JIHOČESKÁ UNIVERZITA V ČESKÝCH BUDĚJOVICÍCH
FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA
ÚSTAV ANGLISTIKY

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Fairytales reinvented: How the heroines shape their own destiny in Robin McKinley's fairytale retellings *Beauty*, *Rose Daughter* and *Deerskin*

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Tomáš Jajtner, Ph.D.

Autorka práce: Helena Konopiská
Studijní obor: Anglický jazyk a literatura - Bohemistika
Ročník: 3.

2013

Prohlašuji, že svoji bakalářskou práci jsem vypracovala samostatně pouze s použitím pramenů a literatury uvedených v seznamu citované literatury.

Prohlašuji, že v souladu s § 47b zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. v platném znění souhlasím se zveřejněním své bakalářské práce, a to v nezkrácené podobě elektronickou cestou ve veřejně přístupné části databáze STAG provozované Jihočeskou univerzitou v Českých Budějovicích na jejích internetových stránkách, a to se zachováním mého autorského práva k odevzdanému textu této kvalifikační práce. Souhlasím dále s tím, aby toutéž elektronickou cestou byly v souladu s uvedeným ustanovením zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. zveřejněny posudky školitele a oponentů práce i záznam o průběhu a výsledku obhajoby kvalifikační práce. Rovněž souhlasím s porovnáním textu mé kvalifikační práce s databází kvalifikačních prací Theses.cz provozovanou Národním registrem vysokoškolských kvalifikačních prací a systémem na odhalování plagiátů.

České Budějovice 15. máje 2013

Helena Konopiská

PODĚKOVÁNÍ

Ráda bych poděkovala vedoucímu své práce, Mgr. Tomáši Jajtnerovi, Ph.D., za ochotu a cenné připomínky.

Dále děkuji své rodině a přátelům za psychickou podporu.

V neposlední řadě děkuji Robin McKinley za napsání úžasných románů. Je pro mě velkou inspirací.

ANOTACE

Tato práce se zabývá hrdinkami převyprávěných pohádek Robin McKinley. Úvod představuje převyprávěné pohádky jako žánr a Robin McKinley jako autorku. Zbytek práce je rozdělen na dvě hlavní části. Ta první pojednává o převyprávěných verzích "Krásky a Zvířete" od Robin McKinley: *Beauty* a *Rose Daughter*. Ta druhá je soustředěna na román *Deerskin*, což je převyprávěná verze pohádky "Oslí kůže". Hrdinky románů od McKinley jsou porovnány se svými protějšky z klasických verzí pohádek. Práce se dále zabývá jejich charaktery a jejich kontolou nad vlastními příběhy. Závěr nabízí shrnutí získaných poznatků.

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on heroines of Robin McKinley's fairy tale revisions. The introduction concerns fairy tale retellings as a genre and Robin McKinley as an author. The rest of the thesis is divided into two main parts. In the first, McKinley's retellings of "Beauty and the Beast", *Beauty* and *Rose Daughter*, are introduced. Second part of the thesis revolves around a fairy tale "Donkeyskin" that McKinley retold in her novel *Deerskin*. The heroines of McKinley's novels are compared with their respective counterparts from the classical versions of the fairy tale. The issue of their character traits and their agency is explored. The conclusion summarizes the findings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction

1.1 Me, scholars and fairy tales.....1

1.2 The purpose of my thesis.....2

1.3 Robin McKinley.....2

2. McKinley's recreations of "Beauty and the Beast"

2.1 "A Tale As Old As Time" (Introduction to "Beauty and the Beast" fairy tale).....4

2.2 *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast*.....8

2.3 *Rose Daughter*.....22

3. McKinley's recreation of "Donkeyskin"

3.1 "Resourceful Cinderella" (Introduction to "Donkeyskin" fairy tale type).....31

3.2 *Deerskin*.....32

4. Conclusion.....41

Works cited.....43

1. Introduction

1.1 Me, scholars and fairy tales

I have always been an avid reader of fantastical stories. And as many before me, I am fascinated by the phenomenon called "fairy tale". Scholars, who devote their lives to studying fairy tales, remind us that fairy tales are not carved in stone, preserved in an unvarying shape; they have been transforming from the dawn of ages, they are being retold and adapted by people of every generation. Jack Zipes, an American professor and expert on fairy tales, explains in his study:

> . . . there is no such thing as a pure literary fairy tale or a separate literary tradition. The fairy tale developed out of an oral cognitive mode of communication and narration; it was continued and expanded through print, which generated another mode of transmitting relevant information. When fairy tales came to be printed as public representations, they were read privately and publicly, remembered and retold orally, and republished, always with changes. (Zipes 97)

The fact that fairy tales are around as they have been for thousands of years ago speaks for itself: people need stories and storytelling in their lives.

With fantasy genre getting extraordinary popular at the turn of the 20th and 21st century, fairy tale stories have also started to get more recognition in literature, as well as in the film industry. Fairy tale retellings quickly became one of the most productive and popular sub-genres of fantasy literature. In the last fifteen years, more than eighty fairy tale revisions were published. Surprisingly enough, they can be as captivating for adults as they are for children.

Contemporary authors present the old stories with new twists, deeper characteristics and attractive settings. For instance, Philip Pullman rewrote the well-known story of "Cinderella" from a mouse's point of view. Neil Gaiman is the author of a short story *Snow, Glass, Apples* that features Snow White as a vampire. Alex Flinn retold the traditional tale of "Sleeping Beauty" by moving the setting to the present day. These are just several examples of how fairy tales are being revived today. They are changing – as they were ages ago. My thesis shows one aspect of this change. It is

concentrated on how are traditional fairy tale heroines being recreated in novels of a contemporary author.

1.2 The purpose of my thesis

In my thesis, I want to show how different and fascinating can be heroines of classical fairy tales when recreated in modern retellings. For that I have chosen three novels by Robin McKinley: *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* (1978), *Rose Daughter* (1997) and *Deerskin* (1993). I want to compare the retold stories with the classical versions of the fairy tales they are based on, with regard to the female protagonists and their development from them being passive and virtuous in the classical fairy tales to active and flawed in McKinley's recreations. I shall also address the issue of their agency in McKinley's novels and how they shape their own stories.

1.3 Robin McKinley

Robin McKinley (born 1952) is an American writer who is one of the most critically acclaimed and prolific authors of fantasy literature and fairy tale retellings. She is also a winner of several literary awards, including Newbery Medal for her novel *The Hero and the Crown* in 1985. In the course of the last thirty-five years, she published sixteen books, from which six can be considered fairy tale revisions:

- *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* (1978)
- *The Door in the Hedge* (1981) – a collection of four short stories: two retellings of classical fairy tales and two original ones
- *The Outlaws of Sherwood* (1988) – a retelling of a Robin Hood legend
- *Deerskin* (1993) – a retelling of Donkeyskin
- *Rose Daughter* (1997) – McKinley's second revision of Beauty and the Beast
- *Spindle's End* (2000) – a retelling of Sleeping Beauty

One of the reasons why McKinley's novels are recognized and praised is because they present heroines who are strong, self-sufficient and passionate, who **don't** wait in the corner while their male counterparts have their share of adventures, who take their fate into their own hands and prove they are more than capable of slaying dragons or fighting evil sorcerers.

As Lynn Moss Sanders aptly expressed in one of her essays:

> [McKinley] avoids the fantasy stereotype of the damsel in distress, she creates a new role for women in fantasy fiction. ... Her characters are

> winners in the eternal fantasy battle between good and evil, partially through magical help, but largely through their own physical skills as riders and swordfighters, their extraordinary courage and insight, their willingness to defy convention to do what is right, all traditionally the hallmarks of the male fantasy hero. (Sanders 4)

Biographer Marilyn H. Karrenbock also commented on McKinley's protagonists:

> McKinley's females do not simper; they do not betray their own nature to win a man's approval. But neither do they take love lightly or put their own desires before anything else. In McKinley's books, the romance--like the adventure—is based upon ideals of faithfulness, duty, and honor. (Karrenbrock 264)

2. McKinley's recreations of "Beauty and the Beast"

2.1 "A Tale As Old As Time" (Introduction to "Beauty and the Beast" fairy tale)

"Beauty and the Beast" is one of the most popular fairy tales in the world. If we want to formally categorize it, the Aarne-Thompson system (which classifies traditional fairy tales on the basis of their elementary plot patterns) marks "Beauty and the Beast" as a stand-alone category 425C. Unlike the type 425A ("Search for the Lost Husband") or 425B ("Cupid and Psyche") which both confront the heroine with impossible tasks, the main emphasis of "Beauty and the Beast" is on the power of love to transform.

The first recorded version of "Beauty and the Beast" was written by Madame Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Gallon de Villeneuve in 1740. On more than one hundred pages of text (in Planché's translation) Madame de Villeneuve narrates the story of an unfortunate merchant who is forced to give his daughter to the Beast from whose garden he stole a rose. She does so in exquisite detail and relates several minor stories that help to complete the whole picture. The element that is often omitted from the later versions concerns magical dreams. In Mme. de Villeneuve's tale, the dreams are supposed to bring Beauty to her realization of the Beast's enchantment and his true identity. Also, where the well-known part of the story ends (i.e. the Beast is transformed back into a Prince), Villeneuve adds another chapter titled "The Story of the Beast", which describes his earlier life and events that led to his enchantment. That is followed by the recollection of the lives of Beauty's true parents, the king and a fairy, as she was only adopted by the merchant and his family.

In 1756 Madame Jean-Marie Leprince de Beaumont rewritten Villeneuve's "Beauty and the Beast" and made significant alternations to the story. Among other things, she reduced the number of merchant's children by half, she omitted the circumstances of his losing the fortune and ignored the particularities of the Beast's curse and Beauty's true parentage. However, her version is peculiar not just in its changes to the story but also in the way she treats Beauty as a character. Interestingly, Mme. de Villeneuve does not single out Beauty as a heroine of the story until she describes the circumstances that led to the family's departure for country:

> The youngest girl, however, displayed greater perseverance and firmness in their common misfortune. She bore her lot cheerfully, and with a

> strength of mind much beyond her years: not but what, at first, she was truly melancholy. (Villeneuve 3)

As opposed to that, Mme. de Beaumont introduces Beauty as soon as in the second sentence of the tale:

> [Merchant's] daughters were extremely handsome, especially the youngest; when she was little, every body admired her, and called her "The little Beauty"; so that, as she grew up, she still went by the name of Beauty, which made her sisters very jealous. The youngest, as she was handsome, was also better than her sisters. (Beaumont 1)

Notice that while both authors praise Beauty's virtues, Beaumont deliberately contrasts her with her sisters, drawing a clear line between "the good" and "the bad" characters. This also contributes to the ultimate moral message of the story – in the end virtue is rewarded and jealousy punished. She also describes in greater detail how Beauty occupied herself after her family moved to country: besides doing the house chores that her sisters neglected, she surrounded herself with music and books. It should be noted here that while Villeneuve briefly mentions Beauty's delight as she discovers the library in the Beast's castle, Beaumont establishes Beauty's fondness of books as one of the essential traits of the character:

> [The sisters] laughed at [Beauty], because she spent the greatest part of her time in reading good books. (Beaumont 1)
>
> After [Beauty] had done her work, she read, played on the harpsichord, or else sung whilst she spun. (Beaumont 2)
>
> . . . what chiefly took up [Beauty's] attention, was a large library, a harpsichord, and several music books. (Beaumont 6)

As Jack Zipes reminds us in his work, Mme. de Beaumont worked as a governess for many years and believed in women education and that "through reading, dialogue, and lessons . . . girls could socialize themselves to advance their status in society" (Zipes 77). Beaumont's characterization of Beauty as an avid reader was expanded upon in later revisions and adaptations – including Robin McKinley's - but most famously in the Disney's animated film (1991) which presented Beauty as a typical "bookworm".

