

## PREFACE

This book emerges during a period in which teen girls' screen media culture is saturated with fairy tale narratives, themes and images. These are powerful and persistent popular myths through which a range of fears, desires and hopes for the feminine rite of passage from adolescence into adulthood are staged and imagined. I am interested in this contemporary trend, particularly because it produces a range of challenging, complex and often contradictory images of girlhood. Furthermore, my fascination with the fairy tale lies in its dual capacity to be mobilised for profoundly conservative purposes, as well as for its rebellious zones of wonder and pure potential. For example, many contemporary teen revisions of the tales work to increase the agency of the heroine in interesting and complex ways, while often simultaneously cleaving to such familiar tropes as the heterosexual happily ever after as the pinnacle of success in the girl's coming of age story. The research conducted in this book is motivated by questions about how youthful femininity is constructed in both traditional, canonical versions of fairy tales, as well as contemporary teen revisions of them, and what this tells us about changing notions of girlhood in the twenty-first century. The fairy tale is about setting out limits, to be sure, but it is also about the alternatives that arise when one crosses those limits, and I am particularly interested in these possibilities. The teen screen texts under analysis in the book provide representations of girls who cross over into other worlds, disobey rules and commit unruly acts, allowing for a discussion of the fairy tale's liminal energy and powers of transgression. I endeavour to locate my attention in this space of

subversion and flux to consider how received ideas about girls can be disrupted, and how alternative rituals of girlhood can be produced in their stead on the teen screen.

This book is based on my Ph.D. dissertation and I am very thankful to Dr. Wendy Haslem and Professor Angela Ndalians, who supervised that earlier project. I am grateful, too, for the unflagging support provided by my wonderful family, Mary, Michael and Vicki, and my grandparents Athena, James, Vassiliki and George during the making of this project. Heartfelt thanks also go to my partner, Stefan Nekvapil, who lovingly encouraged me and made incredible pancakes for me as I wrote this book. I am also incredibly lucky to be surrounded by wonderful colleagues and friends who have helped me during the making of the Ph.D. and the book, especially Jodi McAlister, Mark Nicholls, Kim Clayton Greene, Elena Benthaus, Leigh McLennon, Tara Lomax, Prudence Flint and Meredith Faragher. Special thanks also go to the Weinberger family, for their friendship and support, especially during the writing of my Ph.D.

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Fairy Tales on the Teen Screen

Rituals of Girlhood

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2017, X, 250 p. 20 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-64972-6