fore, thus realigning the relationship between reader and text. Ideally, this reading process will contribute to an understanding of how *Kissing the Witch*, in conjunction with its reader, can be said to queer fairy tales. This article assumes that once such a reading is produced, it becomes easier to produce, if not more difficult to avoid, similar readings of *Kissing the Witch*'s intertexts and, by extension, the fairy-tale genre itself.

JENNIFER ORME

## Mouth to Mouth: Queer Desires in Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch*

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Exemplifying the intertextuality of what Stephen Benson has called “post-Carter Generation” fairy tales, Emma Donoghue’s *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (1997) can be seen to “re-engage contemporaneously with an already multilayered polyphony, adding a further critical layer to the plurality” of the genre (Makinen 151). *Kissing the Witch* consists of twelve revisions of “classic” literary fairy tales from Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and Hans Christian Andersen, and one final “new” story.<sup>1</sup> Each tale recounts the trials of an innocent persecuted heroine figure based upon well-known characters such as Cinderella, Snow White, or the Little Mermaid. The narrator in each case is the character as an older, wiser self. Most of these heroines come to a kind of awakening to their own desires and experience a personal transformation with the help of a (usually older) female character—often the fairy godmother or wicked fairy/stepmother/witch transformed from their pre-texts into caring mentor figures. When she reaches the end of her telling, each narrator turns to this character and asks to hear a tale. On the page following the conclusion of each tale, set off in a framing border, italicized, and centered on the page, are variations of the following lines that follow the narration of the first tale, “The Tale of the Shoe”:

In the morning I asked  
Who were you

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