There is one more famous literary adaptation of Madame de Villeneuve's "Beauty and the Beast" that should not be left out. It was written by Scottish author and collector of fairy tale stories, Andrew Lang, and published in his *Blue Fairy Book* (1889). Lang considerably shortened Villeneuve's story but he preserved the motif of

dream sequences and otherwise made only minor changes to the story. As Mme. de Beaumont before him, he left out the background stories of the Beast's and Beauty's pasts. Through his collections of fairy tales, Andrew Lang significantly contributed to spreading general awareness of fairy tale stories from all around the world among the British readers.

As the genre of fairy tale retellings flourished, especially in the second half of twentieth century, "Beauty and the Beast" became one of the most popular sources for revisions and adaptations. For instance, Angela Carter, a reputable British author, included not one, but two retellings of "Beauty and the Beast" into her collection of short stories *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). Her takes on the fairy tale, titled *The Tiger's Bride* and *The Courtship of Mr. Lyon* respectively, spark with extraordinary invention and originality that no doubt encouraged and inspired many later authors of fairy tale recreations.

Though it is impossible to name all retellings of Beauty and the Beast published in the last fifty years, here are enlisted some notable examples in chronological order: *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* (1978) by Robin McKinley, *Beauty* (1983), a short story with science fictions themes, by Tanith Lee, *Fire Rose* (1995), a novel set in the beginning of 20th century, by Mercedes Lackey, *Rose Daughter* (1997) again by McKinley, *Beast* (1999) by Donna Jo Napoli, who sets the story to Middle East and France, *Beastly* (2007) by Alex Flinn, who gives the story a modern setting, *Belle: A Retelling of "Beauty and the Beast"* (2008) by Cameron Dokey, or a fantasy novel *Heart's Blood* (2009) by Juliet Marillier.

While a few of the recent authors, Donna Jo Napoli and Alex Flinn among others, retell the story from the Beast's point of view, which adds a whole new dimension to the fairy tale, most of the writers stay true to the tradition set by Beaumont and closely follow Beauty's journey from the beginning. As Betsy Hearne remarks in her work:

> Since the Beast is obviously an alien to society already, it is Beauty on whom [the authors] concentrate, a person who seems to have been tailored for social fitness but in fact feels alienated or isolated. (Hearne 105)

Beauty from the classical fairy tale is a character with a great potential, but overall she is rather passive in her story.

On her behalf, Zipes writes:

> The name Belle or Beauty assumes meaning through the behavioral traits that the young woman displays as a good housekeeper and domesticated woman: industrious, diligent, loyal, submissive, gentle, self-sacrificial. Not all these traits are necessarily bad, but in the context of the plot, Beauty's behavior leads to the denial of her own desires. In fact, we never really know her desires, but we certainly know what her father and the Beast want. (Zipes 139)

Therefore, many modern authors aim to recreate Beauty as a strong active heroine with her own agency. So does Robin McKinley who even presents the first of her two retellings of "Beauty and the Beast" in the first-person narrative, which naturally helps the reader to identify himself with the heroine. Undoubtedly, this is also one of the reasons why *Beauty* remains among the most popular young adult novels written in the last forty years and why it was chosen a Phoenix Award honor book of 1998. McKinley's second retelling of Beauty and the Beast, titled *Rose Daughter*, is written in third person – readers do not have a direct access to her mental processes, but as I shall try to prove, it does not make her any less of an interesting character.

2.2 Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast

The book opens with Beauty's recollection of how she "acquired [her] odd nickname" (9). Unlike the classical fairy tale where she was *given* the name Beauty on the basis of her appearance, in McKinley's novel she *chose* the name for herself. It happened when she was five-years old and her father was unable to provide her with a satisfactory answer when she asked him what her given name, "Honour", meant. Beauty recalls the memory with a hint of regret: too late she realized that her "ill-considered opinion became a reality" (9) and it seems to be a sort of haunting mockery when she does not turn out to be as pretty as her nickname suggests. That is a considerable modification to all previous versions: Robin McKinley introduces a story in which a proverbial fairy tale Beauty is not, in fact, a beautiful young lady, but an awkward teenager with mousy-colored hair, muddy brown eyes and oversized hands and feet. In spite of this, Beauty does not display self-pity and often remarks on her unsatisfactory appearance with humour and irony. Lynn Moss Sanders points out in her essay that humour is "[her] weapon in helping her to face her destiny" (Sanders 2).

Beauty is nevertheless somewhat troubled with her outer self: she often compares herself to her profoundly gorgeous older sisters and notes with a hint of irony that "[she] was going to let the family down by being plain" (11). Through the majority of the novel, Beauty suffers of being unable to embrace her true value; Ellen R. Sackelman even comes to a conclusion:

> In a text lacking an obvious villain, Beauty's poor self-image makes her her own worst enemy. (Sackelman 2)

As I mentioned earlier, Beauty is the narrator of the novel and she quickly proves to be a witty storyteller and a keen observer as she describes the first sixteen years of her life. Her background is pretty much the same as in the classical tale: she is the youngest daughter of a wealthy merchant Roderick Huston and has two older sisters, Grace and Hope. However, the relationships in the family are very different. Beauty's older sisters treat her with kindness and understanding and they are often trying to convince her that she is going to turn pretty in a matter of years, she just has to be patient. Beauty does not believe them and devotes her time to her greatest pleasures: reading and translating old Greek authors.

I stated a few pages back that it was Madame de Beaumont who first emphasized Beauty's love for books: Beauty of her fairy tale reads when she's done with her house chores and books become one of the pleasures she enjoys in the Beast's castle.

McKinley goes further than that. Beauty of her novel uses books as the means of an escape to her own private world where she can actually outshine her beautiful sisters. As Beauty confesses herself: "The only comfort I had in being my sisters' sister was that I was 'the clever one'" (11). She knowingly accepts the role of the bookish member of her family and also has a plan to get to University and become a scholar. That is another contrast with the classical fairy tale where Beauty's only vision of her future was to stay with her father as long as he should need her and Mme. de Villeneuve even marks in her version that "[Beauty] was not the slave of ambition" (Villeneuve 229).

As in the Villeneuve's version, Beauty's family is hit with misfortune when her father loses all his ships on the sea. Grace, the eldest sister, also loses her fiancé Robbie, who was the captain of one of the ships. While in the fairy tale the family receives nothing but scorn from the people of the city, in the novel people sympathize with them. Hope's sweetheart Gervain takes them all to the country, where he has an appointed work as a blacksmith. Moving to the village of Blue Hill far away from the city brings family closer together: the older sisters divide the house work among themselves, their father starts to work as a carpenter (which he was before he settled himself in trade) and Beauty is left with "the odds and ends" (47) of work around the house and in her brother-in-law Gervain's smithy.

Let me pause here for a while and draw your attention Beauty's relationships with the male characters we meet before the Beast is introduced. In the classical fairy tale, the relationship between Beauty and her father is based on her loyalty and obedience to him. She does what he tells her to or what she thinks is best for him. When they have to determine whether it will be Beauty's father, who shall return to the Beast's castle and die, or Beauty herself, it is the father's weakness rather than Beauty's determination what decides her going to the Beast in the end. Her obedience counted as a virtue given the context of 18th century in which both, Mme. de Villeneuve and Mme. de Beaumont, composed their fairy tales.

This does not apply for Beauty of the novel who has a mutual caring relationship with her father who supports her in her dream to become a scholar and it is also several times suggested that Beauty plays the role of a mediator between her sisters and him. As Ellen R. Sackelman observes in her essay:

> . . . Beauty communicates with her father, and her affectionate exchanges with her brother-in-law foreshadow her own healthy, romantic relationship. (Sackelman 1)

Beauty's nature is also more *honourable* than obedient. She remarks at the beginning of her story that she was never especially fond of her given name, Honour, because "it sounded sallow and angular to [her], as if 'honourable' were the best what could be said of [her]" (11). But it is nevertheless one of her fundamental traits.

There is an interesting exchange between her and her brother-in-law, Gervain, that takes place some time after the family moves to country and helps to illustrate Beauty's sense of honour. Ger tells her a story about the nearby forest which is called enchanted and about a terrible Beast that presumably lives there. Beauty asks him: "Are you sure you're not making it all up to scare me into obedience? It won't work, you know; it'll only make me mad." (52) Ger assures her that he is indeed serious, and makes her promise him to never go there. He is certain of her keeping the promise for she is honourable - she reflects on this in her mind and realizes he is right. On the side note, the scene also foreshadows the events near the end of the book where Beauty on the opposite *has to* go back to the castle in the enchanted forest because she *promised* so to the Beast.

Since the novel follows closely the basic plot of the fairy tale, it is not unexpected when the nearly idyllic country life of Beauty's family is cut short by the consequences of her father's journey to the city. He decides to travel there after he learns that one of his missing ships returned to the port. When he asks his daughters what should he bring them from the city, Beauty asks him for rose seeds.

That is another crucial divergence from the classical fairy tale. If we brush aside the importance of a rose as a symbol of the tale, which is substantial but insignificant in regards to the topic, what remains is a rose that serves as a tool of the story's catalyst. Beauty of Mme. de Villeneuve's fairy tale asks for a rose because she loves them very much and wants to please her father, who insists on her choosing something. Mme. de Beaumont's Beauty asks for a rose to set an example to her greedy sisters. But Robin McKinley's Beauty does not ask for a flower, she asks for rose seeds so she can plant some in her little garden; she is a nurturer who wants to be able to *create* beauty, not just own it.

