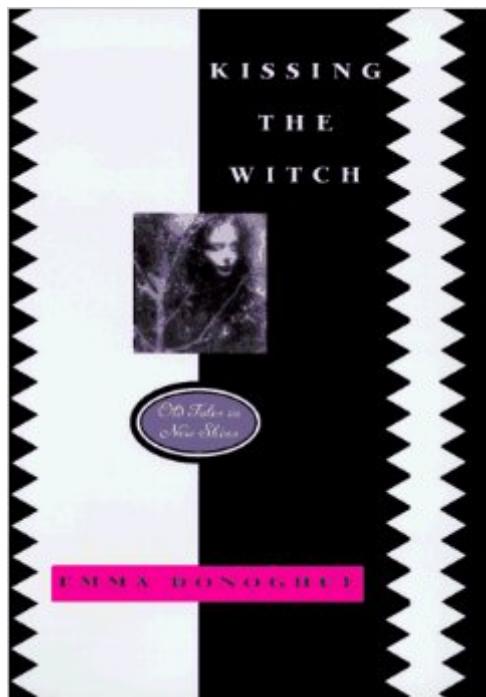


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# Kissing The Witch: Old Tales In New Skins



## **Synopsis**

Cinderella forsakes the handsome prince and runs off with the fairy godmother; Beauty discovers the Beast behind the mask is not so very different from the face she sees in the mirror; Snow White is awakened from slumber by the bittersweet fruit of an unnamed desire. Acclaimed writer Emma Donoghue spins new tales out of old in a magical web of thirteen interconnected stories about power and transformation and choosing one's own path in the world. In these fairy tales, women young and old tell their own stories of love and hate, honor and revenge, passion and deception. Using the intricate patterns and oral rhythms of traditional fairy tales, Emma Donoghue wraps age-old characters in a dazzling new skin.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

One page read aloud and one image shared (the book's cover on an overhead transparency) aroused a thirst for more as I listened to a review of this new collection of fairytales. As I sat in the audience of over eighty other English teachers, gathering notes about new adolescent literature, my ears perked up as the eloquent speaker, a very conventional looking lady, gave accolades to this potentially controversial anthology. Once I bought a copy and read it for myself I admired the author's clever skill at delicately weaving each tale to the next, taking every opportunity to dispell the subtle patriarchal oppressive seeds of thought planted by their traditional ancestors. As a literary instructor, I put much faith in the science and art of bibliotherapy (using books to address emotional and psychological issues). This book is excellant balm for a young lady

confronting her emerging sexuality, should it diverge from mass cultural expectations. Furthermore it is a vivid example of how a story can be beautifully retold, keeping the frame of the original but explaining something much deeper than "happily ever-after." I would not limit this book by saying that its only audience is comprised of lesbians, bisexuals, or adolescents. It is a book from which we can all gain lessons of tolerance, peace, and a deeper understanding of human emotion.

I impulsively picked up this book because of the name & cover design. I had no idea that it was directed at an adolescent audience until I was about to order one as a gift for one of my heroes. I read it through with delight and anticipation for each story to come. I think this is an excellent book for women of any age. It provides our younger siblings with an alternative to all things boys. Its life affirming without sentimental illusions, and portrays the other side of the story, our side, with humor & accuracy seldom seen. It takes the fairy tale back from the Grimm brothers, and their superstitious fears about women with knowledge, self determination and freedom. I loved it and have a list a mile long of friends I'll be sharing it with.

I picked up the book on a whim. My friends gave me curious looks as I explained it was a retelling of fairy tales. As I started to read it (I consumed it in one sitting), I realized it was much more. The problem with fairy tales is that they provide this bland, generalistic view of what romance is, what a woman is, what a man is. And the view is incorrect. These tales are wonderful in their change of the old stories. These are not simple retellings. Quite often it took me a lot of the story to realize which fairy tale it was. It is great for any age, either sex, and people who prefer pretty much any genre of story. I loved this book as a writer and a reader.

This was--no pun intended--the most magical book that I have read since *\*The Mists of Avalon\**. Beautiful language, dark eroticism and finely-woven structure makes *\*Kissing the Witch\** a treat even for people who wouldn't normally enjoy books with "alternative" themes. There's more and more wonderful lesbian fiction out there, but in the plethora of murder mysteries and everyday romances, sometimes the soul hungers for mythic characters. I love this book because it connects me with the awesome experience of passionate self-discovery. There is a moment when you begin to find who you are when the heavens seem to reverberate, but the sound is so soft that you only hear it with your heart. I can only sit back in wonder as Ms. Donoghue articulates it so well. My hat is more than off to her...I'm willing to learn a full court bow!

This book is for everyone, a gorgeous collection of insightful stories that look deeply into the human spirit and teach readers to believe in themselves, seek freedom, and live life to the fullest. I'm mainly writing this review for someone who asked whether or not this book is just for gays. The answer is NO. When I first read about it, I too had the impression that it was only for gays and I wouldn't like it. After reading several great reviews of it, however, my curiosity got the best of me and I ordered it, half expecting to dislike it when it arrived. How wrong I was! This book is not anti-male or lesbian; in fact, only three of the stories even hint at homosexuality. (By the way, for someone who asked, the story titled "The Tale of the Bird" is based on Thumbelina). The prose of this book is beautiful and brutally honest at the same time and gives the reader vivid images of the characters and places. I highly recommend it to anyone with a taste for insightful stories and truly alive heroines!

Virtually all the other reviewers have commented on the books wonderful and novel takes on these stories. And they are actually, quite interesting. And there are some amusing references to recent popular retellings of the tales -- the witch in the version of the Little Mermaid is rumored to be "an octopus below the waist." Sound familiar? But I have to admit to some problems. One of them might be my own unfamiliarity with some of the stories -- I can't figure out, exactly, what fairy tale "The Tale of the Bird" is supposed to be, for example. Also, while the linkage of the stories is interesting, some of them defy easy understanding; I find myself wondering how, exactly, Rapunzel became the horse in the story of the Goose Girl, to say nothing of how the Little Mermaid turns into a version of the bad fairy in Sleeping Beauty. Which in and of itself begs the question, in a collection of stories that includes a talking horse's skull, why does the author feel the need to demystify the Little Mermaid into a fisherman's daughter? And ultimately, I feel like I've read half a book. The nested structure only takes us to the point where one of the characters asks another for her story, without explaining what then happened to the first character to bring her into the story where she was asked, and so on, and so forth. (I think I'm probably not being as clear as I could be, but so it goes.) Still, this is an excellent and subversive retelling of stories that probably could stand a bit of subverting; I wish that I could like it better than I do.

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