The father returns from the city in several months time, exhausted and horrified. He brings a single rose to Beauty, apologizing for not being able to get her the rose seeds she requested. Later, he relates the story of his unfortunate journey back home in bad weather: how he got lost in the woods, found an enchanted castle where he comfortably spent a night, took a rose from the garden in the morning and after that

encountered a terrible Beast who claimed his life for stealing the flower. These events display little change in comparison with the old fairy tale, only the Beast's conditions are a bit different: the father has one month before he has to go back to the castle and die for his 'crime' – or he can send one of his daughters in his place and the Beast promises that no harm will come to the girl.

Beauty's father is nevertheless determined to return to the Beast and die. It should be noted that in the classical version of the fairy tale Beauty's sisters blame her for the misfortune and demand her going to the Beast. In McKinley's novel, Beauty's sister Grace (who is, unlike Hope, unmarried and childless) actually volunteers to go, but Beauty will not have it. Instead, Beauty makes her father promise to take her with him in the month's time and if not, she is going to run away to the castle on her own. Her sense of obligation does not come from her obedience as in the case of her counterpart from the fairy tale. Beauty wants to go because it is a right thing to do. She tries to explain it to her family by reminding them that the rose was for her. She also adds that she is "the youngest – and the ugliest" (89). Once more, Beauty's biggest flaw shows: she underestimates herself and firmly believes that because of her plain appearance, "the world isn't losing much in [her]" (89).

To comfort herself and her family, she even jokes about the prospect of her future:

> [The Beast] must have a library in that great castle of his. He must do something with the days besides guard his roses and frighten travellers. (98)

Then again, Beauty is young. She is but eighteen in the novel and as many people of her age, she yearns to fly out of her family's nest and see the world she only read about in her books. When the opportunity presents itself before her – as horrifying and scary as it may seem – she cannot just let it go and says that she is "ready for an adventure" (90).

But there is more to her choice than that. Beauty is led by a strange instinct, something she is unable to explain even to herself:

> I believed that my decision was correct, that I and no other should fulfil the obligation; but a sense of responsibility, if that was what it was, did not explain the intensity of my determination. (92)

The reader can but to guess where this "instinct" of hers comes from, although several possible explanations could be suggested in the connection to the later events of the book.

One of them relates to the theme of Beauty's dreams she starts having after her decision to go to the Beast is made. It is not the first time the theme of the dreams goes through the story of Beauty and the Beast. In my recollection of Mme. de Villeneuve's version I mentioned that dreams are essential for it. Villeneuve's Beauty dreams about the Beast, whom she sees him in his true form as a handsome young Prince, and a friendly fairy. Both of them give her guidance and remind her not to be misled by appearances. But Beauty does not know who the Beast really is. At one point she even comes to a conclusion that the young Prince from her dreams is a prisoner in the Beast's castle. She does not realize that they are the same person.

Similarly, the dreams that McKinley's Beauty experiences also serve her as a guidance: but a spiritual one. Beauty dreams that she is in the Beast's castle – which she has yet to see in real life – running through the corridors and opening the doors, looking frantically and seemingly hopelessly for someone special. Again, it is not hard for any reader to decipher the meaning of this. But Beauty herself is, understandably enough, confused and cannot possibly realize that the dreams anticipate her future doings. Her dreams become sharper and more vivid as the story progresses and she is getting closer to her real life traumatic experience the dreams prepare her for.

Because of Beauty's urgency to go to the Beast's castle is not entirely explainable, Amie A. Doughty questions its validity as a proof of Beauty's agency:

> . . . this choice is questionable since the alternative is to sacrifice her father . . . Something, it seems, is pressing her toward the Beast and whatever he has in store for her - and she half fears he means to go back on his promise to her father and eat her. (Doughty 2)

Michael Cadden also calls her seemingly independent choice an illusion:

> While Beauty chooses to go, her choice is destined by her stubborn and strong character. She doesn't seize an opportunity but, again, she makes the best of a failed situation. Her act is honourable, but it is dictated by the action of her father. (Cadden 3)

But while Beauty's choice is not completely hers, her stubbornness with which she opposes her family, who are trying to turn her away from her decision, marks her as a strong, willful and active character. That shows once more not much later in the story, where Beauty's father, in front of the castle's gates, makes one last attempt to persuade her to return. Beauty answers:

> "The decision is long past now – you cannot revoke it; and you agreed because you had no choice." (114)

Unlike Doughty and Cadden, Ellen R. Sackelman believes that it is Beauty who has a control over the situation; she even calls her "a female voice negating male desires" (Sackelman 1).

The scene of parting in front of the Beast's castle is also a slight alternation to all the classical versions where the father accompanies Beauty to the castle, meets the Beast for the second time, and *then* leaves his daughter to her fate.

Beauty is left – for the first time in her whole life – on her own. What she finds in the castle, the reader already knows from the fairy tale: beautiful gardens, clean stables where she leaves her beloved horse Greatheart, invisible servants who open her doors, candles that light themselves as she walks past them, a splendid table with delicious dinner, even Beauty's own room with a bath prepared. Beauty immediately notices the books in her room which makes her hope that the Beast is maybe not going to eat her after all. Yes – she is still scared and understandably so – but soon she overcomes her fears and leaves her room in order to search for the Beast. She discovers that the corridors relocate themselves magically – the castle usually navigates her where she wants to go.

The first exchange between Beauty and the Beast plays out along the similar lines as in the classical tale – or so it would seem at the first sight. Because when the Beast thanks Beauty for coming, she demurs that he gave her no choice for she could not let her father die. The Beast then admits that he would not harm her father if he returned alone, but it would not bring her any joy: instead she would be haunted by reproaches for the rest of her life because she sent her father, as she thought, to his death.

While my thesis aims to focus on the character of Beauty, let me just briefly compare the Beast of this novel with his counterpart from the classical fairy tale because the difference is significant. The Beast from the classical story is a kind of simpleton. He is forbidden to show any signs of wit, and if he does, his curse shall become irreversible. In Mme. de Beaumont's version it contributes to the moral message: her Beauty in the end chooses the goodness of heart as opposite to both, wit and beauty, and is rewarded for her choice.

McKinley's Beast is a fully shaped character who spent the last two hundred years in the dark castle, accompanied only by his invisible servants. The curse does not

prevent him from speaking his mind and he seems to be a very good observer. His appearance is mostly left to the reader's imagination: he is only described as very tall, dark and hairy, with "too many long white teeth" (133) and claws instead of hands.

His first dialogue with Beauty is not humourless either: she mentions to him that Beauty is not her given name and remarks (yet again) that she is actually "very plain" (133). He then leaves her speechless when he counters her, saying: "I have been out of the world a long time, of course, but I do not believe I am so short-sighted as all that." (133) And when she reveals her true name, he actually smiles and says: "I welcome Beauty and Honour both, then... Indeed, I am very fortunate." (133) Then he asks her if she will marry him, Beauty, terrified, declines and flees to her room.

In the months that follow, a bond is slowly formed between Beauty and the Beast. Their flourishing relationship is mapped out through the series of episodes, starting the day that follows their first encounter. They take walks in the gardens together, enjoy the sunsets and Beauty even introduces the Beast to her horse Greatheart – something which is not easy to do, since all animals are afraid of the Beast.
Beauty remarks at one point that they "looked forwards to the [their] next meeting... [because they] were each other's only alternative to solitude". (156) But it becomes more than that.

The first signs of a real friendship appear when the Beast shows Beauty the castle's library. She is amazed by the enormous number of books and happy that she has the time and the means to catch up with her studies – something she was denied while she was living with her family and had to devote her time to work. The Beast reveals to her that the library is – as many things in the castle – magical and some of the books she can find there were not, in fact, written yet. He surprises her by being himself an avid reader and even recommends her some of the books, including Browning's poetry.

They gradually start to spend more and more time together, mostly in the library, reading to each other. Ellen R. Sackelman points out, that interestingly enough, it is Beauty who "determines the pace and nature of her interaction with her Beast" (Sackelman 2) - and she is right. This is a huge diversion from the classical fairy tale where the Beast is in control of Beauty's "daily routine" – he comes to her only when *he* wants to and she spends her days alone, wondering about the castle, enjoying the entertainment the invisible servants prepare for her, while having no idea of the where the Beast is or what he does in the meantime. Not to mention that since the Beast from

the fairy tale is forbidden to show any signs of wit, their seldom conversations are rather dull.

But McKinley's Beauty interacts with the Beast daily and even seeks out his company:

> Once after several weeks of a daily chapter of *Bleak House,* he did not come one day, and I missed him sadly. I scolded him for his neglect when I saw him at sunset that evening. He looked pleased and said, 'Very well. I shan't miss again.' (177)

Beauty and the Beast in McKinley's story are equals – not just that they share the same tastes but they are also in the same position of the prisoners in the enchanted castle. The Beast is not 'the master' here, he is an involuntary prisoner, who learned to cope with the castle's magic only due to the fact that he has spent two hundred years there. Beauty slowly realizes this and sympathizes with him.

Beauty is also aware of the castle's magic but she is unable to perceive all of it. For instance, sometimes before she falls asleep, she thinks she hears chattering of the two invisible maids who attend her, but she always ascribes it to her imagination. She relies on her common sense and her instincts to lead her and for her first months in the Beast's castle, it appears to be enough. Things change for her dramatically as she grows closer to the Beast and one night she panics after she faints and finds herself in his arms. She later reflects on this experience, contemplating:

> I had avoided touching him, or letting him touch me. At first I had eluded him from fear; but when fear departed, elusiveness remained, and developed into habit. Habit bulwarked by something else; I could not say what. The obvious answer, because he was a Beast, didn't seem to be the right one . . . I thought I knew what Persephone must have felt after she ate those pomegranate seeds; and was then surprised by a sudden rush of sympathy for the dour King of Hell. (188-189)

After that night, her senses become somewhat sharper and she is suddenly able to recognize the voices of her invisible maids. Moreover, she knows whenever the Beast is near. She describes her new feeling as "trying to catch the echo of a sound so faint [she] wasn't sure it existed" 194 and something that was "niggling at the edge of [her] consciousness". (194)

Beauty shares her new experience with the Beast who, reluctantly, tries to explain to her:

> "You look at this world—my world, here, as you looked at your old world, your family's world . . . Well; it's different here. Some things go by different rules . . . you have no reason to trust me . . . you trust nothing here that you cannot perceive on your old terms. You refuse to acknowledge the existence of anything that is too unusual. You don't see it, you don't hear it—for you it doesn't exist." (197)

This means that Beauty acquires new awareness of the Beast and his world, the world she slowly becomes a part of. Her new perception of the castle's magic goes hand in hand with her growing attraction to the Beast which she does not yet fully realize: "I looked steadily at the Beast, too; it wasn't that he looked any less huge or less dark or less hairy, but there was some difference." (199)

In addition to this, Evelyn Perry observes in her essay that both, Beauty and the Beast, have avoided any mirrors for years, out of fear that looking to the mirror might result in their ultimate identification with their unflattering reflections.

> As Beauty describes her changing vision to Beast... Beauty and the Beast create a shared vision; they identify each other and the self... Despite Beast and Beauty's mutual dislike for mirrors, they discover that they care very much about how they look to each other. (Perry 10)

Perry's last point is best illustrated by a humorous scene in which Beauty's invisible maids want her to wear a puffy princess dress. Beauty is annoyed by this: she does not believe that such thing could suit her, besides she prefers more practical clothing:

> "'It is a beautiful dress,' I said wildly . . . 'And that's why I won't wear it; if you put a peacock's tail on a sparrow, he's still a brown little, wretched little, drab little *sparrow.*'" (203)

When the maids refuse to take the dress off her, Beauty does not want to come out of her room and the Beast, who is standing behind her door, asks her what is wrong. She tells him and he is surprised:

> "'You care how I see you?' he said; his voice was muffled by the door, and I could be sure of only the astonishment." (204)

Their little happy moments are cut short by Beauty's growing desire to see her family again. In the classical fairy tale, she has a magic mirror in her room which shows her how her family is, and therefore, her longing for them is suppressed. McKinley's Beauty

has no such possibility: she has dreams about her family and often admits that her missing them is the only flaw in happiness she found in the Beast's castle. Despite her friendship with the Beast, she cannot make herself to forget about her family completely. She does not like to mention it to him either: she feels ungrateful that she dares to long for her father and sisters when she has anything she wants in the castle. But when she is sad and the Beast keeps asking what is wrong, she confesses her feelings and he shows her the magic mirror in his room – the one the reader already knows from the fairy tale. Beauty sees her sisters in it: Hope convincing Grace to stop thinking about her fiancé lost in the sea and to marry a young curate, who loves her. The image transforms and Beauty sees Robbie, the one Grace loves, to be alive and returning home. Beauty, naturally, begs the Beast to allow her to go home for a while, so she can prevent Grace from marrying the wrong man.

That is another great shift from the classical fairy tale where Beauty wanted to come home to be with her father who "had pined himself sick for the loss of her" (Beaumont 8). That Beauty, yet again, acted out of obligation to her father and did not even think about missing her brothers and sisters. But in McKinley's novel, there is a strong bond between Beauty and her sisters which is something that cannot disappear with time. There is a difference between wanting to see someone because he is dying and you feel obligated to be with him and wanting to see someone to make him happy. McKinley's Beauty cares deeply about her sister's future happiness and that is why she asks the Beast to let her go. The Beast hesitates, afraid she might leave him for good, but unable to deny her anything – especially such an unselfish request. He gives her a week and lets her go.

Soon, Beauty enjoys a warm welcome by the members of her family, all of whom are overjoyed to see her. Beauty postpones her telling Grace about Robbie and instead, she finds herself talking about her happy life in the enchanted castle and answering anything her family wants to know. But her position is more difficult as she makes two essential discoveries about herself.

Firstly she finds out that she changed physically – she had grown taller than both her sisters during the months spent in the castle. That is one side of her personal transformation. The other is that she does not fit the roles she assigned to herself while she was living with her family. She is no longer the lonesome quirky bookworm, loved by her family but lacking the companionship of someone who would share her interest. In the castle, she found an intellectual equal in the Beast. And she also starts to

understand that she cannot be the tomboy who chopped the wood and helped her brother-in-law in his smithy anymore. Her stay in the castle shifted her perspective and opened a whole new world to her. The world where she can be herself and be appreciated for it. Evelyn Perry states in her essay:

> Beauty's family remarks on her growing up . . . Although Beauty responds with her usual self-deprecation, in truth, she feels herself changed. She doesn't fit in and, again, this is described in terms of fantasy, reality and perception. (Perry 11)

The second is the discovery of her feelings for the Beast. When she tells her family about him, they are in awe and especially her father cannot comprehend how can she speak so affectionately about the monster who took his youngest child away from him. Beauty finds herself speaking in the Beast's defence, trying to explain to her family why does she care about him so much.

> My greatest difficulty was the Beast himself . . . I found myself pleading in his defense . . . I stumbled over explanations of how fond I had come to be of him, and what a good friend I found him. It seemed disloyal, somehow. It was he who had cruelly taken me away from my family in the first place; how could they or I forgive him that? How could I make excuses? I couldn’t tell them that I—loved him. This thought came to me with an unpleasant jolt. Loved him? (229)

Beauty realizes that her vision of the Beast is very different from how her family perceives him. Evelyn Perry even marks that Beauty views the Beast "through the love in her own eyes" and that she "establishes her sense of self in partnership with Beast" (Perry 11). Amie A. Doughty comments on the intertextuality of the scene where Beauty relates her story to her family:

> . . . metatextual aspect of the novel is very limited, and Beauty never makes reference to creating her story as it is unfolding, something that would be easy for her to do as narrator of the novel. Instead, she lets the events of the story carry her along until she reaches her happy ending. She accepts her fate . . . (Doughty 3)

In the classical versions of the fairy tale, Beauty also struggled with defining her relationship with the Beast during her stay with her family. Beauty in Mme. de Villeneuve's tale was torn between her romantic affection for the Prince from her dreams and her gratitude and friendship to the Beast, not knowing they were the same

person. And when she asked her father for advice, he actually sympathized with the Beast and suggested she should marry him. What a difference from the father in McKinley's story who is horrified by the prospect of losing his daughter to the Beast for good! Even when Beauty presents him with the gifts the Beast sent, it only makes him angrier: "Let him take his rich gifts back, and leave us our girl." (235)

Mme. Beaumont had her Beauty to define her feelings to the Beast so it would suit the moral message. Her Beauty's 'realization' reminds rather of a rational reasoning more than romantic attachment: ". . . it is neither wit nor a fine person in a husband, that makes a woman happy; but virtue, sweetness of temper, and complaisance . . . I do not feel the tenderness of affection for him, but I find I have the highest gratitude, esteem, and friendship . . . " (Beaumont 9)

Both, Villeneuve's and Beaumont's stories, Beauty comes back to the Beast out of the sense of obligation and does not become aware of her romantic feelings for him until she finds him dying in the castle's garden later in the story.

In McKinley's novel, the realization of her feelings for the Beast only makes Beauty more determined to return to him. After she informs her sister that her fiancé is alive and well, she senses that her visit to her family is over and she should return to the castle, which became her home. She admits to herself that "[she does] not belong here, and [she] should not stay." (251)

But she still delays her return to the castle by one day and, similarly to the classical fairy tale, she has a nightmare in which she sees the Beast dying. It is still her old dream, only slightly modified, but it is suddenly frightful for a different reason. She does no longer fear the unknown. The dream had taken a concrete shape and what terrifies her now is the Beast's death.

Beauty leaves her family again and rides her horse Greatheart towards the castle. She is already familiar with how the magic that surrounds the castle works and she knows that the key to find it is, actually, to get lost in the woods. But the magic of the woods is seemingly failing and she cannot find a road to the castle. Beauty and her horse wander for many hours, tired and weary, and Beauty is scared that she should come to late.

This episode is something that McKinley invented for her story and you would not find it in any of the older versions. Her Beauty experiences physical obstacles that prevent her reunion with the Beast. She is alone and left to her own devices – the scene actually mirrors her first journey to the castle. First time, she was afraid what awaits for

her in the end of her path. But now, it is the journey itself which presents a difficulty. It could also be viewed as a physical representation of her inner journey she had gone through in the past few weeks: her self-actualization and her realization of her feelings for the Beast. During her wandering in the woods, Beauty even loses a track of time: "Any number of nights may have passed without my knowledge or comprehension." (256) This supports the theory of the metaphor to her inner development – you also cannot mark the time when your heart changes, the change is a process as the journey is.

It is her instinct that helps her in the end – or her love for the Beast as Betsy Hearne claims in her essay (Hearne 92). After Beauty finds the castle – seemingly abandoned – and takes Greatheart to the stables, she enters it and fully experiences what her dreams have been preparing her for. She is unable to find her way through the castle: if the corridors always navigated her where she wanted to go before, now they became a labyrinth and Beauty marks that she lost her awareness of the Beast's presence she acquired not so long time ago.

> All my senses were dull; I could catch no feeling of his presence. The castle had never been so large. I crossed hundreds of halls, passed through thousands of rooms . . . The castle was deserted, and as chill and dank as if it had stood empty for many years. (258)

Beauty finally finds the Beast in his room and after she manages to wake him, she confesses her love for him. By her declaration, the Beast is transformed back to his human self and the castle is coming to live again.

Beauty is drawn back by this as she does not recognize her Beast in the "alarmingly handsome" (263) man who stands in front of her. She suddenly feels small and insignificant in comparison with him, Evelyn Perry calls it "one last gesture towards the self-image of her adolescence" (Perry 11). Beauty even says:

> 'I can't marry *you*,' I burst out . . . 'You should marry a queen or something, a duchess at least, not a dull drab little nothing like myself.' (265)

The former Beast protests – the scene is a rather obvious parallel to their first meeting all those months ago – and he takes her to the mirror where she sees herself for the first time in many years:

> The girl in the mirror wasn't I, I was sure of it . . . She was tall—well, all right, I said to myself, I do remember that I'm tall enough now. Her hair was a pale coppery red, and her eyes, strangest of all, weren't muddy

> hazel, but clear and amber, with flecks of green . . . The quirk of the eyebrows was still there . . . And I recognized the high wide cheekbones, bur my face had filled out around them; and the mouth was still higher on one side than the other, and the high side had a dimple. (266-267)

She does not realize just her physical change: she fully acknowledges her inner change as well.

> Beauty shifts her disbelief from herself to the girl in the mirror, ultimately accepting her new sense of self and finally asserting her 'I'. It isn't magic, the magic is over, people are waking up all over the house, and yet, the enchantment has just begun. (Perry 12)

In the final scene, former Beast admits that he no longer remembers his given name and asks Beauty to name him. While there are voices that question her control over this, more precisely, Cadden says:

> . . . there is nothing that she can name him that will come before his title. He is already named "King" and she "Queen." (Cadden 5)

and Doughty adds:

> . . . like the characters she reads about and compares her world to, she is bound by the conventions of her story (Doughty 3) . . . as with all other aspects of her life, Beauty lives at the whim of others. (Doughty 4)

I am inclined to agree with Ellen Sackelman who comments on Beauty's final choice:

> The privilege in giving a human name to the Beast makes final and more significant Beauty's sense of control over her world. (Sackelman 2)

During the course of the story, Beauty proves to be a strong, independent heroine and while her agency regarding some of her choices can be questioned, in the end she has a control over her own life.

2.3 Rose Daughter

In 1997, Robin McKinley published her second retelling of Beauty and the Beast entitled *Rose Daughter*. Unlike *Beauty*, *Rose Daughter* is presented through third-person omniscient perspective. The reader does not have such a direct access to the heroine's head as in the case of *Beauty* where the protagonist is narrating her story.

Similarly to the classical versions of the fairy tale, as well as to *Beauty*, *Rose Daughter*'s story starts with the wealthy merchant who lives in the city together with his three young daughters, named Lionheart, Jeweltongue and Beauty in this version. As in *Beauty*, relationships between the sisters are loving and supportive. However, Beauty, the protagonist of the story, does not share her sisters' fondness of parties and crowds of admirers. She prefers to be alone and often thinks about her mother. Her mother died when Beauty was very young. But Beauty remembers her mother's scent – a scent she is unable to identified although she loves flowers and gardening.

If Beauty of *Beauty* found her sanctuary in the company of her books and enjoyed spending her nights translating old Greek authors, Beauty of *Rose Daughter* finds it in gardens, where she used to hide at first, so no-one could find her, and later she discovers her love for plants.

> She liked plants. They were quiet, and they stayed in the same place, but they weren't boring, like a lot of the things she was supposed to be interested in were boring . . . Plants got on with making stems and leaves and flowers and fruit, whatever you did, and a lot of them were nice to the touch . . . (3)

Beauty does not seek out attention or approval of the members of her family, although she loves them dearly. Her first friends are the flowers and she realizes that she is good with them – anything she touches grows for her and she is also extraordinarily good at arranging them.

> Beautiful, gifted, and passionate, Lionheart and Jeweltongue exist in the world of their deceased mother, the world of literary salons, society parties, and marrying into aristocracy. *Rose Daughter* 's Beauty does not refer to herself or her name and she searches out a space so private as never to be seen. (Perry 5)

One of the Beauty's nurses reveals to her what Beauty's mother's perfume smelled of: roses. But roses in her world are extremely rare and only powerful magicians are able to

grow them. Beauty does not even know what roses look like, but she is destined to find out.

After her family loses its wealth as in the classical fairy tale, it is Beauty who takes care of her family. Her father is rather weak in this version – both physically and mentally - and completely put out of countenance when his money are suddenly gone; he understands it as his failure. And Beauty's sisters are not much of use at this point because their fiancés leave them as soon as their financial collapse is revealed. Beauty does not fall into despair, instead she goes through her father's papers and finds out that she and her sisters years ago inherited a small house in a country. The house is called Rose Cottage, and since Beauty believes that it is a sign of good chance, she and her family move there.

Rose Cottage stand quite lonely in the meadows and its nearest village is Longchance. The sisters soon accommodate to their new life. They learn the house chores they were not familiar with before. Jeweltongue starts sewing clothing for the villagers and is surprised that she is a talented seamstress. Lionheart always loved horses and she disguises herself as a boy in order to get a job on a farm.

Beauty comes across a small garden behind their new house and she begins to nurture plants she finds there. She also sees roses for the first time in her life.

> She identifies them first as ugly, cold, dead things, but takes pity on them . . . She then becomes quickly expert in the ways of the roses, their differing habits, scents, and composition. She becomes possessive of, and responsible for, the roses. (Perry 5)

Beauty bonds with the roses and nurtures the seemingly dead plants back to life. She is fascinated by them and they seem to grow because she wishes so. By talking to the people of Longchance, Beauty learns that Rose Cottage used to belong to a greenwitch, who mysteriously disappeared several years ago. The woman from the village who tells Beauty about the greenwitch also divulges the true nature of roses:

> Maybe it’s no wonder they grow for you after all. You know—pansy for thoughtfulness, yew for sorrow, bay for glory, dock for tomorrow? Roses are for love. Not forget-me-not, honeysuckle, silly sweethearts’ love but the love that makes you and keeps you whole, love that gets you through the worst your life’II give you and that pours out of you when you’re given the best instead. (53)

Beauty then listens as the woman tells her that there are not many roses around anymore because they need love of people – or magic. But their greenwitch is long gone. Maybe Beauty is not a magic handler and yet the roses grow for her because she loves them as no-one has before her.

Aside from the roses, there is another thing Beauty carries with her all her life: her dream. I described the theme of dream in Villeneuve and in McKinley's Beauty just few pages ago, so I shall not repeat it. But Beauty's dream in Rose Daughter is different. In her dream, Beauty stands in the dark corridor without windows and doors and at the very far end there is a monster waiting for her. While the dream resembles the one from Beauty, later events prove this statement to be wrong. But during her stay in Rose Cottage, Beauty has it often and it changes:

> She found that her dream had changed in another way. She had begun to pity the monster she approached. She feared him no less for this: she did not even know why she felt pity and grew angry with herself for it. She would rush along the endless shadowy corridor with her head bowed and her arms crossed across her breast, feeling grief and pity and raging at herself, Why do I feel sorry for a monster who is going to eat me as soon as seen, like the Minotaur with his maidens? (31)

Events that follow are in no way surprising. The father has to travel back to the city, but there is no money that awaits him and he return as poor as he was before. On his way back home, he loses his way and finds a shelter in a palace in the woods. He takes a blooming rose from the table vase for Beauty. She asked for it because nothing grows in the winter and she sorely misses her roses that kept her company. Terrible monster appears before the old merchant as soon as he touches the rose. When the Beast learns from the merchant that "everything in the garden grows for [Beauty], but the roses most of all" (74), the Beast demands Beauty's coming to his palace. He swears to the merchant that he has no intention of harming the girl and then he lets him return home.

Since the father is too weak and sick to go anywhere, there is no-one who could stop Beauty from going to the Beast. She is certain that she must go to the palace for it was her who asked for a rose. She is also curious about the Beast, especially after she hears that he loves the roses as she does. Beauty is also convinced that the Beast must be very powerful magician if he has gardens full of roses. She tells her sisters:

> 'This palace must be close at hand—as Father has described it. Or he is so great a sorcerer as to make it seem so, and I do not care the truth of it.

> I am a quick walker—I will find a way to come here sometime and tell you how I get on . . . Remember, he has—he has promised no harm to me. And—can a Beast who loves roses so much be so very terrible?' (81)

As soon as she comes to the Beast's palace, Beauty searches for the rose garden but comes face to face with the Beast instead. And her first impression of him is unlike in any other version:

> The contrasts she found there were too great: wisdom and despair, power and weakness, man and animal. These made him far more terrible than any hungry lion, any half-tamed hydra, any angry sorcerer, terrible as something that should not exist is terrible, because to recognize that it does exist shakes that faith in the foundations of the natural world which human beings must have to bear the burden of their rationality. (87)

When Beauty comes inside the Beast's palace, she discovers that the whole place is magical. For the reader, who knows the classical versions of the fairy tale or read *Beauty*, it might be interesting that magic in *Rose Daughter* operates on a very peculiar basis. While in the classical fairy tales there were invisible hands and in *Beauty* the servants resembled wind, the Beast's palace in *Rose Daughter* seems to be alive and listening: if Beauty needs something, she simply asks for it and it appears.

After she has a panic attack on the first night in the palace when she finds herself in one of the dark corridors and remembers her dream, the Beast asks her about it and later he explains that he has exactly the same dream about darkness and a monster. *The Beast has the same dream as Beauty does*. In this moment, it does not seem to be clear that the dream prophesizes the future (as in the case of story in *Beauty*) because the Beast and the monster in the darkness are not the same person/creature.

And Beauty also starts to have dreams about her family; dreams that are later proved to be real events, so she, in a way, knows that they are well.

On the second day in the palace, Beauty finds the flower gardens and a tall greenhouse full of roses. But the Beast's roses seem to be dead – as hers were when she moved to Rose Cottage. However, Beauty does not let it discourage her and she sets out to work immediately. She plucks out the weeds, prunes and cuts the dead parts off the roses, and she talks to the Beast's roses as she used to her own. She quickly becomes anxious to save them, not just because *she* loves roses but mostly because *the Beast* loves them – and Beauty pities him and wants to make him happy.

She thinks about the Beast as if he was a sorcerer, she views him as a strong, powerful being. As in the classical fairy tale, the Beast asks her every night if she would marry him, but she declines him every time. In spite of this, almost from the beginning of their acquaintance Beauty - unwittingly – reflects on her relationship with the Beast.

> And then Beauty remembered the story of a sorcerer who looked like the Phoenix, and who had married a human princess because her hair, he said, was the colour of the fire of his birth. I am no princess, she said to herself. (126)

While Beauty and the Beast from *Beauty* shared their love for the books and bonded over reading to each other, the characters of *Rose Daughter* share their love for roses. The Beast is grateful for Beauty's company and her care for his roses since he is unable to tend them himself – with his claws he is too clumsy to do that.

There is a beautiful scene in which the Beast takes Beauty to the roof of the palace at night. He can name all the star constellations in the sky and he tells Beauty stories that relate to them. Beauty enjoys that, but she is much more fascinated when she looks under her feet and discovers that the roof is full of paintings that depict the creatures from the constellations. The Beast admits that it was him who painted them – he can see very well in the dark and uses big brushes he can handle with his claws.

As the days go by, Beauty learns more about the ways of magic in the castle. She also finds some small animals in her room every morning – bats, toads, hedgehogs, kittens... Similarly to her counterpart from Beauty, this heroine also seems to be the cause of a sudden reappearance of the animals in the Beast's lands.

In only several days, Beauty manages to bring the Beast's roses back to life. They start to bloom again – as if by magic it would seem.

> For the glasshouse had come back to life indeed. There were roses everywhere she looked, red roses, white roses, and pink roses, and every shade among them . . . And the smell, everywhere, was so rich and wonderful Beauty wanted to cup her hands to it and drink it, and yet it was not one smell, but all the rose scents discernible and individual as all the colours of roses . . . (191)

Right before she restores the roses to their living forms, Beauty has another vision of her family, she sees them talking about the curse that supposedly lays on the Rose Cottage. Beauty has been aware of the legends that go about her home, but she never thought them important, although the curse said that something happens when three

sisters live in Rose Cottage. But the villagers were not afraid because Lionheart posed as a young man. And then Beauty had to go to the Beast and her sisters started to worry. But no-one was able to tell them what was supposed to happen according to the curse. Now, Beauty is away from home, she thinks about the curse too and that makes her think about the story she is a part of. She starts to ask herself the right questions, she demands to know who is behind her story, how that story works. That is something that Beauty of *Beauty* never did, she simply let her instincts to lead her, never realized that she is caught in the story. But Beauty from Rose Daughter is different, she meditates:

> Why did you ensorcel me to come to this place? Or if not you, who? Who put the rose on my father's breakfast table? If you are a prisoner here, who ensorcelled you? Who tends your garden? Who is the old woman who leaves a basket in the night in front of doors that do not open? Why have the bats and butterflies and toads and hedgehogs returned and not the birds? Why do you ask me to marry you when you will not tell me who you are? (235)

Amie A. Doughty comments on Beauty's realization of her place in her story:

> By considering her place in the story that she perceives she is part of, Beauty takes possession of that story and takes responsibility for her part in the events, even speculating that the story will last. (Doughty 11)

Beauty, with her head full of worries about the mysterious curse and her sisters, asks the Beast to let her go and he does. He gives her a magical rose and warns her that when the last petal of the rose falls, she will know that he is dead, because he cannot live without her. After Beauty puts one petal of the rose to her mouth, it magically transports her home to the Rose Cottage.

At home, she discovers that she was gone seven months, not seven days as she thought because the time spent in the enchanted palace flows differently. Her sisters ask her about the Beast and Beauty tries to share her vision of him:

> 'He is—he is—oh, I don't know how to describe him!' said Beauty. 'He is very tall, and very wide, and very hairy; he is a Beast, just as he is named. He eats apples in two bites, including the cores. But he is—that is not what he is like . . . He is gentle and kind. He loves roses. He loves roses best of all, but his were dying; the only one still blooming was the one from Father's breakfast table. Of course, when I knew—when I found—I had to rescue him—help them—rescue them—him. He walks

> on the roof every night, looking at the stars. On the roof he has drawn the most beautiful map of the sky. ...' Beauty was weeping as she talked. (258)

At this point, Beauty is already well aware of her feelings for the Beast, but she does not believe that she is enough for him.

> Why would someone so great and grand, like the Beast, want to marry her? She was beautiful, but that would fade, unlike Jeweltongue's skill with her needle and Lionheart's horse sense. She had always been the least of the sisters, called Beauty because she had no other, better characteristic to name her as herself. (249)

As she talks with her sisters, she suddenly notices how the last petal falls from the magical rose the Beast gave her. She comes to realization that her Beast needs her more than her sisters do.

> When Beauty realizes how Beast needs her, and of her usefulness to him, when she understands the great metaphor--that her talent as a rosarian is what makes her her own, valuable self even as those talents keep Beast alive--she separates from the sisters whose "hearts beat in each other's breasts". (Perry 13)

Beauty then magically travels back to the castle. She observes that she appeared in her old nightmare again: she stands in the dark corridor with no windows or doors and there is a monster waiting for her... She stops herself at once. She understands now that 'the dream' is untrue, there is no monster and she is no longer afraid. Beauty comes to conclusion that the magic she feels floating around her is not of a helpful kind.

> 'No.' And silently in her mind she said: You will not have me so easily, nor will you have him.She turned round and started to walk back down the corridor she had come up. . . . Some soundless subvibration of the hum that filled the corridor demanded that she turn round; but she had made her choice, and now she put one slow, heavy foot down after the other by her own will and of her own choice, and while each footstep was very hard, dragged as it was in the opposite direction, it was also a victory for her, and the hum changed its inaudible note and became fury. (265)

Perry comments on Beauty's action:

> Beauty swims against a strong current in the air of the castle hallways, finally taking refuge in her own self-reflexion and self-assertion . . . [she] has chosen blindness. She searches for Beast in the darkness, but she searches with her heart, her inner vision, rather than with her eyes. . . (Perry 14)

Beauty finds her Beast lying in the meadows outside the castle. She tries to wake him up, saying that she loves him and wishes to marry him. Suddenly, Beauty feels magic around her again and an old woman appears before her, the one Beauty spotted once before at the castle's gates. The greenwitch – for it is the very same one who left Rose Cottage for Beauty and her sisters – answers Beauty's questions, filling the gaps of the story that she helped to create. She explains to Beauty about the magic, Beast's enchantment, animals and roses. She laughs when Beauty asks about the curse and tells her that the curse is but a children skipping rhyme, transformed by the superstitious people into something it never was. In the end, she offers Beauty a choice.

Beauty can either restore the Beast to his original, human form. The greenwitch claims that he used to be a handsome man, rich and powerful. Or, the Beast can stay as he is and he can go with Beauty back to Rose Cottage in Longchance. Beauty then asks:

> 'You said that if I chose that my Beast keep his wealth and influence, we should use it for good and that our names should be spoken in many lands. How will our names be spoken?' (280)

And the greenwitch answers:

> '. . . Your names shall be spoken in fear and in dread, for no single human being, nor even the wisest married pair, can see the best way to dispense justice for people beyond their own ken.' (281)

Beauty then chooses Longchance and "the little goodnesses among the people we know." (281) Ultimately, it is Beauty who decides how shall her story end.

> This choice, made with full knowledge of what each option entails, allows Beauty to shape her (and the Beast's) stories consciously. She knows she is writing the end of their story, and she is doing so on her terms. (Doughty 12)

After she makes her choice, the evil magic appears again, drawing near to her and the Beast. But Beauty defies them, shouting:

> 'Go away! Can you not see you have already lost? There is nothing for you here!' (284)

Beauty was an active character during the whole course of the book. She took care of her family after they lost their fortune. She tended the garden at Rose Cottage and learned everything she could about roses. She went to the Beast's palace on her own. She saved the Beast's roses and invited animals to the palace. And in the end she did not save just the Beast, but herself as well, by realizing her place in the story and gaining full control over it.

3. McKinley's recreation of Donkeyskin

3.1 "Resourceful Cinderella" (Introduction to "Donkeyskin" fairy tale type)

In Aarne–Thompson classification system, tale type 510B comprises of many fairy tales, some of which are quite distinct from the others. The type is most commonly known as "The Dress of Gold, of Silver, and of Stars", "Unnatural Love", "Donkeyskin" or "Catskin", the last two being the titles of fairy tales that belong into this category.

In her elaborate study, *The Donkey Skin Folktale Cycle (AT 510B)*, Christine Goldberg recounts many variants of this fairy tale type, including the versions where the heroine uses human skin as her disguise or even hides herself in a piece of furniture.

But what fairy tales 510B have in common is a heroine (usually a princess), who is abused by her father or, less often, a grandfather. For the record, type 510A has a heroine abused by a mother or a stepmother and its most popular variation is "Cinderella".

While Goldberg includes into this category fairy tales that start with a daughter proclaiming that she loves her father as dearly as salt and is subsequently banished from her home (a theme Czech readers are familiar with from the Slavic variation "Salt Above Gold"), the most typical representative of the category is a fairy tale in which a father wants to marry his own daughter. Perrault's "Donkeyskin" is a primary example of this, as well as Grimms' "Allerleirauh" or Basile's "The She-Bear". Czech readers are acquainted with a fairy tale in which the princess has a cloak made of skins of mice. After the heroine flees her father in a disguise, she becomes a servant girl in a foreign kingdom and ultimately marries the Prince or the King of the country, who discovered her identity.

> In contrast to the character Cinderella, who has been criticized for her passivity, this young woman is active. She takes charge of her life and bides her time until she is in a position to marry a wealthy, devoted husband. (Goldberg 29)

Goldberg also remarks that this fairy tale type is not very often adapted. Although its variations are almost always included in the major collections of fairy tales (Perrault, Grimms, Basile, Lang, Jacobs...) there are just a few film adaptations and only two modern retellings: Robin McKinley's *Deerskin* (1993) being the first one, and Mercedes Lackey's *Unnatural Issue* (2011) the other.

Regarding *Deerskin*, McKinley claims in the Author's note to the novel that she was inspired by Perrault's Donkeyskin. The book itself does not follow the plot of the fairy tale very closely, so I do not have an opportunity to contrast them. Nevertheless, Deerskin bears few elements of both: Perrault's Donkeyskin and Grimms' Allerleirauh.

3.2 Deerskin

The heroine of this fairy tale recreation is Princess Lissla Lissar, or just Lissar, who is the only child of her parents, the king and queen of a big and prosperous country. While the classical fairy tales of Donkeyskin type open with the queen's illness – or she is already dead by the time the story starts – Lissar's mother does not die until Lissar is twelve years old but Lissar suffers from neglect by both her parents through her whole childhood.

As Amie A. Doughty describes in her essay, Lissar connects to her parents only through the stories her nanny tells her about them. And Lissar admires her parents – as a child admires heroes of legends, but she never has any kind of real relationship with them, neither good nor bad.

> She saw them, remembered them, as if she were looking at a painting; they were too splendid to be real, and always they seemed at some little distance from her, from all onlookers. (3)

Amelia A. Rutledge wrote an essay on narcissism in *Deerskin*. Lissar's parents certainly display this trait, they have eyes only for themselves and so not care about anyone else – including their child.

> Although Lissar and her parents all operate in the Symbolic order as king, queen, and princess/daughter, the parents' relationship is regressive and exclusionary, and she suffers from its effects. (Rutledge 173)

Lissar is invisible during her whole childhood, but unlike Beauty from Rose Daughter, her invisibility is not deliberate. In comparison with her parents, who she worships, she views herself as unimportant. She does not have her own voice, any wishes or desires. At the beginning of the novel, Lissar is completely isolated from others. Her parents are too busy admiring themselves to pay any attention to her and even the castle servants and the kingdom's subjects do not seem to acknowledge the little princess.

> When the king and queen made processions through their kingdom, the princess came too; and people were kind to her. They were kind to her when they noticed her, for all eyes were upon the king and queen, and

> she was but a child, and small, and shy; and during those early years of her life she worshipped her parents more than anyone, except, perhaps, her nursemaid. (8)

Lissar's isolation is even more significant than in the case of heroines of *Beauty* and *Rose Daughter;* she is not a misunderstand child of a loving family because no one loves her and no one cares to understand her.

> She knew no other children, and never guessed the noisy games that most children play; and she learned very young that when she cried or was cross she was likely to be left alone; and as she had so little companionship she was unwilling to risk the little. (24)

Lissar's life remains seemingly unchanged after her mother dies. Her father is paralysed by grief and does not reach out to his child, while the courtiers watch Lissar with more of curiosity than serious interest, waiting if she will ever be a match to her splendid parents. And yet, one great change occurs after her mother's death, because Lissar is given a puppy. The dog, named Ash, is a beautiful silver-fawn-colored fleethound and she quickly becomes Lissar's only and best friend

That is a considerable divergence from any of the classical versions of the fairy tale where the princess has no allies but an old nurse or a fairy godmother who fill the role of an advisor to the princess in the first part of the story. In *Deerskin*, McKinley provided Lissar with an animal, who is the heroine's inseparable companion and guardian.

After she is given Ash, Lissar becomes more of an active character, for instance, she gives orders to have her chambers relocated to the ground floor, so Ash would have an access to the small garden next to it. She becomes more conscious of her role as a princess and more conscious of herself.

> . . . in awakening to the fact that she had a mind to use, Lissar was discovering the pleasure of using it. And by using it, she came to know it. Had Ash not come to her, she might have discovered greed instead, for her world as she understood it had ended with her mother's death; and what she had learned by that death was that she was alone . . . With the knowledge of her aloneness came the rush of self-declaration: I will not be nothing. (35-36)

With her dog at her side, Lissar learns that the world does not turn around her parents, as she was convinced during her childhood, and she starts to fill her time with the games

with Ash. She even befriends one of her ladies-in-waiting, Viaka, and an old herbalist, Rinnol, who begins to teach Lissar gardening.

> Lissar surprised herself in this, since she had been given so few lessons to learn in her life she did not know that she was quite able to learn, and was further surprised to find that she could like learning besides. (44)

As Lissar comes of age, she remains to appear "grave and silent" (40) to most people, but the courtiers observe that she has grown up into a particularly beautiful young woman: a living image of her dead mother. But her mother's likeness lures the unwanted attention of her father and this is where the classical fairy tale kicks in again.

Readers who are familiar with the fairy tale may recall that in order to discourage her father from an incest marriage, the princess asked him for three dresses, "one as golden as the sun, and one as silver as the moon, and one as shining as the stars" (Lang, "Allerleirauh" 1). Unfortunately, Lissar did not think of this way to avoid the marriage and if she did, it would be of no use. The king set his mind on marrying her and not even his most trustworthy advisors were able to oppose his decision.

Lissar has no means of defence; her friends are in no position to help her and the people of the court are either on the king's side or they fear him too much to defy him. Alone, as she was at the times of her childhood, and terrified, Lissar locks Ash and herself up in her room. But her father intrudes into her chambers through the gardens, he nearly kills Ash, who attempts to defend Lissar, beats up his daughter and rapes her.

There is no more striking alternation to the classical fairy tale than this. In the fairy tale, the king's intentions are threatening, but the princess manages to escape his lust before anything happens. McKinley chose to use post-rape trauma of the protagonist as one of the major themes of the novel and consequently, Lissar's journey is far more complicated than her fairy tale counterpart's.

When Lissar wakes up, she flees her father's castle together with Ash, they find a cabin in the woods and hide themselves. She represses her memories and her story, which is something Doughty comments on in her study:

> The suppression of Lissar's memory - of her own story - is a major element of the novel. She does not want to acknowledge her story during most of the novel because of the trauma it contains. (Doughty 7)

In the novel where storytelling is a key element, as it is in every McKinley's work, Lissar does not play a role of a narrator. Beauty of *Beauty* is a conscious narrator of her own story and while she does not have many choices, her voice is clear, she tells us

about herself and presents her life with witty commentary. Beauty of *Rose Daughter* is timid and quiet, but she forms her own story during the whole course of the novel. On the other hand, Lissar is more of a listener and it takes her a long time before she is prepared to make important choices in her life.

Although Lissar tries to put her past behind, she cannot. She discovers she is pregnant and has a miscarriage shortly after that. This reminder of her experience brings back her trauma and she nearly dies of physical and mental exhaustion.

Luckily, the Moon Goddess takes pity on her and helps her to start a new life. She – temporarily - takes away all her memories and makes Lissar and Ash unrecognizable: Ash magically grows long fur and the goddess changes the color of Lissar's hair from dark to white, the color of her eyes from green to black and provides her with a white deerskin dress. Rutledge remarks in her essay that Lissar becomes "a photographic negative of herself" (Rutledge 176)

With her memory wiped out, Lissar lives in the woods with only Ash for her company. After many months, they travel to one of the foreign kingdoms. Lissar adopts a name Deerskin, after the dress the goddess gave her. The dress itself does not serve "as an index to the heroine's physical degradation" (Rutledge 171) as in classical fairy tales, but quite the opposite as a token of purity and good will.

Doughty states in her essay that although it would seem that Lissar's leaving the woods is a result of her conscious will, it is not. She lets an unknown force to lead her:

> It was like following the direction of the wind beating in her face: if she fell off the point, she could feel the change at once; if the wind shifted, she felt that at once also; but where the wind blew from she did not know . . . This sensing was a trembling of the nerves, and she might not therefore have believed in it, except that she needed some direction to set her feet and this was at least as good as any other: better, then, because it was there, and it spoke to her. More significantly, it seemed Ash's nose pointed the same way. (126)

Doughty concludes that it is because Lissar is "not yet ready to make her own decisions" (Doughty 7). She actually has no reason to make any big decisions yet – that is how I would put it. It is true, that at this point Lissar is not yet prepared to withstand the trauma her true identity involves. She willingly accepts the blank spots on her mind, guessing correctly that her old memories are too painful to be seeked out. She begins to live again.

In contrast to the classical versions of the fairy tale, Lissar seeks out work for she needs a purpose in her life and desires human company. She finds a work at the royal palace where she is appointed with a work in kennels and has to nurture a litter of prematurely born puppies.

While the princess of the fairy tale felt humiliated by a low work she had to do (tending geese/pigs in some variations or helping in the kitchens), in *Deerskin,* as Rutledge puts it: "servitude is actually a refuge of humane relationships for Lissar" (Rutledge 171). Lissar also rediscovers some of her old skills like her knowledge of herbs Rinnol taught her – which leads her to believe that she used to be a herbalist's apprentice.

Lissar manages to save the puppies that were put into her care, which gains her respect of other workers. After a while, she begins to hear stories about Moonwoman, a kind goddess, and Lissar thinks that it could be the Lady who saved her. Doughty notes that "Deerskin shows the importance of storytelling and how actions can influence stories and stories can influence actions" (Doughty 7) because people around Lissar start to think that *she* is Moonwoman. They know near to nothing about Lissar and after she saves the puppies, who were thought doomed, and finds a missing boy from the village in the woods, she is ascribed with supernatural powers.

> Deerskin they called her to her face; but Moonwoman she heard more than once when she was supposed to be out of earshot. She thought of the Lady, and she did not ask any questions; she did not want to ask any questions, and when she heard the name uttered, she tried to forget what she had heard. (199)

Certainly, there are parallels between Lissar's history and a legend about Moonwoman. Moonwoman used to be a human princess who refused all her suitors and one of them raped her in order to prove her father his claim to the throne. Moonwoman ran away together with her dog and became a goddess of the Moon: a higher power watching over children and animals. So Lissar, involuntarily, becomes a heroine of someone else's story, a stuff of a legend that does not belong to her. This also contrasts with the beginning of her story where she *wanted* to be part of the stories, that were told about her parents, but she never was.

> 'Who am I, then?' said Lissar softly . . . And yet she feared to hear the answer too, feared to recognize what she was not; feared to understand that by learning one more thing that she was not that it narrowed the

> possibilities of what she was; that if those possibilities were thinned too far, that she would no longer be able to escape the truth. Her truth. (202)

Lissar actually befriends some of her co-workers and also prince Ossin, who is grateful to her for saving the puppies. He actually helps her with taking care of the puppies, who are sick and very weak during the first weeks of their lives, and he and Lissar become very close. Amelia A. Rutledge wrote:

> Lissar must experience only incomplete Symbolic relationships in her kennel work with Ossin and her worker associates. All of these relationships are— paradoxically—real but also illusory, since they are posited on the borrowed identity she receives as the Moonwoman's gift. (Rutledge 176)

Unfortunately, I cannot agree with this claim. It is true that some people Lissar meets – even some of her co-workers – see her as the legendary Moonwoman and treat her accordingly. But not all of them are like this.

Firstly, there is Lilac, a kind girl who helped Lissar when she first came to the city. She is well aware that Lissar – whom she knows as Deerskin – is not really a Moonwoman, but she often teases her about it.

> 'One would expect the Moonwoman to keep track of time well, of course,' said Lilac, 'even if your reappearance just now is a trifle melodramatically late. You should get used to it, Deerskin; they've been calling you Moonwoman since I first found you . . . And Deerskin isn't your real name either, is it?' (287)

Even more different is Lissar's relationship with Ossin is, despite the fact that it is him who tells her the legend about the Moon Goddess. Partly it is because Lissar told him the little she knew about herself and he had no reason not to believe her:

> She did not mean to tell him this, that she did not remember what her life had been, but at four o'clock in the morning, when the world is full of magic, things may be safely said that may not be uttered at any other time, so long as the person who listens believes in the same kind of magic as the person who speaks. Ossin and Lissar did believe in the same kinds of magic, and she told him more than she knew herself, for she was inside her crippled memory, and he was outside. (188-189)

But mostly it is because Lissar herself notices that Ossin views her differently:

> And Ossin was real . . . [he] looked at her only as if she were another human being . . . when he walked into the pen, it was as if the sunlight came with him. (188)
>
> [Ossin] was the only one who still named her Deerskin without an echo, who still met her eyes easily-as, it occurred to her, she met his. (212)
>
> And she knew what he saw when he looked at her: a woman with prematurely white hair, from what unknown loss or sorrow; and with eyes black from secrets she herself could not look at. (221)

Ossin does not think that Lissar and Moonwoman are anyhow connected and he treats Lissar as his equal. At first they are friends; later their friendship blossoms into love.

But Lissar's life takes a dramatic turn after Ossin takes her to one room at the palace where portraits of foreign monarchs are hanging. Lissar recognizes herself in one of the paintings. When she asks Ossin what happened to the princess in the painting, he tells her the little he knows and she realizes that yet again, she figures in a story that is not her own:

> No one would say if Lissar had actually died or if so what of. There was even a story that a lion leaped over the princess's garden wall and seized her; as soon say a dragon flew off with her, I think. But it was definitely given out that the king was now suddenly without heir. (224)

From that moment, Lissar's memory begins to come back to her and she becomes restless and tense. Shortly after, Ossin invites her to a royal ball, because he wants to have at least one friend there, and Lissar is sent four dresses to choose from by the queen: a small nod to the classical fairy tale where were three dresses and three balls.

At the ball, Ossin proposes to Lissar, proving again that he does not believe that she has anything to do with the Moonwoman legend:

> I know what they call you behind your back, but I do not believe it. Moonwoman would not raise puppies the hard way, staying up all night, night after night . . . I believe you're as human as I am, and I'm glad of that, because I love you, and if you really were Moonwoman I wouldn't have the nerve. (247)

Lissar is however unable to stay with him due to the trauma she remembered, so she flees him, as she did her father, and together with Ash and now-grown puppies spends a winter in the wilderness. Then, as she grows stronger and after Moon Goddess appears

to her again to encourages her, Lissar makes a decision to come back to people, especially to Ossin, whom she misses. Doughty comments on Lissar's actions:

> Though her flight from Ossin is a byproduct of the trauma she suffered at her father's hands, the decision to return to Ossin is a genuine choice, unlike her first emergence from the woods. (Doughty 8)

When she returns to the city, she learns that a royal wedding is supposed to take place soon. At first she fears that it is Ossin who is going to be married and it breaks her heart because she genuinely loves him. But later she discovers that it is Ossin's sister who is to be married, and from the description Lilac gives her, she realizes that the young princess is to be married to Lissar's father.

Terrified for the princess and determined to face her past, Lissar rushes to the palace to stop the wedding. In the climatic scene, Lissar confronts her father.

> 'Father! . . . 'You shall not marry this woman, nor any woman, in memory of what you did to me, your own daughter,' said the blazing figure; and the people in the receiving-hall heard the words, borne on a storm-wind, as did the people who had followed the Moonwoman's race through the city . . . (295)

As Lissar speaks to her father, her voice magically carries through the whole land, so everyone can hear Lissar's accusations against her father. Unlike the people of her father's court, who did not care for their princess and when their king announced his intentions to marry her, they actually thought she bewitched him, people of Ossin's kingdom stand by Lissar, no matter if she is or not Moonwoman.

> Our Deerskin would not lie, murmured Goldhouse's court, much troubled. Our prince and his dogs love her. The Moonwoman is here to rescue us, murmured those who had followed her. Rescue us and our princess, as she has rescued our lost children. (297)

Amie A. Doughty points out that in this moment, after there were so many stories and rumors about Lissar – the ones that connected her to Moonwoman or the lies spread by her father after she ran away – she finally has the strength needed to tell the others, including Ossin, the real story.

> 'I remember waking up, after you left me, the last night I spent under your roof. I thought I was dead, or dying, and I wanted to be dead . . . I had forgotten almost everything but a madness I could not name; I often thought that I would choose to die than risk remembering what drove me

> to madness, for I believed the shame was mine. For you were king, and your will was law, and I was but a girl, or rather a woman, forced into my womanhood.' (298)

During Lissar's speech, she starts to bleed from all her body and her appearance is restored to its original form: her hair are dark again and her eyes green. Her father is completely horrified by the sight of her and does not even try to defend himself. Lissar continues:

> 'But I return to you now all that you did give me: all the rage and the terror, the pain and the hatred that should have been love. The nightmares, and the waking dreams that are worse than nightmares because they are memories. These I return to you, for I want them no more, and I will bear them not one whit of my time on this earth more.' (298)

I agree with Amie A. Doughty who states that "this declaration more than anything else in the novel shows Lissar making clear choices for her life" (Doughty 9). Lissar symbolically overcomes her past, even though she will never be able to forget it. Then she runs away from the castle – again – but this time, she does not get very far because Ossin catches up with her and asks her to stay with him. Lissar is uncertain what to answer him.

> 'I am hurt ... in ways you cannot see, and that I cannot explain, even to myself, but only know that they are there, and a part of me, as much as my hands and eyes and breath are a part of me.' (306)

Lissar knows that what happened to her did not magically disappear, she acknowledges that it always be a part of her – and that acceptance makes her character very real. And Ossin loves her and understands this, and in the end, she promises him to try to stay with him.

Overall, Lissar's character is not so complex as are the other protagonists of McKinley's novels, but her story is much more intense.

> The narrative complexity of Lissar’s experiences is not always equalled by the complexity of her characterization; she has no negative traits . . . [Ossin] displays more varied traits than the protagonist herself. (Rutledge 177)

In the end Lissar is prepared to live again and make her own decisions again. She is no longer without her memory, set on the journey Moonwoman prepared for her, her

choice to confront her father – and her past – is entirely her own, as is her decision to stay with Ossin that marks her own happy ending.

4. Conclusion

In my thesis, I introduced the genre of fairy tale retellings. This sub-genre of fantasy literature has been flourishing since the second half of 20th century. Contemporary authors recreate the classical fairy tales and make them attractive for today's audience. I examined three fairy tale retellings by Robin McKinley with regard to the female protagonists. By going through their stories, their actions and their awareness of their own stories, I proved that McKinley's heroines are, unlike their counterparts from the classical fairy tales, active individuals with their own agency.

In the classical versions of "Beauty and the Beast", Beauty, the protagonist, is a virtuous and passive heroine. She is an ideal image of a 18th century woman: mild, obedient and educated. Her choices are not entirely her own: they are determined by her sense of obligation to her father and to the Beast.

Robin McKinley retold the story of "Beauty and the Beast" twice. In her first novel, titled *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast*, Beauty is an active, but a flawed character. She does not view herself as beautiful and therefore doubts her own importance and underestimates herself. She matures over the course of the novel: after she is left on her own, she has to cope with magic in the Beast's castle and the Beast himself. Outside her family circle Beauty discovers that she is good enough for somebody: the Beast is her equal and he appreciates her traits that are considered 'quirky' by her family (her love for books and horse-riding). Beauty is also an active character, e.g. she initiates the meetings between herself and the Beast, but her agency is mostly questionable. Similarly to the classical fairy tale, her choice to go to the Beast is initiated by the action of her father. Despite the fact that she is the narrator of the story, she is not aware of her role in it. Beauty is limited by the boundaries of the essential fairy tale plot – she listens to her instinct and it leads her to her happy ending. Only after she breaks the Beast's curse and learns more about the enchantments that surrounded the castle, she finally finds her place in the world – and in her story.

Rose Daughter is McKinley's second revision of "Beauty and the Beast". The heroine, Beauty, also struggles with finding her place within her family and in the world. She likes to be alone and does not care that she is 'invisible' because her sisters have always received more attention than herself. She is also sweeter and milder than

self-ironic Beauty from McKinley's first retelling. She is a gardener and her love for roses initiates her relationship with the Beast. Beauty goes to him after she learns that the Beast loves roses as much as she does: she sees him as her kindred spirit from the beginning. She seems to be in control of the Beast's enchanted castle, e.g. the animals return to the Beast's grounds because she wishes so, and she also manages to save the Beast's dying roses. There is no doubt that she is an active character; but she is also a character with her own agency. She wonders several times if she is a part of a story that is being created. She has no 'instinct' like Beauty of *Beauty* has and her dreams are actually misleading her. In the end, she must not believe what she sees or hears: she defeats the creatures of darkness by the strength of her own will. In the end, Beauty has a chance to restore the Beast to his human self and to live with him in wealth. And yet, she declines this and decides to live with the Beast as he is now in her village. She consciously chooses her own happy ending.

Robin McKinley retold the fairy tale "Donkeyskin" in her novel *Deerskin*. The princess of the classical fairy tale is an active character for the majority of the story, e.g. she finds a husband on her own terms and in her own time. Lissar in McKinley's *Deerskin* is an active character too. After she frees herself of her parents' shadow at the beginning of the story, she starts to make decisions for herself, e.g. she learns what she wants to learn and generally does what she wants. But after she is forced to flee her home, her memory is taken from her and her agency from that moment is not her own. Similarly to Beauty of *Beauty*, Lissar is led by forces that are beyond her understanding. She goes where they lead her and does not question it: she does not explore her possibilities. Only after her memory returns to her, she becomes a whole person once again and her agency in the climatic scenes of the book is unquestionable.

To summarize, McKinley's protagonists are all active heroines and each one of them has her strengths and weaknesses. Agency of Beauty of *Rose Daughter* is the most noticeable: she shapes her story from the beginning. On the contrary, Lissar and Beauty of *Beauty* gain their agency in the end of their stories.

WORKS CITED

Primary sources:

McKinley, Robin. *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast*. London: Random House Children's UK, 2004. Print.

---. *Deerskin*. New York: Ace Books, 1994. Print

---. *Rose Daughter*. New York: Ace Books, 1998. Print

Secondary sources:

Cadden, Michael. "The Illusion of Control: Narrative Authority in Robin McKinley's Beauty and The Blue Sword". *Mythlore* 20.2 (Spring 1994): 16–19. PDF file.

de Beaumont, Jean-Marie Leprince. *Beauty and the Beast.* PDF file.

de Villeneuve, Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot. The Story of Beauty and the Beast. Trans. J. R. Planché. *Four and twenty tales, selected from those of Perrault and other popular writers* (1858): 225-331. *Google Books.* Web. 4 May 2013.

Doughty, Amie A. "'I Think You Are Not Telling Me All of This Story' Storytelling, Fate, and Self-Determination in Robin McKinley's Folktale Revisions". *Fairy Tales Reimagined: Essays on New Retellings*: 122-135. Ed. Susan Redington Bobby. Jefferson: McFarland. 2009. Kindle.

Goldberg, Christine. "The Donkey Skin Folktale Cycle (AT 510B)". The Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 110, No. 435 (Winter, 1997): 28-46. Web. 4 May 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/541584>

Hearne, Betsy. "Beauty And The Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale: 1950-1985." The Lion and the Unicorn 12.2 (1988): 74-111. *Project MUSE*. Web. 4 May. 2013. <http://muse.jhu.edu/>.

Karrenbrock, Marilyn H., et al. *American Writers for Children since 1960: Fiction*. Ed. Glenn E. Estes. Vol. 52. Detroit: Gale Research International, 1986. PDF file. Dictionary of Literary Biography.

Lang, Andrew. *Beauty and the Beast*. The Blue Fairy Book. PDF file.

---. *Allerleirauh; or, The Many-Furred Creature*. The Green Fairy Book. PDF file.

Perrault, Charles. *Donkeyskin*. PDF file.

Perry, Evelyn. "Reflection and Reflexion: Female Coming-of-Age, the Mirror Stage, and the Absence of Mirrors in Robin McKinley's Beauty and Rose Daughter." The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature, 2004. Web. 19 April 2013

Rutledge, Amelia A. "Robin McKinley's Deerskin : Challenging Narcissisms." Marvels & Tales 15.2 (2001): 168-182. *Project MUSE*. Web. 4 May. 2013. <http://muse.jhu.edu/>.

Sackelman, Ellen R. "More Than Skin Deep: Robin McKinley's Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast". *Women in Literature: Reading Through the Lens of Gender*. Ed. Jerilyn Fisher and Ellen S. Silber. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003. 32–34. *Google Books.* Web. 4 May 2013.

Sanders, Lynn Moss. "Girls Who Do Things: The Protagonists of Robin McKinley's Fantasy Fiction." ALAN Review 24.1 (Fall 1996): 38-42. PDF file.

Zipes, Jack, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. PDF file.

Zipes, Jack. *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*. New York: Routledge, 2006. PDF file.